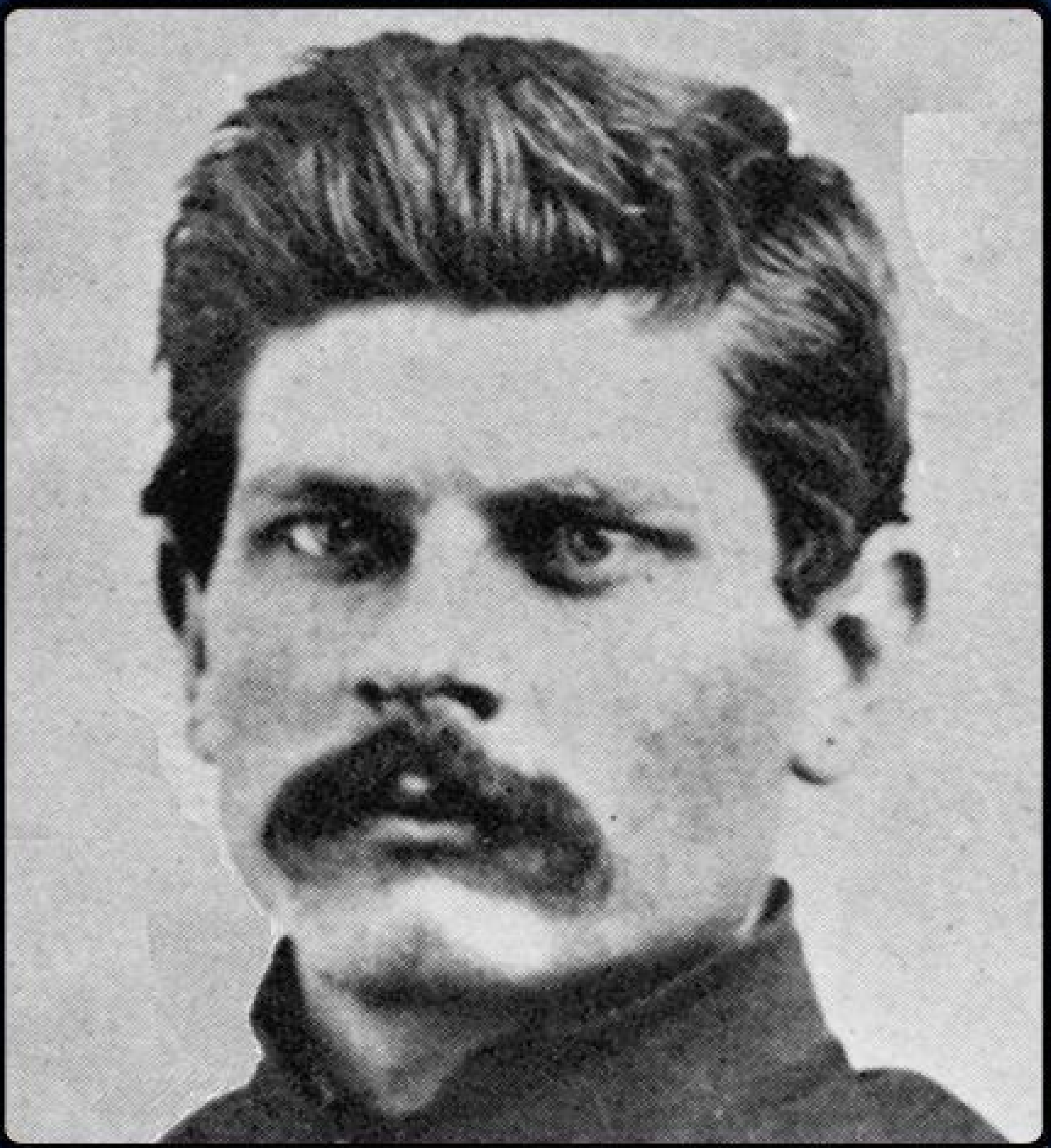
Complete Works of
AMBROSE BIERCE



DELPHI CLASSICS

The Complete Works of

AMBROSE BIERCE

(1842-1913)

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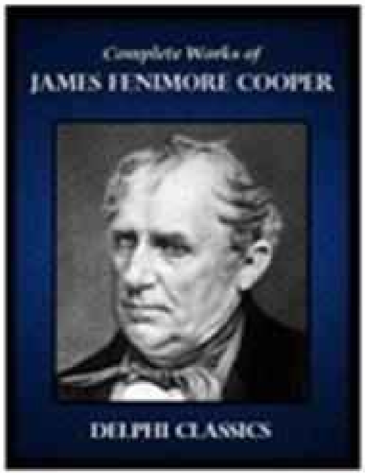
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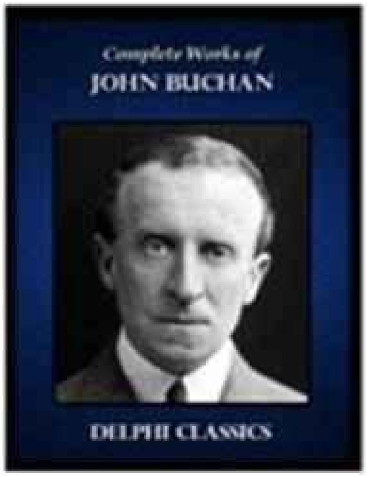
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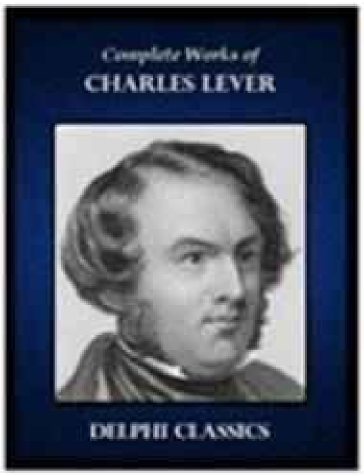
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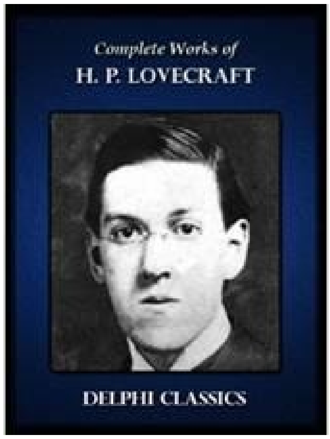
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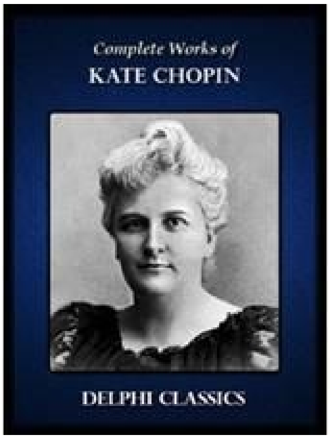
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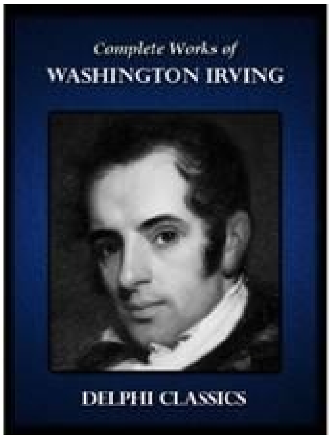
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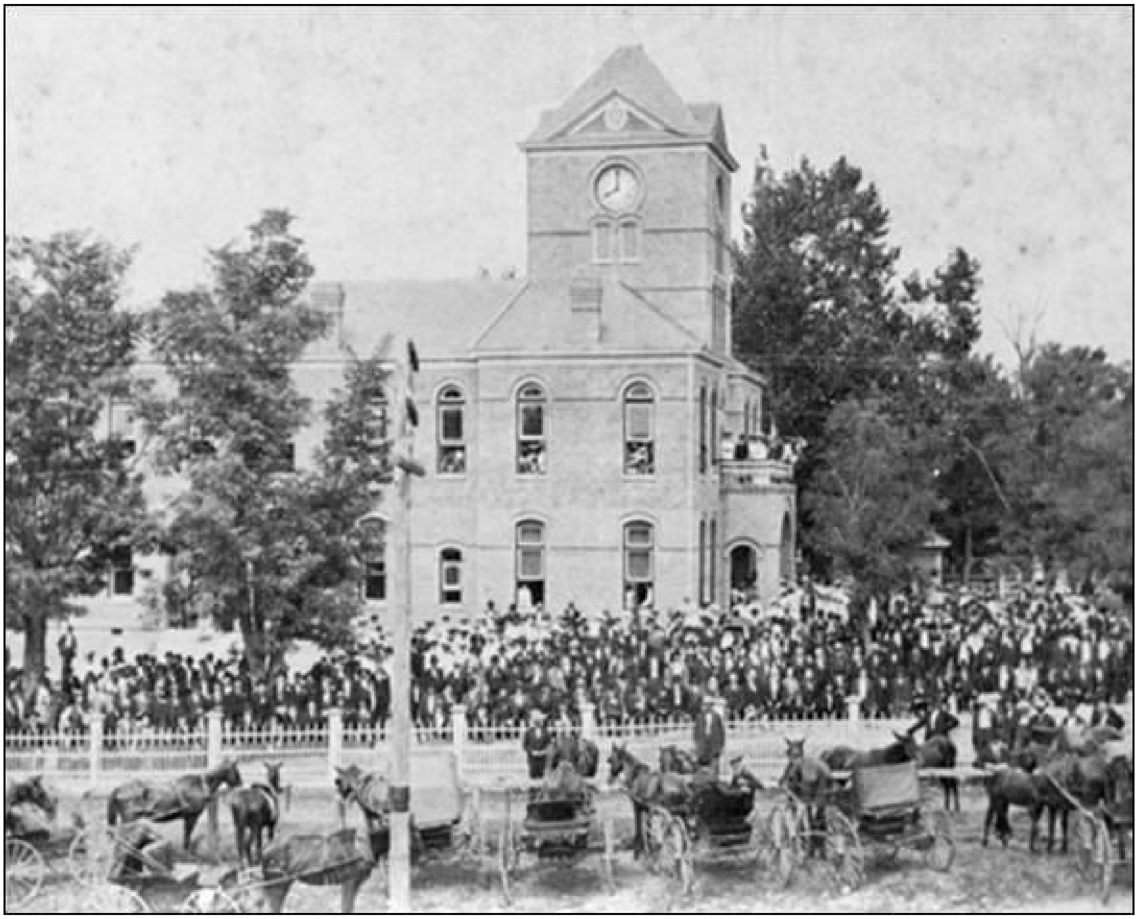
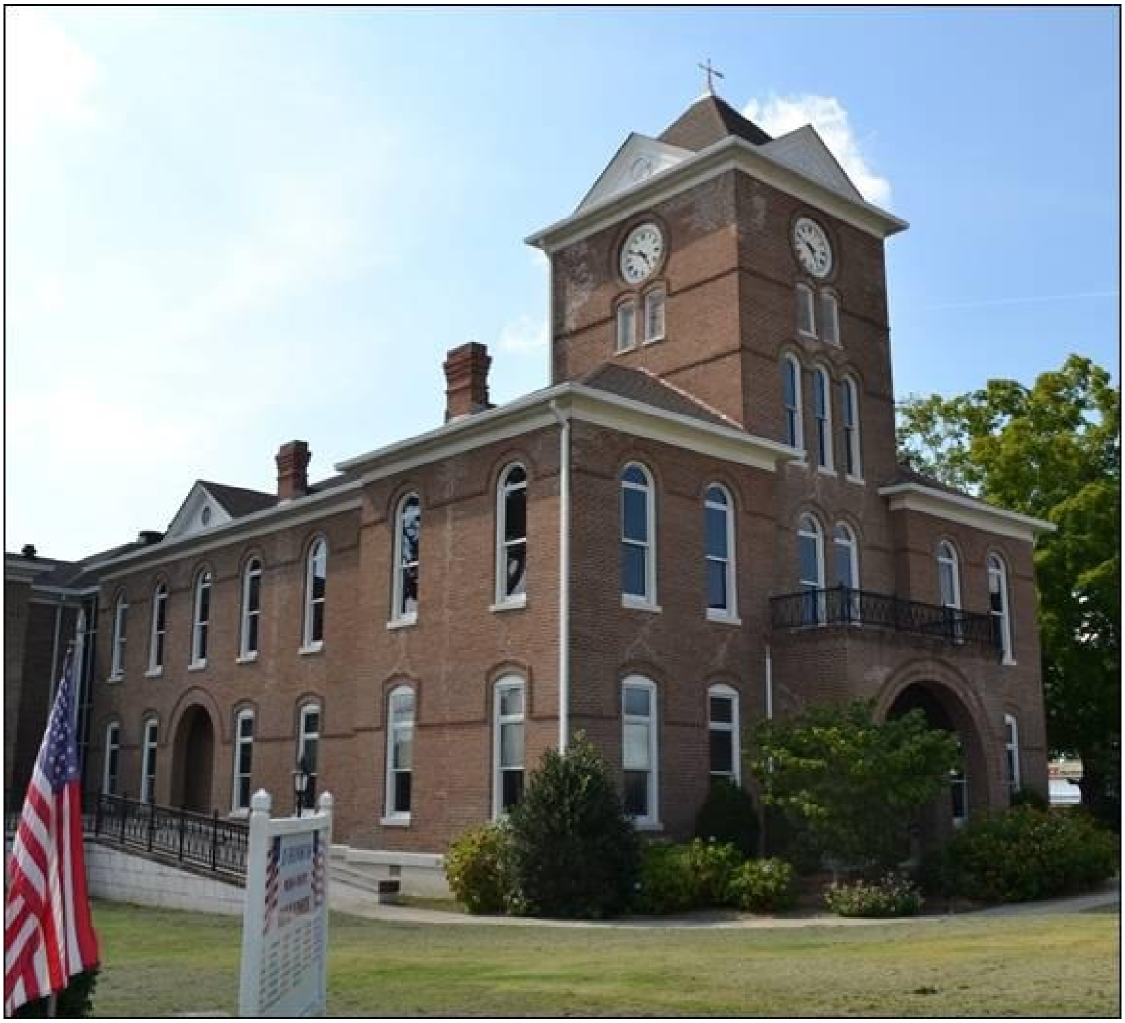
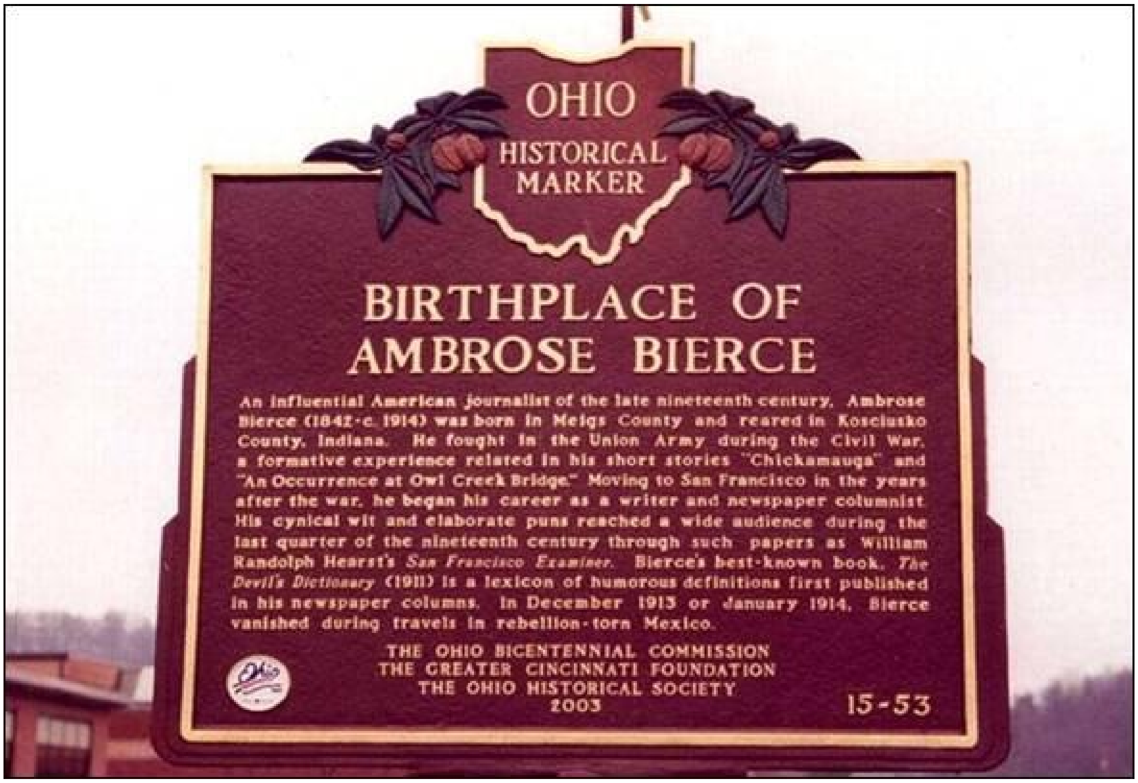


Meigs County, Ohio, 1904 — believed to be the birthplace of Ambrose Bierce. The precise location is not known.



The Court House today



OHIO
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BIRTHPLACE OF
AMBROSE BIERCE

An influential American journalist of the late nineteenth century, Ambrose Bierce (1842-c. 1914) was born in Meigs County and reared in Kosciusko County, Indiana. He fought in the Union Army during the Civil War, a formative experience related in his short stories "Chickamauga" and "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge." Moving to San Francisco in the years after the war, he began his career as a writer and newspaper columnist. His cynical wit and elaborate puns reached a wide audience during the last quarter of the nineteenth century through such papers as William Randolph Hearst's *San Francisco Examiner*. Bierce's best-known book, *The Devil's Dictionary* (1911) is a lexicon of humorous definitions first published in his newspaper columns. In December 1913 or January 1914, Bierce vanished during travels in rebellion-torn Mexico.

THE OHIO BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION
THE GREATER CINCINNATI FOUNDATION
THE OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
2003

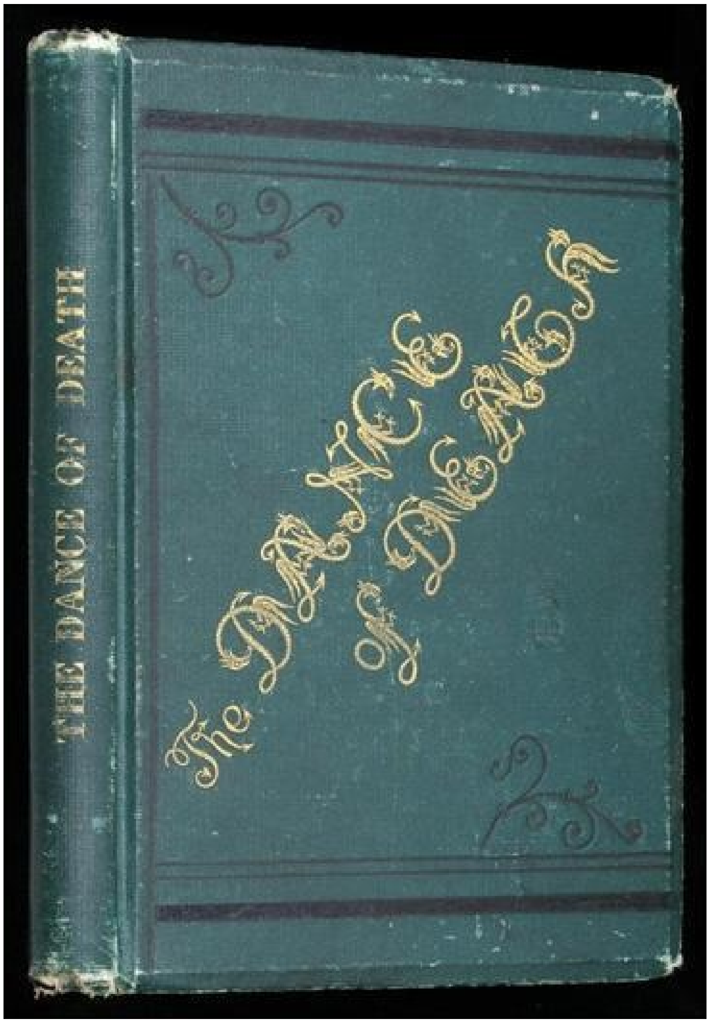
15-53

The plaque commerotaing Bierce's birth in Meigs County

Ambrose Bierce as a young man

THE DANCE OF DEATH

Bierce wrote *The Dance of Death* with Thomas A. Harcourt, published by Keller of San Francisco in 1877 and using the nom de plume, William Herman. Bierce later said that Harcourt's father-in-law, the photographer William Rulofson, "suggested the scheme and supplied the sinews of sin." Tongue firmly in cheek, the authors denounced the waltz, describing it in often lewd, lurid and lascivious terms. Critics and clergymen argued over whether the diatribe was serious or satirical and the fascinated public purchased 20,000 copies in its first year. An anonymous author replied by defending the waltz in *The Dance of Life*.


THE DANCE OF DEATH
The Dance of Death

The first edition

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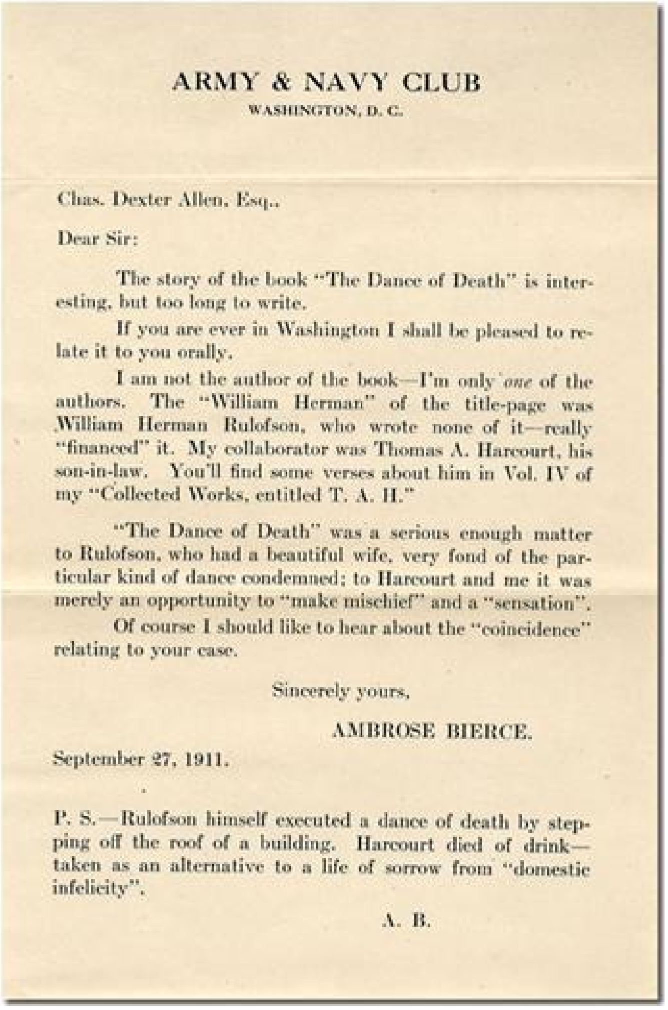


ARMY & NAVY CLUB
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Chas. Dexter Allen, Esq.,

Dear Sir:

The story of the book "The Dance of Death" is interesting, but too long to write.

If you are ever in Washington I shall be pleased to relate it to you orally.

I am not the author of the book—I'm only *one* of the authors. The "William Herman" of the title-page was William Herman Rulofson, who wrote none of it—really "financed" it. My collaborator was Thomas A. Harcourt, his son-in-law. You'll find some verses about him in Vol. IV of my "Collected Works, entitled T. A. H."

"The Dance of Death" was a serious enough matter to Rulofson, who had a beautiful wife, very fond of the particular kind of dance condemned; to Harcourt and me it was merely an opportunity to "make mischief" and a "sensation".

Of course I should like to hear about the "coincidence" relating to your case.

Sincerely yours,

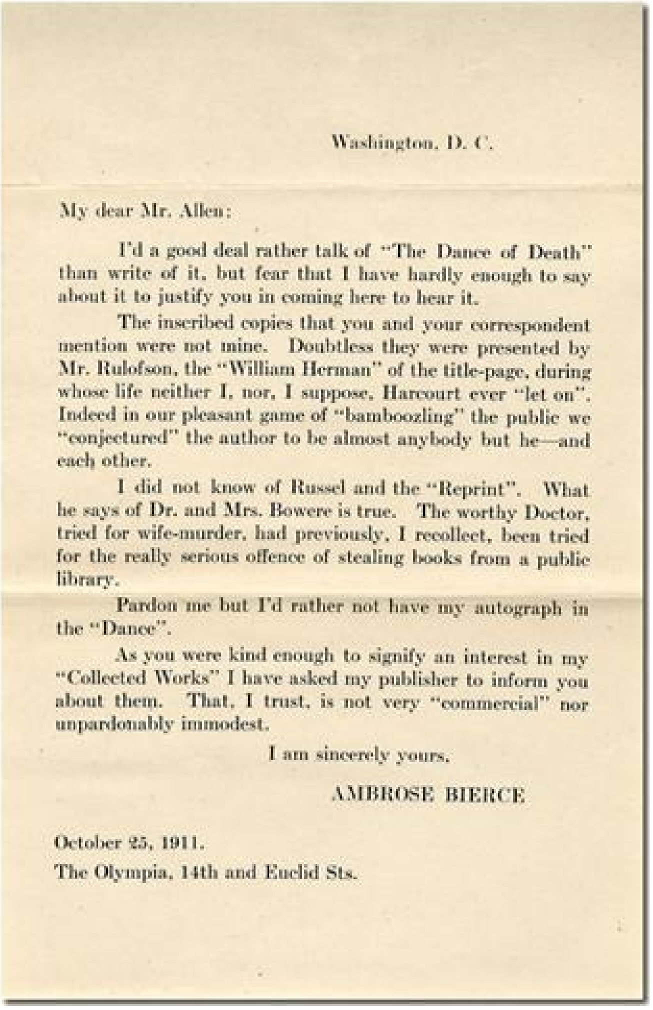
AMBROSE BIERCE.

September 27, 1911.

P. S.—Rulofson himself executed a dance of death by stepping off the roof of a building. Harcourt died of drink—taken as an alternative to a life of sorrow from "domestic infelicity".

A. B.

Two Bierce letters dealing with the somewhat confusing authorship of 'The Dance of Death'



Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Allen:

I'd a good deal rather talk of "The Dance of Death" than write of it, but fear that I have hardly enough to say about it to justify you in coming here to hear it.

The inscribed copies that you and your correspondent mention were not mine. Doubtless they were presented by Mr. Rulofson, the "William Herman" of the title-page, during whose life neither I, nor, I suppose, Harcourt ever "let on". Indeed in our pleasant game of "bamboozling" the public we "conjectured" the author to be almost anybody but he—and each other.

I did not know of Russel and the "Reprint". What he says of Dr. and Mrs. Bowere is true. The worthy Doctor, tried for wife-murder, had previously, I recollect, been tried for the really serious offence of stealing books from a public library.

Pardon me but I'd rather not have my autograph in the "Dance".

As you were kind enough to signify an interest in my "Collected Works" I have asked my publisher to inform you about them. That, I trust, is not very "commercial" nor unpardonably immodest.

I am sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE

October 25, 1911.
The Olympia, 14th and Euclid Sts.

THE DANCE OF DEATH BY WILLIAM HERMAN

“Wilt thou bring fine gold for a payment
For sins on this wise?
For the glittering of raiment
And the shining of eyes,
For the painting of faces
And the sundering of trust,
For the sins of thine high places
And delight of thy lust?”

*

“Not with fine gold for a payment,
But with coin of sighs,
But with rending of raiment
And with weeping of eyes,
But with shame of stricken faces
And with strewing of dust,
For the sin of stately places
And lordship of lust.”
SWINBURNE.

PREFACE.

The writer of these pages is not foolish enough to suppose that he can escape strong and bitter condemnation for his utterances. On this score he is not disposed to be greatly troubled; and for these reasons: Firstly — he feels that he is performing a *duty;* secondly — he is certain that his sentiments will be endorsed by hundreds upon whose opinion he sets great value; thirdly — he relieves his mind of a burden that has oppressed it for many years; and fourthly — as is evident upon the face of these pages — he is no professed *litterateur*, who can be starved by adverse criticism. Nevertheless he would be apostate to his self-appointed mission if he invited censure by unseemly defiance of those who must read and pass judgment upon his work. While, therefore, he does not desire to invoke the *leniency* of the professional critic or the casual reader, he does desire to justify the position he has taken as far as may be consistent with good taste.

It will doubtless be asserted by many: That the writer is a “bigoted parson,” whose puritanical and illiberal ideas concerning matters of which he has no personal experience belong to an age that is happily passed. On the contrary, he is a man of the world, who has mixed much in society both in the old world and the new, and who knows whereof he affirms.

That he is, for some reason, unable to partake of the amusement he condemns, and is therefore jealous of those more fortunate than himself. Wrong again. He has drunk deeply of the cup he warns others to avoid; and has better opportunities than the generality of men to continue the draught if he found it to his taste.

That he publishes from motives of private malice. *Private* malice — no. Malice of a certain kind, yes. Malice against those who should know better than to abuse the rights of hospitality by making a bawdy-house of their host’s dwelling.

But the principal objection will doubtless refer to the plain language used.

My excuse, if indeed excuse be needed for saying just what I mean, is, that it is impossible to clothe in delicate terms the intolerable nastiness which I expose, and at the same time to press the truth home to those who are most in need of it; I might as well talk to the winds as veil my ideas in sweet phrases when addressing people who it seems cannot descry the presence of corruption until it is held in all its putridity under their very nostrils.

Finally, concerning the prudence and advisability of such a publication, I have only to say that I have consulted many leading divines and principals of educational institutions, all of whom agree that the subject must be dealt with plainly, and assure me that its importance demands more than ordinary treatment — that it is a foeman worthy of the sharpest steel; for, say they: To repeat the tame generalities uttered from the pulpit, or the quiet tone of disapprobation adopted by the press, would be to accord to the advocates of this evil a power which they do not possess, and to proclaim a weakness of its opponents which the facts will not justify.

I have therefore spoken plainly and to the purpose, that those who run — or waltz — may read.

But there remains yet something to be said, which is more necessary to my own peace of mind, and to that of many of my readers, than all that has gone ‘before. So important is it, indeed, that what I am about to say should be distinctly understood by all those whose criticism I value, and whose feelings I respect, that I almost hesitate t6 consign it to that limbo of egotism — the preface.

Be it known, then, that although in the following pages I have, without compunction, attacked the folly and vice of those who practice such, yet I would rather my right hand should wither than that the pen it wields should inflict a single wound upon one innocent person. I am willing to believe, nay, I *know*, that there are many men and women who can and do dance without an impure thought or action; for theirs is not the Dance of Death; they can take a reasonable pleasure in one another’s society without wishing to be locked in one another’s embrace; they can rest content with such graces as true refinement teaches them are modest, without leaping the bounds of decorum to indulge in what a false and fatal refinement styles the “poetry of motion;” in short, to them the waltz, in its newest phases at least, is a stranger. I would not, like Lycurgus and Mahomet, cut down all the vines, and forbid the drinking of wine, because it makes some men drunk. Dancers of this class, therefore, I implore not to regard the ensuing chapters as referring to themselves — the cap does not fit their heads, let them not attempt to wear it. The same remarks will apply to some of those heads of families who permit and encourage dancing at their homes. Many among them doubtless exercise a surveillance too strict to admit of anything improper taking place within their doors; these stand in no need of either advice or warning from me. But more of them, I am grieved to say, are merely blameless because they are ignorant of what really *does* take place. The social maelstrom whirls nightly in their drawing-rooms; with their wealth, hospitality, and countenance they unconsciously, but none the less surely, lure the fairest ships of life into its mad waters. Let these also, then, not be offended that in this book I raise a beacon over the dark vortex, within whose treacherous embrace so many sweet young souls have been whirled to perdition.

CHAPTER I.

“That motley drama! Oh, be sure
  It shall not be forgot!
With its Phantom chased for evermore
  By a crowd that seize it not,
Through a circle that ever returneth in
  To the self-same spot;
And much of Madness, and more of Sin
  And Horror, the soul of the plot!”

POE.

Reader, I have an engagement to keep to-night. Let me take you with me; you will be interested.

But, stay — I have a condition to make before I accept of your company. Have you read the preface? “No, of course not; who reads prefaces?” Very well, just oblige me by making mine an exception — it is a Gilead where you perhaps may obtain balm for the wounds you will receive on our expedition. And now, supposing you to have granted this request, let us proceed.

Our carriage pulls up before the entrance of an imposing mansion. From every window the golden gaslight streams out into the darkness; from the wide-open door a perfect glory floods the street from side to side. There is a hum of subdued voices within, there is a banging of coach doors without; there is revelry brewing, we may be sure.

We step daintily from our carriage upon the rich carpet which preserves our patent-leathers from the contamination of the sidewalk; we trip lightly up the grand stone stairway to the entrance; obsequious lackeys relieve us of our superfluous raiment; folding doors fly open before us without so much as a “sesame” being uttered; and, behold, we enter upon a scene of enchantment.

Magnificent apartments succeed each other in a long vista, glittering with splendid decorations; costly frescoes are overhead, luxurious carpets are under foot, priceless pictures, rich laces, rare trifles of art are around us; an atmosphere of wealth, refinement, luxury, and good taste is all-pervading.

But these are afterthoughts with us; it is the splendor of the assembled company that absorbs our admiration now. Let us draw aside and observe this throng a little, my friend.

Would you have believed it possible that so much beauty and richness could have been collected under one roof? Score upon score of fair women and handsome men; the apparel of the former rich beyond conception — of the latter, Immaculate to a fault. The rooms are pretty well filled already, but the cry is still they come.

See yonder tall and radiant maiden, as she enters leaning upon the arm of her grey-headed father. Mark her well, my friend; I will draw your attention to her again presently. How proud of her the old man looks; and well he may. What divine grace of womanhood lives in that supple form; what calm, sweet beauty shines in that lovely face — a face so pure and passionless in expression that the nudity of bust and arms, and the contour of limbs more than suggested by the tightly clinging silk, call for no baser admiration than we feel when looking upon the representation of an angel. Observe closely with what high-bred and maidenly reserve she responds to the greeting of the Apollo in “full dress” who bows low before her — the very type of the elegant and polished gentleman. In bland and gentle tones he begs a favor to be granted a little later in the evening. With downcast eyes she smiles consent; with a bow he records the promise upon a tablet in his hand. Gracefully she moves forward again, leaning on her father’s arm, smiling and nodding to her acquaintances, and repeating the harmless little ceremony described above with perhaps a dozen other Apollos before she reaches the end of the room.

“Ah, pure and lovely girl!” I hear you mutter as she disappears, “happy indeed is he who can win that jewel for a wife. That face will haunt me like a dream!” Likely enough, O my friend! but dreams are not all pleasant.

Now look again at this young wife just entering with her husband. Is she not beautiful! and how devotedly she hangs upon his arm! With what a triumphant glance around the room he seems to say: “Behold my treasure — my very own; look at the gorgeousness of her attire, ladies, and pray for such a husband; gaze upon the fairness of her face, gentlemen, and covet such a wife.” Again the Apollos step blandly forward, again the little promises are lisped out and recorded. And so the goodly company go on, introducing and being introduced, and conversing agreeably together. A right pleasant and edifying spectacle, purely.

But, hark! The music strikes up; the dancing is about to begin. You and I do not dance; we withdraw to an adjoining room and take a hand at cards.

The hours go swiftly by and still we play on. The clock strikes two; the card-players are departing. But the strains of the distant music have been unceasing; the game does not flag in the ballroom. You have not seen a dance since your youth, you say, and then only the rude gambols of countryfolk; you would fain see before you go how these dames and damsels of gentler breeding acquit themselves.

The dance is at its height; we could not have chosen a better time to see the thing in its glory.

As we approach the door of the ballroom the music grows louder and more ravishing than ever; no confusion of voices mars its delicious melody; the only sounds heard beneath its strains are a low swish and rustle as of whirling robes, and a light, but rapid and incessant shuffling of feet. The dull element has gone home; those who remain have better work to do than talking. We push the great doors asunder and enter.

Ha! the air is hot and heavy here; it breathes upon us in sensuous gusts of varying perfumes. And no wonder. A score of whirling scented robes stir it into fragrance. How beautiful — but you look aghast, my friend. Ah, I forgot; these are not the rude countryfolk of your youth. You are dazzled — bewildered. Then let me try to enliven your dulled senses with a description of what we see.

A score of forms whirl swiftly before us under the softened gaslight. I say a score of *forms* — but each is double — they would have made two score before the dancing began. Twenty floating visions — each male and female. Twenty women knit and growing to as many men, undulate, sway, and swirl giddily before us, keeping time with the delirious melody of piano, harp, and violin, But draw nearer — let us see how this miracle is accomplished. Do you mark yonder tall couple who seem even to excel the rest in grace and ardor. Do they not make a picture which might put a soul under the ribs of Death? Such must have been the sight which made Speusippas incontinently rave: “O admirable, O divine Panareta! Who would not admire her, who would not love her, that should but see her dance as I did? O how she danced, how she tripped, how she turned! With what a grace! *Felix qui Panareta fruitur*! O most incomparable, only, Panareta!” Let us take this couple for a sample. He is stalwart, agile, mighty; she is tall, supple, lithe, and how beautiful in form and feature! Her head rests upon his shoulder, her face is upturned to his; her naked arm is almost around his neck; her swelling breast heaves tumultuously against his; face to face they whirl, his limbs interwoven with her limbs; with strong right arm about her yielding waist, he presses her to him till every curve in the contour of her lovely body thrills with the amorous contact. Her eyes look into his, but she sees nothing; the soft music fills the room, but she hears nothing; swiftly he whirls her from the floor or bends her frail body to and fro in his embrace, but she knows it not; his hot breath is upon her hair, his lips almost touch her forehead, yet she does not shrink; his eyes, gleaming with a fierce intolerable lust, gloat satyrlike over her, yet she does not quail; she is filled with a rapture divine in its intensity — she is in the maelstrom of burning desire — her spirit is with the gods.

With a last, low wail the music ceases. Her swooning senses come back to life. Ah, must it be! Yes; her companion releases her from his embrace. Leaning wearily upon his arm, the rapture faded from her eye, the flush dying from her cheek — enervated, limp, listless, worn out — she is led to a seat, there to recover from her delirium and gather her energies as best she may in the space of five minutes, after which she must yield her body to a new embrace.

But did you not notice a faint smile upon the lips of her late companion as he turned and left her? a smile of triumph, an air of sated appetite, it seemed to me; and see, as he joins his cronies yonder he laughs, rubs his hands together, chuckles visibly, and communicates some choice scrap of news which makes them look over at our jaded beauty and laugh too; they appreciate the suggestion of the ancient:

“Tenta modo tangere corpus,
Jam tua mellifluo membra calore fluent.”

But she can keep her secret better than they, it is evident.

And now tell me, friend of mine, did you not recognize an old acquaintance in the lady we have been watching so closely? No! Then believe me she is no other than the “pure and lovely girl” you so much admired earlier in the evening, the so desirable wife, the angel who was to “haunt your dreams.”

“What! that harlot — .”

Hush — a spade is not called a spade here; but I assure you again that the sensuous, delirious Bacchante whose semi-nakedness was so apparent as she lay swooning in the arms of her param — partner just now, was one and the same with the chaste and calm Diana — *virgo virginissima* — whose modest mien concealed her nudity so well. Moreover the satyr who was her accomplice — I can find no better word — the coward who pastured upon her and then boasted of his lechery, was the Apollo who first saluted her; the little promise which she gave so gracefully, and which he recorded so eagerly, was a deliberate surrender of her body to his use and their mutual enjoyment. Furthermore, the old man who, filled with wine, sits asleep before the fire in the card-room, dreaming he holds thirteen trumps in his hand, is the proud father of our fair friend. Unselfish old man! he, like you, knows no dances but reels and minuets. “Why should not the dear girl enjoy herself?” he says; besides, if he grows tired he can go; Apollo will be glad to see her home. Apollo being rich, the old gentleman has no objection to see him chasing his Daphne; Cupio, Cupid, Cupidity — the Latin always knows what it is about.

But, hark! The music begins again. *Le jeu est fait, faites votre jeu messieurs!*

Gentlemen croupiers, prepare to rake in lost souls! All stakes are yours that come within your reach.

With energies recuperated by stimulating refreshments, matron and maiden rise to the proffered embrace; with lusty vigor the Bulls of Bashan paw their fresh pastures. This is the last dance, and a furious one.

“Now round the room the circling dow’gers sweep,
Now in loose waltz the thin-clad daughters leap;
The first in lengthened line majestic swim,
The last display the free, unfettered limb.”

The Saturnalia will soon be ended. One more picture before we go.

What right has that face over there to intrude amid this scene of wild festivity? That dark and scowling face, filled with hate, and jealousy, and stifled rage. See how its owner prowls restlessly about; continually changing his position, but ever keeping his watchful eyes upon that voluptuous woman who, surrendering her soul to the lascivious pleasing of opportunity, is reeling, gliding, and yielding in the clutch of her partner — her drunken catholicity of desire, her long libidinous reaches of imagination, the glib and facile assent of her emotions, figured in every movement, and visible to every eye.

This was the manner in which Bacchus and Ariadne danced, which so moved the spectators that, as the old writer tells us, “they that were unmarried swore they would forthwith marry, and those that were married called instantly for their horses and galloped home to their wives.” That miserable, self-despised, desperate wretch is the exultant husband whom we noticed on his arrival; it is natural that he should take some interest in the lady, — she is the wife he was exulting over. No wonder that there is a dangerous look in his eye as he takes in the situation; the gallant who is dancing with his wife may sup with Polonius yet — late, or rather early, as it is, for “murder’s as near to lust as flame to smoke.” No wonder there is a hangdog expression in his face as his friends clap him on the back and applaud the lady’s performance — ask him how he is enjoying the evening, and so forth. But the climax is reached when the sated Lothario restores the partner of *his* joys to her lawful lord, with the remark that “your wife, sir, dances most divinely;” then the poor fool must screw up a sickly smile and say “thank you, sir,” knowing all the while in his heart of hearts that the man before him has just now most surely made him cuckold under his very nose. Poor fool! Will he *never* learn to appreciate the utter vileness of his situation? Will he *always* be persuaded next morning that he must have been excited by the champagne — that his jealousy was the acme of all unreason? Or will he, as many have done, pop out some fine day a full-fledged dancer himself, and compromise matters with his wife by making the degradation mutual?

But while we ponder these things the melody has ceased; the weary musicians have departed. There is a rush for cloaks and hoods, and rather more adjusting of the same upon feminine forms by bold masculine hands than is perhaps necessary for their proper arrangement.

Shift the scenery for the last act of this delectable drama!

The gentlemen will escort the ladies to their homes! Apollo will still pursue the nimble Daphne, Pan will not yet relinquish his hot pursuit of the fleet-footed Syrinx; and verily on this occasion their reward shall be greater than reeds and laurels. Forward, then, to the waiting carriages!

Ah, how grateful to the gas-scorched eyeballs is the thick gloom of the coach — how pleasant to the weary limbs are these luxurious cushions!

There! close the door softly; up with the windows — down with the curtains! Driver, go slowly, as I heard you ordered to do just now, and you shall not want for future patronage. And you, young man within, strike while the iron is hot. In your comrade every mental sense is stupified, every carnal sense is roused. It is the old, old story: *“Nox, vinum et adoiescentia”* The opportunity is golden. Society is very good to you, young man!

Come, my friend, let us go. The play is played out, and so are the players. The final tableau does not take place upon the stage. We read that under one of the Roman Emperors the pantomimic dance was not unfrequently ended by the putting to death by torture upon the stage of some condemned, criminal, in order that the spectators might gaze upon death in all its horrible reality. God forbid that any such ghastly finale should take place *behind the scenes* now that *our* pantomime is finished! But at all events there is no more to see; and lest your imagination spoil your rest let me divert your attention to the speck of dawn over there in the east. At this hour, says the poet,

“When late larks give warning
Of dying lights and dawning,
Night murmurs to the morning,
‘Lie still, O love, lie still;’
And half her dark limbs cover
The white limbs of her lover,
With amorous plumes that hover
And fervent lips that chill.”

But, mind you, in these lines the poet does not even remotely refer to the occupants of the carriage.

CHAPTER II.

“The Dance is the spur of lust — a circle of which the Devil himself is the centre. Many women that use it have come dishonest home, most indifferent, none better.” — PETRARCH.

But,” says the worthy reader who has honored me by perusing the preceding Chapter, “what manner of disgusting revel is this that you have shown us? Have we been present at a reproduction of the rites of Dionysus and Astarte? Have we held high revel in the halls of a modern Faustina or Messalina? Have we supped with Catherine of Russia? Or have we been under the influence of a restored Lampsacene?

Don’t delude yourself, my unsophisticated friend, you have simply been present at a “social hop” at the house of the Hon. Ducat Fitzbullion — a most estimable and “solid” citizen, a deacon of the church, where his family regularly attend, a great promoter of charities, Magdalen Asylums, and the like, and President of the “Society for the Suppression of Immorality among the Hottentots.” The fair women whom you have somewhat naturally mistaken for *prétresses de la Vagabonde Vénus,* are the pure daughters and spotless wives of our “best citizens;” their male companions, or accomplices, or whatever you choose to call them, are the *crime de la crime* of all that is respectable and eligible in society; and, finally, the dance which you have pronounced outrageously indecent, is simply the Divine Waltz, in its various shapes of “Dip,” ‘Glide,” “Saratoga,” “German,” and what not — the King of Dances “with all the modern improvements.”

And this, my dear reader, is the abomination that I intend to smite hip and thigh — not with fine words and dainty phrases, but with the homely language of truth; not blinded by prejudice or passion, but calmly and reasonably; not with any private purpose to subserve, but simply in the cause of common decency; not with the hope of working out any great moral reform, but having the sense of *duty* strong upon me as I stick my nibbed lancet into the most hideous social ulcer that has as yet afflicted the body corporate.

That the subject is a delicate one is best shown by the fact that even Byron found himself reduced to the necessity of “Putting out the light” and invoking the longest garments to cover that which he was unable to describe — hear him:

“Waltz — Waltz alone — both legs and arms demands;
Liberal of feet, and lavish of her hands;
‘Hands which may freely range in public sight
Where ne’er before — but — pray “put out the light.’

“But here the muse with due decorum halts —
And lends her longest petticoats to Waltz.”

It should not, then, be a matter of surprise, when one so gifted in the use of his mother tongue and writing in a far less prudish age, failed to describe the “voluptuous Waltz” without shocking his readers, — if I, sixty-three years later, with so much more to describe and such limited capacity, do not succeed in rendering the subject less repulsive.

Many will urge that a practice indulged in by the “best people” of every country — seemingly tolerated by all — cannot be so violently assailed without some motive other than a disinterested desire to advocate a correct principle — but such are reminded that much more than one-half the male adult population of every American city are addicted to the use of tobacco. Is its baneful effect upon the nerves of man any the less severe on this account? So in the case of alcoholic beverages, is it open to debate that the great mass of our population are constantly consuming this “wet damnation”? And is it not known to all that it is the direct source of desolation to hearth and home, the destroyer of happiness and character, — that this has broken more hearts, filled more dishonored graves than any other of man’s follies? Does, I say, the fact of its universality render its destroying influence less potent? I think not. Neither do I believe the fact of society permitting itself to be carried by storm into the toleration of the “modern” dance, obliterates the fearful vortex into which its members are drawn, or compensates for the irreparable loss it suffers in the degradation of its chief ornament — woman.

And here is one great difficulty in my self-imposed task, for to lovely and pure woman must I partly address myself. Yet even a partial reference to the various considerations involved, entails the presenting of topics not generally admitted into refined conversation. But in order to do any justice at all to the subject, we must not only consider the dance itself, but we must follow it to its conclusion. We must look at its direct results. We must hold it responsible for the vice it encourages, the lasciviousness of which it so largely partakes. And in presenting this subject, I shall steadfastly ignore that line of argument based upon the assumption that because “it is general,” it must be proper. Says Rochester: —

“Custom docs often reason overrule,
And only serves for reason to the fool.”

And Crabbe: —

Habit with him was all the test of truth:
It must be right — I’ve done it from my youth.”

No, neither the use of tobacco, the indulgence in alcoholic beverages, nor the familiar posturing of the “Glide” can be justified or defended by proving that they are common to all classes of society.

I repeat that the scene I have attempted to describe in the foregoing chapter is no creation of a prurient imagination — would to God that it were — but is a scene that is enacted at every social entertainment which in these days is regarded by the class for whose benefit this work is written as worth the trouble of attending. I repeat that the female portion of the “class” referred to is not composed of what are commonly known as prostitutes, whatever the uninitiated spectator at their orgies may imagine, but of matrons who are held spotless, and of maidens who are counted pure — not only by the world in general, but by those husbands, fathers, and brothers, whose eyes should surely be the first to detect any taint upon the character of wife, daughter, or sister. And I repeat, moreover, that the social status of these people is not that of the rude peasant whose lewd pranks are the result of his ignorance, but that of the most highly cultivated and refined among us. These are the people who are expected to, and do, lead the world in all that is elegant and desirable; and the Waltz, forsooth, is one of their arts — one of the choice products of their ultra-civilization — brought to perfection by the grace with which God has gifted them above common folk, adorned by their wealth, and enjoyed by their high-strung sensibilities. The boor could not dance as they do though he were willing to give his immortal soul to possess the accomplishment, for the waltz, in its perfection, is a pleasure reserved for the social pantheon.

Said one to me, stooping forward in the most confidential way “Do you see that young lady to the left? How exquisitely the closely drawn silk discloses her wasp-like form! and those motions — could anything be more suggestive? Every movement of her body is a perfect reproduction of Hogarth’s line of beauty. Look man! Remove just a little drapery and there is nothing left to desire — isn’t it wonderful? But then,” added he, “it is a perfect outrage nevertheless.”

Not so, I answered. Can aught be said against her reputation? no! — a thousand times no — and as for her dress, is it not the perfection of what all others in the room are but a crude attempt to accomplish? Does it not disclose a form intrinsically beautiful, and admit of a grace and “poetry of motion” quite unknown to those encumbered with petticoats? Yes, look at her backward and forward movements — see how she entwines her lithe limbs with those of her enraptured partner as they oscillate, advance, recede, and rotate, as though they were “spitted on the same bodkin.”

“Thus front to front the partners move or stand, The foot may rest, but none withdraw the hand.

This, sir, is but one of the many *improvements* on the waltz.

And pray, sir, are not this lady to the right and that one in the center, vainly endeavoring to achieve the same feat? The only difference is that this lady is better dressed, more ably taught than either; is she to be censured because she has the talent and industry to do well, that which they have neither the courage, energy, nor ability to perform?

Can it be that in this instance alone, a want of proficiency is a redeeming feature?

CHAPTER III.

“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves.”

EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

Already I see the face of the reader grow red with indignation. “This is a calumniator, an infamous detractor, an envious pessimist, a hater of all that is innocently enjoyable!” cries he or she. Very well — I bow my acknowledgements for the compliment I have already stated in my preface that I did not expect you to say anything else. I could be well content to tell what I know and let you say your say in peace, but I will nevertheless go somewhat out of my way to answer your principal objections.

In the first place, there are certainly many who will deny my charges *in toto* — who will declare that the waltz is very moral and healthful, and entirely innocent and harmless, and that he who puts it in any other light is a knave and a vile slanderer. These of my opponents I may divide into two classes: First, those who know nothing of the matter, who have never danced, have scarcely ever seen a modem waltz, and are consequently unwilling to believe that such terrible things could be going on in their very midst without their knowledge; and, secondly, those who do know and practice the abomination, and find “the fruit of the tree of knowledge” far too sweet to be hedged about as “forbidden.”

To the first of these classes I have little to say; it is composed mainly of “old fogies,” the diversions of whose youth were innocent, and who can see no evil that does not sprawl in all its ugliness over the face of the community. If a courtesan accosted one of them on the street, they would be unutterably shocked, and so they certainly would if they on a sudden found themselves experiencing the “perfect waltz,” though even then it is doubtful if they would not be shocked into dumbness and grieved into inaction. But of the vailed and subtle pleasures of the waltz they are profoundly ignorant — why should they not be? They see no harm in it because they don’t see it at all; they are optimists through ignorance, and lift palms of deprecation at the mention of vice which they cannot understand or attain to. To these I say: open your eyes and look about you, even at the risk of seeing things not exactly as you fancied them to be; or, if you *will* remain obstinately blind, then pray do not deny that evil exists where you do not happen to see it with your eyes shut I have painted the picture, you can compare it with the reality at your leisure.

To the second class that I have mentioned, namely, those who know and deny what they know, a far stronger condemnation is to be applied. It is composed of the dancers *par excellence,* both male and female — who have tasted of the unholy pleasures of the waltz until it has become the very sap of their lives. These are the blushing rakes and ogling prudes who will be most bitter in their denunciation of this book and its author; and no wonder — I only oppose the prejudices of the others, but I contend with the passions of these. These it is who are forever prating of the beauties and virtues of the waltz. It is an "innocent recreation," a "healthful exercise," it is the "mother of grace" and the "poetry of motion;" no eulogy can be too extravagant for them to bestow upon their idol. *They* see no harm in it, not they, and for those who dare hint at such a thing, they have ever ready at their tongue's end that most convenient and abused of legends: *Honi soit qui mal y pense.* They will catch at any straw to defend their pet amusement. They will tell you that The Preacher says "there is a time to dance," without stopping to inquire why that ancient cynic put the words "there is a time to mourn" in such close proximity. They will inform you that Plato, in his Commonwealth, will have dancing-schools to be maintained, "that young folks may meet, be acquainted, see one another, and be seen," but they forget to mention that he will also have them dance naked, or to quote the comments of Eusebius and Theodoret upon Plato's plan. They think the secret of their great respect for the waltz is possessed only by themselves, and hug the belief that by them that secret shall never be divulged. Bah! They must dance with the gas out if there is to be any secrecy in the matter Innocent and healthful recreation forsooth! The grotesque abominations of the old Phallic worship had, a basis of clean and wholesome truth, but as the obscene rites of that worship desecrated the principle that inspired them, so do the pranks of the "divine waltz" libel the impulse that stirs its wriggling devotees. The fire that riots in their veins and the motive that actuates their haunches is an honest flame and a decent energy when honestly and decently invoked, but if blood and muscle would be pleased to indulge their impotent raptures in private, the warmer virtues would not be subjected to open caricature, nor the colder to downright outrage What do I mean by such insinuations? Nay, then, gentle reader, I will not insinuate, but will boldly state that with the class with which I am now dealing — the dancers *par excellence,* the modem waltz is not merely "suggestive," as its opponents have hitherto charitably styled it, but an open and shameless gratification of sexual desire and a cooler of burning lust To lookers-on it is "suggestive" enough, Heaven knows, but to the dancers — that is to say, to the "perfect dancers"; — it is an actual realization of a certain physical ecstacy which should at *least,* be indulged in private and no pure person should experience save under the sanction of matrimony.

And this is the secret to which I have alluded. It cannot even be *claimed* as private property any longer.

"For shame!" cries the horrified (and non-waltzing) reader; "how can you make such dreadfully false assertions! And who are these 'perfect danders' you talk so much about? And how came *you* to know their 'secret' as you term it? Surely no woman of even nominal decency would make such a horrible confession, and yet the most immaculate women waltz, and waltz divinely!"

By your leave, I will answer these questions one at a time. Who are these "perfect waltzers?" Of the male sex there are several types, of which I need only mention two.

The first is your lively and handsome young man — a Hercules in brawn and muscle — who exults in his strength and glories in his manhood. Dancing comes naturally to him, as does everything else that requires grace and skill. He is a ruthless hunter to whom all game is fair. The gods have made him beautiful and strong, and the other sex recognize and appreciate the fact. Is it to be expected of Alcibiades that he scorn the Athenian lasses, or of Phaon the Fair that he avoid the damsels of Mytelene? No indeed! it is for the husband and father to take care of the women — *he* can take care of himself. Yet even this gay social pirate and his like might take a hint from the poet:

"But ye — who never felt a single thought
For what our morals are to be, or ought;
Who wisely wish the charms you view to reap,
Say — would you make three beauties quite so cheap?"

But this fine animal is by no means the most common or degraded type of ball-room humanity. It would be perhaps better it he were. In his mighty embrace a woman would at least have the satisfaction of knowing that she was dancing with a wholesome creature, however destitute he might be of the finer feelings that go to make up what is called a man.

No, the most common type of the male "perfect dancer" is of a different stamp. This is the blockhead who covers his brains with his boots — to whom dancing is the one serious practical employment of life, and who, it must be confessed, is most diligent and painstaking in his profession. He is chastity's paramour — strong and lusty in the presence of the unattainable, feeble-kneed and trembling in the glance of invitation; in pursuit a god, in possession an incapable — satyr of dalliance, eunuch of opportunity. This creature dances divinely. He has given his mind to dancing, has never got it back, and is the richer for that He haunts “hops” and balls because his ailing virility finds a feast in the paps and gruels of love there dispensed. It is he to whose contaminating embrace your wi — I mean your neighbor’s wife or daughter, dear reader, is oftenest surrendered, to whet his dulled appetite for strong meats of the bagnio — nay to coach him for offences that *must* be nameless here. She performs her function thoroughly, conscientiously, wholly — merges her identity in his, and lo! the Beast with two Backs!

A pretty picture is it not? — the Grand Passion Preservative dragged into the blaze of gas to suffer pious indignities at the hand of worshippers who worship not wisely, but too well! The true Phallos set up at a cross-roads to receive the homage of strolling dogs — male and female created he them! Bah! these orgies are the spawn of unmannerly morals. They profane our civilization, and are an indecent assault upon common sense. It is nearly as common as the dance itself, to hear the male participants give free expression, loose tongued, to the lewd emotions, the sensual pleasure, in which they indulge when locked in the embrace of your wives and daughters; if this be true, if by any possibility it can be true, that a lady however innocent in thought is exposed to lecherous comments of this description, then is it not also true that *every* woman possessing a remnant of delicacy, will flee from the dancing-hall as from a pestilence.

CHAPTER IV.

“What! the girl that I love by another embraced!
Another man’s arm round my chosen one’s waist!
What! touched in the twirl by another man’s knee;
And panting recline on another than me!
Sir, she’s yours; you have brushed from the grape its soft blue,
From the rose you have shaken the delicate dew;
What you’ve touched you may take — pretty Waltzer, adieu!”

Let us now consider the female element in this immodesty. Is the woman equally to blame with the man? Is she the unconscious instrument of his lust, or the conscious sharer in it? We shall see.

In the first place, it is absolutely necessary that she shall be able and willing to reciprocate the feelings of her partner before she can graduate as a “divine dancer.” Until she can and will do this she is regarded as a “scrub” by the male experts, and no matter what her own opinion of her proficiency may be she will surely not be sought as a companion in that *piéce de résistance* of the ball-room the “after — supper glide.”

Horrible as this statement seems, it is the truth and nothing but the truth, and though I could affirm it upon oath from what I have myself heard and seen, I fortunately am able to confirm it by the words of a highly respected minister of the gospel — Mr. W. C. Wilkinson, who some years ago published in book form an article on “The Dance of Modern Society,” which originally appeared in one of our American Quarterly Reviews.

This gentleman gives a remark overheard on a railway car, in a conversation that was passing between two young men about their lady acquaintances.

“The horrible concreteness of the fellow’s expression,” says Mr. Wilkinson, “may give a wholesome recoil from danger to some minds that would be little affected by a speculative statement of the same idea. Said one I would not give a straw to dance with Miss — ; you can’t excite any more passion in her than you can in a stick of wood.” Can anything be plainer than this “Pure young women of a warmer temperament,” the same reverend author subsequently adds, “who innocently abandon themselves to enthusiastic proclamations of their delight in the dance in the presence of gentlemen, should but barely once have a male intuition of the *meaning* of the involuntary glance that will often shoot across from eye to eye among their auditors. Or should overhear the comments exchanged among them afterwards. For when young men meet after an evening of the dance to talk it over together, it is not points of dress they discuss. Their only demand (in this particular) and it is generally conceded, is that the ladies' dress shall not needlessly embarrass suggestion." But here is one of my own experiences in this connection. At a fashionable sociable, I was approached by a friend who had been excelling himself in Terpsichorean feats during the whole evening. This friends was a very handsome man, a magnificent dancer, and of course a great favorite with the ladies. I had been watching him while he waltzed with a young and beautiful lady, also of my acquaintance, and had been filled with wonder at the way he had folded her in his arms — literally fondling her upon his breast, and blending her delicate melting form into his ample embrace in a manner that was marvelous to behold. They had whirled and writhed in a corner for fully ten minutes — the fury of lust in his eyes, the languor of lust in hers — until gradually she seemed to lose her senses entirely, and must have slipped down upon the floor when he finally released her from his embrace had it not been for the support of his arm and shoulder. Now as he came up to me all flushed and triumphant I remarked to him that he evidently enjoyed this thing very much.

"Of course I do," he answered. "Why not?"

"But I should think," said I, not wishing to let him see that I knew anything about the matter from experience, "that your passions would become unduly excited by such extremely close contact with the other sex."

"Excited!" he replied, "of course they do; but not unduly — what else do you suppose I come here for? And don't you ' know, old fellow," he added in a burst of confidence, "that this waltzing is the grandest thing in the world. While you are whirling one of those charmers — if you do it properly, mind you — you can whisper in her ear things which she would not listen to at any other time. Ah! but she likes it then, and comes closer still, and in response to the pressure of her hand, your arm tightens about her waist, and then" — but here he grew very eloquent at the bare remembrance, and the morals of the printer must be respected.

"But," said I, "I should be afraid to take such liberties with a respectable woman."

"O," he answered, "that's nothing — they like it; but, as I said before, you must know how to do it; there must be no blundering; they wont stand that. The best place to learn to do the thing correctly is in one of those dance-cellars; there you can take right hold of them. The girls there are "posted," you know; and they'll soon "post" you. Let everything go loose. You will soon fall into the step. All else comes natural. I go round amongst them all. Come with me a few nights, I'll soon make a waltzer of you — you will see what there is in it." He still rests under the promise to "show me round" in the interests of the diffusion of useful knowledge; and if he does not trace the authorship of this book to me, and take offence thereat, I will go at some future time. It must indeed be "jolly," as he called it, to possess such consumate skill in an art which makes the wives and daughters of our "best people" the willing instruments of his lechery. Oh yes — I *must learn.* This is a supreme accomplishment I cannot afford to be without It has been said that out of evil comes good, and assuredly "this is an evil born with all its teeth."

"Ah, yes," continued my enthusiastic friend, "it isn't the whirling that makes the waltz, and those who think it is are the poorest dancers. A little judicious handling will make a sylph out of the veriest gawk of a girl that ever attempted the "light fantastic;" and once manage to initiate one of those stay-at-home young ladies, and I'll warrant you she'll be on hand at every ball she is invited to for the rest of that season I'll wager, sir, that there isn't a "scrub" in this *room* who just knows the step but what I can make a dancer of her in fifteen minutes — the dear creatures take to it naturally when they are properly taught. But don't forget to come with me to the 'dives one of these evenings and I'll show you what there is in it." And this was the estimation in which this man held the ladies of his acquaintance: this is the kind of satyr to the quenching of whose filthy lusts we are to furnish our wives and daughters; this is the manner of Minotaur who must be fed upon comely virgins — may he recognize a Theseus in these pages!

And yet, dear reader, do not imagine that this man was a social ogre of unusual monstrosity No, indeed, he was, and is, a "very nice young man;" he is, in fact, commonly regarded as a model young man. Nor must you imagine that his partner had a single stain upon her reputation. She is a young lady of the highest respectability; she takes a great interest in Sunday schools, is regular at the communion-table, makes flannel waistcoats for the heathen, and is on all sides allowed to be the greatest catch of the season in the matrimonial market. If she and the young man in question meet in the street, a modest bow on her part, and a respectful lifting of the hat on his, are the only greetings interchanged — he may enjoy her body in the ball-room, but, you see, he is not well enough acquainted with her to take her hand on the street.

CHAPTER V.

“Where lives the man that hath not tried
How mirth can into folly glide,
And folly into sin!”

SCOTT.

THE conversation I have given in the last chapter is faithfully reported — it is exact in spirit very nearly so in letter; we may surely believe that the clergyman from whom I have quoted some pages back, was honest in his statements, and I think that there can be no man who has mixed among his sex in the ballroom and not heard similar remarks made. All this is, it seems to me, ample proof of the fact which I set out to demonstrate, namely, that the lechery of the waltz is not confined to the males, but is consciously participated in by the females, and if further evidence be needed, then, I say, take the best of all — watch the dancers at their sport — mark well the faces, the contortions of body and limb, and be convinced against your will. But even over and beyond this, I shall now lay before you a kind of testimony which you will be surprised to find brought to bear on the case.

Shortly after I had determined to publish a protest against the abominations of the waltz, it became plainly apparent to me that I must if possible obtain the views on the subject of some intelligent and well known lady, whose opinion would be received with respect by all the world. With this end in view, I addressed one of the most eminent and renowned women of America. I could not foretell the result of such a step, I certainly did not expect it to be what it is, I hardly dared to hope that she would accede to my request in any shape. But I knew that if she did speak, it would be according to her honest convictions, and I resolved in that event to publish her statement whatever it might be. This lady freely and generously offered me the use of her name, and as this would be of great value to my undertaking, I had originally intended to print it; but upon consideration I have concluded that it would be a poor return for her kindness and self-devotion, to subject her to the fiery ordeal of criticism she would in that case have to endure, and for this reason, and this only, I withhold her name for the present. But I do earnestly assure the reader that if ever the words of a great and good woman deserved respectful attention, it is these:—”You ask me to say what I think about ‘round dances.’ I am glad of the opportunity to lay my opinion on that subject before the world; though, indeed I scarcely know what I can write which you have not probably already written. I will, however, venture to lay bare a young girl's heart and mind by giving you my own experience in the days when I waltzed.

"In those times. I cared little for Polka or Varsovienne, and still less for the old-fashioned 'Money Musk' or 'Virginia Reel,' and wondered what people could find to admire in those 'slow dances.' But in the soft floating of the waltz I found a strange pleasure, rather difficult to intelligibly describe. The mere anticipation fluttered my pulse, and when my partner approached to claim my promised hand for the dance I felt my cheeks glow a little sometimes, and I could not look him in the eyes with the same frank gaiety as heretofore.

"But the climax of my confusion was reached when, folded in his warm embrace, and giddy with the whirl, a strange, sweet thrill would shake me from head to foot, leaving me weak and almost powerless and really almost obliged to depend for support upon the arm which encircled me. If my partner failed from ignorance, lack of skill, or innocence, to arouse these, to me, most pleasurable sensations, I did not dance with him the second time.

"I am speaking openly and frankly, and when I say that I did not understand what I felt, or what were the real and greatest pleasures I derived from this so-called dancing, I expect to be believed. But if my cheeks grew red with uncomprehended pleasure then, they grow pale with shame to-day when I think of it all. It was the physical emotions engendered by the magnetic contact of strong men that I was enamoured of — not of the dance, nor even of the men themselves.

"Thus I became abnormally developed in my lowest nature. I grew bolder, and from being able to return shy glances at first, was soon able to meet more daring ones, until the waltz became to me and whomsoever danced with me, one lingering, sweet, and purely sensual pleasure, where heart beat against heart, hand was held in hand, and eyes looked burning words which lips dared not speak.

"All this while no one said to me: you do wrong; so I dreamed of sweet words whispered during the dance, and often felt while alone a thrill of joy indescribable yet overpowering when my mind would turn from my studies to remember a piece of temerity of unusual grandeur on the part of one or another of my cavaliers.

"Girls talk to each other. I was still a school girl although mixing so much with the world. We talked together. We read romances that fed our romantic passions on seasoned food, and none but ourselves knew what subjects we discussed. Had our parents heard us they would have considered us on the high road to ruin.

“Yet we had been taught that it was right to, dance; our parents did it, our friends did, and we were permitted. I will say also that all the girls with whom I associated, with the exception of one, had much the same experience in dancing; felt the same strangely sweet emotions, and felt that almost imperative necessity for a closer communion than that which even the freedom of a waltz permits, without knowing exactly why, or even comprehending what.

“Married now, with home and children around me, I can at least thank God for the experience which will assuredly be the means of preventing my little daughters from indulging in any such dangerous pleasure. But, if a young girl, pure and innocent in the beginning, can be brought to feel what I have confessed to have felt, what must be the experience of a married woman? *She* knows what every glance of the eye, every bend of the head, every close clasp means, and knowing that reciprocates it and is led by swifter steps and a surer path down the dangerous, dishonorable road.

“I doubt if my experience will be of much service, but it is the candid truth, from a woman who, in the cause of all the young girls who may be contaminated, desires to show just to what extent a young mind may be defiled by the injurious effects of round dances. I have not hesitated to lay bare what are a young girl’s most secret thoughts, in the hope that people will stop and consider, at least before handing their lillies of purity over to the arms of any one who may choose to blow the frosty breath of dishonor on their petals.”

And this is the experience of a woman of unusual strength of character — one whose intellect has gained her a worldwide celebrity and earned for her the respect and attention of multitudes wherever the English language is spoken. What hope is there then for ordinary women to escape from this mental and physical contamination? which

“Turns — if nothing else — at least our heads.”

None whatever.

CHAPTER VI.

“Il fault bien dire que la danse est quasi le comble de tous vices c’est le -commencement d’une ordure, laquelle je ne veux declarer. Pour en parler rondement, il m’est advis que c’est une maniere de tout villaine et barbare * A quoy servent tant de saults que font ces filles, soustenues des compagnons par soubs les bras; a fin de regimber plus hault? Quel plaisir prennent ces sauterelles á se tormenter ainsi et demener la pluspart des nuicts sans se souler ou lasser de la danse?” — L. VIVES.

MANY will say — have said — Byron wrote against the waltz because a physical infirmity prevented him from waltzing — that he is not a proper person to quote as an example for others to follow. It must be conceded that whatever his motive was, he *well knew* what he was writing about, and whatever his practices may have been in other respects, it is to his credit that his sense of the proprieties of life were not so blunted as to render him blind to this cause of gross public licentiousness.

But, unlike Byron, I have, as has been stated before, *practical experience*, and *positive knowledge* in the matter whereof I speak, and am possessed of the most convincing assurances that my utterances will be received with joy by thousands of husbands and fathers whose views have been down-trodden — their sentiments disregarded, and their notions of morality held up to scorn because they disapprove of this “innocent amusement.”

It has also been before said that this vice was “seemingly tolerated by all,” but I am proud to say that the placard posted about the streets announcing a “Sunday School Festival — dancing TO COMMENCE AT NINE O’CLOCK,” does not reflect the sentiments of the entire community; that in all the marts of business, in every avenue of trade, in counting-house and in work-shop, men are to be found who would shrink with horror from exposing their wives and daughters to the allurements of the dancehall — men who form a striking contrast to those simpering simpletons who sympathize with their feelings, but have not the courage to maintain the family honor by enforcing their views in the domestic circle.

It is only a few years since the *Frankfort Journal* announced that the authorities had decided, in the interest of good morals, that in future dancing-masters should not teach their art to children who had not yet been confirmed. The teaching of dancing in boarding-houses and hotels was also forbidden. It is not desirable that the law should interfere with purely domestic affairs, but really it seems as if those unfortunate parents and husbands who shudder at the evil but are awed into silence by ridicule or open rebellion, stand in as urgent need of the law’s assistance as the Magdeburg godfathers and godmothers.

I well know that many young ladies profess entire innocence of any impure emotions during all this “palming work.”

To them let me say: If you are so sluggish in your sensibilities as this would imply, then you are not yet fit subjects for the endearments of married life, and can give but poor promise of securing your husband’s affection. But if on the other hand (as in most cases is true) you experience the true bliss of this intoxication, then indeed will the ground of your emotions be pretty well worked over before you reach the hymeneal altar, and the nuptial couch will have but little to offer for your consideration with which you are not already *in some measure* familiar.

A friend at my elbow remarks. “I agree with you perfectly, but my wife likes these dances, — sees no harm in them, and her concluding and unanswerable argument is, that if I danced them, I should like them just as well as she does.” The truth of this latter statement depends upon your moral perceptions. There is but one answer to the former, given by “Othello,”

“This is the curse of Marriage:
We call these delicate creatures ours —
But not their appetites.”

If you are so lax in your attention — so deficient in those qualities which go to make a woman happy — that she seeks the embrace of other men to supply the more than half acknowledged need — if this be true, my friend, I leave the matter with you — it belongs to another class of subjects, treated of by Doctor Acton of London — I refer you to his able works.

Another says: Both my wife and I enjoy these dances. We see no particular harm in them—”to the pure all things are pure.” The very same thing may be said by the *habitués* of other haunts of infamy —

“Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”

There is, again, a very large class of dancers who frankly allow that there is immorality in the modern waltz, but insist that this immorality need not be, and by them is not, practised. They dance — but very properly, you know. These are the Pharisees who beat their breasts in public places, crying fie! upon their neighbors, and bravo! upon themselves.

Of course, they will tell you, there are persons who are excited impurely by the waltz, but these are persons who would be immoral under any circumstances. "To the pure all things are pure." It is astonishing how apt they are with these tongue-worn aphorisms. To the pure all things are pure, — yes, but purity is only a relative virtue whose value is fixed by the moral standard of the individual. What would be pure to some would be grossly impure to others, and when you place your wife or daughter in the arms of such salacious gentry as have been described in the foregoing pages are you not pretty much in the position of the gentleman who when gravely informed by a guest who was taking an unaccountably hasty leave that his (the host's) wife had lewdly entreated him, replied: "But, my friend, that is nothing; your wife did as much for me when I visited you last year." This gentleman, remember, was also ready to add: "to the pure all things are pure." The Waltz should assuredly have figured among the "pure impurities" of Petronius.

But even if it *be* allowed that a lady can waltz virtuously, I have already shown that in that case she must not dance *well*. And what a pitiful spectacle, surely, is that of a lady trying "how not to do it" — converting her natural grace into clumsiness in order that she may do an indecent thing decently, and remain

"Warm but not wanton; dazzled, but not blind."

But perhaps she *cannot* waltz. In that case how long will it take her to learn? Will not one single dance lower her standard of purity if her partner happens to be one of the adepts I have described?

"But," cries the fair dancer "you must remember that no lady will permit herself to be introduced to, or accept as a partner, any but a gentleman, who she is sure will treat her with becoming respect."

I will not stop to inquire what her definition of a "gentleman" is — whether the most courteous and urbane of men may not be a most desperate roué at heart The attitude and 'contact are the same in any case, and if it needs must be that a husband is to see his wife folded in the close embrace of another man, is it any consolation for him to know that her partner is eligible as a rival in other respects than his nimble feet — that he who is brushing the bloom from his peach is at least his equal? Can you stop to consider the intellectual accomplishments and social status of the man who has invaded the sacred domain of your wife's chamber? No — equally unimportant is it to you, who or what he may be — that has thus exercised a privilege reserved by all pure-minded women for their husbands alone.

But in this matter of the selection of the fittest the ladies have set up a man of straw, which I must - proceed to demolish. In order that the lawless contact may be impartially distributed, and that no* lady may be free to choose whose sexual magnetism she shall absorb, we have imported from across the water a foreign variety of the abomination, by which ingenious contrivance the color of the ribbon a lady chances to hold determines who shall have the use of her body in the waltz, and places her in the pitiable predicament of the "poore bryde" at ancient French weddings, who, as we read in Christen, "State of Matrimony," must "kepe foote with all dancers, and refuse none, how scabbed, foule, droncken, rude, and shameless soever he be."

Nor are even the square dances any longer left as a refuge for the more modest, for to such a pitch has the passion for this public sexual intimacy come, 'that the waltz is now inseparably wedded to the quadrille. Even the old fogies are sometimes trapped by this device. A quadrille is called and they take their places feeling quite safe. "First couple forward!"

"Cross over!"

"Change partners!"

"Waltz up and down the centre!"

"Change over!"

"All hands waltz round the outside!" and before they know it their sedate notions are lost in the "waltz quadrille." It may be said that every arrangement of the dance looks to an "equitable" distribution of each lady's favors. It is a recognized fact that a lady dancing repeatedly with the same gentleman shows a marked preference thereby — and he is deemed rude and selfish who attempts to monoplize his affianced, or shows reluctance in resigning her to the arms of another.

CHAPTER VII.

“Transformed all wives to Dalilahs,
Whose husbands were not for the cause;
And turned the men to ten-horn’d cattle,
Because they went not out to battle.”

SAMUEL BUTLER.

SOME time ago a lady friend said to me: “How is it that while so many of you gentlemen are fond of dancing until you are married, yet from that moment few of you can be induced to dance any more. In fact it is a fraud perpetrated upon young ladies; you fall in love with them in the ball room, you court them there, you marry them there, and they naturally think you will continue to take them there. But no — thenceforth they must stay at home, or if you *are* induced to go occasionally, you are as cross and ill-natured about it as possible; as though it was something dreadful. If the dancing-hall is good enough to get a wife in, is it not good enough to take a wife to?”

My dear lady, said I, you have stated the case with a fairness not often met with in an opponent. There can be no stronger evidence (none other is required) to establish the sexualism of the popular dance than that which you have just cited. The privileges of matrimony relieve the necessity for the dance. The *lover* is compelled to share that which the *husband* considers all his own. Those who, while single, were most deeply versed in the mysteries and pleasures of the waltz are, when married, the first to proclaim their abhorrence of it, too often, it is true, in a mild and impotent protest, but not always.

Is the reader acquainted with Boyesen’s novel called “Gunnar?” If so he will remember that Ragnhild was to wed Lars under the pressure of parental authority. She preferred, however, the valiant, dancing Gunnar. “Ha! ha! ha!’’ cried he, “strike up a tune and that a right lusty one!” The music struck up, he swung upon his heel, caught the girl who stood nearest him round the waist; and whirled away with her. Suddenly he stopped and gazed right into her face, and who should it be but Ragnhild. She begged and tried to release herself from his arm, but he lifted her from the floor, made another leap, and danced away, so that the floor shook under them.”

“Gunnar, Gunnar,” whispered she, “please, Gunnar, let me go” — he heard nothing. “Gunnar,” begged she again, now already half surrendering, “only think what mother would say if she were here.” But now she began to feel the spell of the dance. The walls, the roof, and the people began to whirl round her in a strange, bewildering circle; at one moment the music seemed to be winging its way to her from an unfathomable depth in an inconceivable, measureless distance, and in the next it was roaring and booming in her ears with the rush and din of an infinite cataract of tone. Unconsciously her feet moved, to its measure, her heart beat to it, *and she forgot her scruples*, her fear, and everything but *him* in the bliss of the dance.

Gunnar knew how to tread the springing dance, and no one would deny him the rank of the first dancer in the valley, so, it was a dance worth seeing, and of the girls, there was scarcely one who did not wish herself in the happy Ragnhild's place" — (of course they did.) After the music had ceased, it was some time before Ragnhild fully recovered her senses — (quite likely); she still clung fast to Gunnar's arm, the floor seemed to be heaving and sinking under her — (quite common in such cases), and the space was filled with a vague, distant hum." (Why not?)

Later, the gleaming knife in the hands of Lars, showed that he but too plainly understood the nature of the performance in which his future wife had been engaged. And the sequel well attests, that his happiness did not increase with his knowledge. Even the vigor of a Norwegian climate was not sufficient to cool his fury. What a promising field for future operations must sunnier climes present for such enterprising young gentlemen.

Follow the subject a little further and it will be seen that Ragnhild lost more than her head in the bewildering whirl. Now let me ask any father or mother (or husband if you will), — any man possessing a grain of common sense, if Ragnhild was in a safe condition to be shown by Gunnar, to one of our commodious carriages and driven to her home (perhaps miles away) at three o'clock in the morning?

"Lead us not into temptation."

Yet this is done — is permitted by very many of our so-called "prudent parents" and while they are crying out about "social evils," are doing all in their power to furnish recruits for the great army of the infamous.

"Deliver us from evil."

There are two types of married ladies who practise, and of course enjoy, the waltz, and lest either might discover the portrait of the other and take offence that her own lovely face was not used to adorn these pages, each shall have a separate notice. They will probably have already recognized portraits of themselves in this volume, but the object here is more particularly to distinguish between the two.

The first of these we may safely call semi-respectable — she is so partly from necessity, partly from choice — from choice because she regards it as the "proper thing" that her husband should dance attendance while she dances something else, during the performance of which, the poet tells us,

"The fair one's breast Gives all it can and bids us take the rest."

She has not yet quite reached that stage of shamelessness when she can carouse the entire night without some lingering regard for what Mrs. Grundy will say; besides this, she is not quite sure of her position, and does not know exactly how much her husband will bear. She is afflicted with a bare suspicion that his docile nature might be over taxed — that in the pigeon holes of his dull cranium might be found a desire to make it rather lively if too openly slighted. "Oh, no," she reasons, "take him along his presence makes it all right — his smile gives sanction to all that may happen. When he is with me who dare complain?"

But the woman whom it would be my joy to describe, whose perfections surpass description, is moved by no such paltry considerations. She glories in an independence which scorns all such petty restraints. She it is whose insight into domestic politics descries the true position, "to go with her husband is a bore" — his very presence is a hindrance to a full and free exercise of all the privileges of the "Boston Dip." She can find it in her heart *now* to laugh at the ridiculous vow she made when playing that old-fashioned farce before the altar — the vow to "leave all others and cleave to him alone." How much pleasanter, surely, to cleave and cling to all others, and leave *hint* alone. She may be "too ill" to attend with her husband; but let "Mr. Nimblefoot" — sprightly of heel and addled of brain — come along, with an invitation to attend a ball, and in a trice she so far recovers her declining health as to make such an elaborate toilet that

"Not Cleopatra on her galley's deck,
Displays so much of leg, or more of neck."

Then it is, when with a disregard for neighborly comments which would do credit to a better cause, we see her in all her naked loveliness. No vulgar restraint upon her movements, no "green-eyed monster" to inquire into her absence or take note of her doings. None to say

“Methinks the glare of yonder chandelier
Shines much too far — or I am much too near.”

But a more detailed account of this lady and of “how it all came about,” is it not written in the chronicles of the Courts having “original jurisdiction” in cases of divorce?

Who, then, after reviewing this ghastly procession of moral lepers, shall find words wherewith to express his reverence and admiration for those pure-minded girls and women who refuse to dance — *on principle!* No renowned hero of ancient or modern times has a better right to claim the bays than the woman who, seeing the degradation of the modern dance, has the independence and moral courage to avoid it. Her heroism is greater than you might suppose, for she is sorely tempted to do wrong on the one hand, and severely punished for doing right on the other. Tempted — because she is as fair and graceful as her less modest sisters, and naturally as fond of man’s admiration, and as sensible of physical pleasure as they; punished — by the sneers of women who call her “prude” and “wall-flower,” and by the slights put upon her by men who avoid her because she “doesn’t dance.” In spite of the example set by those whom she has perhaps been taught to regard as wiser and better than herself, she yet resists the fascination of the Social Basilisk from pure pride of womanhood, and sacrifices her inclinations upon the altar of modesty.

These are the wives and daughters who do honor to their families. Their reward is the respect and admiration of all honorable men.

“My child,” said a friend of mine to his daughter who had declined to attend a “sociable” on the ground that dancing was improper, “my child, I honor your judgment, and let me give you a father’s advice: never allow a man’s arm to encircle your waist till you are married, *and then only your husbands.*” And this advice I re-echo to all young ladies.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Illic Hippolitum pone, Priapus erit.”

OVID.

“Le Proverbe qui a coum á l’egard des Cloitres, *dangereux comme le retour de matines*, en pouvoit produire un autre avec un petit changement, *dangereux comme le retour du bal*.”

BAYLE

There are, of course, many other classes of waltzers to whom I might revert, though I have sought in vain for a single one that is entirely free from reproach. It is however time that the evil should be viewed from other points. Let us consider some of its results and effects.

I have repeatedly declared, and I now do so again that the waltz has grown to be a purely sexual enjoyment. That I may not be supposed to stand alone in this assertion I will again quote the words of the worthy clergyman before referred to. He writes:

The dance “consists substantially of a system of means contrived with more than human ingenuity to excite the instincts of sex to action, however subtle and disguised at the moment in its sequel the most bestial and degrading.” And again: “it is a usage that regularly titillates and tantalises an animal appetite as insatiable as hunger, more cruel than revenge.”

Gail Hamilton, to whose words most of us will attach some weight, I think, in a contribution to an Eastern journal, says: “The thing in its very nature is unclean and cannot be washed. The very pose of the parties suggests impurity.” But I must go further than this, and assert that the pose and motions of the parties cannot even be spoken of by a young lady without danger of committing a double entendre at which many a “nice young man” will laugh in his sleeve.

I will illustrate this statement: A charming young lady, just arrived from abroad, informed me that we do not execute these new round dances “quite right” in this country. She describes it as having “two forward and two backward movements, then sideways, with a whirl.” But she will “show me how to do it on the first opportunity.”

“That must, indeed, be nicer than the way we do it,” said I, “though I have heard of a similar dance in the Sandwich Islands.” Yea, verily, “to the pure all things are pure.”

What says St. Aldegonde in a letter written as long ago as 1577 to Caspar Verheiden? He says that he approves of the course adopted by the Church of Geneva, which by interdicting the dance has abolished many filthy abuses of daily occurrence; it being the custom of the men to take young girls to balls at night and there to vex them by lewd posturing. No one, he contends, can look on at such a spectacle without sin; what then shall we say of those who take part in it. Much more he adds, and when I say that I dare not translate it here, the reader will be ready to believe that the worthy Saint is pretty plain-spoken in his strictures on the dance. But he is no more so than is Lambert Daneau in his “Traité des Danses,” the perusal of which might do some modern dancers good. And yet both these old writers only saw the play of Hamlet with Hamlet left out, for the Waltz did not exist in their day.

Now, this being the case, what are we to suppose are its effects upon those who indulge in it? Does the scandal end in the ball room, or, as Byron says, may we not marvel

“If nothing follows all this palming work.”

and do we not feel ourselves constrained to believe his assurance that

“Something does follow at a fitter time.”

That the waltz has been the acknowledged avenue to destruction for great multitudes, is a truth burnt into the hearts of thousands of downcast fathers and broken-hearted mothers; and the husbands are legion who can look upon hearths deserted and homes left desolate by wives and daughters who have been led captive by this magnificent burst of harmony and laying-on of hands.

One of our ablest writers says: “it is a war on home, it is a war on physical health, it is a war on man’s moral nature; this is the broad avenue through which thousands press into the brothel.” The “dancing hall is the nursery of the divorce Court, the training ship of prostitution, the graduating school of infamy.”

Olaus Magnus tells us that the young people of the North danced among naked sword-blades and pointed weapons scattered upon the ground; our young people dance among far deadlier dangers than these.

Think of it, dear reader, picture to yourself the condition to which a young girl is reduced by the time that her carriage is announced. All the baser instincts of her nature are aroused — to use the words of Erasmus she has “a pound of passion to an ounce of reason.” Answer me, is she not now in a fit state to fall an easy prey to the destroyer? And yet in this condition

“Hot from the hands promiscuously applied
Round the slight waist or down the glowing side,”

she is almost borne to her carriage by an escort, “flown with insolence and wine” and whose condition is otherwise similar to her own, except that the excitement of the moment makes him as bold and ardent, as it renders her languid and compliant. He places her panting form upon the soft cushions, and with a whispered admonition to the coachman not to drive too fast, he ensconces ‘himself by her side. But here as upon an earlier page, we must leave them. The hour, the darkness, everything is propitious — it is little short of a miracle if she escapes.

“Look out, look out and see
What object this may be
That doth perstringe mine eye;
A gallant lady goes
In rich and gaudy clothes,
But whither away God knows.”

But let us charitably suppose that the sequel is only a continuation of the license of the waltz, and that she reaches her home with merely the smell of the fire through which she has passed upon her garments — let us suppose that the Ah si liceret! of Caracalla has not been answered by the yielding quic-quid libet licet of his mother-in-law — and what is the result? The flame that has been aroused must be allayed. If she is unmarried, then in God’s name let us inquire no farther; but if she is a wife then is the dear indulgent husband at home privileged to meet a want inspired in the embrace of “the first dancer in the valley,” and to enjoy some advantage, at least, from the peculiar position which he sustains toward the matronly dancer.

And now may we not take a peep at the fair danseuse as she comes into the breakfast-room at noon next day. Is this broken-down, used-up creature the radiant beauty of the night before? Can it be that that “healthful recreation,” the Waltz, has painted those dark circles round her eyes and planted those wrinkles on her brow?

“Alas, the mother, that her bare,
If she could stand in presence there,

In that wan cheek and wasted air
She would not know her child."

She is paying now for the sweetness of "stolen waters" and the pleasantness of bread "eaten in secret." For the next week what pleasure will husband, father, or brother, derive from her society. She is ill and peevish — she is damaged both in body and soul. For the next week, did I say? Well, I meant until the next invitation to a dance arrives. That is the magic elixir that will brighten the dull eyes and recall the dead smiles to life. Then invoking the rejuvenating spirit of the cosmetic - box and tricked out in the finery which those most near, but not most dear, to her have toiled to purchase, she will sally forth to lavish upon the lechers of the ball-room a gracious sweetness which she never showed at home.

But where is Apollo all this time?

We left him burning with half satiated lust before the gate of his paramour's mansion. Where will he go to complete his debauch? At what strange fountains will he quench the flame that is devouring him? Go ask the harlot! She will reap the harvest that has ripened in the warm embrace of maids and mothers. She is equally fortunate with the husband described above. Ah, well! verily it is an ill wind that blows nobody good.

The Waltz is, therefore, in its effects, fearfully disastrous to both sexes, but nevertheless the woman is the greater sufferer — physically, because what is fatal excess for a woman may be only hurtful indulgence for a man, and morally, because she loses that without which her beauty and grace are but a curse — man's respect. And her punishment is just, her fault being more inexcusable than his. For woman is the natural and acknowledged custodian of morals. It is she who fixes the standard of modesty — a variable standard, it is true, different in different ages and countries, but always sufficiently well-defined. She draws across the path of passion, lines limiting, on the one hand, the license of masculine approach, on the other, the liberty of feminine concession. To a certain extent man may blamelessly accept whatever privileges she is pleased to accord him, without troubling himself to consider "too curiously" their consistency with the general tenor of her decrees. It is her discretion in such matters that must, in a large way, preserve the race from fatal excess. When, therefore, she shamelessly violates this sacred trust which nature and society have confided to her, it is to be expected that the ball-room roué should regard her as something lower than the harlot, who at least ministers to his lusts in a natural manner.

But, what is worse still, she also loses moral caste with those who have more than a negative respect for honorable women. For even your gentleman is no professor of heroic virtues, and the same easy courtesy with which he dismisses the soliciting courtesan, restrains him from wounding, even by implication, the merely facile fair being whom favoring fortune has as yet prevented from taking to the street. He dissembles his disgust, begs the honor of her hand for the next dance, flutters her pulses to her soul’s satisfaction, and regards her ever thereafter with tranquil, philosophical contempt And so they come to mutually despise each other; she sets no value on his flattering praises, he no longer cares for her good opinion — the wine of woman’s approval has gone stale, and the sunshine of man’s admiration is darkened in her eyes.

CHAPTER IX.

"So she looks into her heart, and lo! *Vacucæ sedes et inania arcana* * And the man is himself, and the woman herself; that dream of love is over as everything else is over in life; as flowers and fury, as griefs and pleasures are over."

THACKERAY.

"Wir haben lang genug geliebt, und wollen endlich hassen."

GEORGE HERWEGH.

BUT this "innocent amusement" entails worse consequences than these. It is the high-road to the divorce court, it has brought strife and misery into ten thousand happy homes; truly it is the "abomination that maketh desolation."

Take the case of the poor, dull, stupid Benedick who, like Byron with his club foot, dances not at all. He is a splendid man of business, perhaps, and is highly respected on change; but here, in the ballroom, what is he? A dolt, a ninny, an old fogy, a nuisance — to be snubbed and slighted by the woman he calls wife for every brainless popingay who "dances divinely." He has been proud to toil from day to day to be able to purchase costly apparel with which to adorn this far better half of his; now he has the felicity of seeing the fine fruits of his labor dangled about the legs of another man; he had supposed her the "wife of his bosom," yet, behold! she reclines most lovingly on the bosom of another; she is the mother of his children, yet as she quivers in her partner's arms, her face is troubled with

"The half-told wish and ill-dissembled flame."

He has pride enough to attempt to look interested, and to affect ignorance of his own shame, but the sham is apparent. Note how uneasily he sits upon the benches provided for such "wallflowers" as himself. Anyone who will take the trouble to observe him, can see that his heart is not in the waltz in which his spouse is taking such a lively interest. Approach him, now, and tell him that it is a very nice party, and that he seems to be enjoying himself. "Oh very nice," he answers with a ghastly grin intended for a smile, "I am enjoying it greatly." But now incidentally remark that after all you have no great liking for these "fancy dances," and see how quickly a fellow-feeling will make him wondrous confidential, as he answers:

“To tell the truth, I don’t like them at all.”

Perhaps you have known him when a bachelor and have seen him dance then. You mention this fact.

“O yes,” he answers, “of course I used to dance; but can’t you see that there is a mighty deal of difference between hugging other people’s wives and daughters to music, and taking your own wife to a place where every fellow can press her to his bosom and dangle his legs among her petticoats? No, sir, I do not like it, and if my wife thought as I do about it, there would be no more dancing in our family. ‘I would rather be a toad and feed on the damp vapor of a dungeon, than keep a corner in the thing I love for others’ uses.’”

Follow the conversation up and you will find that if ever Sorrow mocked a festival by its presence it is in the person of this man. He is not jealous, he is outraged; all the finer feelings of his nature are trampled under foot, he is grieved and deeply wounded beyond recovery.

This is the beginning of the end; she is never the same woman to him hereafter; he may smile and appear careless, but none the less has that tiny satin slipper crushed all the fresh love from his heart. The second volume of his Book of Life is opened; the first chapter thereof being headed “Estrangement,” and the last “Divorce.”

And this is not an exceptional case; the writer will venture the assertion that out of every fifty husbands who have dancing wives, there are at least a dozen who if spoken frankly to upon the subject would express themselves in terms of most bitter condemnation.

And what kind of men are those who do not object to see their wives made common property in this manner? Well, there is your weak good-natured husband, who would willingly suffer any personal annoyance rather than thwart the wishes of his beloved wife, no matter how ill-advised those wishes may be.

The writer is personally acquainted with a young and newly-married man, whose experience will illustrate what I have just said, though it is true that he eventually came to see the error of his ways He had the misfortune to marry a lady who was excessively fond of dancing. He had never learned to waltz himself, but finding it impossible to remain a looker-on he determined to acquire a knowledge of the intoxicating art. He, poor fool, imagined that when he had conquered the first elements of the dance, his wife would take particular pleasure in attending to his further instruction. Picture, then, his surprise and disgust when on making his début in the ballroom he found that his wife would avail herself of every pretext to leave him to shift for himself — a conspicuous object for commiseration of the experts — while she accepted the amorous attentions of every clodhopper who possessed the divine accomplishment.

Were I, dear reader, to reproduce his exact words in giving expression to his indignation at and contempt for an institution the effect of which is to ignore the relations of husband and wife, and exalt the accomplishments of the heel over those of the head and heart, you would be shocked beyond measure.

All his happiness was centred in this one woman; her good opinion was the dearest thing on earth to him. When therefore he found himself unable to partake with her of the pleasures of the dance, he tortured himself to acquire an art which in itself had no attraction for him, merely because he thought it would render him more pleasing in her sight. We have seen the manner in which she encouraged his first attempts; but the wrong was to be deeper yet. Content that her pleasure should not be spoiled by his bad dancing, he allowed her to choose her own partners, while he applied himself vigorously to his self-appointed task of learning to waltz "like an angel." Exactly how he achieved this end is not quite clear. He was not seen to practice much at the fashionable gatherings he attended with his wife; he was too sensitive to ridicule for that. Perhaps, like Socrates in his old age, he found some underground Aspasia who was willing to give him lessons in the art. But however this may be, certain it is that before long he had acquired a degree of proficiency which was quite surprising. Now, he triumphantly thought, his fond wife could have all the "Boston Dip" necessary for her "healthful exercise and recreation" without submitting her charms to the embrace of comparative strangers.

Alas, for his hopes! After walking through the stately opening quadrille with the "partner of his joys," he discovered that as though by magic her card had been filled by the young bloods who clustered about her; and then for the first time he was informed that after introducing his wife to the floor it was a breach of etiquette to monopolize her any further — he must either sit content to see her whirl, spitted on the same bodkin with men he had never seen before, or must turn his own skill to the best account and

"Give — like her — caresses to a score."

It is more than likely that he adopted the latter course — most of his class do.

Those wives who are so eager, for various reasons of their own, that their husbands should learn to dance, might draw a wholesome lesson from the story if Caribert, king of Paris, whose wife Ingoberge would fain prevent him from spending so much time in the hunting-field.

To this end she prepared a series of splendid festivities, which she induced her lord to attend. Now, fairest and most graceful among the dancers were two sisters of surpassing beauty, named Méroflède and Marcovère. Having, at his queen's express solicitation, essayed the "light fantastic" with these ladies, the good Caribert, who had before no thought for any woman but his wife, suddenly became so enamored with the skill and grace of the sisters, that he not only forswore the chase forever, but with all possible despatch divorced Ingoberge and married first Méroflède and then Marcovère.

And thus it is that this demon creeps between the husband and the wife, and sooner or later separates their hearts forever. The sturdy oak may laugh at the entering of the wedge, but his mighty trunk will nevertheless be riven asunder by it in the end.

But there is one other type of ballroom husband, whose portrait must not be omitted. This is the miserable, simpering, smirking creature who fully appreciates the privilege of being permitted to furnish, in the person of his wife, a well draped woman for other men's amusement; who has an idea that the lascivious embraces bestowed upon his wife are an indirect compliment to himself; who is only too happy to be a cooler to other men's lust in the ballroom, and is content to enjoy a kind of matrimonial aftermath in the nuptial chamber. Can any human being fall lower than this?

Old Fenton has told us that flattery "supples the toughest fool," but I regard the man who thus willingly resigns his wife to the palming of these ball room satyrs, merely because her beauty and gorgeous raiment bring notice upon him as the owner of so splendid an article — I regard this beast as a pander of the vilest kind; and a most foolish pander withal, for he simply purchases the title of cuckold at the price of his own dishonor and his wife's open shame. He loves to hear it said that she "dances divinely," though he knows that the horns on his forehead are plainer to none than to the fellow who tells him so. Bah! In the words of Mallet,

"He who can listen pleased to such applause
Buys at a dearer rate than I dare purchase."

The budding horns affixed to the husband's pow in the fierce light of the ballroom have not the simple dignity of even the most towering antlers prepared by the ‘‘neat-handed Phyllis" of his heart in the domestic seclusion and subdued half-lights of a house of assignation. In the one case he poses as a suppliant for honors to mark his importunity; in the other his coronation is the unsought reward of modest merit. The Waltz may not make such despicable creatures as I have described above, but it at least affords them an opportunity to parade their own degradation.

But the modern. Terpsichore has to answer for, if possible, still worse consequences than the seducing of our maids, the debauching of our young men, the prostitution of our wives, and the debasing of human nature, both male and female. She is worse than a procuress, there is blood upon her skirts, she is a murderess.

From the day when Herodias danced John the Baptist’s head into a trencher the dance has been the cause of violence and bloodshed. The hate and jealousy which smoulder within the breast of the rejected lover, and which he is struggling to extinguish, burst into flame at the sight of her he loves folded in ecstacy upon the breast of his rival. His cup was already full — this is more than he can bean We may pass by Venetian masquerade and Spanish fandango — where the knife of the avenger sends the victim’s, blood spurting into the face of his partner — and may look nearer home, at our fashionable “hops” and “sociables,” where, though the Vendetta may not be carried out upon the floor (and instances of this are not lacking) it is nevertheless declared, and where, though no mute form be borne out from the ballroom to the grave, the dance is none the less a veritable Dance of Death — a dance of murdered love and slain friendship, of stabbed and bleeding hearts, of crushed hopes and blighted prospects, of ruined virtue and of betrayed trust.

CHAPTER X.

“To save a Mayd, St. George the Dragon slew;
A pretty tale if all that’s told be true;
Most say there are no Dragons, and Vis sayd
There was no George — pray heaven there was a Mayd.”

Anonymous.

And now if I have succeeded in showing the modern dance as it is and the dancers as they are, together with the almost inevitable effects of the evil upon those who indulge in it, my main object is accomplished. I did not set out to deal with theories, but with facts. Indeed, did those whose godly calling places them on the watch-towers of the church, use a tongue of fire to lay bare this pernicious practice, and obey the divine mandate: “Thou shalt teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean,” and did those whose office it is to speak to the millions through the myriad tongued press, use a pen of flame to expose this growing iniquity, then would this thankless task be spared me. But when

“Pulpits their sacred satire learn to spare,
And vice admired to find a flatterer there,”

then I say a layman must speak, or the stones would cry out against him.

I have no personal or pulpit popularity to preserve, would not preserve it if I had at the price of divesting this public sensuality of its terrors, or at the risk of not causing the types of dancers herein painted to shrink from their own portraits.

It only remains for me, then, to make a few concluding and general remarks.

It is often urged that dancing cannot be desperately wicked, because it is “tolerated by all except those of narrow and bigotted religious views.” A greater mistake was never made, I assert that there are hosts of men who never permit the members of their families to take part in round dances. Nor is this the result of religious bigotry. With most of them “religion,” in the popular sense of the word, does not enter into the question at all — they are not too pious, but too chaste to dance. In their eyes this familiar “laying on of hands” is essentially indecent, and they cannot see that the fact of its being done in public makes it any less indecent They will not allow even omnipotent Fashion to blind them in this matter, especially when they see that the vice is most common among those who lead the fashion.

Far be it from me, however, to imply that even the most ardent votaries of the dance are blind to its impurity. No indeed. Is there one so-called respectable woman among them who would submit to be painted or photographed in the attitude she assumes while dancing the latest variety of waltz — even though her partner in the picture, instead of being a stranger just met for the first time, were her most intimate friend — aye, even though he were her husband? Not one of them would submit to be thus depicted; but if some maiden could be persuaded, what a pleasing family picture it would be for her husband and children to gaze upon in later years! Had I such an one to illustrate this book with, the success of its mission would be assured, with the simple drawback of the author being held amenable to an offended law for issuing obscene pictures.

Such a representation would immediately effect the fulfillment of a prophecy made by the writer of a recent work entitled “Saratoga in Nineteen Hundred.” In those times there is to be no more dancing. The gentlemen, it is true, are to engage the ladies for a portion of the evening as in these benighted days; but instead of taking her on the floor, he will retire with her to one of a number of little private rooms with which every respectable mansion is to be provided, and there they will do their hugging in private. A great improvement, certainly, upon the present plan, in such matters as decency and comfort, but scarcely in completeness.

It will only remain for the sons and daughters of that future generation to make dancing their religion. Let them convert their churches into dancing-halls, and set up an appropriate image of their deity — the Waltz — upon the altars; not the decently draped Terpsichore of the dark, pagan past, but the reeling Bacchante — flushed, panting, dishevelled, half-naked, half-drunk, half-mad — of the enlightened, Christian present; let the grave priest give way to the gay master-of-ceremonies, and the solemn benediction to the parting toast; let the orchestra occupy the pulpit, and the “wallflowers” sit in the vestry; let the pews be swept away, and the floors duly waxed and polished, but let not the tablets of the dead be removed — they are the “handwriting upon the wall,” the mene, mene, tekel, upharsin, most fitting for those to read who delight in the Dance of Death. Then, when the prayerbooks are programmes, and the hymnbooks the music of Strauss, the jingle of the piano may mock the dumb thunder of the organ, and the whirling congregation may immortalize a bard of to-day by singing the following verses of his composition to the “praise and glory of” — the Waltz:

“In lofty cathedrals the organ may thunder

Its echoes repeated from fresco-crowned vaults,
And the multitude kneeling in rapture may wonder,
But give me the music that sounds for the waltz!

The Angels of Heaven, in glory advancing,
Are singing hosannahs of praise to the King;
Unless they have women, and music, and dancing.
Forever unheeded by me they may sing.

Oh! take not the sunshine that knows no to-morrow,
The rivers of honey and fountains of bliss,
Where the souls of the righteous may rest from their sorrow —
They have not a joy that is equal to this.

When the dead from their graves stand in awe and desponding,
And the trumpet calls loud on that terrible day,
To our names on the roll there will be no responding —
To the music of Love we'll have floated away."

But having brought this delectable "recreation" to the utmost pitch of refinement of which it is susceptible — a condition it bids fair promise to attain in a few more seasons, I feel that it is time, as Byron has it, to "put out the light." I therefore conclude with a very brief exhortation to my readers.

To dancers one and all I would say:

Try and see yourselves as others see you; remember that there are many harmless pleasures that have about them no taint of filthy lust; above all cease to believe or to assert that the modem waltz is an "innocent amusement."

To the women, in particular, I say: Set your faces against this abomination, which is robbing you of man's respect, and is the primal cause of infinite misery to yourselves.

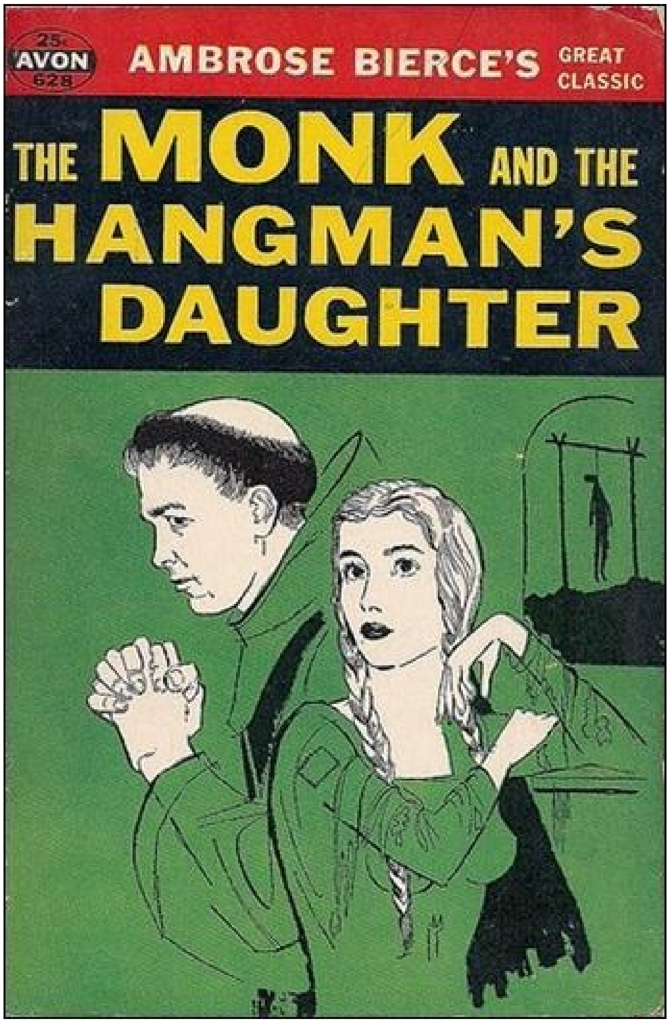
To the men I would say: Those who are the natural arbiters of what is permissible between man and woman, have shown their weakness and betrayed their trust; it is now for you to show your strength and redeem your honor.

You who are unfavorable to the modern dance, I adjure not to let your opposition be merely negative, but to work positively for the putting down of the evil precisely as you might for the suppression of prostitution or any other corrupting influence. For as surely as thy soul liveth, this is "a way that seemeth good unto a man, but the end thereof is death."

THE MONK AND THE HANGMAN'S DAUGHTER

The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter appeared in 1892, published by F.J. Schulte, of Chicago. Bierce collaborated on the novella with German author, Gustav Adolph Danziger, who had translated the original, *The Monk of Berchtesgaden*, by Richard Voss, into English. Bierce revised and rewrote the tale and, after publication in *The San Francisco Examiner*, had a falling out with Danziger over authorship. Bierce claimed to have written every word as published.

The novella takes place at a rural monastery. Ambrosius, a recently arrived monk, meets and begins to spend time with Benedicta, the young daughter of the local hangman. His increasing interest in her, as well as her scandalous involvement with a young man, provides the backdrop for a tale of love, sin, and redemption.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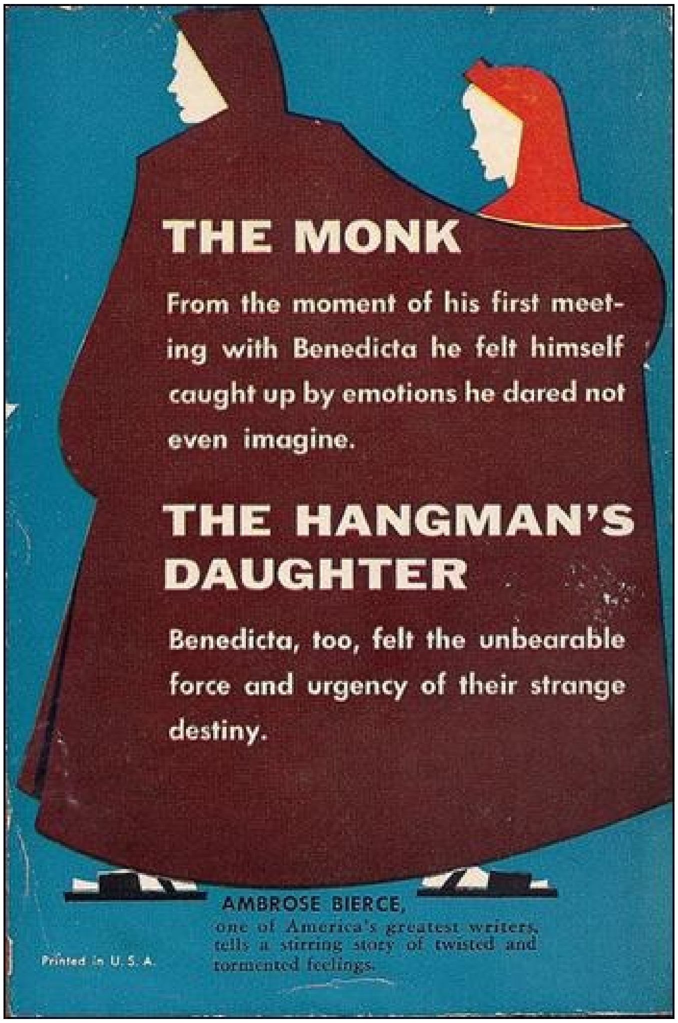

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THE MONK AND THE HANGMAN’S DAUGHTER

By Adolphe Danziger De Castro and Ambrose Bierce

STATEMENT

Under the name of G. A. Danziger I wrote in the year 1889 a story founded on a German tale, which I called *The Monk and the Hangman’s Daughter*. The story was tragic but I gave it a happy ending. Submitting it to the late Ambrose Bierce, asking him to revise the story, he suggested the retention of the tragic part and so revised it. The story was published and the house failed.

When in 1900 a publisher desired to bring out the story provided I gave it a happy ending, I submitted the matter to Bierce and on August 21, 1900, he wrote me a long letter on the subject of which the following is an extract:

‘I have read twice and carefully, your proposed addition to *The Monk*, and you must permit me to speak plainly, if not altogether agreeably, of it. It will not do for these reasons and others:

‘The book is almost perfect as you wrote it; the part of the work that pleases me least is *my* part (underscores Bierce’s). I am surprised that you should yield to the schoolgirl desire for that shallowest of all literary devices, a “happy ending,” by which all the pathos of the book is effaced to “make a woman holiday.” It is unworthy of you. So much vii did I feel this unworthiness that I hesitated a long time before even deciding to have so much of “odious ingenuity” and “mystery” as your making Benedicta the daughter of the Saltmaster and inventing her secret love for Ambrosius instead of Rochus.

‘“Dramatic action,” which is no less necessary in a story than in a play, requires that so far as is possible what takes place shall be *seen* to take place, not related as having previously taken place.... Compare Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* with his better plays. See how he spoiled it the same way. You need not feel ashamed to err as Shakespeare erred. Indeed, you did better than he, for his explanations were of things already known to the reader, or spectator, of the play. *Your* explanations are needful to an understanding of the things explained; it is *they* that are needless. All “explanation” is unspeakably tedious, and is to be cut as short as possible. Far better to have nothing to explain — to *show* everything that occurs, in the very act of occurring. We cannot always do that, but we should come as near to doing it as we can. Anyhow, the “harking back” should not be done at the end of the book, when the dénouement is already known and the reader’s interest in the action exhausted....

‘Ambrosius and Benedicta are unique in letters. Their nobility, their simplicity, their sufferings — everything that is theirs stamps them as “beings apart.” They live in the memory sanctified and glorified by these qualities and sorrows. They are, in the last and most gracious sense, children of nature. Leave them lying there in the lovely valley of the gallows, where Ambrosius shuddered as his foot fell on the spot where he was destined to sleep....

‘Let *The Monk and the Hangman’s Daughter* alone. It is great work and *you* should live to see the world confess it. Let me know if my faith in your faith in me is an error. You once believed in my judgment; I think it is not yet impaired by age.

‘Sincerely yours,

‘(Signed) Ambrose Bierce.’

I can only add that my faith in Bierce’s judgment of letters is as firm to-day as it was then, when I gave him power of attorney to place my book with a publisher. This publisher embodied *The Monk and the Hangman’s Daughter* in Bierce’s collected works, then sold the right to Messrs. Albert and Charles Boni who without knowledge of the true facts brought out an edition under Bierce’s name.

ADOLPHE de CASTRO.

1

On the first day of May in the year of our Blessed Lord 1680, the Franciscan monks Ægidius, Romanus and Ambrosius were sent by their Superior from the Christian city of Passau to the Monastery of Berchtesgaden, near Salzburg. I, Ambrosius, was the strongest and youngest of the three, being but twenty-one years of age.

The Monastery of Berchtesgaden was, we knew, in a wild and mountainous country, covered with dismal forests, which were infested with bears and evil spirits; and our hearts were filled with sadness to think what might become of us in so dreadful a place. But since it is Christian duty to obey the mandates of the Church, we did not complain, and were even glad to serve the wish of our beloved and revered Superior.

Having received the benediction, and prayed for the last time in the church of our Saint, we tied up our cowls, put new sandals on our feet, and set out, attended by the blessings of all. Although the way was long and perilous, we did not lose our hope, for hope is not only the beginning and the end of religion, but also the strength of youth and the support of age. Therefore our hearts soon forgot the sadness of parting, and rejoiced in the new and varying scenes that gave us our first real knowledge of the beauty of the earth as God has made it. The colour and brilliance of the air were like the garment of the Blessed Virgin; the sun shone like the Golden Heart of the Saviour, from which streameth light and life for all mankind; the dark blue canopy that hung above formed a grand and beautiful house of prayer, in which every blade of grass, every flower and living creature praised the glory of God.

As we passed through the many hamlets, villages and cities that lay along our way, the thousands of people, busy in all the vocations of life, presented to us poor monks a new and strange spectacle, which filled us with wonder and admiration. When so many churches came into view as we journeyed on, and the piety and ardour of the people were made manifest by the acclamations with which they hailed us and their alacrity in ministering to our needs, our hearts were full of gratitude and happiness. All the institutions of the Church were prosperous and wealthy, which showed that they had found favour in the sight of the good God whom we serve. The gardens and orchards of the monasteries and convents were well kept, proving the care and industry of the pious peasantry and the holy inmates of the cloisters. It was glorious to hear the peals of bells announcing the hours of the day: we actually breathed music in the air — the sweet tones were like the notes of angels singing praise to the Lord.

Wherever we went we greeted the people in the name of our patron Saint. On all sides were manifest humility and joy: women and children hastened to the wayside, crowding about us to kiss our hands and beseech a blessing. It almost seemed as if we were no longer poor servitors of God and man, but lords and masters of this whole beautiful earth. Let us, however, not grow proud in spirit, but remain humble, looking carefully into our hearts lest we deviate from the rules of our holy Order and sin against our blessed Saint.

I, Brother Ambrosius, confess with penitence and shame that my soul caught itself upon exceedingly worldly and sinful thoughts. It seemed to me that the women sought more eagerly to kiss my hands than those of my companions — which surely was not right, since I am not more holy than they; besides, I am younger and less experienced and tried in the fear and commandments of the Lord. When I observed this error of the women, and saw how the maidens kept their eyes upon me, I became frightened, and wondered if I could resist should temptation accost me; and often I thought, with fear and trembling, that vows and prayer and penance alone do not make one a saint; one must be so pure in heart that temptation is unknown. Ah me!

At night we always lodged in some monastery, invariably receiving a pleasant welcome. Plenty of food and drink was set before us, and as we sat at table the monks would crowd about, asking for news of the great world of which it was our blessed privilege to see and learn so much. When our destination was learned we were usually pitied for being doomed to live in the mountain wilderness. We were told of ice-fields, snow-crowned mountains and tremendous rocks, roaring torrents, caves and gloomy forests; also of a lake so mysterious and terrible that there was none like it in the world. God be with us!

On the fifth day of our journey, while but a short distance beyond the city of Salzburg, we saw a strange and ominous sight. On the horizon, directly in our front, lay a bank of mighty clouds, with many grey points and patches of darker hue, and above, between them and the blue sky, a second firmament of perfect white. This spectacle greatly puzzled and alarmed us. The clouds had no movement; we watched them for hours and could see no change. Later in the afternoon, when the sun was sinking into the west, they became ablaze with light. They glowed and gleamed in a wonderful manner, and looked at times as if they were on fire!

No one can imagine our surprise when we discovered that what we had mistaken for clouds was simply earth and rocks. These, then, were the mountains of which we had heard so much, and the white firmament was nothing else than the snowy summit of the range — which the Lutherans say their faith can remove. I greatly doubt it.

2

When we stood at the opening of the pass leading into the mountains we were overcome with dejection; it looked like the mouth of Hell. Behind us lay the beautiful country through which we had come, and which now we were compelled to leave forever; before us frowned the mountains with their inhospitable gorges and haunted forests, forbidding to the sight and full of peril to the body and the soul. Strengthening our hearts with prayer and whispering anathemas against evil spirits, we entered the narrow pass in the name of God, and pressed forward, prepared to suffer whatever might befall.

As we proceeded cautiously on our way giant trees barred our progress and dense foliage almost shut out the light of day, the darkness being deep and chill. The sound of our footfalls and of our voices, when we dared to speak, was returned to us from the great rocks bordering the pass, with such distinctness and so many repetitions, yet withal so changed, that we could hardly believe we were not accompanied by troops of invisible beings who mocked us and made sport of our fears. Great birds of prey, startled from their nests in the treetops and the sides of the cliffs, perched upon high pinnacles of rock and eyed us malignly as we passed; vultures and ravens croaked above us in hoarse and savage tones that made our blood run cold. Nor could our prayers and hymns give us peace; they only called forth other fowl and by their own echoes multiplied the dreadful noises that beset us. It surprised us to observe that huge trees had been plucked out of the earth by the roots and hurled down the sides of the hills, and we shuddered to think by what powerful hands this had been done. At times we passed along the edges of high precipices, and the dark chasms that yawned below were a terrible sight. A storm arose, and we were half-blinded by the fires of heaven and stunned by thunder a thousand times louder than we had ever heard. Our fears were at last worked up to so great a degree that we expected every minute to see some devil from Hell leap from behind a rock in our front, or a ferocious bear appear from the undergrowth to dispute our progress. But only deer and foxes crossed our path, and our fears were somewhat quieted to perceive that our blessed Saint was no less powerful in the mountains than on the plains below.

At length we reached the bank of a stream whose silvery waters presented a most refreshing sight. In its crystal depths between the rocks we could see beautiful golden trout as large as the carp in the pond of our monastery at Passau. Even in these wild places Heaven had provided bountifully for the fasting of the faithful.

Beneath the black pines and close to the large lichen-covered rocks bloomed rare flowers of dark blue and golden yellow. Brother Ægidius, who was as learned as pious, knew them from his herbarium and told us their names. We were delighted by the sight of various brilliant beetles and butterflies which had come out of their hiding-places after the rain. We gathered handfuls of flowers and chased the pretty winged insects, forgetting our fears and prayers, the bears and evil spirits, in the exuberance of our joy.

For many hours we had not seen a dwelling nor a human being. Deeper and deeper we penetrated the mountain region; greater and greater became the difficulties we experienced in forest and ravine, and all the horrors of the wilderness that we had already passed were repeated, but without so great an effect upon our souls, for we all perceived that the good God was preserving us for longer service to His holy will. A branch of the friendly river lay in our course, and, approaching it, we were delighted to find it spanned by a rough but substantial bridge. As we were about to cross I happened to cast my eyes to the other shore, where I saw a sight that made my blood turn cold with terror. On the opposite bank of the stream was a meadow, covered with beautiful flowers, and in the centre a gallows upon which hung the body of a man! The face was turned toward us, and I could plainly distinguish the features, which, though black and distorted, showed unmistakable signs that death had come that very day.

I was upon the point of directing my companions’ attention to the dreadful spectacle, when a strange incident occurred: in the meadow appeared a young girl, with long golden hair, upon which rested a wreath of blossoms. She wore a bright red dress, which seemed to me to light up the whole scene like a flame of fire. Nothing in her actions indicated fear of the corpse upon the gallows; on the contrary, she glided toward it barefooted through the grass, singing in a loud but sweet voice, and waving her arms to scare away the birds of prey that had gathered about it, uttering harsh cries and with a great buffeting of wings and snapping of beaks. At the girl’s approach they all took flight, except one great vulture, which retained its perch upon the gallows and appeared to defy and threaten her. She ran close up to the obscene creature, jumping, dancing, screaming, until it, too, put out its wide wings and flapped heavily away. Then she ceased her dancing, and, taking a position at the gibbet’s foot, calmly and thoughtfully looked up at the swinging body of the unfortunate man.

The maiden’s singing had attracted the attention of my companions, and we all stood watching the lovely child and her strange surroundings with too much amazement to speak.

While gazing on the surprising scene, I felt a cold shiver run through my body. This is said to be a sure sign that someone has stepped upon the spot which is to be your grave. Strange to say, I felt this chill at the moment the maiden stepped under the gallows. But this only shows how the true beliefs of men are mixed up with foolish superstitions; for how could a sincere follower of Saint Franciscus possibly come to be buried beneath a gallows?

‘Let us hasten,’ I said to my companions, ‘and pray for the soul of the dead.’

We soon found our way to the spot, and, without raising our eyes, said prayers with great fervour; especially did I, for my heart was full of compassion for the poor sinner who hung above. I recalled the words of God, who said, ‘Vengeance is mine,’ and remembered that the dear Saviour had pardoned the thief upon the cross at His side; and who knows that there were not mercy and forgiveness for this poor wretch who had died upon the gallows?

On our approach the maiden had retired a short distance, not knowing what to make of us and our prayers. Suddenly, however, in the midst of our devotions, I heard her sweet, bell-like tones exclaim: ‘The vulture! the vulture!’ and her voice was agitated, as if she felt great fear. I looked up and saw a great grey bird above the pines, swooping downward. It showed no fear of us, our sacred calling and our pious rites. My brothers, however, were indignant at the interruption caused by the child’s voice, and scolded her. But I said: ‘The girl is probably a relation of the dead man. Now think of it, brothers; this terrible bird comes to tear the flesh from his face and feed upon his hands and his body. It is only natural that she should cry out.’

One of the brothers said: ‘Go to her, Ambrosius, and command her to be silent that we may pray in peace for the departed soul of this sinful man.’

I walked among the fragrant flowers to where the girl stood with her eyes still fixed upon the vulture, which swung in ever narrowing circles about the gallows. Against a mass of silvery flowers on a bush by which she stood the maid’s exquisite figure showed to advantage, as I wickedly permitted myself to observe. Perfectly erect and motionless, she watched my advance, though I marked a terrified look in her large, dark eyes, as if she feared that I would do her harm. Even when I was quite near her she made no movement to come forward, as women and children usually did, and kiss my hands.

‘Who are you?’ I said, ‘and what are you doing in this dreadful place all alone?’

She did not answer me, and made neither sign nor motion; so I repeated my question:

‘Tell me, child, what are you doing here?’

‘Scaring away the vultures,’ she replied, in a soft, musical voice, inexpressibly pleasing.

‘Are you a relation of the dead man?’ I asked.

She shook her head.

‘You knew him?’ I continued, ‘and you pity his unchristian death?’

But she was again silent, and I had to renew my questioning: ‘What was his name, and why was he put to death? What crime did he commit?’

‘His name was Nathaniel Alfinger, and he killed a man for a woman,’ said the maiden, distinctly and in the most unconcerned manner that it is possible to conceive, as if murder and hanging were the commonest and most uninteresting of all events. I was astounded, and gazed at her sharply, but her look was passive and calm, denoting nothing unusual. ‘Did you know Nathaniel Alfinger?’

‘No.’

‘Yet you came here to protect his corpse from the fowls?’

‘Yes.’

‘Why do you do that service to one whom you did not know?’

‘I always do so.’

‘How — !’

‘Always when any one is hanged here I come and frighten away the birds and make them find other food. See — there is another vulture!’

She uttered a wild, high scream, threw her arms above her head, and ran across the meadow so that I thought her mad. The big bird flew away, and the maiden came quietly back to me, and, pressing her sunburnt hands upon her breast, sighed deeply, as from fatigue. With as much mildness as I could put into my voice, I asked her:

‘What is your name?’

‘Benedicta.’

‘And who are your parents?’

‘My mother is dead.’

‘But your father — where is he?’

She was silent. Then I pressed her to tell me where she lived, for I wanted to take the poor child home and admonish her father to have better care of his daughter and not let her stray into such dreadful places again.

‘Where do you live, Benedicta? I pray you tell me.’

‘Here.’

‘What! here? Ah, my child, here is only the gallows.’

She pointed toward the pines. Following the direction of her finger, I saw among the trees a wretched hut which looked like a habitation more fit for animals than human beings. Then I knew better than she could have told me whose child she was.

When I returned to my companions and they asked me who the girl was, I answered: ‘The hangman’s daughter.’

3

Having commended the soul of the dead man to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the Holy Saints, we left the accursed spot, but as we withdrew I looked back at the lovely child of the hangman. She stood where I had left her, looking after us. Her fair white brow was still crowned with the wreath of primroses, which gave an added charm to her wonderful beauty of feature and expression, and her large, dark eyes shone like the stars of a winter midnight. My companions, to whom the hangman’s daughter was a most unchristian object, reproved me for the interest that I manifested in her; but it made me sad to think this sweet and beautiful child was shunned and despised through no fault of her own. Why should she be made to suffer blame because of her father’s dreadful calling? And was it not the purest Christian charity which prompted this innocent maiden to keep the vultures from the body of a fellow-creature whom in life she had not even known and who had been adjudged unworthy to live? It seemed to me a more kindly act than that of any professed Christian who bestows money upon the poor. Expressing these feelings to my companions, I found, to my sorrow, that they did not share them; on the contrary, I was called a dreamer and a fool who wished to overthrow the ancient and wholesome customs of the world. Everyone, they said, was bound to execrate the class to which the hangman and his family belonged, for all who associated with such persons would surely be contaminated. I had, however, the temerity to remain steadfast in my conviction, and with due humility questioned the justice of treating such persons as criminals because they were a part of the law’s machinery by which criminals were punished. Because in the church the hangman and his family had a dark corner specially set apart for them, that could not absolve us from our duty as servants of the Lord to preach the gospel of justice and mercy and give an example of Christian love and charity. But my brothers grew very angry with me, and the wilderness rang with their loud vociferations, so that I began to feel as if I were very wicked, although unable to perceive my error. I could do nothing but hope that Heaven would be more merciful to us all than we are to one another. In thinking of the maiden it gave me comfort to know that her name was Benedicta. Perhaps her parents had so named her as a means of blessing to one whom no one else would ever bless.

But I must relate what a wonderful country it was into which we were now arrived. Were we not assured that all the world is the Lord’s, for He made it, we might be tempted to think such a wild region the kingdom of the Evil One.

Far down below our path the river roared and foamed between great cliffs, the grey points of which seemed to pierce the very sky. On our left, as we gradually rose out of this chasm, was a black forest of pines, frightful to see, and in front of us a most formidable peak. This mountain, despite its terrors, had a comical appearance, for it was white and pointed like a fool’s cap, and looked as if some one had put a flour-sack on the knave’s head. After all, it was nothing but snow. Snow in the middle of the glorious month of May! — surely the works of God are wonderful and almost past belief! The thought came to me that if this old mountain should shake his head the whole region would be full of flying snow.

We were not a little surprised to find that in various places along our road the forest had been cleared away for a space large enough to build a hut and plant a garden. Some of these rude dwellings stood where one would have thought that only eagles would have been bold enough to build; but there is no place, it seems, free from the intrusion of Man, who stretches out his hand for everything, even that which is in the air. When at last we arrived at our destination and beheld the temple and the house erected in this wilderness to the name and glory of our beloved Saint, our hearts were thrilled with pious emotions. Upon the surface of a pine-covered rock was a cluster of huts and houses, the monastery in the midst, like a shepherd surrounded by his flock. The church and monastery were of hewn stone, of noble architecture, spacious and comfortable.

May the good God bless our entrance into this holy place.

4

I have now been in this wilderness for a few weeks, but the Lord, too, is here, as everywhere. My health is good, and this house of our beloved Saint is a stronghold of the Faith, a house of peace, an asylum for those who flee from the wrath of the Evil One, a rest for all who bear the burden of sorrow. Of myself, however, I cannot say so much. I am young, and although my mind is at peace, I have so little experience of the world and its ways that I feel myself peculiarly liable to error and accessible to sin. The course of my life is like a rivulet which draws its silver thread smoothly and silently through friendly fields and flowery meadows, yet knows that when the storms come and the rains fall it may become a raging torrent, defiled with earth and whirling away to the sea the wreckage attesting the madness of its passion and its power.

Not sorrow nor despair drew me away from the world into the sacred retreat of the Church, but a sincere desire to serve the Lord. My only wish is to belong to my beloved Saint, to obey the blessed mandates of the Church, and, as a servant of God, to be charitable to all mankind, whom I dearly love. The Church is, in truth, my beloved mother, for, my parents having died in my infancy I, too, might have perished without care had she not taken pity on me, fed and clothed me and reared me as her own child. And, oh, what happiness there will be for me, poor monk, when I am ordained and receive holy orders as a priest of the Most High God! Always I think and dream of it and try to prepare my soul for that high and sacred gift. I know I can never be worthy of this great happiness, but I do hope to be an honest and sincere priest, serving God and Man according to the light that is given from above. I often pray Heaven to put me to the test of temptation, that I may pass through the fire unscathed and purified in mind and soul. As it is, I feel the sovereign peace which, in this solitude, lulls my spirit to sleep, and all life’s temptations and trials seem far away, like perils of the sea to one who can but faintly hear the distant thunder of the waves upon the beach.

5

Our Superior, Father Andreas, is a mild and pious gentleman. Our brothers live in peace and harmony. They are not idle, neither are they worldly nor arrogant. They are temperate, not indulging too much in the pleasures of the table — a praiseworthy moderation, for all this region, far and wide — the hills and the valleys, the river and forest, with all that they contain — belongs to the monastery. The woods are full of all kinds of game, of which the choicest is brought to our table, and we relish it exceedingly. In our monastery a drink is prepared from malt and barley — a strong, bitter drink, refreshing after fatigue, but not, to my taste, very good.

The most remarkable thing in this part of the country is the salt-mining. I am told that the mountains are full of salt — how wonderful are the works of the Lord! In pursuit of this mineral Man has penetrated deep into the bowels of the earth by means of shafts and tunnels, and brings forth the bitter marrow of the hills into the light of the sun. The salt I have myself seen in red, brown and yellow crystals. The works give employment to our peasants and their sons, with a few foreign labourers, all under the command of an overseer, who is known as the Saltmaster. He is a stern man, exercising great power, but our Superior and the brothers speak little good of him — not from any unchristian spirit, but because his actions are evil. The Saltmaster has an only son. His name is Rochus, a handsome but wild and wicked youth.

6

The people hereabout are a proud, stubborn race. I am told that in an old chronicle they are described as descendants of the Romans, who in their day drove many tunnels into these mountains to get out the precious salt; and some of these tunnels are still in existence. From the window of my cell I can see these giant hills and the black forests which at sunset burn like great firebrands along the crests against the sky.

The forefathers of these people (after the Romans) were, I am told, more stubborn still than they are, and continued in idolatry after all the neighbouring peoples had accepted the cross of the Lord our Saviour. Now, however, they bow their stiff necks to the sacred symbol and soften their hearts to receive the living truth. Powerful as they are in body, in spirit they are humble and obedient to the Word. Nowhere else did the people kiss my hand so fervently as here, although I am not a priest — an evidence of the power and victory of our glorious faith.

Physically they are strong and exceedingly handsome in face and figure, especially the young men; the elder men, too, walk as erect and proud as kings. The women have long golden hair, which they braid and twist about their heads very beautifully, and they love to adorn themselves with jewels. Some have eyes whose dark brilliancy rivals the lustre of the rubies and garnets they wear about their white necks. I am told that the young men fight for the young women as stags for does. Ah, what wicked passions exist in the hearts of men! But since I know nothing of these things, nor shall ever feel such unholy emotions, I must not judge and condemn.

Lord, what a blessing is the peace with which Thou hast filled the spirits of those who are Thine own! Behold, there is no turmoil in my breast; all is calm there as in the soul of a babe which calls ‘Abba,’ dear Father. And so may it ever be.

7

I have again seen the hangman’s beautiful daughter. As the bells were chiming for mass I saw her in front of the monastery church. I had just come from the bedside of a sick man, and as my thoughts were gloomy the sight of her face was pleasant, and I should have liked to greet her, but her eyes were cast down: she did not notice me. The square in front of the church was filled with people, the men and youths on one side, on the other the women and maidens all clad in their high hats and adorned with their gold chains. They stood close together, but when the poor child approached all stepped aside, whispering and looking askance at her as if she were an accursed leper and they feared infection.

Compassion filled my breast, compelling me to follow the maiden, and, overtaking her, I said aloud:

‘God greet you, Benedicta.’

She shrank away as if frightened, then, looking up, recognised me, seemed astonished, blushed again and again and finally hung her head in silence.

‘Do you fear to speak to me?’ I asked.

But she made no reply. Again I spoke to her: ‘Do good, obey the Lord and fear no one: then shall you be saved.’

At this she drew a long sigh, and replied in a low voice, hardly more than a whisper: ‘I thank you, my lord.’

‘I am not a lord, Benedicta,’ I said, ‘but a poor servant of God, who is a gracious and kind Father to all His children, however lowly their estate. Pray to Him when your heart is heavy, and He will be near you.’

While I spoke she lifted her head and looked at me like a sad child that is being comforted by its mother. And, still speaking to her out of the great compassion in my heart, I led her into the church before all the people.

But do thou, O holy Franciscus, pardon the sin that I committed during that high sacrament! For while Father Andreas was reciting the solemn words of the mass my eyes constantly wandered to the spot where the poor child knelt in a dark corner set apart for her and her father, forsaken and alone. She seemed to pray with holy zeal, and surely thou didst grace her with a ray of thy favour, for it was through thy love of mankind that thou didst become a great saint, and didst bring before the Throne of Grace thy large heart, bleeding for the sins of all the world. Then shall not I, the humblest of thy followers, have enough of thy spirit to pity this poor outcast who suffers for no sin of her own? Nay, I feel for her a peculiar tenderness, which I cannot help accepting as a sign from Heaven that I am charged with a special mandate to watch over her, to protect her, and finally to save her soul.

8

Our Superior has sent for me and rebuked me. He told me I had caused great ill-feeling among the brothers and the people, and asked what devil had me in possession that I should walk into church with the daughter of the public hangman.

What could I say but that I pitied the poor maiden and could not do otherwise than as I did?

‘Why did you pity her?’ he asked.

‘Because all the people shun her,’ I replied, ‘as if she were mortal sin itself, and because she is wholly blameless. It certainly is not her fault that her father is a hangman, nor his either, since, alas, hangmen must be.’

Ah, beloved Franciscus, how the Superior scolded thy poor servant for these bold words.

‘And do you repent?’ he demanded at the close of his reproof. But how could I repent of my compassion — incited, as I verily believe, by our beloved Saint?

On learning my obduracy, the Superior became very sad. He gave me a long lecture and put me under hard penance. I took my punishment meekly and in silence, and am now confined to my cell, fasting and chastising myself. Nor in this do I spare myself at all, for it is happiness to suffer for the sake of one so unjustly treated as the poor friendless child.

I stand at the grating of my cell, looking out at the high, mysterious mountains showing black against the evening sky. The weather being mild, I open the window behind the bars to admit the fresh air and better to hear the song of the stream below, which speaks to me with a divine companionship, gentle and consoling.

I know not if I have already mentioned that the monastery is built upon a rock high over the river. Directly under the windows of our cells are the rugged edges of great cliffs, which none can scale but at the peril of his life. Imagine, then, my astonishment when I saw a living figure lift itself up from the awful abyss by the strength of its hands, and, drawing itself across the edge, stand erect upon the very verge! In the dusk I could not make out what kind of creature it was; I thought it some evil spirit come to tempt me; so I crossed myself and said a prayer. Presently there is a movement of its arm, and something flies through the window, past my head, and lies upon the floor of my cell, shining like a white star. I bend and pick it up. It is a bunch of flowers such as I have never seen — leafless, white as snow, soft as velvet, and without fragrance. As I stand by the window, the better to see the wondrous flowers, my eyes turn again to the figure on the cliff, and I hear a sweet, low voice, which says: ‘I am Benedicta, and I thank you.’

Ah, Heaven! it was the child, who, that she might greet me in my loneliness and penance, had climbed the dreadful rocks, heedless of the danger. She knew, then, of my punishment — knew that it was for her.

She knew even the very cell in which I was confined. O holy Saint! surely she could not have known all this but from thee; and I were worse than an infidel to doubt that the feeling which I have for her signifies that a command has been laid upon me to save her.

I saw her bending over the frightful precipice. She turned a moment and waved her hand to me and disappeared. I uttered an involuntary cry — had she fallen? I grasped the iron bars of my window and shook them with all my strength, but they did not yield. In my despair I threw myself upon the floor, crying and praying to all the saints to protect the dear child in her dangerous descent if still she lived, to intercede for her unshriven soul if she had fallen. I was still kneeling when Benedicta gave me a sign of her safe arrival below. It was such a shout as these mountaineers utter in their untamed enjoyment of life — only Benedicta’s shout, coming from far below in the gorge, and mingled with its own strange echoes, sounded like nothing I had ever heard from any human throat, and so affected me that I wept, and the tears fell upon the wild flowers in my hand.

9

As a follower of Saint Francisais, I am not permitted to own anything dear to my heart, so I have disposed of my most precious treasure; I have presented to my beloved Saint the beautiful flowers which were Benedicta’s offering. They are so placed before his picture in the monastery church as to decorate the bleeding heart which he carries upon his breast as a symbol of his suffering for mankind.

I have learned the name of the flower: because of its colour, and because it is finer than other flowers, it is called Edelweiss — noble white. It grows in so rare perfection only upon the highest and wildest rocks — mostly upon cliffs, over abysses many hundred feet in depth, where one false step would be fatal to him who gathers it.

These beautiful flowers, then, are the real evil spirits of this wild region; they lure many mortals to a dreadful death. The brothers here have told me that never a year passes but some shepherd, some hunter or some bold youth, attracted by these wonderful blossoms, is lost in the attempt to get them.

May God be merciful to all their souls!

10

I must have turned pale when one of the brothers reported at the supper table that upon the picture of Saint Franciscus had been found a bunch of edelweiss of such rare beauty as grows nowhere else in the country but at the summit of a cliff which is more than a thousand feet high, and overhangs a dreadful lake. The brothers tell wondrous tales of the horrors of this lake — how wild its waters and how deep, and how the most hideous spectres are seen along its shores or rising out of it.

Benedicta’s edelweiss, therefore, has caused great commotion and wonder, for even among the boldest hunters there are few, indeed, who dare to climb that cliff by the haunted lake. And the tender child has accomplished the feat! She has gone quite alone to that horrible place, and has climbed the almost vertical wall of the mountain to the green spot where the flowers grow with which she was moved to greet me. I doubt not that Heaven guarded her against mishap in order that I might have a visible sign and token that I am charged with the duty of her salvation.

Ah, thou poor sinless child, accurst in the eyes of the people, God hath signified His care of thee, and in my heart I feel already something of that adoration which shall be thy due when for thy purity and holiness He shall bestow upon thy relics some signal mark of His favour, and the Church shall declare thee blessed!

I have learned another thing that I will chronicle here. In this country these flowers are the sign of a faithful love: the youth presents them to his sweetheart, and the maidens decorate the hats of their lovers with them. It is clear that, in expressing her gratitude to a humble servant of the Church, Benedicta was moved, perhaps without knowing it, to signify at the same time her love of the Church itself, although, alas, she has yet too little cause.

As I ramble about here, day after day, I am becoming familiar with every path in the forest, in the dark pass, and on the slopes of the mountains.

I am often sent to the homes of the peasants, the hunters and the shepherds, to carry either medicine to the sick or consolation to the sad. The most reverend Superior has told me that as soon as I receive holy orders I shall have to carry the sacraments to the dying, for I am the youngest and the strongest of the brothers. In these high places it sometimes occurs that a hunter or a shepherd falls from the rocks, and after some days is found, still living. It is then the duty of the priest to perform the offices of our holy religion at the bedside of the sufferer, so that the blessed Saviour may be there to receive the departing soul.

That I may be worthy of such grace, may our beloved Saint keep my heart pure from every earthly passion and desire!

11

The monastery has celebrated a great festival, and I will report all that occurred.

For many days before the event the brothers were busy preparing for it. Some decorated the church with sprays of pine and birch and with flowers.

They went with the other men and gathered the most beautiful Alpine roses they could find, and as it is midsummer they grow in great abundance. On the day before the festival the brothers sat in the garden, weaving garlands to adorn the church; even the most reverend Superior and the Fathers took pleasure in our merry task. They walked beneath the trees and chatted pleasantly while encouraging the brother butler to spend freely the contents of the cellars.

The next morning was the holy procession. It was very beautiful to see, and added to the glory of our holy Church. The Superior walked under a purple silken canopy, surrounded by the worthy Fathers, and bore in his hands the sacred emblem of the crucifixion of our Saviour. We brothers followed, bearing burning candles and singing psalms. Behind us came a great crowd of the people, dressed in their finest attire.

The proudest of those in the procession were the mountaineers and the salt-miners, the Saltmaster at their head on a beautiful horse adorned with costly trappings. He was a proud-looking man, with his great sword at his side and a plumed hat upon his broad, high brow. Behind him rode Rochus, his son. When we had collected in front of the gate to form a line I took special notice of that young man. I judged him to be self-willed and bold. He wore his hat on the side of his head and cast flaming glances upon the women and the maidens. He looked contemptuously upon us monks. I fear he is not a good Christian, but he is the most beautiful youth that I have ever seen: tall and slender like a young pine, with light brown eyes and golden locks.

The Saltmaster is as powerful in this region as our Superior. He is appointed by the Duke and has judicial powers in all affairs. He has even the power of life and death over those accused of murder or any other abominable crime. But the Lord has fortunately endowed him with good judgment and wisdom.

Through the village the procession moved out into the valley and down to the entrances of the great salt mines. In front of the principal mine an altar was erected, and there our Superior read high mass, while all the people knelt. I observed that the Saltmaster and his son knelt and bent their heads with visible reluctance and this made me very sad. After the service the procession moved toward the hill called ‘Mount Calvary,’ which is still higher than the monastery, and from the top of which one has a good view of the whole country below. There the reverend Superior displayed the crucifix in order to banish the evil powers which abound in these terrible mountains; and he also said prayers and pronounced anathemas against all demons infesting the valley below. The bells chimed their praises to the Lord, and it seemed as if divine voices were ringing through the wilderness. It was all, indeed, most beautiful and good.

I looked about me to see if the child of the hangman were present, but I could not see her anywhere, and knew not whether to rejoice that she was out of reach of the insults of the people or to mourn because deprived of the spiritual strength that might have come to me from looking upon her heavenly beauty.

After the services came the feast. Upon a meadow sheltered by trees tables were spread, and the clergy and the people, the most reverend Superior and the great Saltmaster partook of the viands served by the young men. It was interesting to see the young men make big fires of pine and maple, put great pieces of beef upon wooden spits, turn them over the coals until they were brown, and then lay them before the Fathers and the mountaineers. They also boiled mountain trout and carp in large kettles. The wheaten bread was brought in immense baskets, and as to drink, there was assuredly no scarcity of that, for the Superior and the Saltmaster had each given a mighty cask of beer. Both of these monstrous barrels lay on wooden stands under an ancient oak. The boys and the Saltmaster’s men drew from the cask which he had given, while that of the Superior was served by the brother butler and a number of us younger monks. In honour of Saint Franciscus I must say that the clerical barrel was of vastly greater size than that of the Saltmaster.

Separate tables had been provided for the Superior and the Fathers, and for the Saltmaster and the best of his people. The Saltmaster and Superior sat upon chairs which stood upon a beautiful carpet, and their seats were screened from the sun by a linen canopy. At the table, surrounded by their beautiful wives and daughters, sat many knights, who had come from their distant castles to share in the great festival. I helped at table. I handed the dishes and filled the goblets and was able to see how good an appetite the company had, and how they loved that brown and bitter drink. I could see also how amorously the Saltmaster’s son looked at the ladies, which provoked me very much, as he could not marry them all, especially those already married.

We had music, too. Some boys from the village, who practise on various instruments in their spare moments, were the performers. Ah, how they yelled, those flutes and pipes, and how the fiddle bows danced and chirped! I do not doubt the music was very good, but Heaven has not seen fit to give me the right kind of ears.

I am sure our blessed Saint must have derived great satisfaction from the sight of so many people eating and drinking their bellies full. Heavens! how they did eat — what unearthly quantities they did away with! But that was nothing to their drinking. I firmly believe that if every mountaineer had brought along a barrel of his own he would have emptied it, all by himself. But the women seemed to dislike the beer, especially the young girls. Usually before drinking a young man would hand his cup to one of the maids, who barely touched it with her lips, and, making a grimace, turned away her face. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the ways of woman to say with certainty if this proved that at other times they were so abstemious.

After eating, the young men played at various games which exhibited their agility and strength. Holy Franciscus! what legs they have, what arms and necks! They leapt, they wrestled with one another; it was like the fighting of bears. The mere sight of it caused me to feel great fear. It seemed as if they would crush one another. But the maidens looked on, feeling neither fear nor anxiety; they giggled and appeared well pleased. It was wonderful, too, to hear the voices of these young mountaineers; they threw back their heads and shouted till the echoes rang from the mountain-sides and roared in the gorges as if from the throats of a legion of demons.

Foremost among all was the Saltmaster’s son. He sprang like a deer, fought like a fiend, and bellowed like a wild bull. Among these mountaineers he was a king. I observed that many were jealous of his strength and beauty, and secretly hated him; yet all obeyed. It was beautiful to see how this young man bent his slender body while leaping and playing the games — how he threw up his head like a stag at gaze, shook his golden locks and stood in the midst of his fellows with flaming cheeks and sparkling eyes. How sad to think that pride and passion should make their home in so lovely a body, which seems created for the habitation of a soul that would glorify its Maker!

It was near dusk when the Superior, the Saltmaster, the Fathers and all the distinguished guests parted and retired to their homes, leaving the others at drink and dance. My duties compelled me to remain with the brother butler to serve the debauching youths with beer from the great cask. Young Rochus remained too. I do not know how it occurred, but suddenly he stood before me. His looks were dark and his manner proud.

‘Are you,’ he said, ‘the monk who gave offence to the people the other day?’

I asked humbly — though beneath my monk’s robe I felt a sinful anger: ‘What are you speaking of?’

‘As if you did not know!’ he said, haughtily. ‘Now bear in mind what I tell you; if you ever show any friendship toward that girl I shall teach you a lesson which you will not soon forget. You monks are likely to call your impertinence by the name of some virtue; but I know the trick, and will have none of it. Make a note of that, you young cowl=wearer, for your handsome face and big eyes will not save you.’

With that he turned his back upon me and went away, but I heard his strong voice ringing out upon the night as he sang and shouted with the others. I was greatly alarmed to learn that this bold boy had cast his eyes upon the hangman’s lovely daughter. His feeling for her was surely not honourable, or, instead of hating me for being kind to her, he would have been grateful and would have thanked me. I feared for the child, and again and again did I promise my blessed Saint that I would watch over and protect her, in obedience to the miracle which he has wrought in my breast regarding her. With that wondrous feeling to urge me on, I cannot be slack in my duty, and, Benedicta, thou shalt be saved — thy body and thy soul!

12

Let me continue my report.

The boys threw dry brushwood into the fire so that the flames illuminated the whole meadow and shone red upon the trees. Then they laid hands upon the village maidens and began to turn and swing them round and round. Holy saints! how they stamped and turned and threw their hats in the air, kicked up their heels, and lifted the girls from the ground, as if the sturdy wenches were nothing but feather balls! They shouted and yelled as if all the evil spirits had them in possession, so that I wished a herd of swine might come, that the devils might leave these human brutes and go into the four-legged ones. The boys were quite full of the brown beer, which for its bitterness and strength is a beastly drink.

Before long the madness of intoxication broke out; they attacked one another with fists and knives, and it looked as if they would do murder. Suddenly the Saltmaster's son, who had stood looking on, leaped among them, caught two of the combatants by the hair and knocked their heads together with such force that the blood started from their noses, and I thought surely their skulls had been crushed like egg-shells; but they must have been very hard-headed, for on being released they seemed little the worse for their punishment. After much shouting and screaming, Rochus succeeded in making peace, which seemed to me, poor worm, quite heroic. The music set in again: the fiddles scraped and the pipes shrieked, while the boys with torn clothes and scratched and bleeding faces, renewed the dance as if nothing had occurred. Truly, this is a people that would gladden the heart of a Bramarbas or a Holofernes!

I had scarcely recovered from the fright which Rochus had given me, when I was made to feel a far greater one. Rochus was dancing with a tall and beautiful girl, who looked the very queen of this young king. They made such mighty leaps and dizzy turns, but at the same time so graceful, that all looked on with astonishment and pleasure. The girl had a sensuous smile on her lips and a bold look in her brown face, which seemed to say: 'See! I am the mistress of his heart!' But suddenly he pushed her from him as in disgust, broke from the circle of dancers, and cried to his friends: 'I am going to bring my own partner. Who will go with me?'

The tall girl, maddened by the insult, stood looking at him with the face of a demon, her black eyes burning like flames of hell! But her discomfiture amused the drunken youths, and they laughed aloud.

Snatching a firebrand and swinging it about his head till the sparks flew in showers, Rochus cried again: 'Who goes with me?' and walked rapidly away into the forest. The others seizing firebrands also, ran after him, and soon their voices could be heard far away, ringing out upon the night, themselves no longer seen. I was still looking in the direction which they had taken, when the tall girl whom Rochus had insulted stepped to my side and hissed something into my ear. I felt her hot breath on my cheek.

'If you care for the hangman's daughter, then hasten and save her from that drunken wretch. No woman resists him!'

God! how the wild words of that woman horrified me! I did not doubt the girl's words, but in my anxiety for the poor child I asked: 'How can I save her?'

'Run and warn her, monk,' the wench replied: 'she will listen to you.'

'But they will find her sooner than I.'

'They are drunk and will not go fast. Besides, I know a path leading to the hangman’s hut by a shorter route.’

‘Then show me and be quick!’ I cried.

She glided away, motioning me to follow. We were soon in the woods, where it was so dark I could hardly see the woman’s figure; but she moved as fast and her step was as sure as in the light of day. Above us we could see the torches of the boys, which showed that they had taken the longer path along the mountain-side. I heard their wild shouts, and trembled for the child. We had walked for some time in silence, having left the youths far behind, when the young woman began speaking to herself. At first I did not understand, but soon my ears caught every passionate word:

‘He shall not have her! To the devil with the hangman’s whelp! Every one despises her and spits at the sight of her. It is just like him — he does not care for what people think or say. Because they hate he loves. Besides, she has a pretty face. I’ll make it pretty for her! I’ll mark it with blood! But if she were the daughter of the devil himself he would not rest until he had her. He shall not!’

She lifted her arms and laughed wildly — I shuddered to hear her! I thought of the dark powers that live in the human breast, though I know as little of them, thank God, as a child.

At length we reached the Galgenberg, where stands the hangman’s hut, and a few moments’ climb brought us near the door.

‘There she lives,’ said the girl, pointing to the hut, through the windows of which shone the yellow light of a tallow candle; ‘go warn her. The hangman is ill and unable to protect his daughter, even if he dared. You’d better take her away — take her to the Alpfeld on the Göll, where my father has a house. They will not look for her up there.’

With that she left me and vanished in the darkness.

13

Looking in at the window of the hut, I saw the hangman sitting in a chair, with his daughter beside him, her hand upon his shoulder. I could hear him cough and groan, and knew that she was trying to soothe him in his pain. A world of love and sorrow was in her face, which was more beautiful than ever.

Nor did I fail to observe how clean and tidy were the room and all in it. The humble dwelling looked, indeed, like a place blessed by the peace of God. Yet these blameless persons are treated as accurst and hated like mortal sin! What greatly pleased me was an image of the Blessed Virgin on the wall opposite the window at which I stood. The frame was decorated with flowers of the field, and the mantle of the Holy Mother festooned with edelweiss.

I knocked at the door, calling out at the same time: ‘Do not fear; it is I — Brother Ambrosius.’

It seemed to me that, on hearing my voice and name, Benedicta showed a sudden joy in her face, but perhaps it was only surprise — may the saints preserve me from the sin of pride. She came to the window and opened it.

‘Benedicta,’ said I, hastily, after returning her greeting, ‘wild and drunken boys are on their way hither to take you to the dance. Rochus is with them, and says that he will fetch you to dance with him. I have come before them to assist you to escape.’ At the name of Rochus I saw the blood rise into her cheeks and suffuse her whole face with crimson. Alas, I perceived that my jealous guide was right: no woman could resist that beautiful boy, not even this pious and virtuous child. When her father comprehended what I said he rose to his feet and stretched out his feeble arms as if to shield her from harm, but, although his soul was strong, his body, I knew, was powerless. I said to him: ‘Let me take her away; the boys are drunk and know not what they do. Your resistance would only make them angry, and they might harm you both. Ah, look! See their torches; hear their boisterous voices! Hasten, Benedicta — be quick, be quick!’

Benedicta sprang to the side of the now sobbing old man and tenderly embraced him. Then she hurried from the room, and after covering my hands with kisses ran away into the woods, disappearing in the night, at which I was greatly surprised. I waited for her to return, for a few minutes, then entered the cabin to protect her father from the wild youths who, I thought, would visit their disappointment upon him.

But they did not come. I waited and listened in vain. All at once I heard shouts of joy and screams that made me tremble and pray to the blessed Saint. But the sounds died away in the distance, and I knew that the boys had retraced their steps down the Galgenberg to the meadow of the fires. The sick man and I spoke of the miracle which had changed their hearts, and we were filled with gratitude and joy. Then I returned along the path by which I had come. As I arrived near the meadow, I could hear a wilder and madder uproar than ever, and could see through the trees the glare of greater fires, with the figures of the youths and a few maids dancing in the open, their heads uncovered, their hair streaming over their shoulders, their garments disordered by the fury of their movements. They circled about the fires, wound in and out among them, showing black or red according to how the light struck them, and looking altogether like Demons of the Pit commemorating some infernal anniversary or some new torment for the damned. And, holy Saviour! there, in the midst of an illuminated space, upon which the others did not trespass, dancing by themselves and apparently forgetful of all else, were Rochus and Benedicta!

14

Holy Mother of God! what can be worse than the fall of an angel? I saw — I understood, then, that in leaving me and her father, Benedicta had gone willingly to meet the very fate from which I had striven to save her!

‘The accurst wench has run into Rochus’ arms,’ hissed someone at my side, and, turning, I saw the tall brown girl who had been my guide, her face distorted with hate. ‘I wish that I had killed her. Why did you suffer her to play us this trick, you fool of a monk?’

I pushed her aside and ran toward the couple without thinking what I did. But what could I do? Even at that instant, as though to prevent my interference, though really unconscious of my presence, the drunken youths formed a circle about them, bawling their admiration and clapping their hands to mark the time.

As these two beautiful figures danced they were a lovely picture. He, tall, slender and lithe, was like a god of the heathen Greeks, while Benedicta looked like a fairy. Seen through the slight mist upon the meadows, her delicate figure, moving swiftly and swaying from side to side, seemed veiled with a web of purple and gold. Her eyes were cast modestly upon the ground; her motions, though agile, were easy and graceful; her face glowed with excitement, and it seemed as if her whole soul were absorbed in the dance. Poor, sweet child! her error made me weep, but I forgave her. Her life was so barren and joyless; why should she not love to dance? Heaven bless her! But Rochus — ah, God forgive him!

While I was looking on at all this, and thinking what it was my duty to do, the jealous girl — she is called Amula — had stood near me, cursing and blaspheming. When the boys applauded Benedicta’s dancing Amula made as if she would spring forward and strangle her. But I held the furious creature back, and, stepping forward, called out: ‘Benedicta!’

She started at the sound of my voice, but though she hung her head a little lower, she continued dancing. Amula could control her rage no longer, and rushed forward with a savage cry, trying to break into the circle. But the drunken boys prevented. They jeered at her, which maddened her the more, and she made effort after effort to reach her victim. The boys drove her away with shouts, curses and laughter. Holy Franciscus, pray for us! — when I saw the hatred in

Amula’s eyes a cold shudder ran through my body. God be with us! I believe the creature capable of killing the poor child with her own hands, and glorying in the deed!

I ought now to have gone home, but I remained, I thought of what might occur when the dance was over, for I had been told that the youths commonly accompanied their partners home, and I was horrified to think of Rochus and Benedicta alone together in the forest and the night.

Imagine my surprise when all at once Benedicta lifted her head, stopped dancing, and, looking kindly at Rochus, said in her sweet voice, so like the sound of silver bells: ‘I thank you, sir, for having chosen me for your partner in the dance in such a knightly way.’

Then, bowing to the Saltmaster’s son, she slipped quickly through the circle, and, before anyone could know what was occurring, disappeared in the black spaces of the forest. Rochus at first seemed stupefied with amazement, but when he realized that Benedicta was gone he raved like a madman. He shouted: ‘Benedicta!’ He called her endearing names; but all to no purpose — she had vanished. Then he hurried after her and wanted to search the forest with torches, but the other youths dissuaded him. Observing my presence, he turned his wrath upon me; I think if he had dared he would have struck me. He cried: ‘I’ll make you smart for this, you miserable cowl-wearer!’

But I do not fear him. Praise be to God! Benedicta is not guilty, and I can respect her as before. Yet I tremble to think of the many perils which beset her. She is defenceless against the hate of Amula as well as against the lust of Rochus. Ah, if I could be ever at her side to watch over and protect her! But I commend her to Thee, O Lord: the poor motherless child shall surely not trust to Thee in vain.

15

Alas! my unhappy fate! — again punished and again unable to find myself guilty.

It seems that Amula has talked about Benedicta and Rochus. The brown wench strolled from house to house telling how Rochus went to the gallows for his partner in the dance. And she added that Benedicta had acted in the most shameless manner with the drunken boys. When the people spoke to me of this I enlightened them regarding the facts, as it seemed to me my duty to do, and told all as it had occurred.

By this testimony, in contradiction of one who broke the Decalogue by bearing false witness against her neighbour I have, it seems, offended the Superior. I was summoned before him and accused of defending the hangman's daughter against the statements of an honest Christian girl. I asked, meekly, what I should have done — whether I should have permitted the innocent and defenceless to be calumniated.

'Of what interest,' I was asked, 'can the hangman's daughter be to you? Moreover, it is a fact that she went of her own will to associate with the drunken boys.'

To this I replied: 'She went out of love to her father, for if the intoxicated youths had not found her they would have maltreated him — and she loves the old man, who is ill and helpless. Thus it happened, and thus I have testified.'

But His Reverence insisted that I was wrong, and put me under severe penance. I willingly undergo it: I am glad to suffer for the sweet child. Nor will I murmur against the revered Superior, for he is my master, against whom to rebel, even in thought, is sin. Is not obedience the foremost commandment of our great saint for all his disciples? Ah, how I long for the priestly ordination and the holy oil! Then I shall have peace and be able to serve Heaven better and with greater acceptance.

I am troubled about Benedicta. If not confined to my cell I should go toward the Galgenberg: perhaps I should meet her. I grieve for her as if she were my sister.

Belonging to the Lord, I have no right to love anything but Him who died upon the cross for our sins — all other love is evil. O blessed Saints in Heaven! what if it be that this feeling which I have accepted as a sign and token that I am charged with the salvation of Benedicta's soul is but an earthly love?

Pray for me, O dear Franciscus, that I may have the light, lest I stray into the road which leads down to Hell. Light and strength, beloved Saint, that I may know the right path, and walk therein forever!

16

I stand at the window of my cell. The sun sinks and the shadows creep higher on the sides of the mountains beyond the abyss. The abyss itself is filled with a mist whose billowy surface looks like a great lake. I think how Benedicta climbed out of these awful depths to fling me the edelweiss; I listen for the sound of the stones displaced by her daring little feet and plunging into the chasm below. But night after night has passed. I hear the wind among the pines; I hear the water roaring in the deeps; I hear the distant song of the nightingale; but her voice I do not hear.

Every evening the mist rises from the abyss. It forms billows; then rings; then flakes, and these rise and grow and darken until they are great clouds. They cover the hill and the valley, the tall pines and the snow-pointed mountains. They extinguish the last remaining touches of sunlight on the higher peaks, and it is night. Alas, in my soul also there is night — dark, starless and without hope of dawn!

To-day is Sunday. Benedicta was not in church—'the dark corner' remained vacant. I was unable to keep my mind upon the service, a sin for which I shall do voluntary penance.

Amula was among the other maidens, but I saw nothing of Rochus. It seemed to me that her watchful black eyes were a sufficient guard against any rival, and that in her jealousy Benedicta would find protection. God can make the basest passions serve the most worthy ends, and the reflection gave me pleasure, which, alas, was of short life.

The services being at an end, the Fathers and friars left the church slowly in procession, moving through the vestry, while the people went out at the main entrance. From the long covered gallery leading out of the vestry one has a full view of the public square of the village. As we friars, who were behind the Fathers, were in the gallery, something occurred which I shall remember even to the day of my death as an unjust deed which Heaven permitted for I know not what purpose. It seems that the Fathers must have known what was coming, for they halted in the gallery, giving us all an opportunity to look out upon the square.

I heard a confused noise of voices. It came nearer, and the shouting and yelling sounded like the approach of all the fiends of Hell. Being at the farther end of the gallery I was unable to see what was going on in the square, so I asked a brother at a window near by what it was all about.

'They are taking a woman to the pillory,' he answered.

'Who is it?'

'A girl.'

'What has she done?'

'You ask a foolish question. Whom are pillories and whipping-posts for but fallen women?'

The howling mob passed farther into the square, so that I had a full view. In the front were boys, leaping, gesticulating and singing vile songs. They seemed mad with joy and made savage by the shame and pain of their fellow-creature.

Nor did the maids behave much better. ‘Fie upon the outcast!’ they cried. ‘See what it is to be a sinner! Thank heaven, we are virtuous.’

In the rear of these yelling boys, surrounded by this mob of screaming women and girls — O God! how can I write it? How can I express the horror of it? In the midst of it all — she, the lovely, the sweet, the immaculate Benedicta!

O my Saviour! how did I see all this, yet am still living to relate it? I must have come near to death. The gallery, the square, the people seemed whirling round and round; the earth sank beneath my feet, and, although I strained my eyes open to see, yet all was dark. But it must have been for but a short time; I recovered, and, on looking down into the square, saw her again.

They had clothed her in a long gray cloak, fastened at the waist with a rope. Her head bore a wreath of straw, and on her breast, suspended by a string about the neck, was a black tablet bearing in chalk the word ‘Buhle’ — harlot.

By the end of the rope about her waist a man led her. I looked at him closely, and — O most holy Son of God, what brutes and beasts Thou didst come to save! — it was Benedicta’s father! They had compelled the poor old man to perform one of the duties of his office by leading his own child to the pillory! I learned later that he had implored the Superior on his knees not to lay this dreadful command upon him, but all in vain.

The memory of this scene can never leave me. The hangman did not remove his eyes from his daughter’s face, and she frequently nodded at him and smiled. By the grace of God, the maiden smiled!

The mob insulted her, called her vile names and spat upon the ground in front of her feet. Nor was this all. Observing that she took no notice of them, they pelted her with dust and grass. This was more than the poor father could endure, and, with a faint, inarticulate moan, he fell to the ground in a swoon.

Oh, the pitiless wretches! — they wanted to lift him up and make him finish his task, but Benedicta stretched out her arm in supplication, and with an expression of so ineffable tenderness upon her beautiful face that even the brutal mob felt her gentle power and recoiled before her, leaving the unconscious man upon the ground. She knelt and took her father’s head in her lap. She whispered in his ear words of love and comfort. She stroked his gray hair and kissed his pale lips until she had coaxed him into consciousness and he had opened his eyes. Benedicta, thrice blessed Benedicta, thou surely art born to be a saint, for thou didst show a divine patience like that with which our Saviour bore His cross and with it all the sins of the world!

She helped her father to rise, and smiled brightly in his face when he made out to stand. She shook the dust from his clothing, and then, still smiling and murmuring words of encouragement, handed him the rope. The boys yelled and sang, the women screamed, and the wretched old man led his innocent child to the place of shame.

17

When I was back again in my cell I threw myself upon the stones and cried aloud to God against the injustice and misery that I had witnessed, and against the still greater misery of which I had been spared the sight. I saw in my mind the father binding his child to the post. I saw the brutal populace dance about her with savage delight. I saw the vicious Amula spit in the pure one's face. I prayed long and earnestly that the poor child might be made strong to endure her great affliction.

Then I sat and waited. I waited for the setting of the sun, for at that time the sufferer is commonly released from the whipping-post. The minutes seemed hours, the hours eternities. The sun did not move; the day of shame was denied a night.

It was in vain that I tried to understand it all; I was stunned and dazed. Why did Rochus permit Benedicta to be so disgraced? Does he think the deeper her shame the more easily he can win her? I know not, nor do I greatly care to search out his motive. But, God help me! I myself feel her disgrace, most keenly.

And, Lord, Lord, what a light has come into the understanding of Thy servant! It has come to me like a revelation out of Heaven that my feeling for Benedicta is more and less than what I thought it. It is an earthly love — the love of a man for a woman. As first this knowledge broke into my consciousness my breath beat quick and hard; it seemed to me that I should suffocate. Yet such was the hardness of my heart from witnessing so terrible an injustice tolerated by Heaven, that I was unable wholly to repent. In the sudden illumination I was blinded: I could not clearly see my degree of sin. The tumult of my emotions was not altogether disagreeable; I had to confess to myself that I would not willingly forego it even if I knew it wicked. May the Mother of Mercy intercede for me!

Even now I cannot think that in supposing myself to have a divine mandate to save the soul of Benedicta, and prepare her for a life of sanctity, I was wholly in error. This other human desire — comes it not also of God? Is it not concerned for the good of its object? And what can be a greater good than salvation of the soul? — a holy life on earth, and in Heaven eternal happiness and glory to reward it. Surely the spiritual and the carnal love are not so widely different as I have been taught to think them. They are, perhaps, not antagonistic, and are but expressions of the same will. O holy Franciscus, in this great light that has fallen about me, guide thou my steps. Show to my dazzled eyes the straight, right way to Benedicta's good!

At length the sun disappeared behind the cloister. The flakes and cloudlets gathered upon the horizon; the haze rose from the abyss and, beyond, the purple shadow climbed higher and higher, the great slope of the mountain, extinguishing at last the gleam of light upon the summit. Thank God, oh, thank God, she is free!

18

I have been very ill, but by the kind attention of the brothers am sufficiently recovered to leave my bed. It must be God's will that I live to serve Him, for certainly I have done nothing to merit His great mercy in restoring me to health. Still, I feel a yearning in my soul for a complete dedication of my poor life to Him and His service. To embrace Him and be bound up in His love are now the only aspirations that I have. As soon as the holy oil is on my brow, these hopes, I am sure, will be fulfilled, and, purged of my hopeless earthly passion for Benedicta, I shall be lifted into a new and diviner life. And it may be that then I can, without offence to Heaven or peril to my soul, watch over and protect her far better than I can now as a wretched monk.

I have been weak. My feet, like those of an infant, failed to support my body. The brothers carried me into the garden. With what gratitude I again looked upward into the blue of the sky! How rapturously I gazed upon the white peaks of the mountains and the black forests on their slopes! Every blade of grass seemed to me of special interest, and I greeted each passing insect as if it were an old acquaintance.

My eyes wander to the south, where the Galgenberg is, and I think unceasingly of the poor child of the hangman. What has become of her? Has she survived her terrible experience in the public square? What is she doing? Oh, that I were strong enough to walk to the Galgenberg! But I am not permitted to leave the monastery, and there is none of whom I dare ask her fate. The friars look at me strangely; it is as if they no longer regarded me as one of them. Why is this so? I love them, and desire to live in harmony with them. They are kind and gentle, yet they seem to avoid me as much as they can. What does it all mean?

19

I have been in the presence of the most reverend Superior, Father Andreas. ‘Your recovery was miraculous,’ said he. ‘I wish you to be worthy of such mercies, and to prepare your soul for the great blessing that awaits you. I have, therefore, my son, ordained that you leave us for a season, to dwell apart in the solitude of the mountains, for the double purpose of restoring your strength and affording you an insight into your own heart. Make a severe examination apart from any distractions, and you will perceive, I do not doubt, the gravity of your error. Pray that a divine light may be shed upon your path, that you may walk upright in the service of the Lord as a true priest and apostle, with immunity from all base passions and earthly desires.’

I had not the presumption to reply. I submit to the will of His Reverence without a murmur, for obedience is a rule of our Order. Nor do I fear the wilderness, although I have heard that it is infested with wild beasts and evil spirits. Our superior is right: the time passed in solitude will be to me a season of probation, purification and healing, of which I am doubtless in sore need. So far I have progressed in sin only; for in confession I have kept back many things. Not from the fear of punishment, but because I could not mention the name of the maiden before any other than my holy and blessed Francisais, who alone can understand. He looks kindly down upon me from the skies, listening to my sorrow; and whatever of guilt there may be in my compassion for the innocent and persecuted child he willingly overlooks for the sake of our blessed Redeemer, who also suffered injustice and was acquainted with grief.

In the mountains it will be my duty to dig certain roots and send them to the monastery. From such roots as I am instructed to gather the Fathers distil a liquor which has become famous throughout the land, even as far, I have been told, as the great city of Munich. This liquor is so strong and so fiery with spices that after drinking it one feels a burning in his throat as if he had swallowed a flame from Hell; yet it is held in high esteem everywhere by reason of its medicinal properties, it being a remedy for many kinds of ills and infirmities; and it is said to be good also for the health of the soul, though I should suppose a godly life might be equally efficacious in places where the liquor cannot be obtained. However this may be, from the sale of the liquor comes the chief revenue of the monastery.

The root from which it is chiefly made is that of an Alpine plant called *gentiana*, which grows in great abundance on the sides of the mountains. In the months of July and August the friars dig the roots and dry them by fire in the mountain cabins, and they are then packed and sent to the monastery. The Fathers have the sole right to dig the root in this region, and the secret of manufacturing the liquor is jealously guarded.

As I am to live in the high country for some time, the Superior has directed me to collect the root from time to time as I have the strength. A boy, a servant in the monastery, is to guide me to my solitary station, carrying up my provisions and returning immediately. He will come once a week to renew my supply of food and take away the roots that I shall have dug.

No time has been lost in dispatching me on my penitential errand. This very evening I have taken leave of the Superior, and, retiring to my cell, have packed my holy books, the *Agnus* and the *Life of St. Franciscus*, in a bag. Nor have I forgotten my writing-materials with which to continue my diary. These preparations made, I have fortified my soul with prayer, and am ready for any fate, even an encounter with the beasts and demons.

Beloved Saint, forgive the pain I feel in going away without having seen Benedicta, or even knowing what has become of her since that dreadful day. Thou knowest, O glorious one, and humbly do I confess, that I long to hasten to the Galgenberg, if only to get one glimpse of the hut which holds the fairest and best of her sex. Take me not, holy one, too severely to task, I beseech thee, for the weakness of my erring human heart!

20

As I left the monastery with my young guide all was quiet within its walls; the holy Brotherhood slept the sleep of peace, which had so long been denied to me. It was early dawn, and the clouds in the east were beginning to show narrow edges of gold and crimson as we ascended the path leading to the mountain. My guide, with bag upon his shoulder, led, and I followed, with my robe fastened back and a stout stick in my hand. This had a sharp iron point which might be used against wild beasts.

My guide was a light-haired, blue-eyed young fellow with a cheerful and amiable face. He evidently found a keen delight in climbing his native hills toward the high country whither we were bound. He seemed not to feel the weight of the burden that he bore; his gait was light and free, his footing sure. He sprang up the steep and rugged way like a mountain-goat.

The boy was in high spirits. He told me strange tales of ghosts and goblins, witches and fairies. These last he seemed to be very well acquainted with. He said they appeared in shining garments, with bright hair and beautiful wings, and this description agrees very nearly with what is related of them in books by certain of the Fathers. Anyone to whom they take a fancy, says the boy, they are able to keep under their spell, and no one can break the enchantment, not even the Holy Virgin. But I judge that this is true of only such as are in sin, and that the pure in heart have nothing to fear from them.

We travelled up hill and down, through forests and blooming meadows and across ravines. The mountain-streams, hastening down to the valleys, full-banked and noisy, seemed to be relating the wonderful things that they had seen and the strange adventures they had met with on their way. Sometimes the hillsides and the woods resounded with nature's various voices, calling, whispering, sighing, chanting praises to the Lord of all. Now and again we passed a mountaineer's cabin, before which played children, yellow-haired and unkempt. On seeing strangers, they ran away. But the women came forward, with infants in their arms, and asked for benedictions. They offered us milk, butter, green cheese, and black bread. We frequently found the men seated in front of their huts, carving wood, mostly images of the Saviour upon the cross. These are sent to the city of Munich, where they are offered for sale, bringing, I am told, considerable money and much honour to their pious makers.

At last we arrived at the shore of a lake, but a dense fog prevented a clear view of it. A clumsy little boat was found moored to the bank; my guide bade me enter it, and presently it seemed as if we were gliding through the sky in the midst of the clouds. I had never before been on the water, and felt a terrible misgiving lest we should capsize and drown. We heard nothing but the sound of the ripples against the sides of the boat. Here and there, as we advanced, some dark object became dimly visible for a moment, then vanished as suddenly as it had appeared, and we seemed gliding again through empty space. As the mist at times lifted a little, I observed great black rocks protruding from the water, and not far from shore were lying giant trees half submerged, with huge limbs that looked like the bones of some monstrous skeleton. The scene was so full of horrors that even the joyous youth was silent now, his watchful eye ever seeking to penetrate the fog in search of new dangers.

By all these signs I knew that we were crossing that fearful lake which is haunted by ghosts and demons, and I therefore commended my soul to God. The power of the Lord overcomes all evil. Scarcely had I said my prayer against the spirits of darkness, when suddenly the veil of fog was rent asunder, and like a great rose of fire the sun shone out, clothing the world in garments of colour and gold!

Before this glorious eye of God the darkness fled and was no more. The dense fog, which had changed to a thin, transparent mist, lingered a little on the mountain-sides, then vanished quite away. Except in the black clefts of the hills, no vestige of it stayed. The lake was as liquid silver; the mountains were gold, bearing forests that were like flames of fire. My heart was filled with wonder and gratitude.

As our boat crept on I observed that the lake filled a long, narrow basin. On our right the cliffs rose to a great height, their tops covered with pines, but to the left and in front lay a pleasant land, where stood a large building. This was Saint Bartholomæ, the summer residence of his Reverence, Superior Andreas.

This garden spot was of no great extent: it was shut in on all sides but that upon which the lake lay by cliffs that rose a thousand feet into the air. High in the front of this awful wall was set a green meadow, which seemed like a great jewel gleaming upon the gray cloak of the mountain. My guide pointed it out as the only place in all that region where the edelweiss grew. This, then, was the very place where Benedicta had culled the lovely flowers that she had brought to me during my penance. I gazed upward to that beautiful but terrible spot with feelings that I have no words to express. The youth, his mood sympathetic with the now joyous aspect of nature, shouted and sang, but I felt the hot tears rise into my eyes and flow down upon my cheeks, and concealed my face in my cowl.

21

After leaving the boat we climbed the mountain. Dear Lord, nothing comes from Thy hand without a purpose and a use, but why Thou shouldst have piled up these mountains, and why Thou shouldst have covered them with so many stones, is a mystery to me, since I can see no purpose in stones, which are a blessing to neither man nor beast.

After hours of climbing we reached a spring, where I sat down, faint and footsore and out of breath. As I looked about me the scene fully justified all that I had been told of these high solitudes. Wherever I turned my eyes was nothing but gray, bare rocks streaked with red and yellow and brown. There were dreary wastes of stones where nothing grew — no single plant nor blade of grass — dreadful abysses filled with ice, and glittering snowfields sloping upward till they seemed to touch the sky.

Among the rocks I did, however, find a few flowers. It seemed as if the

Creator of this wild and desolate region had Himself found it too horrible, and, reaching down to the valleys, had gathered a handful of flowers and scattered them in the barren places. These flowers, so distinguished by the Divine hand, have bloomed with a celestial beauty that none others know. The boy pointed out the plant whose root I am to dig, as well as several strong and wholesome herbs serviceable to man, among them the golden-flowered arnica.

After an hour we continued our journey, which we pursued until I was hardly able to drag my feet along the path. At last we reached a lonely spot surrounded by great black rocks. In the centre was a miserable hut of stones, with a low opening in one side for an entrance, and this, the youth told me, was to be my habitation. We entered, and my heart sank to think of dwelling in such a place. There was no furniture of any kind. A wide bench, on which was some dry Alpine grass, was to be my bed. There was a fireplace, with some wood for fuel, and a few simple cooking-utensils.

The boy took up a pan and ran away with it, and, throwing myself down in front of the hut, I was soon lost in contemplation of the wildness and terror of the place in which I was to prepare my soul for service of the Lord. The boy soon returned, bearing the pan in both hands, and on seeing me he gave a joyful shout, whose echoes sounded like a hundred voices babbling among the rocks on every side. After even so short a period of solitude I was so happy to see a human face that I came near answering his greeting with unbecoming joy. How, then, could I hope to sustain a week of isolation in that lonely spot?

When the boy placed the pan before me it was full of milk, and he brought forth from his clothing a pat of yellow butter, prettily adorned with Alpine flowers, and a cake of snow-white cheese wrapped in aromatic herbs. The sight delighted me, and I asked him, jokingly: ‘Do butter and cheese, then, grow on stones up here, and have you found a spring of milk?’

‘You might accomplish such a miracle,’ he replied, ‘but I prefer to hasten to the Black Lake and ask this food of the young women who live there.’ He then got some flour from a kind of pantry in the hut, and, having kindled a fire on the hearth, proceeded to make a cake.

‘Then we are not alone in this wilderness,’ I said. ‘Tell me where is that lake on the shore of which these generous people dwell?’

‘The Black Lake,’ he replied, blinking his eyes, which were full of smoke, ‘is behind that *Kogel* yonder, and the dairy-house stands on the edge of the cliff above the water. It is a bad place. The lake reaches clear down to Hell, and you can hear, through the fissures of the rocks, the roaring and hissing of the flames and the groans of the souls. And in no other place in all this world are there so many fierce and evil spirits. Beware of it! You might fall ill there in spite of your sanctity. Milk and butter and cheese can be obtained at the Green Lake lower down; but I will tell the women to send up what you require. They will be glad to oblige you; and if you will preach them a sermon every Sunday, they will fight the very devil for you!’

After our meal, which I thought the sweetest I had ever eaten, the boy stretched himself in the sunshine and straightway fell asleep, snoring so loudly that, tired as I was, I could hardly follow his example.

22

When I awoke the sun was already behind the mountains, whose tops were fringed with fire. I felt as one in a dream, but was soon recalled to my senses, and made to feel that I was alone in the wilderness by shouts of the young man in the distance. Doubtless he had pitied my condition, for, instead of disturbing me, he had gone away without taking leave, being compelled to reach the dairy on the Green Lake before nightfall. Entering the cabin, I found a fire burning lustily and a quantity of fuel piled beside it. Nor had the thoughtful youth forgotten to prepare my supper of bread and milk. He had also shaken up the grass on my hard bed, and covered it with a woollen cloth, for which I was truly grateful to him.

Refreshed by my long sleep, I remained outside the cabin till late in the evening. I said my prayers in view of the gray rocks beneath the black sky, in which the stars blinked merrily. They seemed much more brilliant up here than when seen from the valley, and it was easy to imagine that, standing on the extreme summit, one might touch them with his hands.

Many hours of that night I passed under the sky and the stars, examining my conscience and questioning my heart. I felt as if in church, kneeling before the altar and feeling the awful presence of the Lord. And at last my soul was filled with a divine peace, and as an innocent child presses its mother’s breast, even so I leaned my head upon thine, O Nature, mother of us all!

23

I had not before seen a dawn so glorious! The mountains were rose-red, and seemed almost transparent. The atmosphere was of a silver lucidity, and so fresh and pure that with every breath I seemed to be taking new life. The dew, heavy and white, clung to the scanty grass-blades like rain and dripped from the sides of the rocks.

It was while engaged in my morning devotions that I involuntarily became acquainted with my neighbours. All night long the marmots had squealed, greatly to my dismay, and they were now capering to and fro like hares. Overhead the brown hawks sailed in circles with an eye to the birds flitting among the bushes and the wood-mice racing along the rocks. Now and again a troop of chamois passed near, on their way to the feeding-grounds on the cliffs, and high above all I saw a single eagle rising into the sky, higher and higher, as a soul flies heavenward when purged of sin.

I was still kneeling when the silence was broken by the sound of voices. I looked about, but, although I could distinctly hear the voices and catch snatches of song, I saw no one. The sounds seemed to come from the heart of the mountain and, remembering the malevolent powers that infest the place, I repeated a prayer against the Evil One and awaited the event.

Again the singing was heard, ascending from a deep chasm, and presently I saw rising out of it three female figures. As soon as they saw me they ceased singing and uttered shrill screams. By this sign I knew them to be daughters of the earth, and thought they might be Christians, and so waited for them to approach.

As they drew near I observed that they carried baskets on their heads, and that they were tall, good-looking lasses, light-haired, brown in complexion and black-eyed. Setting their baskets upon the ground, they greeted me humbly and kissed my hands, after which they opened the baskets and displayed the good things they had brought me — milk, cream, cheese, butter and cakes.

Seating themselves upon the ground, they told me they were from the Green Lake, and said they were glad to have a ‘mountain brother’ again, especially so young and handsome a one; and in saying so there were merry twinkles in their dark eyes and smiles on their red lips, which pleased me exceedingly.

I inquired if they were not afraid to live in the wilderness, at which they laughed, showing their white teeth. They said they had a hunter’s gun in their cabin to keep off bears, and knew several powerful sentences and anathemas against demons. Nor were they very lonely, they added, for every Saturday the boys from the valley came up to hunt wild beasts, and then all made merry. I learned from them that meadows and cabins were common among the rocks, where herdsmen and herdswomen lived during the whole summer. The finest meadows, they said, belonged to the monastery, and lay but a short distance away.

The pleasant chatting of the maidens greatly delighted me, and the solitude began to be less oppressive. Having received the benediction, they kissed my hand and went away as they had come, laughing, singing and shouting in the joy of youth and health. So much I have already observed: the people in the mountains lead a better and happier life than those in the damp, deep valleys below. Also, they seem purer in heart and mind, and that may be due to their living so much nearer to Heaven, which some of the brothers say approaches more closely to the earth here than at any other place in the world excepting Rome.

24

The maidens having gone, I stowed away the provisions which they had brought me, and, taking a short pointed spade and a bag, went in search of the gentiana roots. They grew in abundance, and my back soon began to ache from stooping and digging; but I continued the labour, for I desired to send a good quantity to the monastery to attest my zeal and obedience. I had gone a long distance from my cabin without observing the direction which I had taken, when suddenly I found myself on the brink of an abyss so deep and terrible that I recoiled with a cry of horror. At the bottom of this chasm, so far below my feet that I was giddy to look down, a small circular lake was visible, like the eye of a fiend. On the shore of it, near a cliff overhanging the water, stood a cabin, from the stone-weighted roof of which rose a thin column of blue smoke. About the cabin, in the narrow and sterile pasture, a few cows and sheep were grazing. What a dreadful place for a human habitation!

I was still gazing down with fear into this gulf when I was again startled: I heard a voice distinctly call a name! The sound came from behind me, and the name was uttered with so caressing sweetness that I hastened to cross myself as a protection from the wiles of the fairies with their spells and enchantments. Soon I heard the voice again, and this time it caused my heart to beat so that I was near suffocation, for it was Benedicta's! Benedicta in this wilderness, and I alone with her! Surely I now had need of thy guidance, blessed Franciscus, to keep, my feet in the path of the Divine purpose.

I turned about and saw her. She was now springing from rock to rock, looking backward and calling the name that was strange to me. When she saw that I looked at her she stood motionless. I walked to her, greeting her in the name of the Blessed Virgin, though, God forgive me! hardly able in the tumult of my emotions to articulate that holy title.

Ah, how changed the poor child was! The lovely face was as pale as marble; the large eyes were sunken and inexpressibly sad. Her beautiful hair alone was unaltered, flowing over her shoulders like threads of gold. We stood looking at each other, silent from surprise; then I again addressed her: ‘Is it, then, you, Benedicta, who live in the cabin down there by the Black Lake — near the waters of Avemus? And is your father with you?’

She made no reply, but I observed a quivering about her delicate mouth, as when a child endeavours to refrain from weeping. I repeated my question: ‘Is your father with you?’

She answered faintly, in a tone that was hardly more than a sigh:

‘My father is dead.’

I felt a sudden pain in my very heart, and was for some moments unable to speak further, quite overcome by compassion. Benedicta had turned away her face to hide her tears, and her fragile frame was shaken by her sobs. I could no longer restrain myself. Stepping up to her, I took her hand in mine, and, trying to crush back into my secret heart every human desire, and address her in words of religious consolation, said: ‘My child — dear Benedicta — your father is gone from you, but another Father remains who will protect you every day of your life. And as far as may accord with His holy will I, too, good and beautiful maiden, help you to endure your great affliction. He whom you mourn is not lost; he is gone to the mercy seat, and God will be gracious to him.’

But my words seemed only to awaken her sleeping grief. She threw herself upon the ground and gave way to her tears, sobbing so violently that I was filled with alarm. O Mother of Mercy! how can I bear the memory of the anguish I suffered in seeing this beautiful and innocent child overwhelmed with so great a flood of grief? I bent over her, and my own tears fell upon her golden hair. My heart urged me to lift her from the earth, but my hands were powerless to move. At length she composed herself somewhat and spoke, but as if she were talking to herself rather than to me: ‘Oh, my father, my poor, heart-broken father! Yes, he is dead — they killed him — he died long ago of grief. My beautiful mother, too, died of grief — of grief and remorse for some great sin, I know not what, which he had forgiven her. He could only be compassionate and merciful. His heart was too tender to let him kill a worm or a beetle, and he was compelled to kill men. His father and his father’s father had lived and died in the Galgenberg. They were hangmen all, and the awful inheritance fell to him: there was no escape, for the terrible people held him to the trade. I have heard him say that he was often tempted to kill himself, and but for me I am sure he would have done so. He could not leave me to starve, though he had to see me reviled, and at last, O Holy Virgin! publicly disgraced for that of which I was not guilty.’

As Benedicta made this reference to the great injustice that she had been made to suffer, her white cheeks kindled to crimson with the recollection of the shame which for her father’s sake she had, at the time of it, so differently endured.

During the narrative of her grief she had partly risen and had turned her beautiful face more and more toward me as her confidence had grown; but now she veiled it with her hair, and would have turned her back but that I gently prevented her and spoke some words of comfort, though God knows my own heart was near breaking through sympathy with hers. After a few moments she resumed: ‘Alas, my poor father! he was unhappy every way. Not even the comfort of seeing his child baptised was granted him. I was a hangman’s daughter, and my parents were forbidden to present me for baptism; nor could any priest be found who was willing to bless me in the name of the Holy Trinity. So they gave me the name Benedicta, and blessed me themselves, over and over again.

‘I was only an infant when my beautiful mother died. They buried her in unconsecrated ground. She could not go to the Heavenly Father in the mansions above, but was thrust into the flames. While she was dying my father had hastened to the Reverend Superior, imploring him to send a priest with the sacrament. His prayer was denied. No priest came, and my poor father closed her eyes himself, while his own were blind with tears of anguish for her terrible fate.

‘And all alone he had to dig her grave. He had no other place than near the gallows, where he had so often buried the hanged and the accurst. With his own hands he had to place her in that unholy ground, nor could any masses be said for her suffering soul.

‘I well remember how my dear father took me then to the image of the Holy Virgin and bade me kneel, and, joining my little hands, taught me to pray for my poor mother, who had stood undefended before the terrible Judge of the Dead. This I have done every morning and evening since that day, and now I pray for both; for my father also has died unshriven, and his soul is not with God, but burns in unceasing fire.

‘When he was dying I ran to the Superior, just as he had done for my dear mother. I besought him on my knees. I prayed and wept and embraced his feet, and would have kissed his hand but that he snatched it away. He commanded me to go.’

As Benedicta proceeded with her narrative she gained courage. She rose to her feet and stood erect, threw back her beautiful head and lifted her eyes to the heavens as if recounting her wrongs to God’s high angels and ministers of doom. She stretched forth her bare arms in gestures of so natural force and grace that I was filled with astonishment, and her unstudied words came from her lips with an eloquence of which I had never before had any conception. I dare not think it inspiration, for, God forgive us all! every word was an unconscious arraignment of Him and His Holy Church; yet surely no mortal with lips untouched by a live coal from the altar ever so spake before! In the presence of this strange and gifted being I so felt my own unworth that I had surely knelt, as before a blessed saint, but that she suddenly concluded, with a pathos that touched me to tears.

‘The cruel people killed him,’ she said, with a sob in the heart of every word. ‘They laid hands upon me whom he loved. They charged me falsely with a foul crime. They attired me in a garment of dishonour, and put a crown of straw upon my head, and hung about my neck the black tablet of shame. They spat upon me and reviled me, and compelled him to lead me to the pillory, where I was bound and struck with whips and stones. That broke his great, good heart, and so he died, and I am alone.’

25

When Benedicta had finished I remained silent, for in the presence of such a sorrow what could I say? For such wounds as hers religion has no balm. As I thought of the cruel wrongs of this humble and harmless family there came into my heart a feeling of wild rebellion against the world, against the Church, against God! They were brutally unjust, horribly, devilishly unjust! — God, the Church, and the world.

Our very surroundings — the stark and soulless wilderness, perilous with precipices and bleak with everlasting snows — seemed a visible embodiment of the woeful life to which the poor child had been condemned from birth; and truly this was more than fancy, for since her father’s death had deprived her of even so humble a home as the hangman’s hovel she had been driven to these eternal solitudes by the stress of want. But below us were pleasant villages, fertile fields, green gardens, and homes where peace and plenty abided all the year.

After a time, when Benedicta was somewhat composed, I asked her if she had anyone with her for protection.

‘I have none,’ she replied. But observing my look of pain, she added: ‘I have always lived in lonely, accurst places; I am accustomed to that. Now that my father is dead, there is no one who cares even to speak to me, nor any whom I care to talk with — except you.’ After a pause she said: ‘True, there is one who cares to see me, but he — —’

Here she broke off, and I did not press her to explain lest it should embarrass her. Presently she said: ‘I knew yesterday that you were here. A boy came for some milk and butter for you. If you were not a holy man the boy would not have come to me for your food. As it is, you cannot be harmed by the evil which attaches to everything I have or do. Are you sure, though, that you made the sign of the cross over the food yesterday?’

‘Had I known that it came from you, Benedicta, that precaution would have been omitted,’ I answered.

She looked at me with beaming eyes, and said:

‘Oh, dear sir, dear Brother!’

And both the look and the words gave me the keenest delight — as, in truth, do all this saintly creature’s words and ways.

I inquired what had brought her to the cliff-top, and who the person was that I had heard her calling.

‘It is no person,’ she answered, smiling; ‘it is only my goat. She has strayed away, and I was searching for her among the rocks.’

Then nodding to me as if about to say farewell, she turned to go, but I detained her, saying that I would assist her to look for the goat.

We soon discovered the animal in a crevice of rock, and so glad was Benedicta to find her humble companion that she knelt by its side, put her arms about its neck and called it by many endearing names. I thought this very charming, and could not help looking upon the group with obvious admiration.

Benedicta, observing it, said: ‘Her mother fell from a cliff and broke her neck. I took the little one and brought it up on milk, and she is very fond of me. One who lives alone as I do values the love of a faithful animal.’

When the maiden was about to leave me I gained courage to speak to her of what had been so long in my mind. I said: ‘It is true, is it not, Benedicta, that on the night of the festival you went to meet the drunken boys in order to save your father from harm?’

She looked at me in great astonishment. ‘For what other reason could you suppose I went?’

‘I could not think of any other,’ I replied, in some confusion.

‘And now good-bye, Brother,’ she said, moving away.

‘Benedicta,’ I cried. She paused and turned her head.

‘Next Sunday I shall preach to the dairy women at the Green Lake; will you come?’

‘Oh, no, dear Brother,’ she replied hesitating and in low tones.

‘You will not come?’

‘I should like to come, but my presence would frighten away the dairy women and others whom your goodness would bring there to hear you. Your charity to me would cause you trouble. I pray you, sir, accept thanks, but I cannot come.'

'Then I shall come to you.'

'Beware, oh pray, beware!'

'I shall come.'

26

The boy had taught me how to prepare a cake. I knew all that went to the making of it, and the right proportions, yet when I tried to make it I could not. All that I was able to make was a smoky, greasy pap, more fit for the mouth of Satan than for a pious son of the Church and follower of Saint Franciscus. My failure greatly discouraged me, yet it did not destroy my appetite; so, taking some stale bread, I dipped it in sour milk and was about to make my stomach do penance for its many sins, when Benedicta came with a basketful of good things from her dairy. Ah, the dear child! I fear that it was not with my heart only that I greeted her that blessed morning.

Observing the smoky mass in the pan, she smiled, and quietly throwing it to the birds (which may Heaven guard!) she cleansed the pan at the spring, and, returning arranged the fire. She then prepared the material for a fresh cake. Taking two handfuls of flour, she put it into an earthen bowl, and upon the top of it poured a cup of cream. Adding a pinch of salt, she mixed the whole vigorously with her slender white hands until it became a soft, swelling dough. She next greased the pan with a piece of yellow butter, and, pouring the dough into it, placed it on the fire. When the heat had penetrated the dough, causing it to expand and rise above the sides of the pan, she deftly pierced it here and there that it should not burst, and when it was well browned she took it up and set it before me, all unworthy as I was. I invited her to share the meal with me, but she would not. She insisted, too, that I should cross myself before partaking of anything that she had brought me or prepared, lest some evil come to me because of the ban upon her; but this I would not consent to do. While I ate she culled flowers from among the rocks, and, making a wreath, hung it upon the cross in front of the cabin; after which, when I had finished, she employed herself in cleansing the dishes and arranging everything in order as it should be, so that I imagined myself far more comfortable than before, even in merely looking about me. When there was nothing more to be done, and my conscience would not permit me to invent reasons for detaining her, she went away, and O my Saviour! how dismal and dreary seemed the day when she was gone. Ah, Benedicta, Benedicta, what is this that thou hast done to me? — making that sole service of the Lord to which I am dedicated seem less happy and less holy than a herdsman’s humble life here in the wilderness with thee!

27

Life up here is less disagreeable than I thought. What seemed to me a dreary solitude seems now less dismal and desolate. This mountain wilderness, which at first filled me with awe, gradually reveals its benign character. It is marvellously beautiful in its grandeur, with a beauty which purifies and elevates the soul. One can read in it, as in a book, the praises of its Creator. Daily, while digging gentiana roots, I do not fail to listen to the voice of the wilderness and to compose and chasten my soul more and more.

In these mountains are no feathered songsters. The birds here utter only shrill cries. The flowers, too, are without fragrance, but wondrously beautiful, shining with the fire and gold of stars. I have seen slopes and heights here which doubtless were never trodden by any human foot. They seem to me sacred, the touch of the Creator still visible upon them, as when they came from His hand.

Game is in great abundance. Chamois are sometimes seen in such droves that the very hillsides seem to move. There are steinbocks, veritable monsters, but as yet, thank Heaven, I have seen no bears. Marmots play about me like kittens, and eagles, the grandest creatures in this high world, nest in the cliffs to be as near the sky as they can get.

When fatigued, I stretch myself on the Alpine grass, which is as fragrant as the most precious spices. I close my eyes and hear the wind whisper through the tall stems, and in my heart is peace. Blessed be the Lord!

28

Every morning the dairy women come to my cabin, their merry shouts ringing in the air and echoed from the hills. They bring fresh milk, butter and cheese, chat a little while and go away. Each day they relate something new that has occurred in the mountains or been reported from the villages below. They are joyous and happy, and look forward with delight to Sunday, when there will be divine service in the morning and a dance in the evening.

Alas, these happy people are not free of the sin of bearing false witness against their neighbour. They have spoken to me of Benedicta — called her a disgraceful wench, a hangman’s daughter and (my heart rebels against its utterance) the mistress of Rochus! The pillory, they said, was made for such as she.

Hearing these maidens talk so bitterly and falsely of one whom they so little knew, it was with difficulty that I mastered my indignation. But in pity of their ignorance I reprimanded them gently and kindly. It was wrong, I said, to condemn a fellow-being unheard. It was unchristian to speak ill of any one.

They do not understand. It surprises them that I defend a person like Benedicta — one who, as they truly say, has been publicly disgraced and has not a friend in the world.

29

This morning I visited the Black Lake. It is indeed an awful and accursed place, fit for the habitation of the damned. And there lives the poor forsaken child! Approaching the cabin, I could see a fire burning on the hearth, and over it was suspended a kettle. Benedicta was seated on a low stool, looking into the flames. Her face was illuminated with a crimson glow, and I could observe heavy teardrops on her cheeks.

Not wishing to see her secret sorrow, I hastened to make known my presence, and addressed her as gently as I could. She was startled, but when she saw who it was, smiled and blushed. She rose and came to greet me, and I began speaking to her almost at random, in order that she might recover her composure. I spoke as a brother might speak to his sister, yet earnestly, for my heart was full of compassion.

‘O Benedicta,’ I said, I know your heart, and it has more love for that wild youth Rochus than for our dear and blessed Saviour. I know how willingly you bore infamy and disgrace, sustained by the thought that he knew you innocent. Far be it from me to condemn you, for what is holier or purer than a maiden’s love? I would only warn and save you from the consequence of having given it to one so unworthy.’

She listened with her head bowed, and said nothing, but I could hear her sighs. I saw, too, that she trembled. I continued: ‘Benedicta, the passion which fills your heart may prove your destruction in this life and hereafter. Young Rochus is not one who will make you his wife in the sight of God and Man. Why did he not stand forth and defend you when you were falsely accused?’

‘He was not there,’ she said, lifting her eyes to mine; ‘he and his father were at Salzburg. He knew nothing till they told him.’

May God forgive me if at this I felt no joy in another’s acquittal of the heavy sin with which I had charged him. I stood a moment irresolute, with my head bowed, silent.

‘But, Benedicta,’ I resumed, ‘will he take for a wife one whose good name has been blackened in the sight of his family and his neighbours? No, he does not seek you with an honourable purpose. O Benedicta, confide in me. Is it not as I say?’

But she remained silent, nor could I draw from her a single word. She would only sigh and tremble; she seemed unable to speak. I saw that she was too weak to resist the temptation to love young Rochus; nay, I saw that her whole heart was bound up in him, and my soul melted with pity and sorrow — pity for her and sorrow for myself, for I felt that my power was unequal to the command that had been laid upon me. My agony was so keen that I could hardly refrain from crying out.

I went from her cabin, but did not return to my own. I wandered about the haunted shore of the Black Lake for hours, without aim or purpose.

Reflecting bitterly upon my failure, and beseeching God for greater grace and strength, it was revealed to me that I was an unworthy disciple of the Lord and a faithless son of the Church. I became more keenly conscious than I ever had been before of the earthly nature of my love for Benedicta, and of its sinfulness. I felt that I had not given my whole heart to God, but was clinging to a temporal and human hope. It was plain to me that unless my love for the sweet child should be changed to a purely spiritual affection, purified from all the dross of passion, I could never receive holy orders, but should remain always a monk and always a sinner. These reflections caused me great torment, and in my despair I cast myself down upon the earth, calling aloud to my Saviour. In this my greatest trial I clung to the Cross. ‘Save me, O Lord!’ I cried. ‘I am engulfed in a great passion — save me, oh, save me, or I perish forever!’

All that night I struggled and prayed and fought against the evil spirits in my soul, with their suggestions of recreancy to the dear Church whose child I am.

‘The Church,’ they whispered, ‘has servants enough. You are not as yet irrevocably bound to celibacy. You can procure a dispensation from your monastic vows and remain here in the mountains, a layman. You can learn the craft of the hunter or the herdsman, and be ever near Benedicta to guard and guide her — perhaps in time to win her love from Rochus and take her for your wife.’

To these temptations I opposed my feeble strength and such aid as the blessed

Saint gave me in my great trial. The contest was long and agonising, and more than once, there in the darkness and the wilderness, which rang with my cries, I was near surrender; but at the dawning of the day I became more tranquil, and peace once more filled my heart, even as the golden light filled the great gorges of the mountain where but a few moments before were the darkness and the mist. I thought then of the suffering and death of our Saviour, who died for the redemption of the world, and most fervently I prayed that Heaven would grant me the great boon to die likewise, in a humbler way, even though it were for but one suffering being — Benedicta.

May the Lord hear my prayer!

30

The night before the Sunday on which I was to hold divine service great fires were kindled on the cliffs — a signal for the young men in the valley to come up to the mountain dairies. They came in great numbers, shouting and screaming, and were greeted with songs and shrill cries by the dairy maidens, who swung flaming torches that lit up the faces of the great rocks and sent gigantic shadows across them. It was a beautiful sight. These are indeed a happy people.

The monastery boy came in with the rest. He will remain over Sunday, and, returning, will take back the roots that I have dug. He gave me much news from the monastery. The reverend Superior is living at Saint Bartholomæ, fishing and hunting. Another thing — one which gives me great alarm — is that the Saltmaster’s son, young Rochus, is in the mountains not far from the Black Lake. It seems he has a hunting-lodge on the upper cliff, and a path leads from it directly to the lake. The boy told me this, but did not observe how I trembled when hearing it. Would that an angel with a flaming sword might guard the path to the lake, and to Benedicta!

The shouting and singing continued during the whole night, and between this and the agitation in my soul I did not close my eyes. Early the next morning the boys and girls arrived in crowds from all directions. The maidens wore silken kerchiefs twisted prettily about their heads, and had decorated themselves and their escorts with flowers.

Not being an ordained priest, it was not permitted me either to read mass or to preach a sermon, but I prayed with them and spoke to them whatever my aching heart found to say. I spoke to them of our sinfulness and God’s great mercy; of our harshness to one another and the Saviour’s love for us all; of His infinite compassion. As my words echoed from the abyss below and the heights above I felt as if I were lifted out of this world of suffering and sin and borne away on angel's wings to the radiant spheres beyond the sky! It was a solemn service, and my little congregation was awed into devotion and seemed to feel as if it stood in the Holy of Holies.

The service being concluded, I blessed the people and they quietly went away. They had not been long gone before I heard the lads send forth ringing shouts, but this did not displease me. Why should they not rejoice? Is not cheerfulness the purest praise a human heart can give?

In the afternoon I went down to Benedicta's cabin and found her at the door, making a wreath of edelweiss for the image of the Blessed Virgin, intertwining the snowy flowers with a purple blossom that looked like blood.

Seating myself beside her, I looked on at her beautiful work in silence, but in my soul was a wild tumult of emotion and a voice that cried: 'Benedicta, my love, my soul, I love you more than life! I love you above all things on earth and in Heaven!'

31

The Superior sent for me, and with a strange foreboding I followed his messenger down the difficult way to the lake and embarked in the boat. Occupied with gloomy reflections and presentiments of impending evil, I hardly observed that we had left the shore before the sound of merry voices apprised me of our arrival at St. Bartholomæ. On the beautiful meadow surrounding the dwelling of the Superior were a great number of people — priests, friars, mountaineers and hunters. Many were there who had come from afar with large retinues of servants and boys. In the house was a great bustle — a confusion and a hurrying to and fro, as during a fair. The doors stood wide open, and people ran in and out, clamouring noisily. The dogs yelped and howled as loud as they could. On a stand under the oak was a great cask of beer, and many of the people were gathered about it, drinking. Inside the house, too, there seemed to be much drinking, for I saw many men near the windows with mighty cups in their hands. On entering, I encountered throngs of servants carrying dishes of fish and game. I asked one of them when I could see the Superior. He answered that His Reverence would be down immediately after the meal, and I concluded to wait in the hall. The walls were hung with pictures of some large fish which had been caught in the lake. Below each picture the weight of the monster and the date of its capture, together with the name of the person taking it, were inscribed in large letters. I could not help interpreting these records — perhaps uncharitably — as intimations to all good Christians to pray for the souls of those whose names were inscribed.

After more than an hour the Superior descended the stairs. I stepped forward, saluting him humbly, as became my position. He nodded, eyed me sharply, and directed me to go to his apartment immediately after supper. This I did.

‘How about your soul, my son Ambrosius?’ he asked me, solemnly. ‘Has the Lord shown you grace? Have you endured the probation?’ Humbly, with my head bowed, I answered: ‘Most reverend Father, God in my solitude has given me knowledge.’

‘Of what? Of your guilt?’ This I affirmed.

‘Praise be to God!’ exclaimed the Superior. ‘I knew, my son, that solitude would speak to your soul with the tongue of an angel. I have good tidings for you. I have written in your behalf to the Bishop of Salzburg. He summons you to his palace. He will consecrate you and give you holy orders in person, and you will remain in his city. Prepare yourself, for in three days you are to leave us.’

The Superior looked sharply into my face again, but I did not permit him to see into my heart. I asked for his benediction, bowed and left him. Ah, then, it was for this that I was summoned! I am to go away forever. I must leave my very life behind me; I must renounce my care and protection of Benedicta. God help her and me!

32

I am once more in my mountain home, but tomorrow I leave it forever. But why am I sad? Does not a great blessing await me? Have I not ever looked forward to the moment of my consecration with longing, believing it would bring me the supreme happiness of my life? And now that this great joy is almost within my grasp, I am sad beyond measure.

Can I approach the altar of the Lord with a lie on my lips? Can I receive the holy sacrament as an impostor? The holy oil upon my forehead would turn to fire and burn into my brain, and I should be for ever damned.

I might fall upon my knees before the Bishop and say: ‘Expel me, for I do not seek after the love of Christ, nor after holy and heavenly things, but after the things of this world.’

If I so spoke, I should be punished, but I could endure that without a murmur.

If only I were sinless and could rightly become a priest, I could be of great service to the poor child. I should be able to give her infinite blessings and consolations. I could be her confessor and absolve her from sin, and, if I should outlive her — which God forbid! — might by my prayers even redeem her soul from Purgatory. I could read masses for the souls of her poor dead parents, already in torment.

Above all, if I succeeded in preserving her from that one great and destructive sin for which she secretly longs; if I could take her with me and place her under thy protection, O Blessed Virgin, that would be happiness indeed.

But where is the sanctuary that would receive the hangman’s daughter? I know it but too well: when I am gone from here, the Evil One, in the winning shape he has assumed, will prevail, and she will be lost in time and in eternity.

33

I have been at Benedicta’s cabin.

‘Benedicta,’ I said, ‘I am going away from here — away from the mountains — away from you.’

She grew pale, but said nothing. For a moment I was overcome with emotion; I seemed to choke, and could not continue. Presently I said: ‘Poor child, what will become of you? I know that your love for Rochus is strong and, love is like a torrent which nothing can stay. There is no safety for you but in clinging to the cross of our Saviour. Promise me that you will do so — do not let me go away in misery, Benedicta.’

‘Am I, then, so wicked?’ she said, without lifting her eyes from the ground. ‘Can I not be trusted?’

‘Ah, but, Benedicta, the enemy is strong, and you have a traitor to unbar the gates. Your own heart, poor child, will at last betray you.’

‘He will not harm me,’ she murmured. ‘You wrong him, sir, indeed you do.’

But I knew that I did not, and was all the more concerned to judge that the wolf would use the arts of the fox. Before the sacred purity of this maiden the base passions of the youth had not dared to declare themselves. But none the less I knew that an hour would come when she would have need of all her strength, and it would fail her. I grasped her arm and demanded that she take an oath that she would throw herself into the waters of the Black Lake rather than into the arms of Rochus. But she would not reply. She remained silent, her eyes fixed upon mine with a look of sadness and reproach which filled my mind with the most melancholy thoughts, and, turning away, I left her.

34

Lord, Saviour of my soul, whither hast Thou led me? Here am I in the culprit's tower, a condemned murderer, and tomorrow at sunrise I shall be taken to the gallows and hanged! For who so slays a fellow being, he shall be slain; that is the law of God and man.

On this the last day of my life I have asked that I be permitted to write, and my prayer is granted. In the name of God and in the truth I shall now set down all that occurred.

Leaving Benedicta, I returned to my cabin, and, having packed everything, waited for the boy. But he did not come: I should have to remain in the mountains another night. I grew restless. The cabin seemed too narrow to hold me; the air was too heavy and hot to sustain life. Going outside, I lay upon a rock and looked up at the sky, dark and glittering with stars. But my soul was not in the heavens; it was at the cabin by the Black Lake.

Suddenly I heard a faint, distant cry, like a human voice. I sat upright and listened, but all was still. It may have been, I thought, the note of some night-bird. I was about to lie down again, when the cry was repeated, but it seemed to come from another direction. It was the voice of Benedicta! It sounded again, and now it seemed to come from the air — from the sky above my head, and distinctly it called my name; but, O Mother of God, what anguish was in those tones!

I leapt from the rock. 'Benedicta, Benedicta!' I cried aloud. There was no reply.

'Benedicta, I am coming to thee, child!'

I sprang away in the darkness, along the path to the Black Lake. I ran and leapt, stumbling and falling over rocks and stumps of trees. My limbs were bruised, my clothing was torn, but I gave no heed; Benedicta was in distress, and I alone could save and guard her. I rushed on until I reached the Black Lake. But at the cabin all was quiet; there was neither light nor sound; everything was as peaceful as a house of God.

After waiting a long time I left. The voice that I had heard calling me could not have been Benedicta's, but must have been that of some evil spirit mocking me in my great sorrow. I meant to return to my cabin, but an invisible hand directed my steps another way; and although it led me to my death, I know it to have been the hand of the Lord.

Walking on, hardly knowing whither, and unable to find the path by which I had descended, I found myself at the foot of a precipice. Here was a narrow path leading steeply upward along the face of the cliff, and I began ascending it. After I had gone up some distance I looked above, and saw outlined against the starry sky a cabin perched upon the very verge. It flashed through my mind that this was the hunting-lodge of the Saltmaster's son, and this the path by which he visited Benedicta. Merciful Father! he, Rochus, was certain to come this way; there could be no other. I would wait for him here.

I crouched in the shadow and waited, thinking what to say to him and imploring the Lord for inspiration to change his heart and turn him from his evil purpose.

Before long I heard him approaching from above. I heard the stones displaced by his foot roll down the steep slopes and leap into the lake far below. Then I prayed God that if I should be unable to soften the youth's heart he might miss his footing and fall, too, like the stones; for it would be better that he should meet a sudden and impenitent death, and his soul be lost, than that he should live to destroy the soul of an innocent girl.

Turning at an angle of the rock, he stood directly before me as, rising, I stepped into the faint light of the new moon. He knew me at once, and in a haughty tone asked me what I wanted.

I replied mildly, explaining why I had barred his way, and begging him to go back. He insulted and derided me.

'You miserable towler,' he said, 'will you never cease meddling in my affairs? Because the mountain maids are so foolish as to praise your white teeth and your big black eyes, must you fancy yourself a man, and not a monk? You are no more to women than a goat!'

I begged him to desist and to listen to me. I threw myself on my knees and implored him, however he might despise me and my humble though holy station, to respect Benedicta and spare her. But he pushed me from him with his foot upon my breast. No longer master of myself, I sprang erect, and called him an assassin and a villain.

At this he pulled a dagger from his belt, saying: 'I will send you to Hell!'

Quick as a flash of lightning my hand was upon his wrist. I wrested the knife from him and flung it behind me, crying: 'Not with weapons, but unarmed and equal, we will fight to the death, and the Lord shall decide!'

We sprang upon each other with the fury of wild animals, and were instantly locked together with arms and hands. We struggled upward and downward along the path, with the great wall of rock on one side, and on the other the precipice, the abyss, the waters of the Black Lake! We writhed and strained for the advantage; but the Lord was against me for He permited my enemy to overcome me and throw me down on the edge of the precipice. I was in the grasp of a strong enemy, whose eyes glowed like coals of fire. His knee was on my breast and my head hung over the edge — my life was in his hands. I thought he would push me over, but he made no attempt to do so. He held me there between life and death for a dreadful time, then said, in a low, hissing voice: ‘You see, monk, if I but move I can hurl you down the abyss like a stone. But I care not to take your life, for it is no impediment to me. The girl belongs to me, and to me you shall leave her; do you understand?’

With that he rose and left me, going down the path toward the lake. His footfalls had long died away in the silent night before I was able to move hand or foot. Great God! I surely did not deserve such defeat, humiliation and pain. I had but wished to save a soul, yet Heaven permitted me to be conquered by him who would destroy it!

Finally I was able to rise, although in great pain, for I was bruised by my fall, and could still feel the fierce youth’s knee upon my breast and his fingers about my throat. I walked with difficulty back along the path, downward toward the lake. Wounded as I was, I would return to Benedicta’s cabin and interpose my body between her and harm. But my progress was slow, and I had frequently to rest; yet it was near dawn before I gave up the effort, convinced that I should be too late to do the poor child the small service of yielding up my remnant of life in her defence.

At early dawn I heard Rochus returning, with a merry song upon his lips. I concealed myself behind a rock, though not in fear, and he passed without seeing me.

At this point there was a break in the wall of the cliff, the path crossing a great crevice that clove the mountain as by a sword-stroke from the arm of a Titan. The bottom was strewn with loose boulders and overgrown with brambles and shrubs, through which trickled a slender stream of water fed by the melting snows above. Here I remained for three days and two nights. I heard the boy from the monastery calling my name as he traversed the path searching for me, but I made no answer. Not once did I quench my burning thirst at the brook nor appease my hunger with blackberries that grew abundantly on every side. Thus I mortified the sinful flesh, killed rebellious nature and subdued my spirit to the Lord until at last I felt myself delivered from all evil, freed from the bondage of an earthly love and prepared to devote my heart and soul and life to no woman but thee, O Blessed Virgin!

The Lord having wrought this miracle, my soul felt as light and free as if wings were lifting me to the skies. I praised the Lord in a loud voice, shouting and rejoicing till the rocks rang with the sound. I cried: ‘Hosanna! Hosanna! I was now prepared to go before the altar and receive the holy oil upon my head. I was no longer myself. Ambrosius, the poor erring monk, was dead; I was an instrument in the right hand of God to execute His holy will. I prayed for the delivery of the soul of the beautiful maiden, and as I prayed, behold! there appeared to me in the splendour and glory of Heaven the Lord Himself, attended by innumerable angels, filling half the sky! A great rapture enthralled my senses; I was dumb with happiness. With a smile of ineffable benignity God spake to me:

‘Because that thou hast been faithful to thy trust, and through all the trials that I have sent upon thee hast not faltered, the salvation of the sinless maiden’s soul is now indeed given into thy hand.’

‘Thou, Lord, knowest,’ I replied, ‘that I am without the means to do this work, nor know I how it is to be done.’

The Lord commanded me to rise and walk on, and, turning my face away from the glorious Presence, which filled the heart of the cloven mountain with light, I obeyed, leaving the scene of my purgation and regaining the path that led up the face of the cliff. I began the ascent, walking on and on in the splendour of the sunset, reflected from crimson clouds.

Suddenly I felt impelled to stop and look down, and there at my feet, shining red in the cloudlight, as if stained with blood, lay the sharp knife of Rochus. Now I understood why the Lord had permitted that wicked youth to conquer me, yet had moved him to spare my life. I had been reserved for a more glorious purpose. And so was placed in my hands the means to that sacred end. My God, my God, how mysterious are Thy ways!

35

‘You shall leave her to me.’ So had spoken the wicked youth while holding me between life and death at the precipice. He permitted me to live, not from Christian mercy, but because he despised my life, a trivial thing to him, not worth taking. He was sure of his prey; it did not matter if I were living or dead.

‘You shall leave her to me.’ Oh, arrogant fool! Do you not know that the Lord holds His hand over the flowers of the field and the young birds in the nest? Leave Benedicta to you? — permit you to destroy her body and her soul? Ah, you shall see how the hand of God shall be spread above her to guard and save.

There is yet time — that soul is still spotless and undefiled. Forward, then, to fulfil the command of the Most High God!

I knelt upon the spot where God had given into my hand the means of her deliverance. My soul was wholly absorbed in the mission entrusted to me. My heart was in ecstasy, and I saw plainly, as in a vision, the triumphant completion of the act which I had still to do.

I arose, and, concealing the knife in my robe, retraced my steps, going downward toward the Black Lake. The new moon looked like a divine wound in the sky, as if some hand had plunged a dagger into Heaven's holy breast.

Benedicta's door was ajar, and I stood outside a long time, gazing upon the beautiful picture presented to my eyes. A bright fire on the hearth lit up the room. Opposite the fire sat Benedicta, combing her long golden hair. Unlike what it was the last time I had stood before her cabin and gazed upon it, her face was full of happiness and had a glory that I had never imagined in it. A sensuous smile played about her lips while she sang in a low, sweet voice the air of a love song of the people. Ah me! she was beautiful; she looked like a bride of Heaven. But though her voice was that of an angel, it angered me, and I called out to her: 'What are you doing, Benedicta, so late in the evening? You sing as if you expected your lover, and arrange your hair as for a dance. It is but three days since I, your brother and only friend, left you, in sorrow and despair. And now you are as happy as a bride.'

She sprang up and manifested great joy at seeing me again, and hastened to kiss my hands. But she had no sooner glanced into my face than she uttered a scream of terror and recoiled from me as if I had been a fiend from Hell!

But I approached her and asked: 'Why do you adorn yourself so late in the night? — why are you so happy? Have the three days been long enough for you to fall? Are you the mistress of Rochus?' She stood staring at me in horror. She asked: 'Where have you been and why do you come? You look so ill! Sit, sir, I pray you, and rest. You are pale and you shake with cold. I will make you a warm drink and you will feel better.'

She was silenced by my stern gaze. 'I have not come to rest and be nursed by you,' I said. 'I am here because the Lord commands. Tell me why you sang.'

She looked up at me with the innocent expression of a babe, and replied: 'Because I had for the moment forgotten that you were going away, and I was happy.'

'Happy?'

'Yes — he has been here.'

'Who? Rochus?'

She nodded. 'He was so good,' she said. 'He will ask his father to consent to see me, and perhaps take me to his great house and persuade the Reverend Superior to remove the curse from my life. Would not that be fine? But then.' she added, with a sudden change of voice and manner, lowering her eyes, 'perhaps you would no longer care for me. It is because I am poor and friendless.'

'What! he will persuade his father to befriend you? — to take you to his home? — you, the hangman's daughter? He, this reckless youth, at war with God and God's ministers, will move the Church! Oh, lie, lie, lie! O Benedicta — lost, betrayed Benedicta! By your smiles and by your tears I know that you believe the monstrous promises of this infamous villain.'

'Yes,' she said, inclining her head as if she were making a confession of faith before the altar of the Lord, 'I believe him.'

'Kneel, then,' I cried, 'and praise the Lord for sending one of His chosen to save your soul from temporal and eternal perdition!'

At these words she trembled as in great fear.

'What do you wish me to do?' she exclaimed.

'To pray that your sins may be forgiven.'

A sudden rapturous impulse seized my soul. 'I am a priest,' I cried, 'anointed and ordained by God Himself, and in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, I forgive you your only sin, which is your love. I give you absolution without repentance. I free your soul from the taint of sin because you will atone for it with your blood and life.'

With these words, I seized her and forced her down upon her knees. But she wanted to live; she cried and wailed. She clung to my knees and entreated and implored in the name of God and the Blessed Virgin. Then she sprang to her feet and attempted to run away. I seized her again, but she broke away from my grasp and ran to the open door, crying: 'Rochus! Rochus! help, oh help!'

Springing after her, I grasped her by the shoulder, turned her half-round and plunged the knife into her breast.

I held her in my arms, pressed her against my heart and felt her warm blood upon my body. She opened her eyes and fixed upon me a look of reproach, as if I had robbed her of a life of happiness. Then her eyes slowly closed, she gave a long, shuddering sigh, her little head turned upon her shoulder, and so she died.

I wrapped the beautiful body in a white sheet, leaving the face uncovered, and laid it upon the floor. But the blood tinged the linen, so I parted her long golden hair, spreading it over the crimson roses upon her breast. As I had made her a bride of Heaven, I took from the image of the Virgin the wreath of edelweiss and placed it on Benedicta's brow; and now I remembered the edelweiss which she had once brought me to comfort me in my penance.

Then I stirred the fire, which cast upon the shrouded figure and the beautiful face a rich red light, as if God's glory had descended there to enfold her. It was caught and tangled in the golden tresses that lay upon her breast, so that they looked a mass of curling flame.

And so I left her.

36

I descended the mountain by precipitous paths, but the Lord guided my steps so that I neither stumbled nor fell into the abyss. At the dawning of the day I arrived at the monastery, rang the bell and waited until the gate was opened. The brother porter evidently thought me a fiend, for he raised a howl that aroused the whole monastery. I went straight to the room of the Superior, stood before him in my bloodstained garments, and, telling him for what deed the Lord had chosen me, informed him that I was now an ordained priest. At this they seized me, put me into the tower, and, holding court upon me, condemned me to death as if I were a murderer. Oh, the fools, the poor demented fools!

One person has come to me to-day in my dungeon, who fell upon her knees before me, kissed my hands and adored me as God's chosen instrument — Amula, the brown maiden. She alone has discovered that I have done a great and glorious deed.

I have asked Amula to chase away the vultures from my body, for Benedicta is in Heaven.

I shall soon be with her. Praise be to God! Hosanna! Amen.

[To this old manuscript are added the following lines in another hand: 'On the fifteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord, 1680, in this place, Brother Ambrosius was hanged, and on the following day his body was buried under the gallows, close to that of the girl Benedicta, whom he killed. This Benedicta, though called the hangman's daughter, was (as is now known through declarations of the youth Rochus) the bastard child of the Saltmaster by the hangman's wife. It is also veritably attested by the same youth that the maiden cherished a secret and forbidden love for him who slew her in ignorance of her passion. In all else Brother Ambrosius was a faithful servant of the Lord. Pray for him, pray for him!]

THE LAND BEYOND THE BLOW

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Thither

A crowd of men were assisting at a dog-fight. The scene was one of indescribable confusion. In the center of the tumult the dogs, obscure in a cloud of dust, rolled over and over, howling, yarring, tearing each other with sickening ferocity. About them the hardly less ferocious men shouted, cursed and struck, encouraged the animals with sibilant utterances and threatened with awful forms of death and perdition all who tried to put an end to the combat. Caught in the thick of this pitiless mob I endeavored to make my way to a place of peace, when a burly blackguard, needlessly obstructing me, said derisively: “I guess you are working pockets.”

“You are a liar!” I retorted hotly.

That is all the provocation that I remember to have given.

Sons of the Fair Star

When consciousness returned the sun was high in the heavens, yet the light was dim, and had that indefinable ghastly quality that is observed during a partial eclipse. The sun itself appeared singularly small, as if it were at an immensely greater distance than usual. Rising with some difficulty to my feet, I looked about me. I was in an open space among some trees growing on the slope of a mountain range whose summit on the one hand was obscured by a mist of a strange pinkish hue, and on the other rose into peaks glittering with snow. Skirting the base at a distance of two or three miles flowed a wide river, and beyond it a nearly level plain stretched away to the horizon, dotted with villages and farmhouses and apparently in a high state of cultivation. All was unfamiliar in its every aspect. The trees were unlike any that I had ever seen or even imagined, the trunks being mostly square and the foliage consisting of slender filaments resembling hair, in many instances long enough to reach the earth. It was of many colors, and I could not perceive that there was any prevailing one, as green is in the vegetation to which I was accustomed. As far as I could see there were no grass, no weeds, no flowers; the earth was covered with a kind of lichen, uniformly blue. Instead of rocks, great masses of metals protruded here and there, and above me on the mountain were high cliffs of what seemed to be bronze veined with brass. No animals were visible, but a few birds as uncommon in appearance as their surroundings glided through the air or perched upon the rocks. I say glided, for their motion was not true flight, their wings being mere membranes extended parallel to their sides, and having no movement independent of the body. The bird was, so to say, suspended between them and moved forward by quick strokes of a pair of enormously large webbed feet, precisely as a duck propels itself in water. All these things excited in me no surprise, nor even curiosity; they were merely unfamiliar. That which most interested me was what appeared to be a bridge several miles away, up the river, and to this I directed my steps, crossing over from the barren and desolate hills to the populous plain.

For a full history of my life and adventures in Mogon–Zwair, and a detailed description of the country, its people, their manners and customs, I must ask the reader to await the publication of a book, now in the press, entitled *A Blackened Eye*; in this brief account I can give only a few of such particulars as seem instructive by contrast with our own civilization.

The inhabitants of Mogon–Zwair call themselves Golampis, a word signifying Sons of the Fair Star. Physically they closely resemble ourselves, being in all respects the equals of the highest Caucasian type. Their hair, however, has a broader scheme of color, hair of every hue known to us, and even of some imperceptible to my eyes but brilliant to theirs, being too common to excite remark. A Golampian assemblage with uncovered heads resembles, indeed, a garden of flowers, vivid and deep in color, no two alike. They wear no clothing of any kind, excepting for adornment and protection from the weather, resembling in this the ancient Greeks and the Japanese of yesterday; nor was I ever able to make them comprehend that clothing could be worn for those reasons for which it is chiefly worn among ourselves. They are destitute of those feelings of delicacy and refinement which distinguish us from the lower animals, and which, in the opinion of our acutest and most pious thinkers, are evidences of our close relation to the Power that made us.

Among this people certain ideas which are current among ourselves as mere barren faiths expressed in disregarded platitudes receive a practical application to the affairs of life. For example, they hold, with the best, wisest and most experienced of our own race, and one other hereafter to be described, that wealth does not bring happiness and is a misfortune and an evil. None but the most ignorant and depraved, therefore, take the trouble to acquire or preserve it. A rich Golampi is naturally regarded with contempt and suspicion, is shunned by the good and respectable and subjected to police surveillance. Accustomed to a world where the rich man is profoundly and justly respected for his goodness and wisdom (manifested in part by his own deprecatory protests against the wealth of which, nevertheless, he is apparently unable to rid himself) I was at first greatly pained to observe the contumelious manner of the Golampis toward this class of men, carried in some instances to the length of personal violence; a popular amusement being the pelting them with coins. These the victims would carefully gather from the ground and carry away with them, thus increasing their hoard and making themselves all the more liable to popular indignities.

When the cultivated and intelligent Golampi finds himself growing too wealthy he proceeds to get rid of his surplus riches by some one of many easy expedients. One of these I have just described; another is to give his excess to those of his own class who have not sufficient to buy employment and so escape leisure, which is considered the greatest evil of all. “Idleness,” says one of their famous authors, “is the child of poverty and the parent of discontent”; and another great writer says: “No one is without employment; the indolent man works for his enemies.”

In conformity to these ideas the Golampis — all but the ignorant and vicious rich — look upon labor as the highest good, and the man who is so unfortunate as not to have enough money to purchase employment in some useful industry will rather engage in a useless one than not labor at all. It is not unusual to see hundreds of men carrying water from a river and pouring it into a natural ravine or artificial channel, through which it runs back into the stream. Frequently a man is seen conveying stones — or the masses of metal which there correspond to stones — from one pile to another. When all have been heaped in a single place he will convey them back again, or to a new place, and so proceed until darkness puts an end to the work. This kind of labor, however, does not confer the satisfaction derived from the consciousness of being useful, and is never performed by any person having the means to hire another to employ him in some beneficial industry. The wages usually paid to employers are from three to six *balukan* a day. This statement may seem incredible, but I solemnly assure the reader that I have known a bad workman or a feeble woman to pay as high as eight; and there have been instances of men whose incomes had outgrown their desires paying even more.

Labor being a luxury which only those in easy circumstances can afford, the poor are the more eager for it, not only because it is denied them, but because it is a sign of respectability. Many of them, therefore, indulge in it on credit and soon find themselves deprived of what little property they had to satisfy their hardfisted employers. A poor woman once complained to me that her husband spent every *rylat* that he could get in the purchase of the most expensive kinds of employment, while she and the children were compelled to content themselves with such cheap and coarse activity as dragging an old wagon round and round in a small field which a kind-hearted neighbor permitted them to use for the purpose. I afterward saw this improvident husband and unnatural father. He had just squandered all the money he had been able to beg or borrow in buying six tickets, which entitled the holder to that many days' employment in pitching hay into a barn. A week later I met him again. He was broken in health, his limbs trembled, his walk was an uncertain shuffle. Clearly he was suffering from overwork. As I paused by the wayside to speak to him a wagon loaded with hay was passing. He fixed his eyes upon it with a hungry, wolfish glare, clutched a pitchfork and leaned eagerly forward, watching the vanishing wagon with breathless attention and heedless of my salutation. That night he was arrested, streaming with perspiration, in the unlawful act of unloading that hay and putting it into its owner's barn. He was tried, convicted and sentenced to six months' detention in the House of Indolence.

The whole country is infested by a class of criminal vagrants known as *strambaltis*, or, as we should say, "tramps." These persons prowl about among the farms and villages begging for work in the name of charity. Sometimes they travel in groups, as many as a dozen together, and then the farmer dares not refuse them; and before he can notify the constabulary they will have performed a great deal of the most useful labor that they can find to do and escaped without paying a *rylat*. One trustworthy agriculturist assured me that his losses in one year from these depredations amounted to no less a sum than seven hundred *balukan*! On nearly all the larger and more isolated farms a strong force of guards is maintained during the greater part of the year to prevent these outrages, but they are frequently overpowered, and sometimes prove unfaithful to their trust by themselves working secretly by night.

The Golampi priesthood has always denounced overwork as a deadly sin, and declared useless and apparently harmless work, such as carrying water from the river and letting it flow in again, a distinct violation of the divine law, in which, however, I could never find any reference to the matter; but there has recently risen a sect which holds that all labor being pleasurable, each kind in its degree is immoral and wicked. This sect, which embraces many of the most holy and learned men, is rapidly spreading and becoming a power in the state. It has, of course, no churches, for these cannot be built without labor, and its members commonly dwell in caves and live upon such roots and berries as can be easily gathered, of which the country produces a great abundance though all are exceedingly unpalatable. These *Gropoppsu* (as the members of this sect call themselves) pass most of their waking hours sitting in the sunshine with folded hands, contemplating their navels; by the practice of which austerity they hope to obtain as reward an eternity of hard labor after death.

The Golampis are an essentially pious and religious race. There are few, indeed, who do not profess at least one religion. They are nearly all, in a certain sense, polytheists: they worship a supreme and beneficent deity by one name or another, but all believe in the existence of a subordinate and malevolent one, whom also, while solemnly execrating him in public rites, they hold at heart in such reverence that needlessly to mention his name or that of his dwelling is considered sin of a rank hardly inferior to blasphemy. I am persuaded that this singular tenderness toward a being whom their theology represents as an abominable monster, the origin of all evil and the foe to souls, is a survival of an ancient propitiatory adoration. Doubtless this wicked deity was once so feared that his conciliation was one of the serious concerns of life. He is probably as greatly feared now as at any former time, but is apparently less hated, and is by some honestly admired.

It is interesting to observe the important place held in Golampian affairs by religious persecution. The Government is a pure theocracy, all the Ministers of

State and the principal functionaries in every department of control belonging to the priesthood of the dominant church. It is popularly believed in Mogon–Zwair that persecution, even to the extent of taking life, is in the long run beneficial to the cause enduring it. This belief has, indeed, been crystallized into a popular proverb, not capable of accurate translation into our tongue, but to the effect that martyrs fertilize religion by pouring out their blood about its roots. Acting upon this belief with their characteristically logical and conscientious directness, the sacerdotal rulers of the country mercilessly afflict the sect to which themselves belong. They arrest its leading members on false charges, throw them into loathsome and unwholesome dungeons, subject them to the crudest tortures and sometimes put them to death. The provinces in which the state religion is especially strong are occasionally raided and pillaged by government soldiery, recruited for the purpose by conscription among the dissenting sects, and are sometimes actually devastated with fire and sword. The result is not altogether confirmatory of the popular belief and does not fulfil the pious hope of the governing powers who are cruel to be kind. The vitalizing efficacy of persecution is not to be doubted, but the persecuted of too feeble faith frequently thwart its beneficent intent and happy operation by apostasy.

Having in mind the horrible torments which a Golampian general had inflicted upon the population of a certain town I once ventured to protest to him that so dreadful a sum of suffering, seeing that it did not accomplish its purpose, was needless and unwise.

“Needless and unwise it may be,” said he, “and I am disposed to admit that the result which I expected from it has not followed; but why do you speak of the *sum* of suffering? I tortured those people in but a single, simple way — by skinning their legs.”

“Ah, that is very true,” said I, “but you skinned the legs of one thousand.”

“And what of that?” he asked. “Can one thousand, or ten thousand, or any number of persons suffer more agony than one? A man may have his leg broken, then his nails pulled out, then be seared with a hot iron. Here is suffering added to suffering, and the effect is really cumulative. In the true mathematical sense it is a *sum* of suffering. A single person can experience it. But consider, my dear sir. How can you add one man’s agony to another’s? They are not addable quantities. Each is an individual pain, unaffected by the other. The limit of anguish which ingenuity can inflict is that utmost pang which one man has the vitality to endure.”

I was convinced but not silenced.

The Golampians all believe, singularly enough, that truth possesses some inherent vitality and power that give it an assured prevalence over falsehood;

that a good name cannot be permanently defiled and irreparably ruined by detraction, but, like a star, shines all the brighter for the shadow through which it is seen; that justice cannot be stayed by injustice; that vice is powerless against virtue. I could quote from their great writers hundreds of utterances affirmative of these propositions. One of their poets, for example, has some striking and original lines, of which the following is a literal but unmetrical translation:

A man who is in the right has three arms,
But he whose conscience is rotten with wrong
Is stripped and confined in a metal cell.

Imbued with these beliefs, the Golampis think it hardly worth while to be truthful, to abstain from slander, to do justice and to avoid vicious actions. “The practice,” they say, “of deceit, calumniation, oppression and immorality cannot have any sensible and lasting injurious effect, and it is most agreeable to the mind and heart. Why should there be personal self-denial without commensurate general advantage?”

In consequence of these false views, affirmed by those whom they regard as great and wise, the people of Mogon–Zwair are, as far as I have observed them, the most conscienceless liars, cheats, thieves, rakes and all-round, many-sided sinners that ever were created to be damned. It was, therefore, with inexpressible joy that I received one day legal notification that I had been tried in the High Court of Conviction and sentenced to banishment to Lalugnan. My offense was that I had said that I regarded consistency as the most detestable of all vices.

An Interview with Gnarmag-Zote

Mogon–Zwair and Lalugnan, having the misfortune to lie on opposite sides of a line, naturally hate each other; so each country sends its dangerous political criminals into the other, where they usually enjoy high honors and are sometimes elevated to important office under the crown. I was therefore received in Lalugnan with hospitality and given every encouragement in prosecuting my researches into the history and intellectual life of the people. They are so extraordinary a people, inhabiting so marvelous a country, that everything which the traveler sees, hears or experiences makes a lively and lasting impression upon his mind, and the labor of a lifetime would be required to relate the observation of a single year. I shall notice here only one or two points of national character — those which differ most conspicuously from ours, and in which, consequently, they are least worthy.

With a fatuity hardly more credible than creditable, the Lalugwumps, as they call themselves, deny the immortality of the soul. In all my stay in their country I found only one person who believed in a life "beyond the grave," as we should say, though as the Lalugwumps are cannibals they would say "beyond the stomach." In testimony to the consolatory value of the doctrine of another life, I may say that this one true believer had in this life a comparatively unsatisfactory lot, for in early youth he had been struck by a flying stone from a volcano and had lost a considerable part of his brain.

I cannot better set forth the nature and extent of the Lalugwumpian error regarding this matter than by relating a conversation that occurred between me and one of the high officers of the King's household — a man whose proficiency in all the vices of antiquity, together with his service to the realm in determining the normal radius of curvature in cats' claws, had elevated him to the highest plane of political preferment. His name was Gnarmag–Zote.

"You tell me," said he, "that the soul is immaterial. Now, matter is that of which we can have knowledge through one or more of our senses. Of what is immaterial — not matter — we can gain no knowledge in that way. How, then, can we know anything about it?"

Perceiving that he did not rightly apprehend my position I abandoned it and shifted the argument to another ground. "Consider," I said, "the analogous case of a thought. You will hardly call thought material, yet we know there are thoughts."

“I beg your pardon, but we do not know that. Thought is not a thing, therefore cannot *be* in any such sense, for example, as the hand *is*. We use the word ‘thought’ to designate the result of an action of the brain, precisely as we use the word ‘speed’ to designate the result of an action of a horse’s legs. But can it be said that speed *exists* in the same way as the legs which produce it exist, or in any way? Is it a thing?”

I was about to disdain to reply, when I saw an old man approaching, with bowed head, apparently in deep distress. As he drew near he saluted my distinguished interlocutor in the manner of the country, by putting out his tongue to its full extent and moving it slowly from side to side. Gnarmag–Zote acknowledged the civility by courteously spitting, and the old man, advancing, seated himself at the great officer’s feet, saying: “Exalted Sir, I have just lost my wife by death, and am in a most melancholy frame of mind. He who has mastered all the vices of the ancients and wrested from nature the secret of the normal curvature of cats’ claws can surely spare from his wisdom a few rays of philosophy to cheer an old man’s gloom. Pray tell me what I shall do to assuage my grief.”

The reader can, perhaps, faintly conceive my astonishment when Gnarmag–Zote gravely replied: “Kill yourself.”

“Surely,” I cried, “you would not have this honest fellow procure oblivion (since you think that death is nothing else) by so rash an act!”

“An act that Gnarmag–Zote advises,” he said, coldly, “is not rash.”

“But death,” I said, “death, whatever else it may be, is an end of life. This old man is now in sorrow almost insupportable. But a few days and it will be supportable; a few months and it will have become no more than a tender melancholy. At last it will disappear, and in the society of his friends, in the skill of his cook, the profits of avarice, the study of how to be querulous and in the pursuit of loquacity, he will again experience the joys of age. Why for a present grief should he deprive himself of all future happiness?”

Gnarmag–Zote looked upon me with something like compassion. “My friend,” said he, “guest of my sovereign and my country, know that in any circumstances, even those upon which true happiness is based and conditioned, death is preferable to life. The sum of miseries in any life (here in Lalugnan at least) exceeds the sum of pleasures; but suppose that it did not. Imagine an existence in which happiness, of whatever intensity, is the rule, and discomfort, of whatever moderation, the exception. Still there is some discomfort. There is none in death, for (as it is given to us to know) that is oblivion, annihilation. True, by dying one loses his happiness as well as his sorrows, but he is not conscious of the loss. Surely, a loss of which one will never know, and which, if it operate to make him less happy, at the same time takes from him the desire and capacity and need of happiness, cannot be an evil. That is so intelligently understood among us here in Lalugnan that suicide is common, and our word for sufferer is the same as that for fool. If this good man had not been an idiot he would have taken his life as soon as he was bereaved."

"If what you say of the blessing of death is true," I said, smilingly, for I greatly prided myself on the ingenuity of my thought, "it is unnecessary to commit suicide through grief for the dead; for the more you love the more glad you should be that the object of your affection has passed into so desirable a state as death."

"So we are — those of us who have cultivated philosophy, history and logic; but this poor fellow is still under the domination of feelings inherited from a million ignorant and superstitious ancestors — for Lalugnan was once as barbarous a country as your own. The most grotesque and frightful conceptions of death, and life after death, were current; and now many of even those whose understandings are emancipated wear upon their feelings the heavy chain of heredity."

"But," said I, "granting for the sake of the argument which I am about to build upon the concession" (I could not bring myself to use the idiotic and meaningless phrase, "for the sake of argument") "that death, especially the death of a Lalugwump, is desirable, yet the act of dying, the transition state between living and being dead, may be accompanied by the most painful physical, and most terrifying mental phenomena. The moment of dissolution may seem to the exalted sensibilities of the moribund a century of horrors."

The great man smiled again, with a more intolerable benignity than before. "There is no such thing as dying," he said; "the 'transition state' is a creation of your fancy and an evidence of imperfect reason. One is at any time either alive or dead. The one condition cannot shade off into the other. There is no gradation like that between waking and sleeping. By the way, do you recognize a certain resemblance between death and a dreamless sleep?"

"Yes — death as you conceive it to be."

"Well, does any one fear sleep? Do we not seek it, court it, wish that it may be sound — that is to say, dreamless? We desire occasional annihilation — wish to be dead for eight and ten hours at a time. True, we expect to awake, but that expectation, while it may account for our alacrity in embracing sleep, cannot alter the character of the state that we cheerfully go into. Suppose we did *not* wake in the morning, never did wake! Would our mental and spiritual condition be in any respect different through all eternity from what it was during the first few hours? After how many hours does oblivion begin to be an evil? The man who loves to sleep yet hates to die might justly be granted everlasting life with everlasting insomnia."

Gnarmag–Zote paused and appeared to be lost in the profundity of his thoughts, but I could easily enough see that he was only taking breath. The old man whose grief had given this turn to the conversation had fallen asleep and was roaring in the nose like a beast. The rush of a river near by, as it poured up a hill from the ocean, and the shrill singing of several kinds of brilliant quadrupeds were the only other sounds audible. I waited deferentially for the great antiquarian, scientist and courtier to resume, amusing myself meantime by turning over the leaves of an official report by the Minister of War on a new and improved process of making thunder from snail slime. Presently the oracle spoke.

"You have been born," he said, which was true. "There was, it follows, a time when you had not been born. As we reckon time, it was probably some millions of ages. Of this considerable period you are unable to remember one unhappy moment, and in point of fact there was none. To a Lalugwump that is entirely conclusive as to the relative values of consciousness and oblivion, existence and nonexistence, life and death. This old man lying here at my feet is now, if not dreaming, as if he had never been born. Would not it be cruel and inhuman to wake him back to grief? Is it, then, kind to permit him to wake by the natural action of his own physical energies? I have given him the advice for which he asked. Believing it good advice, and seeing him too irresolute to act, it seems my clear duty to assist him."

Before I could interfere, even had I dared take the liberty to do so, Gnarmag–Zote struck the old man a terrible blow upon the head with his mace of office. The victim turned upon his back, spread his fingers, shivered convulsively and was dead.

"You need not be shocked," said the distinguished assassin, coolly: "I have but performed a sacred duty and religious rite. The religion (established first in this realm by King Skanghutch, the sixty-second of that name) consists in the worship of Death. We have sacred books, some three thousand thick volumes, said to be written by inspiration of Death himself, whom no mortal has ever seen, but who is described by our priests as having the figure of a fat young man with a red face and wearing an affable smile. In art he is commonly represented in the costume of a husbandman sowing seeds.

"The priests and sacred books teach that death is the supreme and only good — that the chief duties of man are, therefore, assassination and suicide. Conviction of these cardinal truths is universal among us, but I am sorry to say that many do not honestly live up to the faith. Most of us are commendably zealous in assassination, but slack and lukewarm in suicide. Some justify themselves in this half-hearted observance of the Law and imperfect submission to the Spirit by arguing that if they destroy themselves their usefulness in destroying others will be greatly abridged. ‘I find,’ says one of our most illustrious writers, not without a certain force, it must be confessed, ‘that I can slay many more of others than I can of myself.’

“There are still others, more distinguished for faith than works, who reason that if A kill B, B cannot kill C. So it happens that although many Lalugwumps die, mostly by the hands of others, though some by their own, the country is never wholly depopulated.”

“In my own country,” said I, “is a sect holding somewhat Lalugwumpian views of the evil of life; and among the members it is considered a sin to bestow it. The philosopher Schopenhauer taught the same doctrine, and many of our rulers have shown strong sympathetic leanings toward it by procuring the destruction of many of their own people and those of other nations in what is called war.”

“They are greatly to be commended,” said Gnarmag–Zote, rising to intimate that the conversation was at an end. I respectfully protruded my tongue while he withdrew into his palace, spitting politely and with unusual copiousness in acknowledgment. A few minutes later, but before I had left the spot, two lackeys in livery emerged from the door by which he had entered, and while one shouldered the body of the old man and carried it into the palace kitchen the other informed me that his Highness was graciously pleased to desire my company at dinner that evening. With many expressions of regret I declined the invitation, unaware that to do so was treason. With the circumstances of my escape to the island of Tamtonia the newspapers have made the world already familiar.

The Tamtonians

In all my intercourse with the Tamtonians I was treated with the most distinguished consideration and no obstacles to a perfect understanding of their social and political life were thrown in my way. My enforced residence on the island was, however, too brief to enable me to master the whole subject as I should have liked to do.

The government of Tamtonia is what is known in the language of the island as a *gilbuper*. It differs radically from any form known in other parts of the world and is supposed to have been invented by an ancient chief of the race, named Natas, who was for many centuries after his death worshiped as a god, and whose memory is still held in veneration. The government is of infinite complexity, its various functions distributed among as many officers as possible, multiplication of places being regarded as of the greatest importance, and not so much a means as an end. The Tamtonians seem to think that the highest good to which a human being can attain is the possession of an office; and in order that as many as possible may enjoy that advantage they have as many offices as the country will support, and make the tenure brief and in no way dependent on good conduct and intelligent administration of official duty. In truth, it occurs usually that a man is turned out of his office (in favor of an incompetent successor) before he has acquired sufficient experience to perform his duties with credit to himself or profit to the country. Owing to this incredible folly, the affairs of the island are badly mismanaged. Complaints are the rule, even from those who have had their way in the choice of officers. Of course there can be no such thing as a knowledge of the science of government among such a people, for it is to nobody's interest to acquire it by study of political history. There is, indeed, a prevalent belief that nothing worth knowing is to be learned from the history of other nations — not even from the history of their errors — such is this extraordinary people's national vanity! One of the most notable consequences of this universal and voluntary ignorance is that Tamtonia is the home of all the discreditable political and fiscal heresies from which many other nations, and especially our own, emancipated themselves centuries ago. They are there in vigorous growth and full flower, and believed to be of purely Tamtonian origin.

It needs hardly to be stated that in their personal affairs these people pursue an entirely different course, for if they did not there could be no profitable industries and professions among them, and no property to tax for the support of their government. In his private business a Tamtonian has as high appreciation of fitness and experience as anybody, and having secured a good man keeps him in service as long as possible.

The ruler of the nation, whom they call a *Tnediserp*, is chosen every five years but may be rechosen for five more. He is supposed to be selected by the people themselves, but in reality they have nothing to do with his selection. The method of choosing a man for *Tnediserp* is so strange that I doubt my ability to make it clear.

The adult male population of the island divides itself into two or more *seitrap*[1] Commonly there are three or four, but only two ever have any considerable numerical strength, and none is ever strong morally or intellectually. All the members of each *ytrap* profess the same political opinions, which are provided for them by their leaders every five years and written down on pieces of paper so that they will not be forgotten. The moment that any Tamtonian has read his piece of paper, or *mroftalp*, he unhesitatingly adopts all the opinions that he finds written on it, sometimes as many as forty or fifty, although these may be altogether different from, or even antagonistic to, those with which he was supplied five years before and has been advocating ever since. It will be seen from this that the Tamtonian mind is a thing whose processes no American can hope to respect, or even understand. It is instantaneously convinced without either fact or argument, and when these are afterward presented they only confirm it in its miraculous conviction; those which make against that conviction having an even stronger confirmatory power than the others. I have said any Tamtonian, but that is an overstatement. A few usually persist in thinking as they did before; or in altering their convictions in obedience to reason instead of authority, as our own people do; but they are at once assailed with the most opprobrious names, accused of treason and all manner of crimes, pelted with mud and stones and in some instances deprived of their noses and ears by the public executioner. Yet in no country is independence of thought so vaunted as a virtue, and in none is freedom of speech considered so obvious a natural right or so necessary to good government.

[1] The Tamtonian language forms its plurals most irregularly, but usually by an initial inflection. It has a certain crude and primitive grammar, but in point of orthoepy is extremely difficult. With our letters I can hardly hope to give an accurate conception of its pronunciation. As nearly as possible I write its words as they sounded to my ear when carefully spoken for my instruction by intelligent natives. It is a harsh tongue.

At the same time that each *ytrap* is supplied with its political opinions for the next five years, its leaders — who, I am told, all pursue the vocation of sharpening axes — name a man whom they wish chosen for the office of *Tnediserp*. He is usually an idiot from birth, the Tamtonians having a great veneration for such, believing them to be divinely inspired. Although few members of the *ytrap* have ever heard of him before, they at once believe him to have been long the very greatest idiot in the country; and for the next few months they do little else than quote his words and point to his actions to prove that his idiocy is of entirely superior quality to that of his opponent — a view that he himself, instructed by his discoverers, does and says all that he can to confirm. His inarticulate mumblings are everywhere repeated as utterances of profound wisdom, and the slaver that drools from his chin is carefully collected and shown to the people, evoking the wildest enthusiasm of his supporters. His opponents all this time are trying to blacken his character by the foulest conceivable falsehoods, some even going so far as to assert that he is not an idiot at all! It is generally agreed among them that if he were chosen to office the most dreadful disasters would ensue, and that, *therefore,* he will not be chosen.

To this last mentioned conviction, namely that the opposing candidate (*rehtot lacsar*) cannot possibly be chosen, I wish to devote a few words here, for it seems to me one of the most extraordinary phenomena of the human mind. It implies, of course, a profound belief in the wisdom of majorities and the error of minorities. This belief can and does in some mysterious way co-exist, in the Tamtonian understanding, with the deepest disgust and most earnest disapproval of a decision which a majority has made. It is of record, indeed, that one political *ytrap* sustained no fewer than six successive defeats without at all impairing its conviction that the right side must win. In each recurring contest this ytrap was as sure that it would succeed as it had been in all the preceding ones — and sure *because* it believed itself in the right! It has been held by some native observers that this conviction is not actually entertained, but only professed for the purpose of influencing the action of others; but this is disproved by the fact that even after the contest is decided, though the result is unknown — when nobody’s action can have effect — the leaders (ax-sharpeners) continue earnestly to “claim” this province and that, up to the very last moment of uncertainty, and the common people murder one another in the streets for the crime of doubting that the man is chosen whom the assassin was pleased to prefer. When the majority of a province has chosen one candidate and a majority of the nation another, the mental situation of the worthy Tamtonian is not over-easy of conception, but there can be no doubt that his faith in the wisdom of majorities remains unshaken.

One of the two antagonistic idiots having been chosen as ruler, it is customary to speak of him as “the choice of the people,” whereas it is obvious that he is one of the few men, seldom exceeding two or three, whom it is certainly known that nearly one-half the people regard as unfit for the position. He is less certainly “the people’s choice” than any other man in the country excepting his unsuccessful opponents; for while it is known that a large body of his countrymen did not want him, it cannot be known how many of his supporters really preferred some other person, but had no opportunity to make their preference effective.

The Tamtonians are very proud of their form of government, which gives them so much power in selecting their rulers. This power consists in the privilege of choosing between two men whom but a few had a voice in selecting from among many millions, any one of whom the rest might have preferred to either. Yet every Tamtonian is as vain of possessing this incalculably small influence as if he were a Warwick in making kings and a Bismarck in using them. He gives himself as many airs and graces as would be appropriate to the display of an honest pin-feather upon the pope’s-nose of a mooley peacock.

Each congenital idiot whom the ax-grinders name for the office of *Tnediserp* has upon the “ticket” with him a dead man, who stands or falls with his leader. There is no way of voting for the idiot without voting for the corpse also, and *vice versa*. When one of these precious couples has been chosen the idiot in due time enters upon the duties of his office and the corpse is put into an ice-chest and carefully preserved from decay. If the idiot should himself become a corpse he is buried at once and the other body is then haled out of its ice to take his place. It is propped up in the seat of authority and duly instated in power. This is the signal for a general attack upon it. It is subjected to every kind of sacrilegious indignity, vituperated as a usurper and an “accident,” struck with rotten eggs and dead cats, and undergoes the meanest misrepresentation. Its attitude in the chair, its fallen jaw, glazed eyes and degree of decomposition are caricatured and exaggerated out of all reason. Yet such as it is it must be endured for the unexpired term for which its predecessor was chosen. To guard against a possible interregnum, however, a law has recently been passed providing that if it should tumble out of the chair and be too rotten to set up again its clerks (*seiraterces*) are eligible to its place in a stated order of succession. Here we have the amazing anomaly of the rulers of a “free” people actually appointing their potential successors! — a thing inexpressibly repugnant to all our ideas of popular government, but apparently regarded in Tamtonia as a matter of course.

During the few months intervening between the ax-men’s selection of candidates and the people’s choice between those selected (a period known as the *laitnediserp ngiapmac*) the Tamtonian character is seen at its worst. There is no infamy too great or too little for the partisans of the various candidates to commit and accuse their opponents of committing. While every one of them declares, and in his heart believes, that honest arguments have greater weight than dishonest; that falsehood reacts on the falsifier's cause; that appeals to passion and prejudice are as ineffectual as dishonorable, few have the strength and sense to deny themselves the luxury of all these methods and worse ones. The laws against bribery, made by themselves, are set at naught and those of civility and good breeding are forgotten. The best of friends quarrel and openly insult one another. The women, who know almost as little of the matters at issue as the men, take part in the abominable discussions; some even encouraging the general demoralization by showing themselves at the public meetings, sometimes actually putting themselves into uniform and marching in procession with banners, music and torchlights.

I feel that this last statement will be hardly understood without explanation. Among the agencies employed by the Tamtonians to prove that one set of candidates is better than another, or to show that one political policy is more likely than another to promote the general prosperity, a high place is accorded to colored rags, flames of fire, noises made upon brass instruments, inarticulate shouts, explosions of gunpowder and lines of men walking and riding through the streets in cheap and tawdry costumes more or less alike. Vast sums of money are expended to procure these strange evidences of the personal worth of candidates and the political sanity of ideas. It is very much as if a man should paint his nose pea-green and stand on his head to convince his neighbors that his pigs are fed on acorns. Of course the money subscribed for these various controversial devices is not all wasted; the greater part of it is pocketed by the ax-grinders by whom it is solicited, and who have invented the system. That they have invented it for their own benefit seems not to have occurred to the dupes who pay for it. In the universal madness everybody believes whatever monstrous and obvious falsehood is told by the leaders of his own *ytrap,* and nobody listens for a moment to the exposures of their rascality. Reason has flown shrieking from the scene; Caution slumbers by the wayside with unbuttoned pocket. It is the opportunity of thieves!

With a view to abating somewhat the horrors of this recurring season of depravity, it has been proposed by several wise and decent Tamtonians to extend the term of office of the *Tnediserp* to six years instead of five, but the sharpeners of axes are too powerful to be overthrown. They have made the people believe that if the man whom the country chooses to rule it because it thinks him wise and good were permitted to rule it too long it would be impossible to displace him in punishment for his folly and wickedness. It is, indeed, far more likely that the term of office will be reduced to four years than extended to six. The effect can be no less than hideous!

In Tamtonia there is a current popular saying dating from many centuries back and running this way: “*Eht eciffo dluohs kees eht nam, ton eht nam eht eciffo*” — which may be translated thus: “No citizen ought to try to secure power for himself, but should be selected by others for his fitness to exercise it.” The sentiment which this wise and decent phrase expresses has long ceased to have a place in the hearts of those who are everlastingly repeating it, but with regard to the office of *Tnediserp* it has still a remnant of the vitality of habit. This, however, is fast dying out, and a few years ago one of the congenital idiots who was a candidate for the highest dignity boldly broke the inhibition and made speeches to the people in advocacy of himself, all over the country. Even more recently another has uttered his preferences in much the same way, but with this difference: he did his speechmaking at his own home, the ax-grinders in his interest rounding up audiences for him and herding them before his door. One of the two corpses, too, was galvanized into a kind of ghastly activity and became a talking automaton; but the other had been too long dead. In a few years more the decent tradition that a man should not blow his own horn will be obsolete in its application to the high office, as it is to all the others, but the popular saying will lose none of its currency for that.

To the American mind nothing can be more shocking than the Tamtonian practice of openly soliciting political preferment and even paying money to assist in securing it. With us such immodesty would be taken as proof of the offender’s unfitness to exercise the power which he asks for, or bear the dignity which, in soliciting it, he belittles. Yet no Tamtonian ever refused to take the hand of a man guilty of such conduct, and there have been instances of fathers giving these greedy vulgarians the hands of their daughters in marriage and thereby assisting to perpetuate the species. The kind of government given by men who go about begging for the right to govern can be more easily imagined than endured. In short, I cannot help thinking that when, unable longer to bear with patience the evils entailed by the vices and follies of its inhabitants, I sailed away from the accursed island of Tamtonia, I left behind me the most pestilent race of rascals and ignoramuses to be found anywhere in the universe; and I never can sufficiently thank the divine Power who spared me the disadvantage and shame of being one of them, and cast my lot in this favored land of goodness and right reason, the blessed abode of public morality and private worth — of liberty, conscience and common sense.

I was not, however, to reach it without further detention in barbarous countries. After being at sea four days I was seized by my mutinous crew, set ashore upon an island, and having been made insensible by a blow upon the head was basely abandoned.

Marooned on Ug

When I regained my senses I found myself lying on the strand a short remove from the margin of the sea. It was high noon and an insupportable itching pervaded my entire frame, that being the effect of sunshine in that country, as heat is in ours. Having observed that the discomfort was abated by the passing of a light cloud between me and the sun, I dragged myself with some difficulty to a clump of trees near by and found permanent relief in their shade. As soon as I was comfortable enough to examine my surroundings I saw that the trees were of metal, apparently copper, with leaves of what resembled pure silver, but may have contained alloy. Some of the trees bore burnished flowers shaped like bells, and in a breeze the tinkling as they clashed together was exceedingly sweet. The grass with which the open country was covered as far as I could see amongst the patches of forest was of a bright scarlet hue, excepting along the water-courses, where it was white. Lazily cropping it at some little distance away, or lying in it, indolently chewing the cud and attended by a man half-clad in skins and bearing a crook, was a flock of tigers. My travels in New Jersey having made me proof against surprise, I contemplated these several visible phenomena without emotion, and with a merely expectant interest in what might be revealed by further observation.

The tigerherd having perceived me, now came striding forward, brandishing his crook and shaking his fists with great vehemence, gestures which I soon learned were, in that country, signs of amity and good-will. But before knowing that fact I had risen to my feet and thrown myself into a posture of defense, and as he approached I led for his head with my left, following with a stiff right upon his solar plexus, which sent him rolling on the grass in great pain. After learning something of the social customs of the country I felt extreme mortification in recollecting this breach of etiquette, and even to this day I cannot think upon it without a blush.

Such was my first meeting with Jogogle–Zadester, Pastor–King of Ug, the wisest and best of men. Later in our acquaintance, when I had for a long time been an honored guest at his court, where a thousand fists were ceremoniously shaken under my nose daily, he explained that my luke-warm reception of his hospitable advances gave him, for the moment, an unfavorable impression of my breeding and culture.

The island of Ug, upon which I had been marooned, lies in the Southern

Hemisphere, but has neither latitude nor longitude. It has an area of nearly seven hundred square *samtains* and is peculiar in shape, its width being considerably greater than its length. Politically it is a limited monarchy, the right of succession to the throne being vested in the sovereign's father, if he have one; if not in his grandfather, and so on upward in the line of ascent. (As a matter of fact there has not within historic times been a legitimate succession, even the great and good Jogogle–Zadester being a usurper chosen by popular vote.) To assist him in governing, the King is given a parliament, the Uggard word for which is *gabagab*, but its usefulness is greatly circumscribed by the *Blubosh*, or Constitution, which requires that every measure, in order to become a law, shall have an affirmative majority of the actual members, yet forbids any member to vote who has not a distinct pecuniary interest in the result. I was once greatly amused by a spirited contest over a matter of harbor improvement, each of two proposed harbors having its advocates. One of these gentlemen, a most eloquent patriot, held the floor for hours in advocacy of the port where he had an interest in a projected mill for making dead kittens into cauliflower pickles; while other members were being vigorously persuaded by one who at the other place had a clam ranch. In a debate in the Uggard *gabagab* no one can have a "standing" except a party in interest; and as a consequence of this enlightened policy every bill that is passed is found to be most intelligently adapted to its purpose.

The original intent of this requirement was that members having no pecuniary interest in a proposed law at the time of its inception should not embarrass the proceedings and pervert the result; but the inhibition is now thought to be sufficiently observed by formal public acceptance of a nominal bribe to vote one way or the other. It is of course understood that behind the nominal bribe is commonly a more substantial one of which there is no record. To an American accustomed to the incorrupt methods of legislation in his own country the spectacle of every member of the Uggard *gabagab* qualifying himself to vote by marching up, each in his turn as his name is called, to the proponent of the bill, or to its leading antagonist, and solemnly receiving a *tonusi* (the smallest coin of the realm) is exceedingly novel. When I ventured to mention to the King my lack of faith in the principle upon which this custom is founded, he replied:

"Heart of my soul, if you and your compatriots distrust the honesty and intelligence of an interested motive why is it that in your own courts of law, as you describe them, no private citizen can institute a civil action to right the wrongs of anybody but himself?"

I had nothing to say and the King proceeded: "And why is it that your judges will listen to no argument from any one who has not acquired a selfish concern in the matter?"

"O, your Majesty," I answered with animation, "they listen to attorneys-general, district attorneys and salaried officers of the law generally, whose prosperity depends in no degree upon their success; who prosecute none but those whom they believe to be guilty; who are careful to present no false nor misleading testimony and argument; who are solicitous that even the humblest accused person shall be accorded every legal right and every advantage to which he is entitled; who, in brief, are animated by the most humane sentiments and actuated by the purest and most unselfish motives."

The King's discomfiture was pitiful: he retired at once from the capital and passed a whole year pasturing his flock of tigers in the solitudes beyond the River of Wine. Seeing that I would henceforth be *persona non grata* at the palace, I sought obscurity in the writing and publication of books. In this vocation I was greatly assisted by a few standard works that had been put ashore with me in my sea-chest.

The literature of Ug is copious and of high merit, but consists altogether of fiction — mainly history, biography, theology and novels. Authors of exceptional excellence receive from the state marks of signal esteem, being appointed to the positions of laborers in the Department of Highways and Cemeteries. Having been so fortunate as to win public favor and attract official attention by my locally famous works, "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," "David Copperfield," "Pilgrim's Progress," and "Ben Hur," I was myself that way distinguished and my future assured. Unhappily, through ignorance of the duties and dignities of the position I had the mischance to accept a gratuity for sweeping a street crossing and was compelled to flee for my life.

Disguising myself as a sailor I took service on a ship that sailed due south into the unknown Sea.

It is now many years since my marooning on Ug, but my recollection of the country, its inhabitants and their wonderful manners and customs is exceedingly vivid. Some small part of what most interested me I shall here set down.

The Uggards are, or fancy themselves, a warlike race: nowhere in those distant seas are there any islanders so vain of their military power, the consciousness of which they acquired chiefly by fighting one another. Many years ago, however, they had a war with the people of another island kingdom, called Wug. The Wuggards held dominion over a third island, Scamadumclitchclitch, whose people had tried to throw off the yoke. In order to subdue them — at least to tears — it was decided to deprive them of garlic, the sole article of diet known to them and the Wuggards, and in that country dug out of the ground like coal. So the Wuggards in the rebellious island stopped up all the garlic mines, supplying their own needs by purchase from foreign trading proas. Having few cowrie shells, with which to purchase, the poor Scamadumclitchclitchians suffered a great distress, which so touched the hearts of the compassionate Uggards — a most humane and conscientious people — that they declared war against the Wuggards and sent a fleet of proas to the relief of the sufferers. The fleet established a strict blockade of every port in Scamadumclitchclitch, and not a clove of garlic could enter the island. That compelled the Wuggard army of occupation to reopen the mines for its own subsistence.

All this was told to me by the great and good and wise Jogogle–Zadester, King of Ug.

“But, your Majesty,” I said, “what became of the poor Scamadumclitchclitchians?”

“They all died,” he answered with royal simplicity.

“Then your Majesty’s humane intervention,” I said, “was not entirely — well, fattening?”

“The fortune of war,” said the King, gravely, looking over my head to signify that the interview was at an end; and I retired from the Presence on hands and feet, as is the etiquette in that country.

As soon as I was out of hearing I threw a stone in the direction of the palace and said: “I never in my life heard of such a cold-blooded scoundrel!”

In conversation with the King’s Prime Minister, the famous Grumsquutzy, I asked him how it was that Ug, being a great military power, was apparently without soldiers.

“Sir,” he replied, courteously shaking his fist under my nose in sign of amity, “know that when Ug needs soldiers she enlists them. At the end of the war they are put to death.”

“Visible embodiment of a great nation’s wisdom,” I said, “far be it from me to doubt the expediency of that military method; but merely as a matter of economy would it not be better to keep an army in time of peace than to be compelled to create one in time of war?”

“Ug is rich,” he replied; “we do not have to consider matters of economy. There is among our people a strong and instinctive distrust of a standing army.”

“What are they afraid of,” I asked — what do they fear that it will do?”

“It is not what the army may do,” answered the great man, “but what it may prevent others from doing. You must know that we have in this land a thing known as Industrial Discontent.”

“Ah, I see,” I exclaimed, interrupting—”the industrial classes fear that the army may destroy, or at least subdue, their discontent.”

The Prime Minister reflected profoundly, standing the while, in order that he might assist his faculties by scratching himself, even as we, when thinking, scratch our heads.

"No," he said presently; "I don't think that is quite what they apprehend — they and the writers and statesmen who speak for them. As I said before, what is feared in a case of industrial discontent is the army's preventive power. But I am myself uncertain what it is that these good souls dislike to have the army prevent. I shall take the customary means to learn."

Having occasion on the next day to enter the great audience hall of the palace I observed in gigantic letters running across the entire side opposite the entrance this surprising inscription:

"In a strike, what do you fear that the army will prevent which ought to be done?"

Facing the entrance sat Grumsquutzy, in his robes of office and surrounded by an armed guard. At a little distance stood two great black slaves, each bearing a scourge of thongs. All about them the floor was slippery with blood. While I wondered at all this two policemen entered, having between them one whom I recognized as a professional Friend of the People, a great orator, keenly concerned for the interests of Labor. Shown the inscription and unable or unwilling to answer, he was given over to the two blacks and, being stripped to the skin, was beaten with the whips until he bled copiously and his cries resounded through the palace. His ears were then shorn away and he was thrown into the street. Another Friend of the People was brought in, and treated in the same way; and the inquiry was continued, day after day, until all had been interrogated. But Grumsquutzy got no answer.

A most extraordinary and interesting custom of the Uggards is called the *Naganag* and has existed, I was told, for centuries. Immediately after every war, and before the returned army is put to death, the chieftains who have held high command and their official head, the Minister of National Displeasure, are conducted with much pomp to the public square of Nabootka, the capital. Here all are stripped naked, deprived of their sight with a hot iron and armed with a club each. They are then locked in the square, which has an inclosing wall thirty *clowgebs* high. A signal is given and they begin to fight. At the end of three days the place is entered and searched. If any of the dead bodies has an unbroken bone in it the survivors are boiled in wine; if not they are smothered in butter.

Upon the advantages of this custom — which surely has not its like in the whole world — I could get little light. One public official told me its purpose was "peace among the victorious"; another said it was "for gratification of the military instinct in high places," though if that is so one is disposed to ask "What was the war for?" The Prime Minister, profoundly learned in all things else, could not enlighten me, and the commander-in-chief in the Wuggard war could only tell me, while on his way to the public square, that it was "to vindicate the truth of history."

In all the wars in which Ug has engaged in historic times that with Wug was the most destructive of life. Excepting among the comparatively few troops that had the hygienic and preservative advantage of personal collision with the enemy, the mortality was appalling. Regiments exposed to the fatal conditions of camp life in their own country died like flies in a frost. So pathetic were the pleas of the sufferers to be led against the enemy and have a chance to live that none hearing them could forbear to weep. Finally a considerable number of them went to the seat of war, where they began an immediate attack upon a fortified city, for their health; but the enemy's resistance was too brief materially to reduce the death rate and the men were again in the hands of their officers. On their return to Ug they were so few that the public executioners charged with the duty of reducing the army to a peace footing were themselves made ill by inactivity.

As to the navy, the war with Wug having shown the Uggard sailors to be immortal, their government knows not how to get rid of them, and remains a great sea power in spite of itself. I ventured to suggest mustering out, but neither the King nor any Minister of State was able to form a conception of any method of reduction and retrenchment but that of the public headsman.

It is said — I do not know with how much truth — that the defeat of Wug was made easy by a certain malicious prevision of the Wuggards themselves: something of the nature of heroic self-sacrifice, the surrender of a present advantage for a terrible revenge in the future. As an instance, the commander of the fortified city already mentioned is reported to have ordered his garrison to kill as few of their assailants as possible.

"It is true," he explained to his subordinates, who favored a defense to the death—"it is true this will lose us the place, but there are other places; you have not thought of that."

They had not thought of that.

"It is true, too, that we shall be taken prisoners, but" — and he smiled grimly —"we have fairly good appetites, and we must be fed. That will cost something, I take it. But that is not the best of it. Look at that vast host of our enemies — each one of them a future pensioner on a fool people. If there is among us one man who would willingly deprive the Uggard treasury of a single dependent — who would spare the Uggard pigs one *gukwam* of expense, let the traitor stand forth."

No traitor stood forth, and in the ensuing battles the garrison, it is said, fired only blank cartridges, and such of the assailants as were killed incurred that mischance by falling over their own feet.

It is estimated by Wuggard statisticians that in twenty years from the close of the war the annual appropriation for pensions in Ug will amount to no less than one hundred and sixty *gumdums* to every enlisted man in the kingdom. But they know not the Uggard customs of exterminating the army.

The Dog in Ganegwag

A about the end of the thirty-seventh month of our voyage due south from Ug we sighted land, and although the coast appeared wild and inhospitable, the captain decided to send a boat ashore in search of fresh water and provisions, of which we were in sore need. I was of the boat's crew and thought myself fortunate in being able to set foot again upon the earth. There were seven others in the landing party, including the mate, who commanded.

Selecting a sheltered cove, which appeared to be at the mouth of a small creek, we beached the boat, and leaving two men to guard it started inland toward a grove of trees. Before we reached it an animal came out of it and advanced confidently toward us, showing no signs of either fear or hostility. It was a hideous creature, not altogether like anything that we had ever seen, but on its close approach we recognized it as a dog, of an unimaginably loathsome breed. As we were nearly famished one of the sailors shot it for food. Instantly a great crowd of persons, who had doubtless been watching us from among the trees, rushed upon us with fierce exclamations and surrounded us, making the most threatening gestures and brandishing unfamiliar weapons. Unable to resist such odds we were seized, bound with cords and dragged into the forest almost before we knew what had happened to us. Observing the nature of our reception the ship's crew hastily weighed anchor and sailed away. We never again saw them.

Beyond the trees concealing it from the sea was a great city, and thither we were taken. It was Gumammam, the capital of Ganegwag, whose people are dog-worshipers. The fate of my companions I never learned, for although I remained in the country for seven years, much of the time as a prisoner, and learned to speak its language, no answer was ever given to my many inquiries about my unfortunate friends.

The Ganegwagians are an ancient race with a history covering a period of ten thousand *supintroes*. In stature they are large, in color blue, with crimson hair and yellow eyes. They live to a great age, sometimes as much as twenty *supintroes*, their climate being so wholesome that even the aged have to sail to a distant island in order to die. Whenever a sufficient number of them reach what they call "the age of going away" they embark on a government ship and in the midst of impressive public rites and ceremonies set sail for "the Isle of the Happy Change." Of their strange civilization, their laws, manners and customs, their copper clothing and liquid houses I have written — at perhaps too great length — in my famous book, “Ganegwag the Incredible.” Here I shall confine myself to their religion, certainly the most amazing form of superstition in the world.

Nowhere, it is believed, but in Ganegwag has so vile a creature as the dog obtained general recognition as a deity. There this filthy beast is considered so divine that it is freely admitted to the domestic circle and cherished as an honored guest. Scarcely a family that is able to support a dog is without one, and some have as many as a half-dozen. Indeed, the dog is the special deity of the poor, those families having most that are least able to maintain them. In some sections of the country, particularly the southern and southwestern provinces, the number of dogs is estimated to be greater than that of the children, as is the cost of their maintenance. In families of the rich they are fewer in number, but more sacredly cherished, especially by the female members, who lavish upon them a wealth of affection not always granted to the husband and children, and distinguish them with indescribable attentions and endearments.

Nowhere is the dog compelled to make any other return for all this honor and benefaction than a fawning and sycophantic demeanor toward those who bestow them and an insulting and injurious attitude toward strangers who have dogs of their own, and toward other dogs. In any considerable town of the realm not a day passes but the public newsman relates in the most matter-of-fact and unsympathetic way to his circle of listless auditors painful instances of human beings, mostly women and children, bitten and mangled by these ferocious animals without provocation.

In addition to these ravages of the dog in his normal state are a vastly greater number of outrages committed by the sacred animal in the fury of insanity, for he has an hereditary tendency to madness, and in that state his bite is incurable, the victim awaiting in the most horrible agony the sailing of the next ship to the Isle of the Happy Change, his suffering imperfectly medicined by expressions of public sympathy for the dog.

A cynical citizen of Gumammam said to the writer of this narrative: “My countrymen have three hundred kinds of dogs, and only one way to hang a thief.” Yet all the dogs are alike in this, that none is respectable.

Withal, it must be said of this extraordinary people that their horrible religion is free from the hollow forms and meaningless ceremonies in which so many superstitions of the lower races find expression. It is a religion of love, practical, undemonstrative, knowing nothing of pageantry and spectacle. It is hidden in the lives and hearts of the people; a stranger would hardly know of its existence as a distinct faith. Indeed, other faiths and better ones (one of them having some resemblance to a debased form of Christianity) co-exist with it, sometimes in the same mind. Cynolatry is tolerant so long as the dog is not denied an equal divinity with the deities of other faiths. Nevertheless, I could not think of the people of Ganegwag without contempt and loathing; so it was with no small joy that I sailed for the contiguous island of Ghargaroo to consult, according to my custom, the renowned statesman and philosopher, Juptka–Getch, who was accounted the wisest man in all the world, and held in so high esteem that no one dared speak to him without the sovereign’s permission, countersigned by the Minister of Morals and Manners.

A Conflagration in Ghargaroo

Through the happy accident of having a mole on the left side of my nose, as had also a cousin of the Prime Minister, I obtained a royal rescript permitting me to speak to the great Juptka–Getch, and went humbly to his dwelling, which, to my astonishment, I found to be an unfurnished cave in the side of a mountain. Inexpressibly surprised to observe that a favorite of the sovereign and the people was so meanly housed, I ventured, after my salutation, to ask how this could be so. Regarding me with an indulgent smile, the venerable man, who was about two hundred and fifty years old and entirely bald, explained.

"In one of our Sacred Books, of which we have three thousand," said he, "it is written, '*Golooloo ek wakwah betenka*,' and in another, '*Jebeb uq seedroy im aboltraqu ocrux ti smelkit*.'"

Translated, these mean, respectively, "The poor are blessed," and, "Heaven is not easily entered by those who are rich."

I asked Juptka–Getch if his countrymen really gave to these texts a practical application in the affairs of life.

"Why, surely," he replied, "you cannot think us such fools as to disregard the teachings of our gods! That would be madness. I cannot imagine a people so mentally and morally depraved as that! Can you?"

Observing me blushing and stammering, he inquired the cause of my embarrassment. "The thought of so incredible a thing confuses me," I managed to reply. "But tell me if in your piety and wisdom you really stripped yourself of all your property in order to obey the gods and get the benefit of indigence."

"I did not have to do so," he replied with a smile; "my King attended to that. When he wishes to distinguish one of his subjects by a mark of his favor, he impoverishes him to such a degree as will attest the exact measure of the royal approbation. I am proud to say that he took from me all that I had."

"But, pardon me," I said; "how does it occur that among a people which regards poverty as the greatest earthly good all are not poor? I observe here as much wealth and 'prosperity' as in my own country."

Juptka–Getch smiled and after a few moments answered: "The only person in this country that owns anything is the King; in the service of his people he afflicts himself with that burden. All property, of whatsoever kind, is his, to do with as he will. He divides it among his subjects in the ratio of their demerit, as determined by the *waguks* — local officers — whose duty it is to know personally every one in their jurisdiction. To the most desperate and irreclaimable criminals is allotted the greatest wealth, which is taken from them, little by little, as they show signs of reformation."

"But what," said I, "is to prevent the wicked from becoming poor at any time? How can the King and his officers keep the unworthy, suffering the punishment and peril of wealth, from giving it away?"

"To whom, for example?" replied the illustrious man, taking the forefinger of his right hand into his mouth, as is the fashion in Ghargaroo when awaiting an important communication. The respectful formality of the posture imperfectly concealed the irony of the question, but I was not of the kind to be easily silenced.

"One might convert one's property into money," I persisted, "and throw the money into the sea."

Juptka–Getch released the finger and gravely answered: "Every person in Ghargaroo is compelled by law to keep minute accounts of his income and expenditures, and must swear to them. There is an annual appraisement by the *waguk*, and any needless decrease in the value of an estate is punished by breaking the offender's legs. Expenditures for luxuries and high living are, of course, approved, for it is universally known among us, and attested by many popular proverbs, that the pleasures of the rich are vain and disappointing. So they are considered a part of the punishment, and not only allowed but required. A man sentenced to wealth who lives frugally, indulging in only rational and inexpensive delights, has his ears cut off for the first offense, and for the second is compelled to pass six months at court, participating in all the gaieties, extravagances and pleasures of the capital, and — —"

"Most illustrious of mortals," I said, turning a somersault — the Ghargarese manner of interrupting a discourse without offense—"I am as the dust upon your beard, but in my own country I am esteemed no fool, and right humbly do I perceive that you are *ecxroptug nemk puttog peleemy*."

This expression translates, literally, "giving me a fill," a phrase without meaning in our tongue, but in Ghargarese it appears to imply incredulity.

"The gaieties of the King's court," I continued, "must be expensive. The courtiers of the sovereign's entourage, the great officers of the realm — surely they are not condemned to wealth, like common criminals!"

"My son," said Juptka–Getch, tearing out a handful of his beard to signify his tranquillity under accusation, "your doubt of my veracity is noted with satisfaction, but it is not permitted to you to impeach my sovereign's infallible knowledge of character. His courtiers, the great officers of the realm, as you truly name them, are the richest men in the country because he knows them to be the greatest rascals. After each annual reapportionment of the national wealth he settles upon them the unallotted surplus."

Prostrating myself before the eminent philosopher, I craved his pardon for my doubt of his sovereign's wisdom and consistency, and begged him to cut off my head.

"Nay," he said, "you have committed the unpardonable sin and I cannot consent to bestow upon you the advantages of death. You shall continue to live the thing that you are."

"What!" I cried, remembering the Lalugwumps and Gnarmag–Zote, "is it thought in Ghargaroo that death is an advantage, a blessing?"

"Our Sacred Books," he said, "are full of texts affirming the vanity of life."

"Then," I said, "I infer that the death penalty is unknown to your laws!"

"We have the life penalty instead. Convicted criminals are not only enriched, as already explained, but by medical attendance kept alive as long as possible. On the contrary, the very righteous, who have been rewarded with poverty, are permitted to die whenever it pleases them.

"Do not the Sacred Books of your country teach the vanity of life, the blessedness of poverty and the wickedness of wealth?"

"They do, O Most Illustrious, they do."

"And your countrymen believe?"

"Surely — none but the foolish and depraved entertain a doubt."

"Then I waste my breath in expounding laws and customs already known to you. You have, of course, the same."

At this I averted my face and blushed so furiously that the walls of the cave were illuminated with a wavering crimson like the light of a great conflagration! Thinking that the capital city was ablaze, Juptka–Getch ran from the cave's mouth, crying, "Fire, fire!" and I saw him no more.

An Execution in Batrugia

My next voyage was not so prosperous. By violent storms lasting seven weeks, during which we saw neither the sun nor the stars, our ship was driven so far out of its course that the captain had no knowledge of where we were. At the end of that period we were blown ashore and wrecked on a coast so wild and desolate that I had never seen anything so terrifying. Through a manifest interposition of Divine Providence I was spared, though all my companions perished miserably in the waves that had crushed the ship among the rocks.

As soon as I was sufficiently recovered from my fatigue and bruises, and had rendered thanks to merciful Heaven for my deliverance, I set out for the interior of the country, taking with me a cutlas for protection against wild beasts and a bag of sea-biscuit for sustenance. I walked vigorously, for the weather was then cool and pleasant, and after I had gone a few miles from the inhospitable coast I found the country open and level. The earth was covered with a thick growth of crimson grass, and at wide intervals were groups of trees. These were very tall, their tops in many instances invisible in a kind of golden mist, or haze, which proved to be, not a transient phenomenon, but a permanent one, for never in that country has the sun been seen, nor is there any night. The haze seems to be self-luminous, giving a soft, yellow light, so diffused that shadows are unknown. The land is abundantly supplied with pools and rivulets, whose water is of a beautiful orange color and has a pleasing perfume somewhat like attar of rose. I observed all this without surprise and with little apprehension, and went forward, feeling that anything, however novel and mysterious, was better than the familiar terrors of the sea and the coast.

After traveling a long time, though how long I had not the means to determine, I arrived at the city of Momgamwo, the capital of the kingdom of Batrugia, on the mainland of the Hidden Continent, where it is always twelve o’clock.

The Batrugians are of gigantic stature, but mild and friendly disposition. They offered me no violence, seeming rather amused by my small stature. One of them, who appeared to be a person of note and consequence, took me to his house (their houses are but a single story in height and built of brass blocks), set food before me, and by signs manifested the utmost good will. A long time afterward, when I had learned the language of the country, he explained that he had recognized me as an American pigmy, a race of which he had some little knowledge through a letter from a brother, who had been in my country. He showed me the letter, of which the chief part is here presented in translation:

"You ask me, my dear Tgnagogu, to relate my adventures among the Americans, as they call themselves. My adventures were very brief, lasting altogether not more than three *gumkas*, and most of the time was passed in taking measures for my own safety.

"My skyship, which had been driven for six moons before an irresistible gale, passed over a great city just at daylight one morning, and rather than continue the voyage with a lost reckoning I demanded that I be permitted to disembark. My wish was respected, and my companions soared away without me. Before night I had escaped from the city, by what means you know, and with my remarkable experiences in returning to civilization all Batrugia is familiar. The description of the strange city I have reserved for you, by whom only could I hope to be believed. Nyork, as its inhabitants call it, is a city of inconceivable extent — not less, I should judge, than seven square *glepkeps*! Of the number of its inhabitants I can only say that they are as the sands of the desert. They wear clothing — of a hideous kind, 'tis true — speak an apparently copious though harsh language, and seem to have a certain limited intelligence. They are puny in stature, the tallest of them being hardly higher than my breast.

"Nevertheless, Nyork is a city of giants. The magnitude of all things artificial there is astounding! My dear Tgnagogu, words can give you no conception of it. Many of the buildings, I assure you, are as many as fifty *sprugas* in height, and shelter five thousand persons each. And these stupendous structures are so crowded together that to the spectator in the narrow streets below they seem utterly devoid of design and symmetry — mere monstrous aggregations of brick, stone and metal — mountains of masonry, cliffs and crags of architecture hanging in the sky!

"A city of giants inhabited by pigmies! For you must know, oh friend of my liver, that the rearing of these mighty structures could not be the work of the puny folk that swarm in ceaseless activity about their bases. These fierce little savages invaded the island in numbers so overwhelming that the giant builders had to flee before them. Some escaped across great bridges which, with the help of their gods, they had suspended in the air from bank to bank of a wide river parting the island from the mainland, but many could do no better than mount some of the buildings that they had reared, and there, in these inaccessible altitudes, they dwell to-day, still piling stone upon stone. Whether they do this in obedience to their instinct as builders, or in hope to escape by way of the heavens, I had not the means to learn, being ignorant of the pigmy tongue and in continual fear of the crowds that followed me.

"You can see the giants toiling away up there in the sky, laying in place the enormous beams and stones which none but they could handle. They look no bigger than beetles, but you know that they are many *sprugas* in stature, and you shudder to think what would ensue if one should lose his footing. Fancy that great bulk whirling down to earth from so dizzy an altitude!...

“May birds ever sing above your grave.

“JOQUOLK WAK MGAPY.”

By my new friend, Tgnagogu, I was presented to the King, a most enlightened monarch, who not only reigned over, but ruled absolutely, the most highly civilized people in the world. He received me with gracious hospitality, quartered me in the palace of his Prime Minister, gave me for wives the three daughters of his Lord Chamberlain, and provided me with an ample income from the public revenues. Within a year I had made a fair acquaintance with the Batrugian language, and was appointed royal interpreter, with a princely salary, although no one speaking any other tongue, myself and two native professors of rhetoric excepted, had ever been seen in the kingdom.

One day I heard a great tumult in the street, and going to a window saw, in a public square opposite, a crowd of persons surrounding some high officials who were engaged in cutting off a man’s head. Just before the executioner delivered the fatal stroke, the victim was asked if he had anything to say. He explained with earnestness that the deed for which he was about to suffer had been inspired and commanded by a brass-headed cow and four bushels of nightingales’ eggs!

“Hold! hold!” I shouted in Batrugian, leaping from the window and forcing a way through the throng; “the man is obviously insane!”

“Friend,” said a man in a long blue robe, gently restraining me, “it is not proper for you to interrupt these high proceedings with irrelevant remarks. The luckless gentleman who, in accordance with my will as Lord Chief Justice, has just had the happiness to part with his head was so inconsiderate as to take the life of a fellow-subject.”

“But he was insane,” I persisted, “clearly and indisputably *ptig nupy uggydug*!” — a phrase imperfectly translatable, meaning, as near as may be, having flitter-mice in his campanile.

“Am I to infer,” said the Lord Chief Justice, “that in your own honorable country a person accused of murder is permitted to plead insanity as a reason why he should not be put to death?”

“Yes, illustrious one,” I replied, respectfully, “we regard that as a good defense.”

“Well,” said he slowly, but with extreme emphasis, “I’ll be *Gook swottled*!”

(“*Gook*,” I may explain, is the name of the Batrugian chief deity; but for the verb “to swottle” the English tongue has no equivalent. It seems to signify the deepest disapproval, and by a promise to be “*swottled*” a Batrugian denotes acute astonishment.)

“Surely,” I said, “so wise and learned a person as you cannot think it just to punish with death one who does not know right from wrong. The gentleman who has just now renounced his future believed himself to have been commanded to do what he did by a brass-headed cow and four bushels of nightingales’ eggs — powers to which he acknowledged a spiritual allegiance. To have disobeyed would have been, from his point of view, an infraction of a law higher than that of man.”

“Honorable but erring stranger,” replied the famous jurist, “if we permitted the prisoner in a murder trial to urge such a consideration as that — if our laws recognized any other justification than that he believed himself in peril of immediate death or great bodily injury — nearly all assassins would make some such defense. They would plead insanity of some kind and degree, and it would be almost impossible to establish their guilt. Murder trials would be expensive and almost interminable, defiled with perjury and sentiment. Juries would be deluded and confused, justice baffled, and red-handed man-killers turned loose to repeat their crimes and laugh at the law. Even as the law is, in a population of only one hundred million we have had no fewer than three homicides in less than twenty years! With such statutes and customs as yours we should have had at least twice as many. Believe me, I know my people; they have not the American respect for human life.”

As blushing is deemed in Batrugia a sign of pride, I turned my back upon the speaker — an act which, fortunately, signifies a desire to hear more.

“Law,” he continued, “is for the good of the greatest number. Execution of an actual lunatic now and then is not an evil to the community, nor, when rightly considered, to the lunatic himself. He is better off when dead, and society is profited by his removal. We are spared the cost of exposing imposture, the humiliation of acquitting the guilty, the peril of their freedom, the contagion of their evil example.”

“In my country,” I said, “we have a saying to the effect that it is better that ninety-nine guilty escape than that one innocent be punished.”

“It is better,” said he, “for the ninety-nine guilty, but distinctly worse for everybody else. Sir,” he concluded with chilling austerity, “I infer from their proverb that your countrymen are the most offensive blockheads in existence.”

By way of refutation I mentioned the English, indignantly withdrew from the country and set sail for Gokeetle-guk, or, as we should translate the name, Trustland.

The Jumjum of Gokeetle-Guk

Arriving at the capital of the country after many incredible adventures, I was promptly arrested by the police and taken before the Jumjum. He was an exceedingly affable person, and held office by appointment, “for life or fitness,” as their laws express it. With one necessary exception all offices are appointive and the tenure of all except that is the same. The Panjandrum, or, as we should call him, King, is elected for a term of ten years, at the expiration of which he is shot. It is held that any man who has been so long in high authority will have committed enough sins and blunders to deserve death, even if none can be specifically proved.

Brought into the presence of the Jumjum, who graciously saluted me, I was seated on a beautiful rug and told in broken English by an interpreter who had escaped from Kansas that I was at liberty to ask any questions that I chose.

“Your Highness,” I said, addressing the Jumjum through the interpreting Populist, “I fear that I do not understand; I expected, not to ask questions, but to have to answer them. I am ready to give such an account of myself as will satisfy you that I am an honest man — neither a criminal nor a spy.”

“The gentleman seems to regard himself with a considerable interest,” said the Jumjum, aside to an officer of his suite — a remark which the interpreter, with characteristic intelligence, duly repeated to me. Then addressing me the Jumjum said:

“Doubtless your personal character is an alluring topic, but it is relevant to nothing in any proceedings that can be taken here. When a foreigner arrives in our capital he is brought before me to be instructed in whatever he may think it expedient for him to know of the manners, customs, laws, and so forth, of the country that he honors with his presence. It matters nothing to us what he is, but much to him what we are. You are at liberty to inquire.”

I was for a moment overcome with emotion by so noble an example of official civility and thoughtfulness, then, after a little reflection, I said: “May it please your Highness, I should greatly like to be informed of the origin of the name of your esteemed country.”

“Our country,” said the Jumjum, acknowledging the compliment by a movement of his ears, “is called Trustland because all its industries, trades and professions are conducted by great aggregations of capital known as ‘trusts.’ They do the entire business of the country.”

“Good God!” I exclaimed; “what a terrible state of affairs that is! I know about trusts. Why do your people not rise and throw off the yoke?”

“You are pleased to be unintelligible,” said the great man, with a smile. “Would you mind explaining what you mean by ‘the yoke’?”

“I mean,” said I, surprised by his ignorance of metaphor, but reflecting that possibly the figures of rhetoric were not used in that country—”I mean the oppression, the slavery under which your people groan, their bond-age to the tyrannical trusts, entailing poverty, unrequited toil and loss of self-respect.”

“Why, as to that,” he replied, “our people are prosperous and happy. There is very little poverty and what there is is obviously the result of vice or improvidence. Our labor is light and all the necessaries of life, many of the comforts and some of the luxuries are abundant and cheap. I hardly know what you mean by the tyranny of the trusts; they do not seem to care to be tyrannous, for each having the entire market for what it produces, its prosperity is assured and there is none of the strife and competition which, as I can imagine, might breed hardness and cruelty. Moreover, we should not let them be tyrannous. Why should we?”

“But, your Highness, suppose, for example, the trust that manufactures safety pins should decide to double the price of its product. What is to prevent great injury to the consumer?”

“The courts. Having but one man — the responsible manager — to deal with, protective legislation and its enforcement would be a very simple matter. If there were a thousand manufacturers of safety pins, scattered all over the country in as many jurisdictions, there would be no controlling them at all. They would cheat, not only one another but the consumers, with virtual immunity. But there is no disposition among our trusts to do any such thing. Each has the whole market, as I said, and each has learned by experience what the manager of a large business soon must learn, and what the manager of a small one probably would not learn and could not afford to apply if he knew it — namely, that low prices bring disproportionately large sales and therefore profits. Prices in this country are never put up except when some kind of scarcity increases the cost of production. Besides, nearly all the consumers are a part of the trusts, the stock of which is about the best kind of property for investment.”

“What!” I cried—”do not the managers so manipulate the stock by ‘watering’ it and otherwise as to fool and cheat the small investors?”

“We should not permit them. That would be dishonest.”

“So it is in my country,” I replied, rather tartly, for I believed his apparent *naïveté* assumed for my confusion, “but we are unable to prevent it.”

He looked at me somewhat compassionately, I thought. “Perhaps,” he said, “not enough of you really wish to prevent it. Perhaps your people are — well, different from mine — not worse, you understand — just different.”

I felt the blood go into my cheeks and hot words were upon my tongue’s end, but I restrained them; the conditions for a quarrel were not favorable to my side of it. When I had mastered my chagrin and resentment I said:

“In my country when trusts are formed a great number of persons suffer, whether the general consumer does or not — many small dealers, middle men, drummers and general employees. The small dealer is driven out of the business by underselling. The middle man is frequently ignored, the trust dealing directly, or nearly so, with the consumer. The drummer is discharged because, competition having disappeared, custom must come without solicitation. Consolidation lets out swarms of employees of the individual concerns consolidated, for it is nearly as easy to conduct one large concern as a dozen smaller ones. These people get great sympathy from the public and the newspapers and their case is obviously pitiable. Was it not so in this country during the transition stage, and did not these poor gentlemen have to” — the right words would not come; I hardly knew how to finish. “Were they not compelled to go to work?” I finally asked, rather humbly.

The great official was silent for several minutes. Then he spoke.

“I am not sure that I understand you about our transition state. So far as our history goes matters with us have always been as they are to-day. To suppose them to have been otherwise would be to impugn the common sense of our ancestors. Nor do I quite know what you mean by ‘small dealers,’ ‘middle men,’ ‘drummers,’ and so forth.”

He paused and fell into meditation, when suddenly his face was suffused with the light of a happy thought. It so elated him that he sprang to his feet and with his staff of office broke the heads of his Chief Admonisher of the Inimical and his Second Assistant Audible Sycophant. Then he said:

“I think I comprehend. Some eighty-five years ago, soon after my induction into office, there came to the court of the Panjandrum a man of this city who had been cast upon the island of Chicago (which I believe belongs to the American archipelago) and had passed many years there in business with the natives. Having learned all their customs and business methods he returned to his own country and laid before the Panjandrum a comprehensive scheme of commercial reform. He and his scheme were referred to me, the Panjandrum being graciously pleased to be unable to make head or tail of it. I may best explain it in its application to a single industry — the manufacture and sale of gootles.”

“What is a gootle?” I asked.

“A metal weight for attachment to the tail of a donkey to keep him from braying," was the answer. "It is known in this country that a donkey cannot utter a note unless he can lift his tail. Then, as now, gootles were made by a single concern having a great capital invested and an immense plant, and employing an army of workmen. It dealt, as it does to-day, directly with consumers. Afflicted with a sonant donkey a man would write to the trust and receive his gootle by return mail, or go personally to the factory and carry his purchase home on his shoulder — according to where he lived. The reformer said this was primitive, crude and injurious to the interests of the public and especially the poor. He proposed that the members of the gootle trust divide their capital and each member go into the business of making gootles for himself — I do not mean for his personal use — in different parts of the country. But none of them was to sell to consumers, but to other men, who would sell in quantity to still other men, who would sell single gootles for domestic use. Each manufacturer would of course require a full complement of officers, clerks and so forth, as would the other men — everybody but the consumer — and each would have to support them and make a profit himself. Competition would be so sharp that solicitors would have to be employed to make sales; and they too must have a living out of the business. Honored stranger, am I right in my inference that the proposed system has something in common with the one which obtains in your own happy, enlightened and prosperous country, and which you would approve?"

I did not care to reply.

"Of course," the Jumjum continued, "all this would greatly have enhanced the cost of gootles, thereby lessening the sales, thereby reducing the output, thereby throwing a number of workmen out of employment. You see this, do you not, O guest of my country?"

"Pray tell me," I said, "what became of the reformer who proposed all this change?"

"All this change? Why, sir, the one-thousandth part is not told: he proposed that his system should be general: not only in the gootle trust, but every trust in the country was to be broken up in the same way! When I had him before me, and had stated my objections to the plan, I asked him what were its advantages.

"'Sir,' he replied, 'I speak for millions of gentlemen in uncongenial employments, mostly manual and fatiguing. This would give them the kind of activity that they would like — such as their class enjoys in other countries where my system is in full flower, and where it is deemed so sacred that any proposal for its abolition or simplification by trusts is regarded with horror, especially by the working men.'

"Having reported to the Panjandrum (whose vermiform appendix may good angels have in charge) and received his orders, I called the reformer before me and addressed him thus:

"'Illustrious economist, I have the honor to inform you that in the royal judgment your proposal is the most absurd, impudent and audacious ever made; that the system which you propose to set up is revolutionary and mischievous beyond the dreams of treason; that only in a nation of rogues and idiots could it have a moment's toleration.'

"He was about to reply, but cutting his throat to intimate that the hearing was at an end, I withdrew from the Hall of Audience, as under similar circumstances I am about to do now."

I withdrew first by way of a window, and after a terrible journey of six years in the Dolorous Mountains and on the Desert of Despair came to the western coast. Here I built a ship and after a long voyage landed on one of the islands constituting the Kingdom of Tortirra.

The Kingdom of Tortirra

Of this unknown country and its inhabitants I have written a large volume which nothing but the obstinacy of publishers has kept from the world, and which I trust will yet see the light. Naturally, I do not wish to publish at this time anything that will sate public curiosity, and this brief sketch will consist of such parts only of the work as I think can best be presented in advance without abating interest in what is to follow when Heaven shall have put it into the hearts of publishers to square their conduct with their interests. I must, however, frankly confess that my choice has been partly determined by other considerations. I offer here those parts of my narrative which I conceive to be the least credible — those which deal with the most monstrous and astounding follies of a strange people. Their ceremony of marriage by decapitation; their custom of facing to the rear when riding on horseback; their practice of walking on their hands in all ceremonial processions; their selection of the blind for military command; their pig-worship — these and many other comparatively natural particulars of their religious, political, intellectual and social life I reserve for treatment in the great work for which I shall soon ask public favor and acceptance.

In Tortirran politics, as in Tamtonian, the population is always divided into two, and sometimes three or four "parties," each having a "policy" and each conscientiously believing the policy of the other, or others, erroneous and destructive. In so far as these various and varying policies can be seen to have any relation whatever to practical affairs they can be seen also to be the result of purely selfish considerations. The self-deluded people flatter themselves that their elections are contests of principles, whereas they are only struggles of interests. They are very fond of the word *slagthrit*, "principle"; and when they believe themselves acting from some high moral motive they are capable of almost any monstrous injustice or stupid folly. This insane devotion to principle is craftily fostered by their political leaders who invent captivating phrases intended to confirm them in it; and these deluding aphorisms are diligently repeated until all the people have them in memory, with no knowledge of the fallacies which they conceal. One of these phrases is "Principles, not men." In the last analysis this is seen to mean that it is better to be governed by scoundrels professing one set of principles than by good men holding another. That a scoundrel will govern badly, regardless of the principles which he is supposed somehow to “represent,” is a truth which, however obvious to our own enlightened intelligence, has never penetrated the dark understandings of the Tortirrans. It is chiefly through the dominance of the heresy fostered by this popular phrase that the political leaders are able to put base men into office to serve their own nefarious ends.

I have called the political contests of Tortirra struggles of interests. In nothing is this more clear (to the looker-on at the game) than in the endless disputes concerning restrictions on commerce. It must be understood that lying many leagues to the southeast of Tortirra are other groups of islands, also wholly unknown to people of our race. They are known by the general name of *Gropilla–Stron* (a term signifying “the Land of the Day-dawn”), though it is impossible to ascertain why, and are inhabited by a powerful and hardy race, many of whom I have met in the capital of Tanga. The Stronagu, as they are called, are bold navigators and traders, their proas making long and hazardous voyages in all the adjacent seas to exchange commodities with other tribes. For many years they were welcomed in Tortirra with great hospitality and their goods eagerly purchased. They took back with them all manner of Tortirran products and nobody thought of questioning the mutual advantages of the exchange. But early in the present century a powerful Tortirran demagogue named Pragam began to persuade the people that commerce was piracy — that true prosperity consisted in consumption of domestic products and abstention from foreign. This extraordinary heresy soon gathered such head that Pragam was appointed Regent and invested with almost dictatorial powers. He at once distributed nearly the whole army among the seaport cities, and whenever a Stronagu trading proa attempted to land, the soldiery, assisted by the populace, rushed down to the beach, and with a terrible din of gongs and an insupportable discharge of stink-pots — the only offensive weapon known to Tortirran warfare — drove the laden vessels to sea, or if they persisted in anchoring destroyed them and smothered their crews in mud. The Tortirrans themselves not being a sea-going people, all communication between them and the rest of their little world soon ceased. But with it ceased the prosperity of Tortirra. Deprived of a market for their surplus products and compelled to forego the comforts and luxuries which they had obtained from abroad, the people began to murmur at the effect of their own folly. A reaction set in, a powerful opposition to Pragam and his policy was organized, and he was driven from power.

But the noxious tree that Pragam had planted in the fair garden of his country’s prosperity had struck root too deeply to be altogether eradicated. It threw up shoots everywhere, and no sooner was one cut down than from roots underrunning the whole domain of political thought others sprang up with a vigorous and baleful growth. While the dictum that trade is piracy no longer commands universal acceptance, a majority of the populace still hold a modified form of it, and that “importation is theft” is to-day a cardinal political “principle” of a vast body of Tortirra’s people. The chief expounders and protagonists of this doctrine are all directly or indirectly engaged in making or growing such articles as were formerly got by exchange with the Stronagu traders. The articles are generally inferior in quality, but consumers, not having the benefit of foreign competition, are compelled to pay extortionate prices for them, thus maintaining the unscrupulous producers in needless industries and a pernicious existence. But these active and intelligent rogues are too powerful to be driven out. They persuade their followers, among whom are many ignorant consumers, that this vestigial remnant of the old Pragam policy is all that keeps the nation from being desolated by small-pox and an epidemic of broken legs. It is impossible within these limits to give a full history of the strange delusion whose origin I have related. It has undergone many modifications and changes, as it is the nature of error to do, but the present situation is about this. The trading proas of the Stronagu are permitted to enter certain ports, but when one arrives she must anchor at a little distance from shore. Here she is boarded by an officer of the government, who ascertains the thickness of her keel, the number of souls on board and the amount and character of the merchandise she brings. From these data — the last being the main factor in the problem — the officer computes her unworthiness and adjudges a suitable penalty. The next day a scow manned by a certain number of soldiers pushes out and anchors within easy throw of her, and there is a frightful beating of gongs. When this has reached its lawful limit as to time it is hushed and the soldiers throw a stated number of stink-pots on board the offending craft. These, exploding as they strike, stifle the captain and crew with an intolerable odor. In the case of a large proa having a cargo of such commodities as the Tortirrans particularly need, this bombardment is continued for hours. At its conclusion the vessel is permitted to land and discharge her cargo without further molestation. Under these hard conditions importers find it impossible to do much business, the exorbitant wages demanded by seamen consuming most of the profit. No restrictions are now placed on the export trade, and vessels arriving empty are subjected to no penalties; but the Stronagu having other markets, in which they can sell as well as buy, cannot afford to go empty handed to Tortirra.

It will be obvious to the reader that in all this no question of “principle” is involved. A well-informed Tortirran’s mental attitude with regard to the matter may be calculated with unfailing accuracy from a knowledge of his interests. If he produces anything which his countrymen want, and which in the absence of all restriction they could get more cheaply from the Stronagu than they can from him, he is in politics a *Gakphew*, or “Stinkpotter”; if not he is what that party derisively calls a *Shokerbom*, which signifies “Righteous Man” — for there is nothing which the Gakphews hold in so holy detestation as righteousness.

Nominally, Tortirra is an hereditary monarchy; virtually it is a democracy, for under a peculiar law of succession there is seldom an occupant of the throne, and all public affairs are conducted by a Supreme Legislature sitting at Felduchia, the capital of Tanga, to which body each island of the archipelago, twenty-nine in number, elects representatives in proportion to its population, the total membership being nineteen hundred and seventeen. Each island has a Subordinate Council for the management of local affairs and a Head Chief charged with execution of the laws. There is also a Great Court at Felduchia, whose function it is to interpret the general laws of the Kingdom, passed by the Supreme Council, and a Minor Great Court at the capital of each island, with corresponding duties and powers. These powers are very loosely and vaguely defined, and are the subject of endless controversy everywhere, and nowhere more than in the courts themselves — such is the multiplicity of laws and so many are the contradictory decisions upon them, every decision constituting what is called a *lantrag*, or, as we might say, “precedent.” The peculiarity of a *lantrag*, or previous decision, is that it is, or is not, binding, at the will of the honorable judge making a later one on a similar point. If he wishes to decide in the same way he quotes the previous decision with all the gravity that he would give to an exposition of the law itself; if not, he either ignores it altogether, shows that it is not applicable to the case under consideration (which, as the circumstances are never exactly the same, he can always do), or substitutes a contradictory *lantrag* and fortifies himself with that. There is a precedent for any decision that a judge may wish to make, but sometimes he is too indolent to search it out and cite it. Frequently, when the letter and intent of the law under which an action is brought are plainly hostile to the decision which it pleases him to render, the judge finds it easier to look up an older law, with which it is compatible, and which the later one, he says, does not repeal, and to base his decision on that; and there is a law for everything, just as there is a precedent. Failing to find, or not caring to look for, either precedent or statute to sustain him, he can readily show that any other decision than the one he has in will would be *tokoli impelly*; that is to say, contrary to public morals, and this, too, is considered a legitimate consideration, though on another occasion he may say, with public assent and approval, that it is his duty, not to make the law conform to justice, but to expound and enforce it as he finds it. In short, such is the confusion of the law and the public conscience that the courts of Tortirra do whatever they please, subject only to overruling by higher courts in the exercise of *their* pleasure; for great as is the number of minor and major tribunals, a case originating in the lowest is never really settled until it has gone through all the intermediate ones and been passed upon by the highest, to which it might just as well have been submitted at first. The evils of this astonishing system could not be even baldly catalogued in a lifetime. They are infinite in number and prodigious in magnitude. To the trained intelligence of the American observer it is incomprehensible how any, even the most barbarous, nation can endure them.

An important function of the Great Court and the Minor Great Court is passing upon the validity of all laws enacted by the Supreme Council and the Subordinate Councils, respectively. The nation as a whole, as well as each separate island, has a fundamental law called the *Trogodal,* or, as we should say, the Constitution; and no law whatever that may be passed by the Council is final and determinate until the appropriate court has declared that it conforms to the Trogodal. Nevertheless every law is put in force the moment it is perfected and before it is submitted to the court. Indeed, not one in a thousand ever is submitted at all, that depending upon the possibility of some individual objecting to its action upon his personal interests, which few, indeed, can afford to do. It not infrequently occurs that some law which has for years been rigorously enforced, even by fines and imprisonment, and to which the whole commercial and social life of the nation has adjusted itself with all its vast property interests, is brought before the tribunal having final jurisdiction in the matter and coolly declared no law at all. The pernicious effect may be more easily imagined than related, but those who by loyal obedience to the statute all those years have been injured in property, those who are ruined by its erasure and those who may have suffered the severest penalties for its violation are alike without redress. It seems not to have occurred to the Tortirrans to require the court to inspect the law and determine its validity before it is put in force. It is, indeed, the traditional practice of these strange tribunals, when a case is forced upon them, to decide, not as many points of law as they can, but as few as they may; and this dishonest inaction is not only tolerated but commended as the highest wisdom. The consequence is that only those who make a profession of the law and live by it and find their account in having it as little understood by others as is possible can know which acts and parts of acts are in force and which are not. The higher courts, too, have arrogated to themselves the power of declaring unconstitutional even parts of the Constitution, frequently annulling most important provisions of the very instrument creating them!

A popular folly in Tortirra is the selection of representatives in the Councils from among that class of men who live by the law, whose sole income is derived from its uncertainties and perplexities. Obviously, it is to the interest of these men to make laws which shall be uncertain and perplexing — to confuse and darken legislation as much as they can. Yet in nearly all the Councils these men are the most influential and active element, and it is not uncommon to find them in a numerical majority. It is evident that the only check upon their ill-doing lies in the certainty of their disagreement as to the particular kind of confusion which they may think it expedient to create. Some will wish to accomplish their common object by one kind of verbal ambiguity, some by another; some by laws clearly enough (to them) unconstitutional, others by contradictory statutes, or statutes secretly repealing wholesome ones already existing. A clear, simple and just code would deprive them of their means of livelihood and compel them to seek some honest employment.

So great are the uncertainties of the law in Tortirra that an eminent judge once confessed to me that it was his conscientious belief that if all cases were decided by the impartial arbitrament of the *do-tusis* (a process similar to our "throw of the dice") substantial justice would be done far more frequently than under the present system; and there is reason to believe that in many instances cases at law are so decided — but only at the close of tedious and costly trials which have impoverished the litigants and correspondingly enriched the lawyers.

Of the interminable train of shames and brutalities entailed by this pernicious system, I shall mention here only a single one — the sentencing and punishment of an accused person in the midst of the proceedings against him, and while his guilt is not finally and definitively established. It frequently occurs that a man convicted of crime in one of the lower courts is at once hurried off to prison while he has still the right of appeal to a higher tribunal, and while that appeal is pending. After months and sometimes years of punishment his case is reached in the appellate court, his appeal found valid and a new trial granted, resulting in his acquittal. He has been imprisoned for a crime of which he is eventually declared not to have been properly convicted. But he has no redress; he is simply set free to bear through all his after life the stain of dishonor and nourish an ineffectual resentment. Imagine the storm of popular indignation that would be evoked in America by an instance of so foul injustice!

In the great public square of Itsami, the capital of Tortirra, stands a golden statue of Estari–Kumpro, a famous judge of the Civil Court.[2] This great man was celebrated throughout the kingdom for the wisdom and justice of his decisions and the virtues of his private life. So profound were the veneration in which he was held and the awe that his presence inspired, that none of the advocates in his court ever ventured to address him except in formal pleas: all motions, objections, and so forth, were addressed to the clerk and by him disposed of without dissent: the silence of the judge, who never was heard to utter a word, was understood as sanctioning the acts of his subordinate. For thirty years, promptly at sunrise, the great hall of justice was thrown open, disclosing the judge seated on a loftly dais beneath a black canopy, partly in shadow, and quite inaccessible. At sunset all proceedings for the day terminated, everyone left the hall and the portal closed. The decisions of this august and learned jurist were always read aloud by the clerk, and a copy supplied to the counsel on each side. They were brief, clear and remarkable, not only for their unimpeachable justice, but for their conformity to the fundamental principles of law. Not one of them was ever set aside, and during the last fifteen years of the great judge's service no litigant ever took an appeal, although none ever ventured before that infallible tribunal unless conscientiously persuaded that his cause was just.

[2] Klikat um Delu Ovwi.

One day it happened during the progress of an important trial that a sharp shock of earthquake occurred, throwing the whole assembly into confusion. When order had been restored a cry of horror and dismay burst from the multitude — the judge's head lay flattened upon the floor, a dozen feet below the bench, and from the neck of the rapidly collapsing body, which had pitched forward upon his desk, poured a thick stream of sawdust! For thirty years that great and good man had been represented by a stuffed manikin. For thirty years he had not entered his own court, nor heard a word of evidence or argument. At the moment of the accident to his simulacrum he was in his library at his home, writing his decision of the case on trial, and was killed by a falling chandelier. It was afterward learned that his clerk, twenty-five years dead, had all the time been personated by a twin brother, who was an idiot from birth and knew no law.

Hither

Listening to the history of the golden statue in the great square, as related by a Tortirran storyteller, I fell asleep. On waking I found myself lying in a cot-bed amidst unfamiliar surroundings. A bandage was fastened obliquely about my head, covering my left eye, in which was a dull throbbing pain. Seeing an attendant near by I beckoned him to my bedside and asked: “Where am I?”

“Hospital,” he replied, tersely but not unkindly. He added: “You have a bad eye.” “Yes,” I said, “I always had; but I could name more than one Tortirran who has a bad heart.”

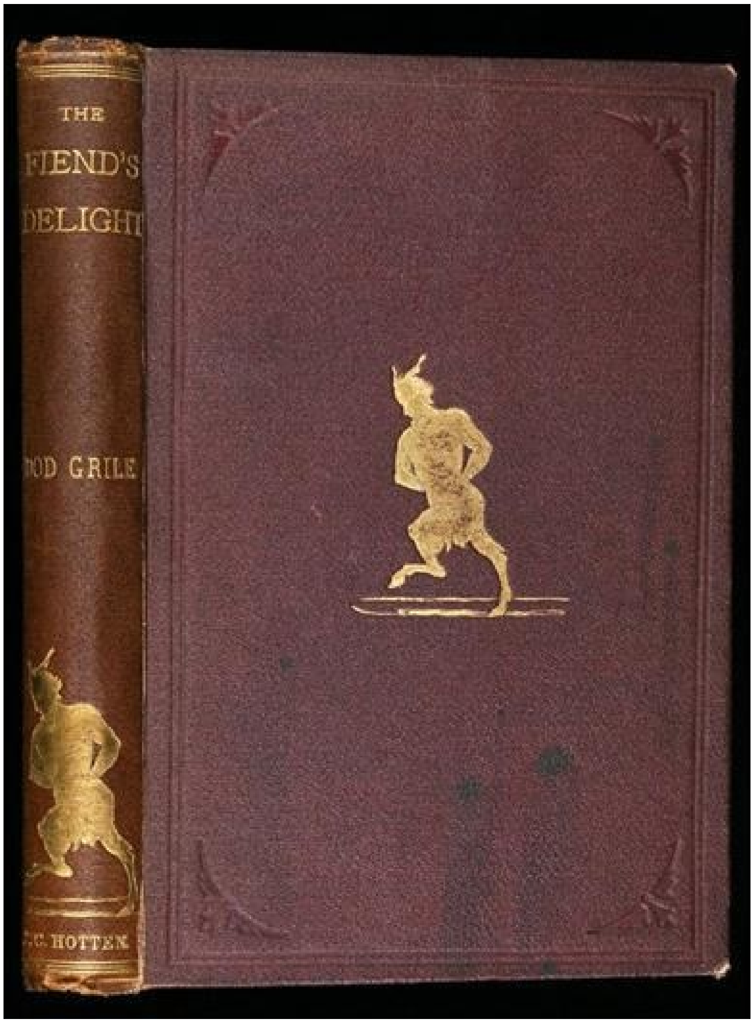
“What is a Tortirran?” he asked.

The Short Story Collections

Warsaw Community High School, Indiana — most likely the school attended by Bierce

THE FIEND'S DELIGHT

In 1872, Ambrose Bierce and his wife Mollie moved to England, where he hoped to achieve literary success. In fact, he published his first book there. *The Fiend's Delight* appeared under Ambrose Bierce's pseudonym, "Dod Grile," published in 1873 by John Camden Hotten, of London. This early collection was a hodgepodge of Bierce's fiction, poetry, essays and personal reflection. Many of the pieces, published earlier in American journals, demonstrate his combative, though often darkly humorous journalistic style, showcasing his witty satire and often biting sarcasm.


THE
FIEND'S
DELIGHT
DOD GRILE
J.C. HOTTEN

First edition published by John Camden Hotton of London in 1873

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THE FIEND’S DELIGHT.

BY DOD GRILE.

“Count that day lost whose low descending sun
Views from thy hand no

TO

THE IMMUTABLE AND INFALLIBLE GODDESS, GOOD TASTE, IN GRATITUDE FOR HER CONDEMNATION OF ALL SUPERIOR AUTHORS, AND IN THE HOPE OF PROPITIATING HER CREATORS AND EXPOUNDERS, This Volume is reverentially Dedicated BY HER DEVOUT WORSHIPPER, **THE AUTHOR.**

PREFACE.

The atrocities constituting this “cold collation” of diabolisms are taken mainly from various Californian journals. They are cast in the American language, and liberally enriched with unintelligibility. If they shall prove incomprehensible on this side of the Atlantic, the reader can pass to the other side at a moderately extortionate charge. In the pursuit of my design I think I have killed a good many people in one way and another; but the reader will please to observe that they were not people worth the trouble of leaving alive. Besides, I had the interests of my collaborator to consult. In writing, as in compiling, I have been ably assisted by my scholarly friend Mr. Satan; and to this worthy gentleman must be attributed most of the views herein set forth. While the plan of the work is partly my own, its spirit is wholly his; and this illustrates the ascendancy of the creative over the merely imitative mind. Palmam qui meruit ferat-I shall be content with the profit.

DOD GRILE.

SOME FICTION.

One More Unfortunate.

It was midnight-a black, wet, midnight-in a great city by the sea. The church clocks were booming the hour, in tones half-smothered by the marching rain, when an officer of the watch saw a female figure glide past him like a ghost in the gloom, and make directly toward a wharf. The officer felt that some dreadful tragedy was about to be enacted, and started in pursuit. Through the sleeping city sped those two dark figures like shadows athwart a tomb. Out along the deserted wharf to its farther end fled the mysterious fugitive, the guardian of the night vainly endeavouring to overtake, and calling to her to stay. Soon she stood upon the extreme end of the pier, in the scourging rain which lashed her fragile figure and blinded her eyes with other tears than those of grief. The night wind tossed her tresses wildly in air, and beneath her bare feet the writhing billows struggled blackly upward for their prey. At this fearful moment the panting officer stumbled and fell! He was badly bruised; he felt angry and misanthropic. Instead of rising to his feet, he sat doggedly up and began chafing his abraded shin. The desperate woman raised her white arms heavenward for the final plunge, and the voice of the gale seemed like the dread roaring of the waters in her ears, as down, down, she went — in imagination — to a black death among the spectral piles. She backed a few paces to secure an impetus, cast a last look upon the stony officer, with a wild shriek sprang to the awful verge and came near losing her balance. Recovering herself with an effort, she turned her face again to the officer, who was clawing about for his missing club. Having secured it, he started to leave.

In a cosy, vine-embowered cottage near the sounding sea, lives and suffers a blighted female. Nothing being known of her past history, she is treated by her neighbours with marked respect. She never speaks of the past, but it has been remarked that whenever the stalwart form of a certain policeman passes her door, her clean, delicate face assumes an expression which can only be described as frozen profanity.

The Strong Young Man of Colusa.

Professor Cramer conducted a side-show in the wake of a horse-opera, and the same sojourned at Colusa. Enters unto the side show a powerful young man of the Colusa sort, and would see his money’s worth. Blandly and with conscious pride the Professor directs the young man’s attention to his fine collection of living snakes. Lithely the blacksnake uncoils in his sight. Voluminously the bloated boa convolves before him. All horrent the cobra exalts his hooded head, and the spanning jaws fly open. Quivers and chitters the tail of the cheerful rattlesnake; silently slips out the forked tongue, and is as silently absorbed. The fangless adder warps up the leg of the Professor, lays clammy coils about his neck, and pokes a flattened head curiously into his open mouth. The young man of Colusa is interested; his feelings transcend expression. Not a syllable breathes he, but with a deep-drawn sigh he turns his broad back upon the astonishing display, and goes thoughtfully forth into his native wild. Half an hour later might have been seen that brawny Colusan, emerging from an adjacent forest with a strong faggot.

Then this Colusa young man unto the appalled Professor thus: “Ther ain’t no good place yer in Kerloosy fur fittin’ out serpence to be subtler than all the beasts o’ the field. Ther’s enmity atween our seed and ther seed, an’ it shell brooze ther head.” And with a singleness of purpose and a rapt attention to detail that would have done credit to a lean porker garnering the strewn kernels behind a deaf old man who plants his field with corn, he started in upon that reptilian host, and exterminated it with a careful thoroughness of extermination.

The Glad New Year.

A poor brokendown drunkard returned to his dilapidated domicile early on New Year's morn. The great bells of the churches were jarring the creamy moonlight which lay above the soggy undercrust of mud and snow. As he heard their joyous peals, announcing the birth of a new year, his heart smote his old waistcoat like a remorseful sledge-hammer.

"Why," soliloquized he, "should not those bells also proclaim the advent of a new resolution? I have not made one for several weeks, and it's about time. I'll swear off."

He did it, and at that moment a new light seemed to be shed upon his pathway; his wife came out of the house with a tin lantern. He rushed frantically to meet her. She saw the new and holy purpose in his eye. She recognised it readily-she had seen it before. They embraced and wept. Then stretching the wreck of what had once been a manly form to its full length, he raised his eyes to heaven and one hand as near there as he could get it, and there in the pale moonlight, with only his wondering wife, and the angels, and a cow or two, for witnesses, he swore he would from that moment abstain from all intoxicating liquors until death should them part. Then looking down and tenderly smiling into the eyes of his wife, he said: "Is it not well, dear one?" With a face beaming all over with a new happiness, she replied:

"Indeed it is, John-let's take a drink." And they took one, she with sugar and he plain.

The spot is still pointed out to the traveller.

The Late Dowling, Senior.

My friend, Jacob Dowling, Esq., had been spending the day very agreeably in his counting-room with some companions, and at night retired to the domestic circle to ravel out some intricate accounts. Seated at his parlour table he ordered his wife and children out of the room and addressed himself to business. While clambering wearily up a column of figures he felt upon his cheek the touch of something that seemed to cling clammily to the skin like the caress of a naked oyster. Thoughtfully setting down the result of his addition so far as he had proceeded with it, he turned about and looked up.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said he, "but you have not the advantage of my acquaintance."

"Why, Jake," replied the apparition-whom I have thought it useless to describe—"don't you know me?"

"I confess that your countenance is familiar," returned my friend, "but I cannot at this moment recall your name. I never forget a face, but names I cannot remember."

"Jake!" rumbled the spectre with sepulchral dignity, a look of displeasure crawling across his pallid features, "you're foolin'."

"I give you my word I am quite serious. Oblige me with your name, and favour me with a statement of your business with me at this hour."

The disembodied party sank uninvited into a chair, spread out his knees and stared blankly at a Dutch clock with an air of weariness and profound discouragement. Perceiving that his guest was making himself tolerably comfortable my friend turned again to his figures, and silence reigned supreme. The fire in the grate burned noiselessly with a mysterious blue light, as if it could do more if it wished; the Dutch clock looked wise, and swung its pendulum with studied exactness, like one who is determined to do his precise duty and shun responsibility; the cat assumed an attitude of intelligent neutrality. Finally the spectre trained his pale eyes upon his host, pulled in a long breath and remarked: "Jake, I'm yur dead father. I come back to have a talk with ye 'bout the way things is agoin' on. I want to know 'f you think it's right notter recognise yur dead parent?"

"It is a little rough on you, dear," replied the son without looking up, "but the fact is that [7 and 3 are 10, and 2 are 12, and 6 are 18] it is so long since you have been about [and 3 off are 15] that I had kind of forgotten, and [2 into 4 goes twice, and 7 into 6 you can't] you know how it is yourself. May I be permitted to again inquire the precise nature of your present business?"

"Well, yes-if you wont talk anything but shop I s'pose I must come to the p'int. Isay! you don't keep any thing to drink 'bout yer, do ye-Jake?"

"14 from 23 are 9-I'll get you something when we get done. Please explain how we can serve one another."

"Jake, I done everything for you, and you ain't done nothin' for me since I died. I want a monument bigger'n Dave Broderick's, with an eppytaph in gilt letters, by Joaquin Miller. I can't git into any kind o' society till I have 'em. You've no idee how exclusive they are where I am."

This dutiful son laid down his pencil and effected a stiffly vertical attitude. He was all attention: "Anything else to-day?" he asked-rather sneeringly, I grieve to state.

"No-o-o, I don't think of anything special," drawled the ghost reflectively; "I'd like to have an iron fence around it to keep the cows off, but I s'pose that's included."

"Of course! And a gravel walk, and a lot of abalone shells, and fresh posies daily; a marble angel or two for company, and anything else that will add to your comfort. Have you any other extremely reasonable request to make of me?"

"Yes-since you mention it. I want you to contest my will. Horace Hawes is having his'n contested."

"My fine friend, you did not make any will."

"That ain't o' no consequence. You forge me a good 'un and contest that."

"With pleasure, sir; but that will be extra. Now indulge me in one question. You spoke of the society where you reside. Where do you reside?"

The Dutch clock pounded clamorously upon its brazen gong a countless multitude of hours; the glowing coals fell like an avalanche through the grate, spilling all over the cat, who exalted her voice in a squawk like the deathwail of a stuck pig, and dashed affrighted through the window. A smell of scorching fur pervaded the place, and under cover of it the aged spectre walked into the mirror, vanishing like a dream.

Love’s Labour Lost.

Joab was a beef, who was tired of being courted for his clean, smooth skin. So he backed through a narrow gateway six or eight times, which made his hair stand the wrong way. He then went and rubbed his fat sides against a charred log. This made him look untidy. You never looked worse in your life than Joab did.

“Now,” said he, “I shall be loved for myself alone. I will change my name, and hie me to pastures new, and all the affection that is then lavished upon me will be pure and disinterested.”

So he strayed off into the woods and came out at old Abner Davis’ ranch. The two things Abner valued most were a windmill and a scratching-post for hogs. They were equally beautiful, and the fame of their comeliness had gone widely abroad. To them Joab naturally paid his attention. The windmill, who was called Lucille Ashtonbury Clifford, received him with expressions of the liveliest disgust. His protestations of affection were met by creakings of contempt, and as he turned sadly away he was rewarded by a sound spank from one of her fans. Like a gentlemanly beef he did not deign to avenge the insult by overturning Lucille Ashtonbury; and it is well for him that he did not, for old Abner stood by with a pitchfork and a trinity of dogs.

Disgusted with the selfish heartlessness of society, Joab shambled off and was passing the scratching-post without noticing her. (Her name was Arabella Cliftonbury Howard.) Suddenly she kicked away a multitude of pigs who were at her feet, and called to the rolling beef of uncanny exterior:

“Comeer!”

Joab paused, looked at her with his ox-eyes, and gravely marching up, commenced a vigorous scratching against her.

“Arabella,” said he, “do you think you could love a shaggy-hided beef with black hair? Could you love him for himself alone?”

Arabella had observed that the black rubbed off, and the hair lay sleek when stroked the right way.

“Yes, I think so; could you?”

This was a poser: Joab had expected her to talk business. He did not reply. It was only her arch way; she thought, naturally, that the best way to win any body’s love was to be a fool. She saw her mistake. She had associated with hogs all her life, and this fellow was a beef! Mistakes must be rectified very speedily in these matters.

“Sir, I have for you a peculiar feeling; I may say a tenderness. Hereafter you, and you only, shall scratch against Arabella Cliftonbury Howard!”

Joab was delighted; he stayed and scratched all day. He was loved for himself alone, and he did not care for anything but that. Then he went home, made an elaborate toilet, and returned to astonish her. Alas! old Abner had been about, and seeing how Joab had worn her smooth and useless, had cut her down for firewood. Joab gave one glance, then walked solemnly away into a “clearing,” and getting comfortably astride a blazing heap of logs, made a barbacue of himself!

After all, Lucille Ashtonbury Clifford, the light-headed windmill, seems to have got the best of all this. I have observed that the light-headed commonly get the best of everything in this world; which the wooden-headed and the beef-headed regard as an outrage. I am not prepared to say if it is or not.

A Comforter.

William Bunker had paid a fine of two hundred dollars for beating his wife. After getting his receipt he went moodily home and seated himself at the domestic hearth. Observing his abstracted and melancholy demeanour, the good wife approached and tenderly inquired the cause. “It’s a delicate subject, dear,” said he, with love~light in his eyes; “let’s talk about something good to eat.”

Then, with true wifely instinct she sought to cheer him up with pleasing prattle of a new bonnet he had promised her. “Ah! darling,” he sighed, absently picking up the fire-poker and turning it in his hands, “let us change the subject.”

Then his soul’s idol chirped an inspiring ballad, kissed him on the top of his head, and sweetly mentioned that the dressmaker had sent in her bill. “Let us talk only of love,” returned he, thoughtfully rolling up his dexter sleeve.

And so she spoke of the vine-enfolded cottage in which she fondly hoped they might soon sip together the conjugal sweets. William became rigidly erect, a look not of earth was in his face, his breast heaved, and the fire-poker quivered with emotion. William felt deeply. “Mine own,” said the good woman, now busily irrigating a mass of snowy dough for the evening meal, “do you know that there is not a bite of meat in the house?”

It is a cold, unlovely truth-a sad, heart-sickening fact-but it must be told by the conscientious novelist. William repaid all this affectionate solicitude-all this womanly devotion, all this trust, confidence, and abnegation in a manner that needs not be particularly specified.

A short, sharp curve in the middle of that iron fire-poker is eloquent of a wrong redressed.

Little Isaac.

Mr. Gobwottle came home from a meeting of the Temperance Legion extremely drunk. He went to the bed, piled himself loosely atop of it and forgot his identity. About the middle of the night, his wife, who was sitting up darning stockings, heard a voice from the profoundest depths of the bolster: “Say, Jane?”

Jane gave a vicious stab with the needle, impaling one of her fingers, and continued her work. There was a long silence, faintly punctuated by the bark of a distant dog. Again that voice—”Say–Jane!”

The lady laid aside her work and wearily, replied: “Isaac, do go to sleep; they are off.”

Another and longer pause, during which the ticking of the clock became painful in the intensity of the silence it seemed to be measuring. “Jane, what’s off!” “Why, your boots, to be sure,” replied the petulant woman, losing patience; “I pulled them off when you first lay down.”

Again the prostrate gentleman was still. Then when the candle of the waking housewife had burned low down to the socket, and the wasted flame on the hearth was expiring bluely in convulsive leaps, the head of the family resumed: “Jane, who said anything about boots?”

There was no reply. Apparently none was expected, for the man immediately rose, lengthened himself out like a telescope, and continued: “Jane, I must have smothered that brat, and I’m ‘fernal sorry!”

“What brat?” asked the wife, becoming interested.

“Why, ours-our little Isaac. I saw you put ‘im in bed last week, and I’ve been layin’ right onto ‘im!”

“What under the sun do you mean?” asked the good wife; “we haven’t any brat, and never had, and his name should not be Isaac if we had. I believe you are crazy.”

The man balanced his bulk rather unsteadily, looked hard into the eyes of his companion, and triumphantly emitted the following conundrum: “Jane, look-a-here! If we haven’t any brat, what’n thunder’s the use o’ bein’ married!”

Pending the solution of the momentous problem, its author went out and searched the night for a whisky-skin.

The Heels of Her.

Passing down Commercial-street one fine day, I observed a lady standing alone in the middle of the sidewalk, with no obvious business there, but with apparently no intention of going on. She was outwardly very calm, and seemed at first glance to be lost in some serene philosophical meditation. A closer examination, however, revealed a peculiar restlessness of attitude, and a barely noticeable uneasiness of expression. The conviction came upon me that the lady was in distress, and as delicately as possible I inquired of her if such were not the case, intimating at the same time that I should esteem it a great favour to be permitted to do something. The lady smiled blandly and replied that she was merely waiting for a gentleman. It was tolerably evident that I was not required, and with a stammered apology I hastened away, passed clear around the block, came up behind her, and took up a position on a dry-goods box; it lacked an hour to dinner time, and I had leisure. The lady maintained her attitude, but with momently increasing impatience, which found expression in singular wave-like undulations of her lithe figure, and an occasional unmistakeable contortion. Several gentlemen approached, but were successively and politely dismissed. Suddenly she experienced a quick convulsion, strode sharply forward one step, stopped short, had another convulsion, and walked rapidly away. Approaching the spot I found a small iron grating in the sidewalk, and between the bars two little boot heels, riven from their kindred soles, and unsightly with snaggy nails.

Heaven only knows why that entrapped female had declined the proffered assistance of her species-why she had elected to ruin her boots in preference to having them removed from her feet. Upon that day when the grave shall give up its dead, and the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, I shall know all about it; but I want to know now.

A Tale of Two Feet.

My friend Zacharias was accustomed to sleep with a heated stone at his feet; for the feet of Mr. Zacharias were as the feet of the dead. One night he retired as usual, and it chanced that he awoke some hours afterwards with a well-defined smell of burning leather, making it pleasant for his nostrils.

“Mrs. Zacharias,” said he, nudging his snoring spouse, “I wish you would get up and look about. I think one of the children must have fallen into the fire.”

The lady, who from habit had her own feet stowed comfortably away against the warm stomach of her lord and master, declined to make the investigation demanded, and resumed the nocturnal melody. Mr. Zacharias was angered; for the first time since she had sworn to love, honour, and obey, this female was in open rebellion. He decided upon prompt and vigorous action. He quietly moved over to the back side of the bed and braced his shoulders against the wall. Drawing up his sinewy knees to a level with his breast, he placed the soles of his feet broadly against the back of the insurgent, with the design of propelling her against the opposite wall. There was a strangled snort, then a shriek of female agony, and the neighbours came in.

Mutual explanations followed, and Mr. Zacharias walked the streets of Grass Valley next day as if he were treading upon eggs worth a dollar a dozen.

The Scolliver Pig.

One of Thomas Jefferson’s maxims is as follows: “When angry, count ten before you speak; if very angry, count a hundred.” I once knew a man to square his conduct by this rule, with a most gratifying result. Jacob Scolliver, a man prone to bad temper, one day started across the fields to visit his father, whom he generously permitted to till a small corner of the old homestead. He found the old gentleman behind the barn, bending over a barrel that was canted over at an angle of seventy degrees, and from which issued a cloud of steam. Scolliver père was evidently scalding one end of a dead pig-an operation essential to the loosening of the hair, that the corpse may be plucked and shaven.

“Good morning, father,” said Mr. Scolliver, approaching, and displaying a long, cheerful smile. “Got a nice roaster there?” The elder gentleman’s head turned slowly and steadily, as upon a swivel, until his eyes pointed backward; then he drew his arms out of the barrel, and finally, revolving his body till it matched his head, he deliberately mounted upon the supporting block and sat down upon the sharp edge of the barrel in the hot steam. Then he replied, “Good mornin’ Jacob. Fine mornin’.”

“A little warm in spots, I should imagine,” returned the son. “Do you find that a comfortable seat?” “Why-yes-it’s good enough for an old man,” he answered, in a slightly husky voice, and with an uneasy gesture of the legs; “don’t make much difference in this life where we set, if we’re good-does it? This world ain’t heaven, anyhow, I s’spose.”

“There I do not entirely agree with you,” rejoined the young man, composing his body upon a stump for a philosophical argument. “I don’t neither,” added the old one, absently, screwing about on the edge of the barrel and constructing a painful grimace. There was no argument, but a silence instead. Suddenly the aged party sprang off that barrel with exceeding great haste, as of one who has made up his mind to do a thing and is impatient of delay. The seat of his trousers was steaming grandly, the barrel upset, and there was a great wash of hot water, leaving a deposit of spotted pig. In life that pig had belonged to Mr. Scolliver the younger! Mr. Scolliver the younger was angry, but remembering Jefferson’s maxim, he rattled off the number ten, finishing up with “You — thief!” Then perceiving himself very angry, he began all over again and ran up to one hundred, as a monkey scampers up a ladder. As the last syllable shot from his lips he planted a dreadful blow between the old man’s eyes, with a shriek that sounded like—”You son of a sea-cook!”

Mr. Scolliver the elder went down like a stricken beef, and his son often afterward explained that if he had not counted a hundred, and so given himself time to get thoroughly mad, he did not believe he could ever have licked the old man.

Mr. Hunker’s Mourner.

Strolling through Lone Mountain cemetery one day my attention was arrested by the inconsolable grief of a granite angel bewailing the loss of “Jacob Hunker, aged 67.” The attitude of utter dejection, the look of matchless misery upon that angel’s face sank into my heart like water into a sponge. I was about to offer some words of condolence when another man, similarly affected, got in before me, and laying a rather unsteady hand upon the celestial shoulder tipped back a very senile hat, and pointing to the name on the stone remarked with the most exact care and scrupulous accent: “Friend of yours, perhaps; been dead long?”

There was no reply; he continued: “Very worthy man, that Jake; knew him up in Tuolumne. Good feller-Jake.” No response: the gentleman settled his hat still farther back, and continued with a trifle less exactness of speech: “I say, young wom’n, Jake was my pard in the mines. Goo’ fell’r I ‘bserved!”

The last sentence was shot straight into the celestial ear at short range. It produced no effect. The gentleman’s patience and rhetorical vigilance were now completely exhausted. He walked round, and planting himself defiantly in front of the vicarious mourner, he stuck his hands doggedly into his pockets and delivered the following rebuke, like the desultory explosions of a bunch of damaged fire-crackers: “It wont do, old girl; ef Jake knowed how you’s treatin’ his old pard he’d jest git up and snatch you bald headed-he would! You ain’t no friend o’ his’n and you ain’t yur fur no good-you bet! Now you jest ‘sling your swag an’ bolt back to heaven, or I’m hanged ef I don’t have suthin’ worse’n horse-stealin’ to answer fur, this time.”

And he took a step forward. At this point I interfered.

A Bit of Chivalry.

At Woodward’s Garden, in the city of San Francisco, is a rather badly chiselled statue of Pandora pulling open her casket of ills. Pandora’s raiment, I grieve to state, has slipped down about her waist in a manner exceedingly reprehensible. One evening about twilight, I was passing that way, and saw a long gaunt miner, evidently just down from the mountains, and whom I had seen before, standing rather unsteadily in front of Pandora, admiring her shapely figure, but seemingly afraid to approach her. Seeing me advance, he turned to me with a queer, puzzled expression in his funny eyes, and said with an earnestness that came near defeating its purpose, “Good ev’n’n t’ye, stranger.” “Good evening, sir,” I replied, after having analyzed his salutation and extracted the sense of it. Lowering his voice to what was intended for a whisper, the miner, with a jerk of his thumb Pandoraward, continued: “Stranger, d’ye hap’n t’know ‘er?” “Certainly; that is Bridget Pandora, a Greek maiden, in the pay of the Board of Supervisors.”

He straightened himself up with a jerk that threatened the integrity of his neck and made his teeth snap, lurched heavily to the other side, oscillated critically for a few moments, and muttered: “Brdgtpnd — .” It was too much for him; he went down into his pocket, fumbled feebly round, and finally drawing out a paper of purely hypothetical tobacco, conveyed it to his mouth and bit off about two-thirds of it, which he masticated with much apparent benefit to his understanding, offering what was left to me. He then resumed the conversation with the easy familiarity of one who has established a claim to respectful attention:

“Pardner, couldn’t ye interdooce a fel’r’s wants tknow’er?” “Impossible; I have not the honour of her acquaintance.” A look of distrust crept into his face, and finally settled into a savage scowl about his eyes. “Sed ye knew ‘er!” he faltered, menacingly. “So I do, but I am not upon speaking terms with her, and-in fact she declines to recognise me.” The soul of the honest miner flamed out; he laid his hand threateningly upon his pistol, jerked himself stiff, glared a moment at me with the look of a tiger, and hurled this question at my head as if it had been an iron interrogation point: “W’at a’ yer ben adoin’ to that gurl?”

I fled, and the last I saw of the chivalrous gold-hunter, he had his arm about Pandora’s stony waist and was endeavouring to soothe her supposed agitation by stroking her granite head.

The Head of the Family.

Our story begins with the death of our hero. The manner of it was decapitation, the instrument a mowing machine. A young son of the deceased, dumb with horror, seized the paternal head and ran with it to the house.

"There!" ejaculated the young man, bowling the gory pate across the threshold at his mother's feet, "look at that, will you?"

The old lady adjusted her spectacles, lifted the dripping head into her lap, wiped the face of it with her apron, and gazed into its fishy eyes with tender curiosity. "John," said she, thoughtfully, "is this yours?"

"No, ma, it ain't none o' mine."

"John," continued she, with a cold, unimpassioned earnestness, "where did you get this thing?"

"Why, ma," returned the hopeful, "that's Pap's."

"John" — and there was just a touch of severity in her voice—"when your mother asks you a question you should answer that particular question. Where did you get this?"

"Out in the medder, then, if you're so derned pertikeller," retorted the youngster, somewhat piqued; "the mowin' machine lopped it off."

The old lady rose and restored the head into the hands of the young man. Then, straightening with some difficulty her aged back, and assuming a matronly dignity of bearing and feature, she emitted the rebuke following:

"My son, the gentleman whom you hold in your hand-any more pointed allusion to whom would be painful to both of us-has punished you a hundred times for meddling with things lying about the farm. Take that head back and put it down where you found it, or you will make your mother very angry."

Deathbed Repentance.

An old man of seventy-five years lay dying. For a lifetime he had turned a deaf ear to religion, and steeped his soul in every current crime. He had robbed the orphan and plundered the widow; he had wrested from the hard hands of honest toil the rewards of labour; had lost at the gaming-table the wealth with which he should have endowed churches and Sunday schools; had wasted in riotous living the substance of his patrimony, and left his wife and children without bread. The intoxicating bowl had been his god-his belly had absorbed his entire attention. In carnal pleasures passed his days and nights, and to the maddening desires of his heart he had ministered without shame and without remorse. He was a bad, bad egg! And now this hardened iniquitor was to meet his Maker! Feebly and hesitatingly his breath fluttered upon his pallid lips. Weakly trembled the pulse in his flattened veins! Wife, children, mother-in-law, friends, who should have hovered lovingly about his couch, cheering his last moments and giving him medicine, he had killed with grief, or driven widely away; and he was now dying alone by the inadequate light of a tallow candle, deserted by heaven and by earth. No, not by heaven. Suddenly the door was pushed softly open, and there entered the good minister, whose pious counsel the suffering wretch had in health so often derided. Solemnly the man of God advanced, Bible in hand. Long and silently he stood uncovered in the presence of death. Then with cold and impressive dignity he remarked, “Miserable old sinner!”

Old Jonas Lashworthy looked up. He sat up. The voice of that holy man put strength into his aged limbs, and he stood up. He was reserved for a better fate than to die like a neglected dog: Mr. Lashworthy was hanged for braining a minister of the Gospel with a boot-jack. This touching tale has a moral.

MORAL OF THIS TOUCHING TALE. — In snatching a brand from the eternal burning, make sure of its condition, and be careful how you lay hold of it.

The New Church that was not Built.

I have a friend who was never a church member, but was, and is, a millionaire-a generous benevolent millionaire-who once went about doing good by stealth, but with a natural preference for doing it at his office. One day he took it into his thoughtful noddle that he would like to assist in the erection of a new church edifice, to replace the inadequate and shabby structure in which a certain small congregation in his town then worshipped. So he drew up a subscription paper, modestly headed the list with “Christian, 2000 dollars,” and started one of the Deacons about with it. In a few days the Deacon came back to him, like the dove to the ark, saying he had succeeded in procuring a few names, but the press of his private business was such that he had felt compelled to intrust the paper to Deacon Smith.

Next day the document was presented to my friend, as nearly blank as when it left his hands. Brother Smith explained that he (Smith) had started this thing, and a brother calling himself “Christian,” whose name he was not at liberty to disclose, had put down 2000 dollars. Would our friend aid them with an equal amount? Our friend took the paper and wrote “Philanthropist, 1000 dollars,” and Brother Smith went away.

In about a week Brother Jones put in an appearance with the subscription paper. By extraordinary exertions Brother Jones-thinking a handsome new church would be an ornament to the town and increase the value of real estate-had got two brethren, who desired to remain incog., to subscribe: “Christian” 2000 dollars, and “Philanthropist” 1000 dollars. Would my friend kindly help along a struggling congregation? My friend would. He wrote “Citizen, 500 dollars,” pledging Brother Jones, as he had pledged the others, not to reveal his name until it was time to pay.

Some weeks afterward, a clergyman stepped into my friend’s counting-room, and after smilingly introducing himself, produced that identical subscription list.

“Mr. K.,” said he, “I hope you will pardon the liberty, but I have set on foot a little scheme to erect a new church for our congregation, and three of the brethren have subscribed handsomely. Would you mind doing something to help along the good work?”

My friend glanced over his spectacles at the proffered paper. He rose in his wrath! He towered! Seizing a loaded pen he dashed at that fair sheet and scrabbled thereon in raging characters, “Impenitent Sinner — Not one cent, by G

— !”

After a brief explanatory conference, the minister thoughtfully went his way. That struggling congregation still worships devoutly in its original, unpretending temple.

A Tale of the Great Quake.

One glorious morning, after the great earthquake of October 21, 1868, had with some difficulty shaken me into my trousers and boots, I left the house. I may as well state that I left it immediately, and by an aperture constructed for another purpose. Arrived in the street, I at once betook myself to saving people. This I did by remarking closely the occurrence of other shocks, giving the alarm and setting an example fit to be followed. The example was followed, but owing to the vigour with which it was set was seldom overtaken. In passing down Clay-street I observed an old rickety brick boarding-house, which seemed to be just on the point of honouring the demands of the earthquake upon its resources. The last shock had subsided, but the building was slowly and composedly settling into the ground. As the third story came down to my level, I observed in one of the front rooms a young and lovely female in white, standing at a door trying to get out. She couldn't, for the door was locked-I saw her through the key-hole. With a single blow of my heel I opened that door, and opened my arms at the same time.

"Thank God," cried I, "I have arrived in time. Come to these arms."

The lady in white stopped, drew out an eye-glass, placed it carefully upon her nose, and taking an inventory of me from head to foot, replied:

"No thank you; I prefer to come to grief in the regular way."

While the pleasing tones of her voice were still ringing in my ears I noticed a puff of smoke rising from near my left toe. It came from the chimney of that house.

Johnny.

Johnny is a little four-year-old, of bright, pleasant manners, and remarkable for intelligence. The other evening his mother took him upon her lap, and after stroking his curly head awhile, asked him if he knew who made him. I grieve to state that instead of answering "Dod," as might have been expected, Johnny commenced cramming his face full of ginger-bread, and finally took a fit of coughing that threatened the dissolution of his frame. Having unloaded his throat and whacked him on the back, his mother propounded the following supplementary conundrum:

"Johnny, are you not aware that at your age every little boy is expected to say something brilliant in reply to my former question? How can you so dishonour your parents as to neglect this golden opportunity? Think again."

The little urchin cast his eyes upon the floor and meditated a long time. Suddenly he raised his face and began to move his lips. There is no knowing what he might have said, but at that moment his mother noted the pressing necessity of wringing and mopping his nose, which she performed with such painful and conscientious singleness of purpose that Johnny set up a war-whoop like that of a night-blooming tomcat.

It may be objected that this little tale is neither instructive nor amusing. I have never seen any stories of bright children that were.

The Child's Provider.

Mr. Goboffle had a small child, no wife, a large dog, and a house. As he was unable to afford the expense of a nurse, he was accustomed to leave the child in the care of the dog, who was much attached to it, while absent at a distant restaurant for his meals, taking the precaution to lock them up together to prevent kidnapping. One day, while at his dinner, he crowded a large, hard-boiled potato down his neck, and it conducted him into eternity. His clay was taken to the Coroner's, and the great world went on, marrying and giving in marriage, lying, cheating, and praying, as if he had never existed.

Meantime the dog had, after several days of neglect, forced an egress through a window, and a neighbouring baker received a call from him daily. Walking gravely in, he would deposit a piece of silver, and receiving a roll and his change would march off homeward. As this was a rather unusual proceeding in a cur of his species, the baker one day followed him, and as the dog leaped joyously into the window of the deserted house, the man of dough approached and looked in. What was his surprise to see the dog deposit his bread calmly upon the floor and fall to tenderly licking the face of a beautiful child!

It is but fair to explain that there was nothing but the face remaining. But this dog did so love the child!

Boys who Began Wrong.

Two little California boys were arrested at Reno for horse thieving. They had started from Surprise Valley with a cavalcade of thirty animals, and disposed of them leisurely along their line of march, until they were picked up at Reno, as above explained. I don’t feel quite easy about those youths-away out there in Nevada without their Testaments! Where there are no Sunday School books boys are so apt to swear and chew tobacco and rob sluice-boxes; and once a boy begins to do that last he might as well sell out; he’s bound to end by doing something bad! I knew a boy once who began by robbing sluice-boxes, and he went right on from bad to worse, until the last I heard of him he was in the State Legislature, elected by Democratic votes. You never saw anybody take on as his poor old mother did when she heard about it.

“Hank,” said she to the boy’s father, who was forging a bank note in the chimney corner, “this all comes o’ not edgercatin’ ‘im when he was a baby. Ef he’d larnt spellin’ and ciferin’ he never could a-ben elected.”

It pains me to state that old Hank didn’t seem to get any thinner under the family disgrace, and his appetite never left him for a minute. The fact is, the old gentleman wanted to go to the United States Senate.

A Kansas Incident.

An invalid wife in Leavenworth heard her husband make proposals of marriage to the nurse. The dying woman arose in bed, fixed her large black eyes for a moment upon the face of her heartless spouse with a reproachful intensity that must haunt him through life, and then fell back a corpse. The remorse of that widower, as he led the blushing nurse to the altar the next week, can be more easily imagined than described. Such reparation as was in his power he made. He buried the first wife decently and very deep down, laying a handsome and exceedingly heavy stone upon the sepulchre. He chiselled upon the stone the following simple and touching line: “She can’t get back.”

Mr. Grile's Girl.

In a lecture about girls, Cady Stanton contrasted the buoyant spirit of young males with the dejected sickliness of immature women. This, she says, is because the latter are keenly sensitive to the fact that they have no aim in life. This is a sad, sad truth! No longer ago than last year the writer's youngest girl-Gloriana, a skin-milk blonde concern of fourteen-came pensively up to her father with big tears in her little eyes, and a forgotten morsel of buttered bread lying unchewed in her mouth.

"Papa," murmured the poor thing, "I'm gettin' awful pokey, and my clothes don't seem to set well in the back. My days are full of ungratified longin's, and my nights don't get any better. Papa, I think society needs turnin' inside out and scrapin'. I haven't got nothin' to aspire to-no aim; nor anything!"

The desolate creature spilled herself loosely into a cane-bottom chair, and her sorrow broke "like a great dyke broken."

The writer lifted her tenderly upon his knee and bit her softly on the neck.

"Gloriana," said he, "have you chewed up all that toffy in two days?"

A smothered sob was her frank confession.

"Now, see here, Glo," continued the parent, rather sternly, "don't let me hear any more about 'aspirations'-which are always adulterated with terra alba-nor 'aims'-which will give you the gripes like anything. You just take this two shilling-piece and invest every penny of it in lollipops!"

You should have seen the fair, bright smile crawl from one of that innocent's ears to the other-you should have marked that face sprinkle, all over with dimples-you ought to have beheld the tears of joy jump glittering into her eyes and spill all over her father's clean shirt that he hadn't had on more than fifteen minutes! Cady Stanton is impotent of evil in the Grile family so long as the price of sweets remains unchanged.

His Railway.

The writer remembers, as if it were but yesterday, when he edited the Hang Tree Herald. For six months he devoted his best talent to advocating the construction of a railway between that place and Jayhawk, thirty miles distant. The route presented every inducement. There would be no grading required, and not a single curve would be necessary. As it lay through an uninhabited alkali flat, the right of way could be easily obtained. As neither terminus had other than pack-mule communication with civilization, the rolling stock and other material must necessarily be constructed at Hang Tree, because the people at the other end didn’t know enough to do it, and hadn’t any blacksmith. The benefit to our place was indisputable; it constituted the most seductive charm of the scheme. After six months of conscientious lying, the company was incorporated, and the first shovelful of alkali turned up and preserved in a museum, when suddenly the devil put it into the head of one of the Directors to inquire publicly what the road was designed to carry. It is needless to say the question was never satisfactorily answered, and the most daring enterprise of the age was knocked perfectly cold. That very night a deputation of stockholders waited upon the editor of the Herald and prescribed a change of climate. They afterward said the change did them good.

Mr. Gish Makes a Present.

In the season for making presents my friend Stockdoddle Gish, Esq., thought he would so far waive his superiority to the insignificant portion of mankind outside his own waistcoat as to follow one of its customs. Mr. Gish has a friend-a delicate female of the shrinking sort-whom he favours with his esteem as a sort of equivalent for the respect she accords him when he browbeats her. Our hero numbers among the blessings which his merit has extorted from niggardly Nature a gaunt meathound, between whose head and body there exists about the same proportion as between those of a catfish, which he also resembles in the matter of mouth. As to sides, this precious pup is not dissimilar to a crockery crate loosely covered with a wet sheet. In appetite he is liberal and cosmopolitan, loving a dried sheepskin as well in proportion to its weight as a kettle of soap. The village which Mr. Gish honours by his residence has for some years been kept upon the dizzy verge of financial ruin by the maintenance of this animal.

The reader will have already surmised that it was this beast which our hero selected to testify his toleration of his lady friend. There never was a greater mistake. Mr. Gish merely presented her a sheaf of assorted angle-worms, neatly bound with a pink ribbon tied into a simple knot. The dog is an heirloom and will descend to the Gishes of the next generation, in the direct line of inheritance.

A Cow–County Pleasantry.

About the most ludicrous incident that I remember occurred one day in an ordinarily solemn village in the cow-counties. A worthy matron, who had been absent looking after a vagrom cow, returned home, and pushing against the door found it obstructed by some heavy substance, which, upon examination, proved to be her husband. He had been slaughtered by some roving joker, who had wrought upon him with a pick-handle. To one of his ears was pinned a scrap of greasy paper, upon which were scrambled the following sentiments in pencil~tracks:

“The inqulosed boddy is that uv old Burker. Step litely, stranger, fer yer lize the mortil part uv wat you mus be sum da. Thers arrest for the weery! If Burker heddenta wurkt agin me fer Corner I wuddenta bed to sit on him. Ov setch is the kingum of hevvun! You don’t want to moov this boddy til ime summuns to hold a ninquest. Orl flesh are gras!”

The ridiculous part of the story is that the lady did not wait to summon the Coroner, but took charge of the remains herself; and in dragging them toward the bed she exploded into her face a shotgun, which had been cunningly contrived to discharge by a string connected with the body. Thus was she punished for an infraction of the law. The next day the particulars were told me by the facetious Coroner himself, whose jury had just rendered a verdict of accidental drowning in both cases. I don’t know when I have enjoyed a heartier laugh.

The Optimist, and What He Died Of.

One summer evening, while strolling with considerable difficulty over Russian Hill, San Francisco, Mr. Grile espied a man standing upon the extreme summit, with a pensive brow and a suit of clothes which seemed to have been handed down through a long line of ancestors from a remote Jew peddler. Mr. Grile respectfully saluted; a man who has any clothes at all is to him an object of veneration. The stranger opened the conversation: “My son,” said he, in a tone suggestive of strangulation by the Sheriff, “do you behold this wonderful city, its wharves crowded with the shipping of all nations?”

Mr. Grile beheld with amazement.

“Twenty-one years ago-alas! it used to be but twenty,” and he wiped away a tear—”you might have bought the whole dern thing for a Mexican ounce.”

Mr. Grile hastened to proffer a paper of tobacco, which disappeared like a wisp of oats drawn into a threshing machine.

“I was one among the first who—”

Mr. Grile hit him on the head with a paving-stone by way of changing the topic.

“Young man,” continued he, “do you feel this bommy breeze? There isn’t a climit in the world—”

This melancholy relic broke down in a fit of coughing. No sooner had he recovered than he leaped into the air, making a frantic clutch at something, but apparently without success.

“Dern it,” hissed he, “there goes my teeth; blowed out again, by hokey!”

A passing cloud of dust hid him for a moment from view, and when he reappeared he was an altered man; a paroxysm of asthma had doubled him up like a nut-cracker.

“Excuse me,” he wheezed, “I’m subject to this; caught it crossin’ the Isthmus in ‘49. As I was a-sayin’, there’s no country in the world that offers such inducements to the immygrunt as Californy. With her fertile soil, her unrivalled climit, her magnificent bay, and the rest of it, there is enough for all.”

This venerable pioneer picked a fragmentary biscuit from the street and devoured it. Mr. Grile thought this had gone on about long enough. He twisted the head off that hopeful old party, surrendered himself to the authorities, and was at once discharged.

The Root of Education.

A pedagogue in Indiana, who was “had up” for unmercifully waling the back of a little girl, justified his action by explaining that “she persisted in flinging paper pellets at him when his back was turned.” That is no excuse. Mr. Grile once taught school up in the mountains, and about every half hour had to remove his coat and scrape off the dried paper wads adhering to the nap. He never permitted a trifle like this to unsettle his patience; he just kept on wearing that gaberdine until it had no nap and the wads wouldn’t stick. But when they took to dipping them in mucilage he made a complaint to the Board of Directors.

“Young man,” said the Chairman, “ef you don’t like our ways, you’d better sling your blankets and git. Prentice Mulford tort skule yer for more’n six months, and he never said a word agin the wads.”

Mr. Grile briefly explained that Mr. Mulford might have been brought up to paper wads, and didn’t mind them.

“It ain’t no use,” said another Director, “the children hev got to be amused.”

Mr. Grile protested that there were other amusements quite as diverting; but the third Director here rose and remarked:

“I perfeckly agree with the Cheer; this youngster better travel. I consider as paper wads lies at the root uv popillar edyercation; ther a necessary adjunck uv the skool systim. Mr. Cheerman, I move and second that this yer skoolmarster be shot.”

Mr. Grile did not remain to observe the result of the voting.

Retribution.

A citizen of Pittsburg, aged sixty, had, by tireless industry and the exercise of rigid economy, accumulated a hoard of frugal dollars, the sight and feel whereof were to his soul a pure delight. Imagine his sorrow and the heaviness of his aged heart when he learned that the good wife had bestowed thereof upon her brother bountiful largess exceeding his merit. Sadly and prayerfully while she slept lifted he the retributive mallet and beat in her brittle pate. Then with the quiet dignity of one who has redressed a grievous wrong, surrendered himself unto the law this worthy old man. Let him who has never known the great grief of slaughtering a wife judge him harshly. He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone-and let it be a large heavy stone that shall grind that wicked old man into a powder of exceeding impalpability.

The Faithful Wife.

“A man was sentenced to twenty years’ confinement for a deed of violence. In the excitement of the moment his wife sought and obtained a divorce. Thirteen years afterward he was pardoned. The wife brought the pardon to the gate; the couple left the spot arm in arm; and in less than an hour they were again united in the bonds of wedlock.”

Such is the touching tale narrated by a newspaper correspondent. It is in every respect true; I knew the parties well, and during that long bitter period of thirteen years it was commonly asked concerning the woman: “Hasn’t that hag trapped anybody yet? She’ll have to take back old Jabe when he gets out.” And she did. For nearly thirteen weary years she struggled nobly against fate: she went after every unmarried man in her part of the country; but “No,” said they, “we cannot-indeed we cannot-marry you, after the way you went back on Jabe. It is likely that under the same circumstances you would play us the same scurvy trick. G’way, woman!” And so the poor old heartbroken creature had to go to the Governor and get the old man pardoned out. Bless her for her steadfast fidelity!

Margaret the Childless.

This, therefore, is the story of her: — Some four years ago her husband brought home a baby, which he said he found lying in the street, and which they concluded to adopt. About a year after this he brought home another, and the good woman thought she could stand that one too. A similar period passed away, when one evening he opened the door and fell headlong into the room, swearing with studied correctness at a dog which had tripped him up, but which upon inspection turned out to be another baby. Margaret's sus~picion was aroused, but to allay his she hastened to implore him to adopt that darling also, to which, after some slight hesitation, he consented. Another twelvemonth rolled into eternity, when one evening the lady heard a noise in the back yard, and going out she saw her husband labouring at the windlass of the well with unwonted industry. As the bucket neared the top he reached down and extracted another infant, exactly like the former ones, and holding it up, explained to the astonished matron: "Look at this, now; did you ever see such a sweet young one go a-campaignin' about the country without a lantern and a-tumblin' into wells? There, take the poor little thing in to the fire, and get off its wet clothes." It suddenly flashed across his mind that he had neglected an obvious precaution-the clothes were not wet-and he hastily added: "There's no tellin' what would have become of it, a-climbin' down that rope, if I hadn't seen it afore it got down to the water."

Silently the good wife took that infant into the house and disrobed it; sorrowfully she laid it alongside its little brothers and sister; long and bitterly she wept over the quartette; and then with one tender look at her lord and master, smoking in solemn silence by the fire, and resembling them with all his might, she gathered her shawl about her bowed shoulders and went away into the night.

The Discomfited Demon.

I never clearly knew why I visited the old cemetery that night. Perhaps it was to see how the work of removing the bodies was getting on, for they were all being taken up and carted away to a more comfortable place where land was less valuable. It was well enough; nobody had buried himself there for years, and the skeletons that were now exposed were old mouldy affairs for which it was difficult to feel any respect. However, I put a few bones in my pocket as souvenirs. The night was one of those black, gusty ones in March, with great inky clouds driving rapidly across the sky, spilling down sudden showers of rain which as suddenly would cease. I could barely see my way between the empty graves, and in blundering about among the coffins I tripped and fell headlong. A peculiar laugh at my side caused me to turn my head, and I saw a singular old gentleman whom I had often noticed hanging about the Coroner's office, sitting cross-legged upon a prostrate tombstone.

"How are you, sir?" said I, rising awkwardly to my feet; "nice night."

"Get off my tail," answered the elderly party, without moving a muscle.

"My eccentric friend," rejoined I, mockingly, "may I be permitted to inquire your street and number?"

"Certainly," he replied, "No. 1, Marle Place, Asphalt Avenue, Hades."

"The devil!" sneered I.

"Exactly," said he; "oblige me by getting off my tail."

I was a little staggered, and by way of rallying my somewhat dazed faculties, offered a cigar: "Smoke?"

"Thank you," said the singular old gentleman, putting it under his coat; "after dinner. Drink?"

I was not exactly prepared for this, but did not know if it would be safe to decline, and so putting the proffered flask to my lips pretended to swig elaborately, keeping my mouth tightly closed the while. "Good article," said I, returning it. He simply remarked, "You're a fool," and emptied the bottle at a gulp.

"And now," resumed he, "you will confer a favour I shall highly appreciate by removing your feet from my tail."

There was a slight shock of earthquake, and all the skeletons in sight arose to their feet, stretched themselves and yawned audibly. Without moving from his seat, the old gentleman rapped the nearest one across the skull with his gold-headed cane, and they all curled away to sleep again.

“Sire,” I resumed, “indulge me in the impertinence of inquiring your business here at this hour.”

“My business is none of yours,” retorted he, calmly; “what are you up to yourself?”

“I have been picking up some bones,” I replied, carelessly.

“Then you are—”

I am—”

“A Ghoul!”

“My good friend, you do me injustice. You have doubtless read very frequently in the newspapers of the Fiend in Human Shape whose actions and way of life are so generally denounced. Sire, you see before you that maligned party!”

There was a quick jerk under the soles of my feet, which pitched me prone upon the ground. Scrambling up, I saw the old gentleman vanishing behind an adjacent sandhill as if the devil were after him.

The Mistake of a Life.

The hotel was in flames. Mr. Pokeweed was promptly on hand, and tore madly into the burning pile, whence he soon emerged with a nude female. Depositing her tenderly upon a pile of hot bricks, he mopped his steaming front with his warm coat-tail.

“Now, Mrs. Pokeweed,” said he, “where will I be most likely to find the children? They will naturally wish to get out.”

The lady assumed a stiffly vertical attitude, and with freezing dignity replied in the words following:

“Sir, you have saved my life; I presume you are entitled to my thanks. If you are likewise solicitous regarding the fate of the person you have mentioned, you had better go back and prospect round till you find her; she would probably be delighted to see you. But while I have a character to maintain unsullied, you shall not stand there and call me Mrs. Pokeweed!”

Just then the front wall toppled outward, and Pokeweed cleared the street at a single bound. He never learned what became of the strange lady, and to the day of his death he professed an indifference that was simply brutal.

L. S.

Early one evening in the autumn of ‘64, a pale girl stood singing Methodist hymns at the summit of Bush Street hill. She was attired, Spanish fashion, in a loose overcoat and slippers. Suddenly she broke off her song, a dark-browed young soldier from the Presidio cautiously approached, and seizing her fondly in his arms, snatched away the overcoat, retreating with it to an auction-house on Pacific Street, where it may still be seen by the benighted traveller, just a-going for two-and-half-and never gone!

The poor maiden after this misfortune felt a bitter resentment swelling in her heart, and scorning to remain among her kind in that costume, took her way to the Cliff House, where she arrived, worn and weary, about breakfast-time.

The landlord received her kindly, and offered her a pair of his best trousers; but she was of noble blood, and having been reared in luxury, respectfully declined to receive charity from a low-born stranger. All efforts to induce her to eat were equally unavailing. She would stand for hours on the rocks where the road descends to the beach, and gaze at the playful seals in the surf below, who seemed rather flattered by her attention, and would swim about, singing their sweetest songs to her alone. Passers-by were equally curious as to her, but a broken lyre gives forth no music, and her heart responded not with any more long metre hymns.

After a few weeks of this solitary life she was suddenly missed. At the same time a strange seal was noted among the rest. She was remarkable for being always clad in an overcoat, which she had doubtless fished up from the wreck of the French galleon Brignardello, which went ashore there some years afterward.

One tempestuous night, an old hag who had long done business as a hermitess on Helmet Rock came into the bar-room at the Cliff House, and there, amidst the crushing thunders and lightnings spilling all over the horizon, she related that she had seen a young seal in a comfortable overcoat, sitting pensively upon the pinnacle of Seal Rock, and had distinctly heard the familiar words of a Methodist hymn. Upon inquiry the tale was discovered to be founded upon fact. The identity of this seal could no longer be denied without downright blasphemy, and in all the old chronicles of that period not a doubt is even implied.

One day a handsome, dark, young lieutenant of infantry, Don Edmundo by name, came out to the Cliff House to celebrate his recent promotion. While standing upon the verge of the cliff, with his friends all about him, Lady Celia, as visitors had christened her, came swimming below him, and taking off her overcoat, laid it upon a rock. She then turned up her eyes and sang a Methodist hymn.

No sooner did the brave Don Edmundo hear it than he tore off his gorgeous clothes, and cast himself headlong in the billows. Lady Celia caught him dexterously by the waist in her mouth, and, swimming to the outer rock, sat up and softly bit him in halves. She then laid the pieces tenderly in a conspicuous place, put on her overcoat, and plunging into the waters was never seen more.

Many are the wild fabrications of the poets about her subsequent career, but to this day nothing authentic has turned up. For some months strenuous efforts were made to recover the wicked Lieutenant’s body. Every appliance which genius could invent and skill could wield was put in requisition; until one night the landlord, fearing these constant efforts might frighten away the seals, had the remains quietly removed and secretly interred.

The Baffled Asian.

One day in ‘49 an honest miner up in Calaveras county, California, bit himself with a small snake of the garter variety, and either as a possible antidote, or with a determination to enjoy the brief remnant of a wasted life, applied a brimming jug of whisky to his lips, and kept it there until, like a repleted leech, it fell off.

The man fell off likewise.

The next day, while the body lay in state upon a pine slab, and the bereaved partner of the deceased was unbending in a game of seven-up with a friendly Chinaman, the game was interrupted by a familiar voice which seemed to proceed from the jaws of the corpse: “I say~Jim!”

Bereaved partner played the king of spades, claimed “high,” and then, looking over his shoulder at the melancholy remains, replied, “Well, what is it, Dave? I’m busy.”

“I say-Jim!” repeated the corpse in the same measured tone.

With a look of intense annoyance, and muttering something about “people that could never stop dead more’n a minute,” the bereaved partner rose and stood over the body with his cards in his hand.

“Jim,” continued the mighty dead, “how fur’s this thing gone?”

“I’ve paid the Chinaman two-and-a-half to dig the grave,” responded the bereaved.

“Did he strike anything?”

The Chinaman looked up: “Me strikee pay dirt; me no bury dead ‘Melican in ‘em grave. Me keep ‘em claim.”

The corpse sat up erect: “Jim, git my revolver and chase that pig-tail off. Jump his dam sepulchre, and tax his camp five dollars each fer prospectin’ on the public domain. These Mungolyun hordes hez got to be got under. And-I say-Jim! ‘f any more serpents come foolin’ round here drive ‘em off. ‘T’aint right to be bitin’ a feller when whisky’s two dollars a gallon. Dern all foreigners, anyhow!”

And the mortal part pulled on its boots.

Tall Talk.

A Call to Dinner.

When the starving peasantry of France were bearing with inimitable fortitude their great bereavement in the death of Louis le Grand, how cheerfully must they have bowed their necks to the easy yoke of Philip of Orleans, who set them an example in eating which he had not the slightest objection to their following. A monarch skilled in the mysteries of the cuisine must wield the sceptre all the more gently from his schooling in handling the ladle. In royalty, the delicate manipulation of an omelette soufflé is at once an evidence of genius, and an assurance of a tender forbearance in state policy. All good rulers have been good livers, and if all bad ones have been the same this merely proves that even the worst of men have still something divine in them.

There is more in a good dinner than is disclosed by the removal of the covers. Where the eye of hunger perceives but a juicy roast, the eye of faith detects a smoking God. A well-cooked joint is redolent of religion, and a delicate pasty is crisp with charity. The man who can light his after-dinner Havana without feeling full to the neck with all the cardinal virtues is either steeped in iniquity or has dined badly. In either case he is no true man. We stoutly contend that that worthy personage Epicurus has been shamefully misrepresented by abstemious, and hence envious and mendacious, historians. Either his philosophy was the most gentle, genial, and reverential of antique systems, or he was not an Epicurean, and to call him so is a deceitful flattery. We hold that it is morally impossible for a man to dine daily upon the fat of the land in courses, and yet deny a future state of existence, beatific with beef, and ecstatic with all edibles. Another falsity of history is that of Heliogabalus-was it not?-dining off nightingales' tongues. No true gourmet would ever send this warbler to the shambles so long as scarcer birds might be obtained.

It is a fine natural instinct that teaches the hungry and cadaverous to avoid the temples of religion, and a short-sighted and misdirected zeal that would gather them into the sanctuary. Religion is for the oleaginous, the fat-bellied, chylesaturated devotees of the table. Unless the stomach be lined with good things, the parson may say as many as he likes and his truths shall not be swallowed nor his wisdom inly digested. Probably the highest, ripest, and most acceptable form of worship is that performed with a knife and fork; and whosoever on the resurrection morning can produce from amongst the lumber of his cast-off flesh a thin-coated and elastic stomach, showing evidences of daily stretchings done in the body, will find it his readiest passport and best credential. We believe that God will not hold him guiltless who eats with his knife, but if the deadly steel be always well laden with toothsome morsels, divine justice will be tempered with mercy to that man’s soul. When the author of the “Lost Tales” represented Sisyphus as capturing his guest, the King of Terrors, and stuffing the old glutton with meat and drink until he became “a jolly, rubicund, tun-bellied Death,” he gave us a tale which needs no hæc fabula docet to point out the moral.

We verily believe that Shakspeare writ down Fat Jack at his last gasp, as babbling, not o’ green fields, but o’ green turtle, and that that starvling Colley Cibber altered the text from sheer envy at a good man’s death. To die well we must live well, is a familiar platitude. Morality is, of course, best promoted by the good quality of our fare, but quantitative excellence is by no means to be despised. Cæteris paribus, the man who eats much is a better Christian than the man who eats little, and he who eats little will pursue a more uninterrupted course of benevolence than he who eats nothing.

On Death and Immortality.

Did it ever strike you, dear reader, that it must be a particularly pleasant thing to be dead? To say nothing hackneyed about the blessed freedom from the cares and vexations of life — which we cling to with such tenacity while we can, and which, when we have no longer the power to hold, we let go all at once, with probably a feeling of exquisite relief-and to take no account of this latter probable but totally undemonstrable felicity, it must be what boys call awfully jolly to be dead.

Here you are, lying comfortably upon your back-what is left of it-in the cool dark, and with the smell of the fresh earth all about you. Your soul goes knocking about amongst an infinity of shadowy things, Lord knows where, making all sorts of silent discoveries in the gloom of what was yesterday an unknown and mysterious future, and which, after centuries of exploration, must still be strangely unfamiliar. The nomadic thing doubtless comes back occasionally to the old grave-if the body is so fortunate as to possess one-and looks down upon it with big round eyes and a lingering tenderness.

It is hard to conceive a soul entirely cut loose from the old bones, and roving rudderless about eternity. It was probably this inability to mentally divorce soul from substance that gave us that absurdly satisfactory belief in the resurrection of the flesh. There is said to be a race of people somewhere in Africa who believe in the immortality of the body, but deny the resurrection of the soul. The dead will rise refreshed after their long sleep, and in their anxiety to test their rejuvenated powers, will skip bodily away and forget their souls. Upon returning to look for them, they will find nothing but little blue flames, which can never be extinguished, but may be carried about and used for cooking purposes. This belief probably originates in some dim perception of the law of compensation. In this life the body is the drudge of the spirit; in the next the situation is reversed.

The heaven of the Mussulman is not incompatible with this kind of immortality. Its delights, being merely carnal ones, could be as well or better enjoyed without a soul, and the latter might be booked for the Christian heaven, with only just enough of the body to attach a pair of wings to. Mr. Solyman Muley Abdul Ben Gazel could thus enjoy a dual immortality and secure a double portion of eternal felicity at no expense to anybody.

In fact, there can be no doubt whatever that this theory of a double heaven is the true one, and needs but to be fairly stated to be universally received, inasmuch as it supposes the maximum of felicity for terrestrial good behaviour. It is therefore a sensible theory, resting upon quite as solid a foundation of fact as any other theory, and must commend itself at once to the proverbial good sense of Christians everywhere. The trouble is that some architectural scoundrel of a priest is likely to build a religion upon it; and what the world needs is theory-good, solid, nourishing theory.

Music–Muscular and Mechanical.

One cheerful evidence of the decivilization of the Anglo–Saxon race is the late tendency to return to first principles in art, as manifested in substituting noise for music. Herein we detect symptoms of a rapid relapse into original barbarism. The savage who beats his gong or kettledrum until his face is of a delicate blue, and his eyes assert themselves like those of an unterrified snail, believes that musical skill is a mere question of brawn-a matter of muscle. If not wholly ignorant of technical gymnastics, he has a theory that a deftness at dumb-bells is a prime requisite in a finished artist. The advance-in a circle-of civilization has only partially unsettled this belief in the human mind, and we are constantly though unconsciously reverting to it.

It is true the modern demand for a great deal of music has outstripped the supply of muscle for its production; but the ingenuity of man has partially made up for his lack of physical strength, and the sublimer harmonies may still be rendered with tolerable effectiveness, and with little actual fatigue to the artist. As we retrograde towards the condition of Primeval Man-the man with the gong and kettledrum-the blacksmith slowly reasserts his place as the interpreter of the maestro.

But there is a limit beyond which muscle, whether that of the arm or cheek, can no further go, without too great an expenditure of force in proportion to the volume of noise attainable. And right here the splendid triumphs of modern invention and discovery are made manifest; electricity and gunpowder come to the relief of puny muscle, simple appliance, and orchestras limited by sparse population. Batteries of artillery thunder exultingly our victory over Primeval Man, beaten at his own game-signally routed and put to shame, pounding his impotent gong and punishing his ridiculous kettledrum in frantic silence, amidst the clash and clang and roar of modern art.

The Good Young Man.

Why is he? Why defaces he the fair page of creation, and why is he to be continued? This has never been explained; it is one of those dispensations of Providence the design whereof is wrapped in profoundest obscurity. The good young man is perhaps not without excuse for his existence, but society is without excuse for permitting it. At his time of life to be “good” is to insult humanity. Goodness is proper to the aged; it is their sole glory; why should this milky stripling bring it into disrepute? Why should he be permitted to defile with the fat of his sleek locks a crown intended to adorn the grizzled pow of his elders?

A young man may be manly, gentle, honourable, noble, tender and true, and nobody will ever think of calling him a good young man. Your good young man is commonly a sneak, and is very nearly allied to that other social pest, the “nice young lady.” As applied to the immature male of our kind, the adjective “good” seems to have been perverted from its original and ordinary signification, and to have acquired a dyslogistic one. It is a term of reproach, and means, as nearly as may be, “characterless.” That any one should submit to have it applied to him is proof of the essential cowardice of Virtue.

We believe the direst ill afflicting civilization is the good young man. The next direst is his natural and appointed mate, the nice young lady. If the two might be tied neck and heels together and flung into the sea, the land would be the fatter for it.

The Average Parson.

Our objection to him is not that he is senseless; this-as it concerns us not-we can patiently endure. Nor that he is bigoted; this we expect, and have become accustomed to. Nor that he is small-souled, narrow, and hypocritical; all these qualities become him well, sitting easily and gracefully upon him. We protest against him because he is always “carrying on.”

To carry on, in one way or another, seems to be the function of his existence, and essential to his health. When he is not doing it in the pulpit he is at it in the newspapers; when both fail him he resorts to the social circle, the church meeting, the Sunday-school, or even the street corner. We have known him to disport for half a day upon the kerb-stone, carrying on with all his might to whomsoever would endure it.

No sooner does a young sick-faced theologue get safely through his ordination, as a baby finishes teething, than straightway he casts about him for an opportunity to carry on. A pretext is soon found, and he goes at it hammer and tongs; and forty years after you shall find him at the same trick with as simple a faith, as exalted an expectation, as vigorous an impotence, as the day he began.

His carryings-on are as diverse in kind, as comprehensive in scope, as those of the most versatile negro minstrel. He cuts as many capers in a lifetime as there are stars in heaven or grains of sand in a barrel of sugar. Everything is fish that comes to his net. If a discovery in science is announced, he will execute you an antic upon it before it gets fairly cold. Is a new theory advanced-ten to one while you are trying to get it through your head he will stand on his own and make mouths at it. A great invention provokes him into a whirlwind of flip-flaps absolutely bewildering to the secular eye; while at any exceptional phenomenon of nature, such as an earthquake, he will project himself frog-like into an infinity of lofty gymnastic absurdities.

In short, the slightest agitation of the intellectual atmosphere sets your average parson into a tempest of pumping like the jointed ligneous youth attached to the eccentric of a boy’s whirligig. His philosophy of life may be boiled down into a single sentence: Carry on and you will be happy.

Did We Eat One Another?

There is no doubt of it. The unwelcome truth has long been suppressed by interested parties who find their account in playing sycophant to that self-satisfied tyrant Modern Man; but to the impartial philosopher it is as plain as the nose upon an elephant's face that our ancestors ate one another. The custom of the Fiji Islanders, which is their only stock-in-trade, their only claim to notoriety, is a relic of barbarism; but it is a, relic of our barbarism.

Man is naturally a carnivorous animal. This none but greengrocers will dispute. That he was formerly less vegetarian in his diet than at present, is clear from the fact that market-gardening increases in the ratio of civilization. So we may safely assume that at some remote period Man subsisted upon an exclusively flesh diet. Our uniform vanity has given us the human mind as the ne plus ultra of intelligence, the human face and figure as the standard of beauty. Of course we cannot deny to human fat and lean an equal superiority over beef, mutton, and pork. It is plain that our meat-eating ancestors would think in this way, and, being unrestrained by the mawkish sentiment attendant upon high civilization, would act habitually upon the obvious suggestion. A priori, therefore, it is clear that we ate ourselves.

Philology is about the only thread which connects us with the prehistoric past. By picking up and piecing out the scattered remnants of language, we form a patchwork of wondrous design. Oblige us by considering the derivation of the word "sarcophagus," and see if it be not suggestive of potted meats. Observe the significance of the phrase "sweet sixteen." What a world of meaning lurks in the expression "she is sweet as a peach," and how suggestive of luncheon are the words "tender youth." A kiss itself is but a modified bite, and when a young girl insists upon making a "strawberry mark" upon the back of your hand, she only gives way to an instinct she has not yet learned to control. The fond mother, when she says her babe is almost "good enough to eat," merely shows that she herself is only a trifle too good to eat it.

These evidences might be multiplied ad infinitum; but if enough has been said to induce one human being to revert to the diet of his ancestors, the object of this essay is accomplished.

Your Friend's Friend.

If there is any individual who combines within himself the vices of an entire species it is he. A mother-in-law has usually been thought a rather satisfactory specimen of total depravity; it has been customary to regard your sweetheart's brother as tolerably vicious for a young man; there is excellent authority for looking upon your business partner as not wholly without merit as a nuisance-but your friend's friend is as far ahead of these in all that constitutes a healthy disagreeableness as they themselves are in advance of the average reptile or the conventional pestilence.

We do not propose to illustrate the great truth we have in hand by instances; the experience of the reader will furnish ample evidence in support of our proposition, and any narration of pertinent facts could only quicken into life the dead ghosts of a thousand sheeted annoyances to squeak and gibber through a memory studded thick with the tombstones of happy hours murdered by your friend's friend.

Also, the animal is too well known to need a description. Imagine a thing in all essential particulars the exact reverse of a desirable acquaintance, and you have his mental photograph. How your friend could ever admire so hopeless and unendurable a bore is a problem you are ever seeking to solve. Perhaps you may be assisted in it by a previous solution of the kindred problem-how he could ever feel affection for yourself? Perhaps your friend's friend is equally exercised over that question. Perhaps from his point of view you are your friend's friend.

Le Diable est aux Vaches.

If it be that ridicule is the test of truth, as Shaftesbury is reported to have said and didn’t, the doctrine of Woman Suffrage is the truest of all faiths. The amount of really good ridicule that has been expended upon this thing is appalling, and yet we are compelled to confess that to all appearance “the cause” has been thereby shorn of no material strength, nor bled of its vitality. And shall it be admitted that this potent argument of little minds is as powerless as the dullards of all ages have steadfastly maintained? Forbid it, Heaven! the gimlet is as proper a gimlet as any in all Christendom, but the timber is too hard to pierce! Grant ye that “the movement” is waxing more wondrous with each springing sun, who shall say what it might not have been but for the sharp hatcheting of us wits among its boughs? If the doctor have not cured his patient by to-morrow he may at least claim that without the physic the man would have died to-day.

And pray who shall search the vitals of a whale with a bodkin-who may reach his jackknife through the superposed bubber? Pachyderm, thy name is Woman! All the king’s horses and all the king’s men shall not bend the bow that can despatch a clothyard shaft through thy pearly hide. The male and female women who nightly howl their social and political grievances into the wide ear of the universe are as insensible to the prickings of ridicule as they are unconscious of logic. An intellectual Goliah of Gath might spear them with an epigram like unto a weaver’s beam, and the sting thereof would be as but the nipping of a red ant. Apollo might speed among them his silver arrows, which erst heaped the Phrygian shores with hecatombs of Argive slain, and they would but complain of the mosquito’s beak. Your female reformer goes smashing through society like a tipsy rhinoceros among the tulip beds, and all the torrent of brickbats rained upon her skin is shed, as globules of mercury might be supposed to run off the back of a dry drake.

One of the rarest amusements in life is to go about with an icicle suspended by a string, letting it down the necks of the unwary. The sudden shrug, the quick frightened shudder, the yelp of apprehension are sources of a pure, because diabolical, delight. But these women-you may practise your chilling joke upon one of them, and she will calmly wonder where you got your ice, and will pen with deliberate fingers an ungrammatical resolution denouncing congelation as tyrannical and obsolete.

We despair of ever dispelling these creatures by pungent pleasantries-of routing them by sharp censure. They are, apparently, to go on practically unmolested to the end. Meantime we are cast down with a mighty proneness along the dust; our shapely anatomy is clothed in a jaunty suit of sackcloth liberally embellished with the frippery of ashes; our days are vocal with wailing, our nights melodious with snuffle!

Brethren, let us pray that the political sceptre may not pass from us into the jewelled hands which were intended by nature for the clouting of babes and sucklings.

Angels and Angles.

When abandoned to her own devices, the average female has a tendency to “put on her things,” and to contrive the same, in a manner that is not conducive to patience in the male beholder. Her besetting iniquity in this particular is a fondness for angles, and she is unwavering in her determination to achieve them at whatever cost.

Now we vehemently affirm that in woman’s apparel an angle is an offence to the male eye, and therefore a crime of no small magnitude. In the masculine garb angles are tolerable-angles of whatever acuteness. The masculine character and life are rigid and angular, and the apparel should, or at least may, proclaim the man. But with the soft, rounded nature of woman, her bending flexibility of temper, angles are absolutely incompatible. In her outward seeming all should be easy and flowing-every fold a nest of graces, and every line a curve.

By close attention to this great truth, and a conscientious striving after its advantages, woman may hope to become rather comely of exterior, and to find considerable favour in the eyes of man. It is not impossible that, without any abatement of her present usefulness, she may come to be regarded as actually ornamental, and even attractive. If with her angles she will also renounce some hundreds of other equally harassing absurdities of attire, she may consider her position assured, and her claim to masculine toleration reasonably well grounded.

A Wingless Insect.

It would be profitable in the end if man would take a hint from his lack of wings, and settle down comfortably into the assurance that midair is not his appointed element. The confession is a humiliating one, but there is a temperate balm in the consciousness that his inability to “shave with level wing” the blue empyrean cannot justly be charged upon himself. He has done his endeavour, and done it nobly; but he’ll break his precious neck.

In Goldsmith’s veracious “History of Animated Nature” is a sprightly account of one Nicolas, who was called, if our memory be not at fault, the man-fish, and who was endowed by his Creator-the late Mr. Goldsmith aforesaid-with the power of conducting an active existence under the sea. That equally veracious and instructive work “The Arabian Nights’ Entertainments,” peoples the bottom of old ocean with powerful nations of similarly gifted persons; while in our own day “the Man–Frog” has taught us what may be done in this line when one has once got the knack of it.

Some years since (we do not know if he has yet suffered martyrdom at the hand of the fiendish White) there lived a noted Indian chieftain whose name, being translated, signifies “The~Man–Who-Walks–Under-the-Ground,” probably a lineal descendant of the gnomes. We have ourselves walked under the ground in wine cellars.

With these notable examples in mind, we are not prepared to assert that, though man has as a rule neither the gills of a fish nor the nose of a mole, he may not enjoy a drive at the bottom of the sea, or a morning ramble under the subsoil. But with the exception of Peter Wilkins’ Flying Islanders-whose existence we vehemently dispute-and some similar creatures whom it suits our purpose to ignore, there is no record of any person to whom the name of The–Man-Who–Flies-Over-the-Hills may be justly applied. We make no account of the shallow device of Mongolfier, nor the dubious contrivance of Marriott. A gentleman of proper aspirations would scorn to employ either, as the Man–Frog would reject a diving-bell, or the subterranean chieftain would sneer at the Mont Cenis tunnel. These “weak inventions” only emphasize our impotence to strive with the subtle element about and above. They prove nothing so conclusively as that we can’t fly-a fact still more strikingly proven by the constant thud of people tumbling out of them. To a Titan of comprehensive ear, who could catch the noises of a world upon his single tympanum as Hector caught Argive javelins upon his shield, the patter of dropping aëronauts would sound like the gentle pelting of hailstones upon a dusty highway-so thick and fast they fall.

It is probable that man is no more eager to float free into space than the earth-if it be sentient-is to shake him off; but it would appear that he and it must, like the Siamese twins, consent to endure the disadvantages of a mutually disagreeable intimacy. We submit that it is hardly worth his while to continue "larding the lean earth" with his carcase in the vain endeavour to emulate angels, whom in no respect he at all resembles.

Pork on the Hoof.

The motto aut Cæsar aut nullus is principally nonsense, we take it. If one may not be a man, one may, in most cases, be a hog with equal satisfaction to his mind and heart.

There is Thompson Washington Smith, for example (his name is not Thompson, nor Washington, nor yet Smith; we call him so to conceal his real name, which is perhaps Smythe). Now Thompson, there is reason to believe, tried earnestly for some years to be a man. Alas! he began while he was a boy, and got exhausted before he arrived at maturity. He could make no further effort, and manhood is not acquired without a mighty struggle, nor maintained without untiring industry. So having fatigued himself before reaching the starting-point, Thompson Washington did not re-enter the race for manhood, but contented his simple soul with achieving a modest swinehood. He became a hog of considerable talent and promise.

Let it not be supposed that Thompson has anything in common with the typical, ideal hog-him who encrusts his hide with clay, and inhumes his muzzle in garbage. Far from it; he is a cleanly-almost a godly-hog, preternaturally fair of exterior, and eke fastidious of appetite. He is glossy of coat, stainless of shirt, immaculate of trousers. He is shiny of beaver and refulgent of boot. With all, a Hog. Watch him ten minutes under any circumstances and his face shall seem to lengthen and sharpen away, split at the point, and develop an unmistakeable snout. A ridge of bristles will struggle for sunlight under the gloss of his coat. This is your imagination, and that is about as far as it will take you. So long as Thompson Washington, actual, maintains a vertical attitude, Thompson Washington, unreal, will not assume an horizontal one. Your fancy cannot “go the whole hog.”

It only remains to state explicitly to whom we are alluding. Well, there is a stye in the soul of every one of us, in which abides a porker more or less objectionable. We don’t all let him range at large, like Smith, but he will occasionally exalt his visage above the rails of even the most cleverly constructed pen. The best of us are they who spend most time repressing the beast by rapping him upon the nose.

The Young Person.

We are prepared, not perhaps to prove, but to maintain, that civilization would be materially aided and abetted by the offer of a liberal reward for the scalps of Young Persons with the ears attached. Your regular Young Person is a living nuisance, whose every act is a provocation to exterminate her. We say “her,” not because, physically considered, the Y. P. is necesarily of the she sex; more commonly is it an irreclaimable male; but morally and intellectually it is an unmixed female. Her virtues are merely milk-and-morality-her intelligence is pure spiritual whey. Her conversation (to which not even her own virtues and intelligence are in any way related) is three parts rain-water that has stood too long and one part cider that has not stood long enough-a sickening, sweetish compound, one dose of which induces in the mental stomach a colicky qualm, followed, if no correctives be taken, by violent retching, coma, and death.

The Young Person vegetates best in the atmosphere of parlours and ball-rooms; if she infested the fields and roadsides like the squirrels, lizards, and mud-hens, she would be as ruthlessly exterminated as they. Every passing sportsman would fill her with duck-shot, and every strolling gentleman would step out of his way to smite off her head with his cane, as one decapitates a thistle. But in the drawing-room one lays off his destructiveness with his hat and gloves, and the Young Person enjoys the same immunity that a sleepy mastiff grants to the worthless kitten campaigning against his nose.

But there is no good reason why the Spider should be destroyed and the Young Person tolerated.

A Certain Popular Fallacy.

The world makes few graver mistakes than in supposing a man must necessarily possess all the cardinal virtues because he has a big dog and some dirty children.

We know a butcher whose children are not merely dirty-they are fearfully and wonderfully besmirched by the hand of an artist. He has, in addition, a big dog with a tendency to dropsy, who flies at you across the street with such celerity that he outruns his bark by a full second, and you are warned of your danger only after his teeth are buried in your leg. And yet the owner of these children and father of this dog is no whit better, to all appearance, than a baker who has clean brats and a mild poodle. He is not even a good butcher; he hacks a rib and lacerates a sirloin. He talks through his nose, which turns up to such an extent that the voice passes right over your head, and you have to get on a table to tell whether he is slandering his dead wife or swearing at yourself.

If that man possessed a thousand young ones, exaltedly nasty, and dogs enough to make a sub-Atlantic cable of German sausage, you would find it difficult to make us believe in him. In fact, we look upon the big dog test of morality as a venerable mistake-natural but erroneous; and we regard dirty children as indispensable in no other sense than that they are inevitable.

Pastoral Journalism.

There shall be joy in the household of the country editor what time the rural mind shall no longer crave the unhealthy stimuli afforded by fascinating accounts of corpulent beets, bloated pumpkins, dropsical melons, aspiring maize, and precocious cabbages. Then the bucolic journalist shall have surcease of toil, and may go out upon the meads to frisk with kindred lambs, frolic familiarly with loose-jointed colts, and exchange grave gambollings with solemn cows. Then shall the voice of the press, no longer attuned to the praises of the vegetable kingdom, find a more humble, but not less useful, employment in calling the animal kingdom to the evening meal beneath the sanctum window.

To the over-worked editor life will have a fresh zest and a new significance. The hills shall hump more greenly upward to a bluer sky, the fields blush with a more tender sunshine. He will go forth at dawn with countless flipflaps of gymnastic joy; and when the white sun shall redden with the blood of dying day, and the hogs shall set up a fine evening hymn of supplication to the Giver of Swill, he will stand upon the editorial head, blissfully conscious that his intellect is a-ripening for the morrow's work.

The rural newspaper! We sit with it in hand, running our fingers over the big staring letters, as over the black and white keys of a piano, drumming out of them a mild melody of perfect repose. With what delight do we disport us in the illimitable void of its nothingness, as who should swim in air! Here is nothing to startle-nothing to wound. The very atmosphere is saturated with "the spirit of the rural press;" and even our dog stands by, with pendant tail, slowly dropping the lids over his great eyes; and then, jerking them suddenly up again, tries to look as if he were not sleepy in the least. A pleasant smell of ploughed ground comes strong upon us. The tinkle of ghostly cow-bells falls drowsily upon the ear. Airy figures of phenomenal esculents float dreamily before our half-shut eyes, and vanish ere perfect vision can catch them. About and above are the drone of bees, and the muffled thunder of milk streams shooting into the foaming pail. The gabble of distant geese is faintly marked off by the bark of a distant dog. The city with its noises sinks away from our feet as from one in a balloon, and our senses are steeped in country languor. We slumber.

God bless the man who first invented the country newspaper!-though Sancho Panza blessed him once before.

Mendicity’s Mistake.

Your famishing beggar is a fish of as sorry aspect as may readily be scared up. Generally speaking, he is repulsive as to hat, abhorrent as to vesture, squalid of boot, and in tout ensemble unseemly and atrocious. His appeal for alms falls not more vexingly upon the ear than his offensive personality smites hard upon the eye. The touching effectiveness of his tale is ever neutralized by the uncomeliness of his raiment and the inartistic besmirchedness of his countenance. His pleading is like the pathos of some moving ballad from the lips of a negro minstrel; shut your eyes and it shall make you fumble in your pocket for your handkerchief; open them, and you would fain draw out a pistol instead.

It is to be wished that Poverty would garb his body in a clean skin, that Adversity would cultivate a taste for spotless linen, and that Beggary would address himself unto your pocket from beneath a downy hat. However, we cannot hope to immediately impress these worthy mendicants with the advantage of devoting a portion of their gains to the purchase of purple and fine linen, instead of expending their all upon the pleasures of the table and riotous living; but our duty unto them remains.

The very least that one can do for the offensive needy is to direct them to the nearest clothier. That, therefore, is the proper course.

Insects.

Every one has observed, a solitary ant breasting a current of his fellows as he retraces his steps to pack off something he has forgotten. At each meeting with a neighbour there is a mutual pause, and the two confront each other for a moment, reaching out their delicate antennæ, and making a critical examination of one another’s person. This the little creature repeats with tireless persistence to the end of his journey.

As with the ant, so with the other insect-the sprightly “female of our species.” It is really delightful to watch the fine frenzy of her lovely eye as she notes the approach of a woman more gorgeously arrayed than herself, or the triumphant contempt that settles about her lips at the advance of a poorly clad sister. How contemplatively she lingers upon each detail of attire-with what keen penetration she takes in the general effect at a sweep!

And this suggests the fearful thought-what would the darlings do if they wore no clothes? One-half their pleasure in walking on the street would vanish like a dream, and an equal proportion of the philosopher’s happiness in watching them would perish in the barren prospect of an inartistic nudity.

Picnicking considered as a Mistake.

Why do people attend public picnics? We do not wish to be iterative, but why do they? Heaven help them! it is because they know no better, and no one has had the leisure to enlighten them.

Now your picnic-goer is a muff-an egregious, gregarious muff, and a glutton. Moreover, a nobody who, if he be male wears, in nine cases in ten, a red necktie and a linen duster to his heel; if she be female hath soiled hose to her calf, and in her face a premonition of colic to come.

We hold it morally impossible to attend a picnic and come home pure in heart and undefiled of cuticle. For the dust will get in your nose, clog your ears, make clay in your mouth and mortar in your eyes, and so stop up all the natural passages to the soul; whereby the wickedness which that subtle organ doth constantly excrete is balked of its issue, tainting the entire system with a grievous taint.

At picnics, moreover, is engendered an unpleasant perspiration, which the patient must perforce endure until he shall bathe him in a bath. It is not sweet to reek, and your picnicker must reek. Should he chance to break a leg, or she a limb, the inevitable exposure of the pedal condition is alarming and eke humiliating.

Thanksgiving Day.

There be those of us whose memories, though vexed with an oyster-rake would not yield matter for gratitude, and whose piety though strained through a sieve would leave no trace of an object upon which to lavish thanks. It is easy enough, with a waistcoat selected for the occasion, to eat one's proportion of turkey and hide away one's allowance of wine; and if this be returning thanks, why then gratitude is considerably easier, and vastly more agreeable, than falling off a log, and may be acquired in one easy lesson without a master. But if more than this be required-if to be grateful means anything beyond being gluttonous, your true philosopher — he of the severe brow upon which logic has stamped its eternal impress, and from whose heart sentiment has been banished along with other small vices-your true philosopher, say we, will think twice before he "crooks the pregnant hinges of the knee" in humble observance of the day.

For here is the nut of reason he is obliged to crack before he can obtain the kernel of emotion proper to the day. Unless the blessings we enjoy are favours from the Omnipotent, to be grateful is to be absurd. If they are, then, also the ills with which we are afflicted have the same origin. Grant this, and you make an offset of the latter against the former, or are driven either to the ridiculous position that we must be equally grateful for both evils and blessings, or the no less ridiculous one that all evils are blessings in disguise.

But the truth is, my fine friend, your annual gratitude is a sorry sham, a cloak, my good fellow, to cover your unhandsome gluttony; and when by chance you do take to your knees, it is only that you prefer to digest your bird in that position. We understand your case accurately, and the hard sense we are poking at you is not a preachment for your edification, but a bit of harmless fun for our own diversion. For, look you! there is really a subtle but potent relation between the gratitude of the spirit and the stuffing of the flesh.

We have ever taught the identity of Soul and Stomach; these are but different names for one object considered under differing aspects. Thankfulness we believe to be a kind of ether evolved by the action of the gastric fluid upon rich meats. Like all gases it ascends, and so passes out of the esophagus in prayer and psalmody. This beautiful theory we have tested by convincing experiments in the manner following: —

Experiment 1st. — A quantity of grass was placed in a large bladder, and a gill of the gastric fluid of a sheep introduced. In ten minutes the neck of the bladder emitted a contented bleat.

Experiment 2nd. — A pound of beef was substituted for the grass, and the fluid of a dog for that of the sheep. The result was a cheerful bark, accompanied by an agitation of the bottom of the bladder, as if it were attempting to wag an imaginary tail.

Experiment 3rd. — The bladder was charged with a handful of chopped turkey, and an ounce of human gastric juice obtained from the Coroner. At first, nothing but a deep sigh of satisfaction escaped from the neck of the bladder, followed by an unmistakeable grunt, similar to that of a hog. Upon increasing the proportion of turkey, and confining the gas, the bladder was very much distended, appearing to suffer great uneasiness. The restriction being removed, the neck distinctly articulated the words “Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!”

Against such demonstration as this any mere theological theorizing is of no avail.

Flogging.

It may justly be demanded of the essayist that he shall give some small thought to the question of corporal punishment by means of the “cat,” and “ground-ash.” We have given the subject the most elaborate attention; we have written page after page upon it. Day and night we have toiled and perspired over that distressing problem. Through Summer’s sun and Winter’s snow, with all unfaltering purpose, we have strung miles of ink upon acres of paper, weaving wisdom into eloquence with the tireless industry of a silkworm fashioning his cocoon. We have refused food, scorned sleep, and endured thirst to see our work grow beneath our cunning hand. The more we wrote the wiser we became; the opinions of one day were rejected the next; the blind surmising of yesterday ripened into the full knowledge of to-day, and this matured into the superhuman omniscience of this evening. We have finally got so infernally clever that we have abandoned the original design of our great work, and determined to make it a compendium of everything that is accurately known up to date, and the bearing of this upon flogging in general.

To other, and inferior, writers it is most fortunate that our design has taken so wide a scope. These can go on with their perennial wrangle over the petty question of penal and educational flagellation, while we grapple with the higher problem, and unfold the broader philosophy of an universal walloping.

Reflections upon the Beneficent Influence of the Press.

Reflection 1. — The beneficent influence of the Press is most talked about by the Press.

Reflection 2. — If the Press were less evenly divided upon all social, political, and moral questions the influence of its beneficence would be greater than it is.

Reflection 3. — The beneficence of its influence would be more marked.

Reflection 4. — If the Press were more wise and righteous than it is, it might escape the reproach of being more foolish and wicked than it should be.

Reflection 5. — The foregoing Reflection is not an identical proposition.

Reflection 6. — (a) The beneficent influence of the Press cannot be purchased for money. (b) It can if you have enough money.

Charity.

Charity is certain to bring its reward-if judiciously bestowed. The Anglo–Saxons are the most charitable race in the world-and the most judicious. The right hand should never know of the charity that the left hand giveth. There is, however, no objection to putting it in the papers. Charity is usually represented with a babe in her arms-going to place it benevolently upon a rich man’s doorstep.

The Study of Human Nature.

To the close student of human nature no place offers such manifold attractions, such possibilities of deep insight, such a mine of suggestion, such a prodigality of illustration, as a pig-pen at feeding time. It has been said, with allusion to this philosophical pursuit, that “there is no place like home;” but it will be seen that this is but another form of the same assertion. — *End of the Essay upon the Study of Human Nature*.

Additional Talk–Done in the Country.

I.

.... Life in the country may be compared to the aimless drifting of a house-dog professing to busy himself about a lawn. He goes nosing about, tacking and turning here and there with the most intense apparent earnestness; and finally seizes a blade of grass by the middle, chews it savagely, drops it; gags comically, and curls away to sleep as if worn out with some mighty exercise. Whatever pursuit you may engage in in the country is sure to end in nausea, which you are quite as sure to try to get recognised as fatigue.

II.

.... A windmill keeps its fans going about; they do not stop long in one position. A man should be like the fans of a windmill; he should go about a good deal, and not stop long-in the country.

III.

.... A great deal has been written and said and sung in praise of green trees. And yet there are comparatively few green trees that are good to eat. Asparagus is probably the best of them, though celery is by no means to be despised. Both may be obtained in any good market in the city.

IV.

.... A cow in walking does not, as is popularly supposed, pick up all her feet at once, but only one of them at a time. Which one depends upon circumstances. The cow is but an indifferent pedestrian. Hæc fabula docet that one should not keep three-fourths of his capital lying idle.

V.

.... The Quail is a very timorous bird, who never achieves anything notable, yet he has a crest. The Jay, who is of a warlike and powerful family, has no crest. There is a moral in this which Aristocracy will do well to ponder. But the quail is very good to eat and the jay is not. The quail is entitled to a crest. (In the Eastern States, this meditation will provoke dispute, for there the jay has a crest and the quail has not. The Eastern States are exceptional and inferior.) VI.

.... The destruction of rubbish with fire makes a very great smoke. In this particular a battle resembles the destruction of rubbish. There would be a close resemblance even if a battle evolved no smoke. Rubbish, by the way, is not good eating, but an essayist should not be a gourmet-in the country.

VII.

.... Sweet milk should be taken only in the middle of the night. If taken during the day it forms a curd in the stomach, and breeds a dire distress. In the middle of the night the stomach is supposed to be innocent of whisky, and it is the whisky that curdles the milk. Should you be sleeping nicely, I would not advise you to come out of that condition to drink sweet milk.

VIII.

.... In the country the atmosphere is of unequal density, and in passing through the denser portions your silk hat will be ruffled, and the country people will jeer at it. They will jeer at it anyhow. When going into the country, you should leave your silk hat at a bank, taking a certificate of deposit.

IX.

.... The sheep chews too fast to enjoy his victual.

Current Journalings.

... Following is the manner of death incurred by Dr. Deadwood, the celebrated African explorer, which took place at Ujijijijiji, under the auspices of the Royal Geographical Society of England, assisted, at some distance, by Mr. Shandy of the New York Herald —

An intelligent gorilla has recently been imported to this country, who had the good fortune to serve the Doctor as a body servant in the interior of Africa, and he thus describes the manner of his master's death. The Doctor was accustomed to pass his nights in the stomach of an acquaintance-a crocodile about fifty feet long. Stepping out one evening to take an observation of one of the lunar eclipses peculiar to the country, he spoke to his host, saying that as he should not return, until after bedtime, he would not trouble him to sit up to let him in; he would just leave the door open till he came home. By way of doing so, he set up a stout fence-rail between his landlord's distended jaws, and went away.

Returning about midnight, he took off his boots outside, so as not to awaken his friend, entered softly, knocked away the prop, and prepared to turn in. But the noise of pounding on the rail had aroused the householder, and so great was the feeling of relief induced by the relaxation of the maxillary muscles, that he unconsciously shut his mouth to smile, without giving his tenant time to get into the bedroom. The Doctor was just stooping to untie his drawers, when he was caught between the floor and ceiling, like a lemon in a squeezer.

Next day the melancholy remains were given up to our informant, who displays a singular reticence regarding his disposition of them; merely picking his teeth with his claws in an absent, thoughtful kind of way, as if the subject were too mournful to be discussed in all its harrowing details.

None of the Doctor's maps or instruments were recovered; his bereaved landlord holds them as security for certain rents claimed to be due and unpaid. It is probable that Great Britain will make a stern demand for them, and if they are not at once surrendered will-submit her claim to a Conference.

.... The prim young maidens who affiliate with the Young Men's Christian Association of San Francisco-who furnish the posies for their festivals, and assist in the singing of psalms-have a gymnasium in the temple. Thither they troop nightly to display their skill in turning inside out and shutting themselves up like jack-knives of the gentler kind.

Here may be seen the godly Rachel and the serious Ruth, suspended by their respective toes between the heaven to which they aspire and the wicked world they do abhor. Here the meek-eyed Hannah, pendent from the horizontal bar, doubleth herself upon herself and stares fixedly backward from between her shapely limbs, a thing of beauty and a joy for several minutes. Mehitable Ann, beloved of young Soapenlocks, vaults lightly over a barrier and with unspoken prayer lays hold on the unstable trapeze mounting aloft in air. Jerusha, comeliest of her sex, ties herself in a double bow-knot, and meditates upon the doctrine of election.

O, blessed temple of grace divine! O, innocence and youth and simple faith! O, water and molasses and unsalted butter! O, niceness absolute and godly whey! Would that we were like unto these ewe lambs, that we might frisk and gambol among them without evil. Would that we were female, and Christian, and immature, with a flavour as of green grass and a hope in heaven. Then would we, too, sing hymns through our blessed nose, and contort and musculate with much satisfaction of soul, even in the gymnasium of The Straight-backed.

.... Some raging iconoclast, after having overthrown religion by history, upset history by science, and then toppled over science, has now laid his impious hands upon babies' nursing bottles.

"The tubes of these infernal machines," says this tearing beast, "are composed of india-rubber dissolved in bisulphide of carbon, and thickened with lead, resin, and sometimes oxysulphuret of antimony, from which, when it comes in contact with the milk, sulphuretted hydrogen is evolved, and lactate of lead formed in the stomach."

This logic is irresistible. Granting only that the tubes are made in that simple and intelligible manner (and anybody can see for himself that they are), the sulphuretted hydrogen and the lactate of lead follow (down the osophagus) as a logical sequence. But the scientific horror seems to be profoundly unaware that these substances are not only harmless to the child, but actually nutritious and essential to its growth. Not only so, but nature has implanted in its breast an instinctive craving for these very comforts. Often have we seen some wee thing turn disgusted from the breast and lift up its thin voice: "Not for Joseph; give me the bottle with the oxysulphuret of antimony tube. I take sulphuretted hydrogen and lactate of lead in mine every time!" And we have said: "Nature is working in that darling. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder!"

And we have thought of the wicked iconoclast.

.... There are a lot of evil-minded horses about the city, who seem to take a fiendish delight in letting fly their heels at whomsoever they catch in a godly reverie unconscious of their proximity. This is perfectly natural and human, but it is annoying to be always getting horse-kicked when one is not in a mood for it.

The worst of it is, these horses always manage it so as to get tethered across the sidewalk in the most populous thoroughfares, where they at once drop into the semblance of a sound slumber. By this means they lure the unsuspecting to their doom, and just as some unconscious pedestrian is passing astern of them they wake up, and without a preliminary yawn, or even a warning shake of the tail like the more chivalrous rattlesnake, they at once discharge their feet at him with a rapidity and effect that are quite surprising if the range be not too long. Usually this occurs in Merchant-street, below Montgomery, and the damage is merely nominal; some worthless Italian fisherman, market gardener, or decayed gentleman oozing out of a second-class restaurant being the only sufferer.

Rut not infrequently these playful brutes get themselves tethered in some fashionable promenade, and the consequence is demoralizing to white people. We speak within the limits of possibility when we say that we have seen no less than seven women and children in the air at once, impelled heavenward by as many consecutive kicks of a single skilled operator. No longer ago than we can remember we saw an aged party in spectacles and a clawhammer coat gyrating through the air like an irregular bolt shot out of a catapult. Before we could ascertain from him the site of the quadruped from whom he had received his impulsion, he had passed like a vague dream, and the equine scoundrel went unwhipped of justice.

These flying squadrons are serious inconveniences to public travel; it is conducive to profanity to have a whizzing young woman, a rattling old man, or a singing baby flung against one’s face every few moments by the hoofs of some animal whom one has never injured, and who is a perfect stranger.

It ought to be stopped.

.... In the telegraphic account of a distressing railway accident in New York, we find the following:—”The body of Mr. Germain was identified by his business partner, John Austin, who seemed terribly affected by his loss.”

O, reader, how little we think upon the fearful possibilities hidden away in the womb of the future. Any day may snatch from our life its light. One moment we were happy in the possession of some dear object, about which to twine the tendrils of the heart; the next, we cower and shiver in the chill gloom of a bereavement that withers the soul and makes existence an intolerable burden! To-day all nature smiles with a sunny warmth, and life spreads before us a wilderness of sweets; to-morrow-we lose our business partner!

.... Mr. J. L. Dummle, one of our most respected citizens, left his home to go, as he said, to his office. There was nothing unusual in his demeanour, and he appeared to be in his customary health and spirits. It is not known that there was anything in his financial or domestic affairs to make life distasteful to him. About half an hour after parting with his family, he was seen conversing with a friend at the corner of Kearny and Sutter-streets, from which point he seems to have gone directly to the Vallejo-street wharf. He was here seen by the captain of the steamer New World, standing upon the extreme end of the wharf, but the circumstance did not arouse any suspicion in the mind of the Captain, to whom he was well known. At that moment some trivial business diverted the Captain’s attention, and he saw Mr. Dummle no more; but it has been ascertained that the latter proceeded directly home, where he may now be seen by any one desiring to obtain further particulars of the melancholy event here narrated.

Mr. Dummle speaks of it with perfect frankness and composure.

.... In deference to a time-worn custom, on the first day of the year the writer swore to, affixed a revenue stamp upon, and recorded the following document:—

“I will not, during this year, utter a profane word-unless in sport-without having been previously vexed by something.

“I will murder no one that does not offend me, except for his money.

“I will commit highway robbery upon none but small school children, and then only under the stimulus of present or prospective hunger.

“I will not bear false witness against my neighbour where nothing is to be made by it.

“I will be as moral and religious as the law shall compel me to be.

“I will run away with no man’s wife without her full and free consent, and never, no never, so help me heaven! will I take his children along.

“I wont write any wicked slanders against anybody, unless by refraining I should sacrifice a good joke.

“I wont beat any cripples who do not come fooling about me when I am busy; and I will give all my neighbours’ boots to the poor.”

....A town in Vermont has a society of young men, formed for the express purpose of rescuing young ladies from drowning. We warn these gentlemen that we will not accept even honorary membership in their concern; we do not sympathize with the movement. Upon several occasions we have stood by and seen young ladies’ noses disappear beneath the waters blue, with a stolid indifference that would have been creditable in a husband. It was a trifle rough on the darlings, but if we know our own mind we do not purpose, just for the doubtful pleasure of saving a female’s life, to surrender our prerogative of marrying when and whom we like.

If we take a fancy to a woman we shall wed her, but we’re not to be coerced into matrimony by any ridiculous school-girl who may chance to fall into a horse-pond. We know their tricks and their manners -waking to consciousness in a fellow’s arms and throwing their own wet ones about his neck, saying, “The life you have preserved, noble youth, is yours; whither thou goest I will go; thy horses and carriages shall be my horses and carriages!”

We are too old a sturgeon to be caught with a spoon-hook. Ladies in the vicinity of our person need not hesitate to fling themselves madly into the first goose-puddle that obstructs their way; their liberty of action will be scrupulously respected.

.... There is a bladdery old nasality ranging about the country upon free passes, vexing the public ear with “hallowed songs,” and making of himself a spectacle to the eye. This bleating lamb calls himself the “Sacred Singer,” and has managed to get that pleasing title into the newspapers until it is become as offensive as himself.

Now, therefore, we do trustfully petition that this wearisome psalm-sharp, this miauling meter-monger, this howling dervish of hymns devotional, may strain his trachea, unsettle the braces of his lungs, crack his ridiculous gizzard and perish of pneumonia starvation. And may the good Satan seize upon the catgut strings of his tuneful soul, and smite therefrom a wicked, wicked waltz!

.... We hold a most unflattering opinion of the man who will thieve a dog, but between him and the man who will keep one, the moral difference is not so great as to be irreconcilable.

Our own dog is a standing example of canine inutility. The scurvy cur is not only totally depraved in his morals, but his hair stands the wrong way, and his tail is of that nameless type intermediate between the pendulously pitiful and the spirally exasperating-a tail which gives rise to conflicting emotions in the mind of the beholder, and causes the involuntarily uplifted hand to hesitate if it shall knuckle away the springing tear, or fall in thunderous vengeance upon the head of the dog’s master.

That dog spends about half his elegant leisure in devouring the cold victuals of compassion, and the other half in running after the bricks of which he is the provocation and we are the target. Within the last six years we employed as editors upon the unhappy journal which it was intended that this article should redeem, no less than sixteen pickpockets, hoping they would steal him; but with an acute intelligence of which their writing conveyed but an imperfect idea, they shunned the glittering bait, as one walks to windward of the deadly upas tree. We have given him away to friends until we haven't a friend left; we have offered him at auction-sales, and been ourselves knocked down; we have decoyed him into strange places and abandoned him, until we are poor from the payment of unpromised rewards. In the character of a charitable donation he has been driven from the door of every orphan asylum, foundling hospital, and reform school in the State. Not a week passes but we forfeit exemplary damages for inciting him to fall foul of passing gentlemen, in the vain hope of getting him slain.

If any one would wish to purchase a cheap dog, we would sell this beast.

.... A religious journal published in the Far West says that Brothers Dong, Gong, and Tong are Chinese converts to its church. There is a fine religious nasality about these names that is strongly suggestive of the pulpit in the palmy days of the Puritans.

By the way, we should dearly love to know how to baptize a Chinaman. We have a shrewd suspicion that it is done as the Mongolian laundryman dampens our linen: by taking the mouth full of water and spouting it over the convert's head in a fine spray. If so, it follows that the pastor having most "cheek" is best qualified for cleansing the pagan soul.

An important question arises here. Suppose Dong, Gong, and Tong to have been baptized in this way, who pronounced that efficacious formula, "I baptize thee in the name," etc.? Clearly the parson, with his mouth full of water, could not have done so at the instant of baptism, and if the sentence was spoken by any other person it was a falsehood. It must therefore have been spoken either before the minister distended his cheeks, or after he had exhausted them. In either case, according to the learned Dr. Sicklewit, the ceremony is utterly null and void of effect. (Study of Baptism, vol. ix., ch. cxix. vi. p. 627, line 13 from bottom.)

Possibly, however, D., G. and T. were not baptized in this way. Then how the devil were they baptized?-and why?

.... Henry Wolfe, of Kentucky, aged one hundred and eight years, who had never been sick in his life, lay down one fine day and sawed his neck asunder with a razor. Henry did not believe in self-slaughter; he despised it. It was Henry's opinion that as God had placed us here we should stay until it was His pleasure to remove us. That is also our opinion, and the opinion of all other good

Christians who would like to die but are afraid to do it. It will be observed that Henry could not claim originality of opinion.

But there is a point beyond which hope deferred maketh the heart sick, and Henry had passed that point. He waited patiently till he was naked of scalp and deaf of ear. He endured without repining the bent back, the sightless eyes, and the creaking joints incident to over-maturity. But when he saw a man perish of senility, who in infancy had called him "Old Hank," Mr. Wolfe thought patience had ceased to be commendable, and he abandoned his post of duty without being regularly relieved.

It is to be hoped he will be hotly punished for it.

.... One day an obscure and unimportant person pitched himself among the rolling porpoises, from a ferry-boat, and an officious busy-body, not at once clearly apprehending that the matter was none of his immediate business, hied him down to the engineer and commanded that official to "back her, hard!" As it is customary upon the high seas for such orders to emanate from the officer in command, that particular boat kept forging ahead, and the unimportant old person carried out his original design-that is, he went to the bottom like an iron wedge. Rises the press in its wrath and prates about a Grand Jury! Shrieks an intelligent public, in chorus, at the heartless engineer!

Meantime the pretty fish are running away with choice bits of God's image at the bottom of the bay; the cunning crab makes merry with a dead man's eye, the nipping shrimp sweetens himself for the table upon the clean juices of a succulent corpse. Below all is peace and fat feasting; above rolls the sounding ocean of eternal Bosh!

.... There is war! The woman suffrage folk go up against one another, because that a portion of them cleave to the error that the Bible is a collection of fables. These will probably divest themselves of this belief about the time that Mr. Satan stands over them with a toasting-fork, points significantly to a glowing gridiron, and says to each suffrager:

"Madame, I beg your pardon, but you will please retire to the ladies' dressing-room, disrobe, unpad, lay off your back-hair; and make yourself as comfortable as possible while some fresh coals are being put on the fire. When you have unmade your toilet you may touch that bell, and you will be nicely buttered and salted for the iron. A polite and gentlemanly attendant will occasionally turn you, and I shall take pleasure in looking in upon you once in a million years, to see that you are being properly done. Exceedingly sultry weather, Madame. Au revoir."

.... The funeral of the Rev. Father Byrne took place from the Church of the Holy Cross. The ceremonies were of the most solemn and impressive character, and were keenly enjoyed by the empty benches by which the Protestant clergy were ably represented. Why turned ye not out, O Biblethump, and Muddletext, and you, Hymnsing? Is it thus that the Master was wont to treat the dead?

Now get thee into the secret recesses of thy closet, Rev. Lovepreach; knuckle down upon thy knees and pray to a tolerant God not to smite thee with a plague. For lo! thou hast been a bigoted, bat-eyed, cat-hearted fraud-a preacher of peace and a practiser of strife. For these many years thy tongue hath been dropping gospel honey, and thy soul secreting bitterness. Thy voice has been as the sound of glad horns upon a hill, but thy ways are the ways of a gaunt hound tracking the hunted stag. “Holier than we,” are you? And when the worker of differing faith is gone to his account, you turn your sleek back upon the God’s-image as it is given to the waiting worms. Perdition seize thee and thy holiness! we’ll none of it.

.... Two hundred dollars for biting a woman’s neck and arms! That was the sentence imposed upon the gentle Mr. Hill, because His Eminence set his incisors into the yielding tissue of Mrs. Langdon, a lady with whom his wife happened to be debating by means of a stew-kettle.

If this monstrous decision stand, the writer owes the treasury about ten thousand dollars. Though by nature of a mild and gentle appetite, preferring simple roots and herbs, yet it has been his custom to nip all female necks and arms that have been willingly submitted unto his teeth. He hath found in this harmless, and he had supposed lawful, practice, an exceeding sweetness of sensation, and a satisfaction wherewith the delights of sausage, or the bliss of pigs’ feet, can in nowise compare. Having commonly found the gratification mutual, he thinks he is justified in maintaining its innocence.

.... We are tolerably phlegmatic and notoriously hard to provoke. We look on with considerable composure while our favourite Chinaman is being dismembered in the streets, and our dog publicly insulted. Detecting an alien hand in our trousers pocket excites in us only a feeling of temperate disapprobation, and an open swindle executed upon our favourite cousin by an unscrupulous shopkeeper we regard simply as an instance of enterprise which has taken an unfortunate direction. Slow to anger, quick to forgive, charitable in judgment and to mercy prone; with unbounded faith in the entire goodness of man and the complete holiness of woman; seeking ever for palliating circumstances in the conduct of the blackest criminal-we are at once a model of moderation and a pattern of forbearance.

But if Mrs. Victoria Woodhull and her swinish crew of free lovers had but a single body, and that body lay asleep under the upturned root of a prostrate oak, we would work with a dull jack-knife day and night-month in and month out-through summer's sun and winter's storm-to sever that giant trunk, and let that mighty root, clasping its mountain of inverted earth, back into the position assigned to it by nature and by nature's God!

.... We like a liar-a thoroughly conscientious, industrious, and ingenious liar. Not your ordinary prevaricator, who skirts along the coast of truth, keeping ever within sight of the headlands and promontories of probability-whose excursions are limited to short, fair-weather reaches into the ocean of imagination, and who paddles for port as if the devil were after him whenever a capful of wind threatens a storm of exposure; but a bold, sea-going liar, who spurns a continent, striking straight out for blue water, with his eyes fixed upon the horizon of boundless mendacity.

We have found such a one, and our hat is at half-mast in token of profound esteem and conscious inferiority. This person gravely tells us that at the burning of the Archiepiscopal Palace at Bourges, among other valuable manuscripts destroyed was the original death-warrant of Jesus Christ, signed at Jerusalem by one Capel, and dated U. C. 783. Not only so, but he kindly favours us with a literal translation of it!

One cannot help warming up to a man who can lie like that. Talk about Chatterton's Rowley deception, Macpherson's Ossian fraud, or Locke's moon hoax! Compared with this tremendous fib they are as but the stilly whisper of a hearth-stone cricket to the shrill trumpeting of a wounded elephant-the piping of a sick cocksparrow to the brazen clang of a donkey in love!

.... For the memory of the late John Ridd, of Illinois, we entertain the liveliest contempt. Mr. Ridd recently despatched himself with a firearm for the following reasons, set forth in a letter that he left behind.

"Two years ago I discovered that I was worthless. My great failings are insincerity of character and sly ugliness. Any one who watched me a little while would discover my unenviable nature."

Now, it is not that Mr. Ridd was worthless that we hold his memory in reprobation; nor that he was insincere, nor sly, nor ugly. It is because possessing these qualities he was fool enough to think they disqualified him for the duties of life, or stood in the way of his being an ornament to society and an honour to his country.

....”About the first of next month,” says a pious contemporary, “we shall discontinue the publication of our paper in this city, and shall remove our office and fixtures to — where we hope for a blessing upon our work, and a share of advertising patronage.”

A numerous editorial staff of intelligent jackasses will accompany the caravan. In imagination we behold them now, trudging gravely along behind the moving office fixtures, their goggle eyes cast down in Christian meditation, their horizontal ears flopping solemnly in unison with their measured tread. Ever and anon the leader halts, uprolls the speculative eye, arrests the oscillation of the ears, laying them rigidly back along the neck, exalts the conscious tail, drops the lank jaw, and warbles a psalm of praise that shakes the blind hills from their eternal repose. His companions take up the parable in turn, “and the echoes, huddling in affright, like Odin’s hounds,” go baying down the valleys and clamouring amongst the pines, like a legion of invisible fiends after a strange cat. Then again all is hush, and tramp, and sanctity, and flop, and holy meditation! And so the pilgrimage is accomplished. Selah! Hee-haw!

.... A man in California has in his possession the rope with which his father was hanged by a vigilance committee in ‘49 for horse-stealing. He keeps it neatly coiled away in an old cheese~box, and every Sunday morning he lays his left hand reverently upon it, and with uncovered head and a look of stern determination in his eye, raises his right to heaven, and swears by an avenging God it served the old man right!

It has not been deemed advisable to put this dutiful son under bonds to keep the peace.

.... A contemporary has some elaborate obituary commendation of a boy seven years of age, who was “a child of more than ordinary sprightliness, loved the Bible, and was deeply impressed with a veneration for holy things.”

Now we would sorrowfully ask our contemporary if he thinks flattery like this can soothe the dull cold ear of young Dobbin? Dobbin père may enjoy it as light and entertaining reading, but when the resurrecting angel shall stir the dust of young Theophilus with his foot, and sing out “get up, Dobbin,” we think that sprightly youth will whimper three times for molasses gingerbread before he will signify an audible aspiration for the Bible. A sweet-tooth is often mistaken for early piety, and licking a sugar archangel may be easily construed as veneration for holy things.

.... A young physician of Troy became enamoured of a rich female patient, and continued his visits after she was convalescent. During one of these he had the misfortune to give her the small-pox, having neglected to change his clothes after calling on another patient enjoying that malady. The lady had to be removed to the pest-house, where the stricken medico sedulously attends her for nothing. His generosity does not end here: he declares that should she recover he will marry her-if she be not too badly pitted.

Apparently the legal profession does not enjoy a monopoly of all the self-sacrifice that is current in the world.

.... A young woman stood before the mirror with a razor. Pensively she twirled the unaccustomed instrument in her jewelled fingers, fancying her smooth cheek clothed with a manly beard. In imagination she saw her pouting lips shaded by the curl of a dark moustache, and her eyes grew dim with tears that it was not, never could be, so. And the mirrored image wept back at her a silent sob, the echo of her grief.

“Ah,” she sighed, “why did not God make me a man? Must I still drag out this hateful, whiskerless existence?”

The girlish tears welled up again and overran her eyes. Thoughtfully she crossed her right hand over to her left ear; carefully but timidly she placed the keen, cold edge of the steel against the smooth alabaster neck, twisted the fingers of her other hand into her long black hair, drew back her head and ripped away. There was an apparition in that mirror as of a ripe watermelon opening its mouth to address a public meeting; there were the thud and jar of a sudden sitting down; and when the old lady came in from frying doughnuts in the adjoining room she found something that seemed to interest her-something still and warm and wet-something kind of doubled up.

Ah! poor old wretch! your doughnuts shall sizzle and sputter and swim unheeded in their grease; but the beardless jaw that should have wagged filially to chew them is dropped in death; the stomach which they should have distended is crinkled and dry for ever!

.... Miss Olive Logan’s lecture upon “girls” has suggested to the writer the propriety of delivering one upon “boys.” He doesn’t know anything about boys, and is therefore entirely unprejudiced. He was never a boy himself-has always been just as old as he is now; though the peculiar vagueness of his memory previously to the time of building the pyramid of Cheops, and his indistinct impressions as to the personal appearance of Job, lead to the suspicion that his faculties at that time were partially undeveloped. He regards himself as the only lecturer extant who can do justice to boys; and he prefers to do it with an axe-handle, but is willing, like Olive Logan, to sacrifice his mere preferences for the purpose of making money.

This lecture will take place as soon as a sum of money has been sent to this office sufficiently large to justify him in renting a hall for one hour's uninterrupted profanity-sixty minutes of careful, accurate, and elaborate cursing. Admission-all the money you have about you. Boys will be charged in proportion to their estimated depravity; fifty dollars a head for the younger sorts, and from five hundred to one thousand for those more advanced in general diabolism.

.... Some women in New York have set the fashion of having costly diamonds set into their front teeth. The attention of robbers and garotters is called to this fact, with the recommendation that no greater force be used than is necessary. The use of the ordinary bludgeon or slung shot would be quite needless; a gentle tap on the head with a clay pipe or a toothpick will place the victim in the proper condition to be despoiled. Great care should be exercised in extracting the jewels; instead of the teeth being knocked inwards, as in ordinary cases of mere purposeless mangling, they should be artistically lifted out by inserting the point of a crowbar into the mouth and jumping on the other end.

.... The Coroner having broken his leg, inquests will hereafter be held by the Justices of the Peace. People intending to commit suicide will confer a favour by worrying along until the Coroner shall recover, as the Justices are all new to the business. The cold, uncharitable world is tolerably hard to endure, but if unfortunates will secure some respectable employment and go to work at it they will be surprised to find how glibly the moments will glide away. The Coroner will probably be ready for their carcases in about four weeks, and it would be well not to bind themselves to service for a longer period, lest he should find it necessary to send for them and do their little business himself. A fair supply of street-cadavers and water-corpses can usually be counted on, but it is absolutely necessary to have a certain proportion of suicides.

.... John Reed, of Illinois, is a man who knows his rights, and knowing dares maintain. Having communicated to a young lady his intention of conferring upon her the honour of his company at a Fourth of July celebration, John was pained and disgusted to hear the proposal quietly declined. John went thoughtfully away to a neighbour who keeps a double-shotgun. This he secured, and again sought the object of his hopeless preference. The object was seated at the dinner-table contending with her lobscouse, and did not feel his presence near. Mr. Reed poised and sighted his artillery, and with the very natural remark, “I think this fetcher,” he exploded the twin charges. A moment later might have been seen the rare spectacle of a headless young lady sitting bolt upright at table, spooning a wad of hash into the top of her neck. The wall opposite presented the appearance of having been bombarded with fresh livers and baptized with sausage-meat.

No one in the vicinity slept any that night. They were busy getting ready for the Fourth: the gentlemen going about inviting the ladies to attend the celebration, and the ladies hastily and unconditionally accepting.

.... In answer to the ladies who are always bothering him for a photograph, Mr. Grile hopes to satisfy all parties by the following meagre description of his charms.

In person he is rather thin early in the morning, and a trifle corpulent after dinner; in complexion pale, with a suspicion of ruby about the gills. He wears his hair brown, and parted crosswise of his remarkably fine head. His eyes are of various colours, but mostly bottle-green, with a glare in them reminding one of incipient hydrophobia-from which he really suffers. A permanent depression in the bridge of his nose was inherited from a dying father what time the son mildly petitioned for a division of the estate to which he and his seventeen brothers were about to become the heirs. The mouth is gentlemanly capacious, indicative of high breeding and feeding; the under jaw projects slightly, forming a beautiful natural reservoir for the reception of beer and other liquids. The forehead retreats rapidly whenever a creditor is met, or an offended reader espied coming toward the office.

His legs are of unequal length, owing to his constant habit of using one of them to kick people who may happen to present a fairer mark than the nearest dog. His hand is remarkably slender and white, and is usually inserted in another man’s pocket. In dress he is wonderfully fastidious, preferring to wear nothing but what is given him. His gait is something between those of a mud-turtle and a jackass-rabbit, verging closely on to the latter at periods of supposed personal danger, as before intimated.

In conversation he is animated and brilliant, some of his lies being quite equal to those of Coleridge or Bolingbroke; but in repose he resembles nothing so much as a heap of old clothes. In conclusion, his respect for letter-writing ladies is so great that he would not touch one of them with a ten-foot pole.

.... Only one hundred and ten thousand pious pilgrims visited Mount Ararat in a body this year. The urbane and gentlemanly proprietors of the Ark Tavern complain that their receipts have hardly been sufficient to pay for the late improvements in this snug retreat. These gentlemen continue to keep on hand their usual assortment of choice wines, liquors, and cigars.

Opposite the Noah House, Shem Street, between Ham and Japhet.

.... It is commonly supposed that President Lopez, of Paraguay, was killed in battle; but after reading the following slander upon him and his mother, written some time since by a friend of ours, it is difficult to believe he did not commit suicide: —

"The telegraph informs us that President Lopez, of Paraguay, has again murdered his mother for conspiring against his life. That sprightly, and active old lady has now been executed three thousand times for the same offence. She is now eighty-three years old, and erect as a telegraph pole. Time writes no wrinkles on her awful brow, and her teeth are as sound as on the day of her birth. She rises every morning punctually at four o'clock and walks ten miles; then, after a light breakfast, enters her study and proceeds to hatch out a new conspiracy against her first born. About 2 P. M. it is discovered, and she is publicly executed. A light toast and a cup of strong tea finish the day's business; she retires at seven and goes to sleep with her mouth open. She has pursued this life with the most unfaltering regularity for the last fifty years. It is only by this unswerving adherence to hygienic principles that she has attained her present green old age."

.... There is a person resident in Stockton Street whom we cannot regard with feelings other than those of lively disapproval. It is not that the woman-for this person is a mature female — ever did us any harm, or is likely to; that is not our grievance. What we seriously object to and actively contemn-yea, bitterly denounce-is the nose of her. So mighty a nose we have never beheld-so spacious, and open, and roomy a human snout the unaided imagination is impotent to picture. It rises from her face like a rock from a troubled sea-grand, serene, majestic! It turns up at an angle that fills the spectator with admiration, and impresses him with an awe that is speechless.

But we have no space for a description of this eternal proboscis. Suffice it that its existence is a standing menace to society, a threat to civilization, and a danger to commerce. The woman who will harbour and cherish such an organ is no better than a pirate. We do not know who she is, and we have no desire to know. We only know that all the angels could not pull us past her house with a chain cable, without giving us one look at that astounding feature. It is the one prominent landmark of the nineteenth century-the special wonder of the age-the solitary marvel of a generation!

We would give anything to see her blow it.

.... At the Coroner's inquest in the case of John Harvey there was considerable difficulty in ascertaining the cause of death, but as one witness testified that the deceased was pounding fulminate of mercury at the Powder Works just previously to his lamented demise, there is good reason to believe he was hoist into heaven with his own petard. In fact, such fractions of him as have come to hand, up to date, seem to confirm this view. This evidence is rather disjointed and fragmentary, but it is sufficient to discourage the brutal practice of pounding fulminate of mercury when our streets and Sunday-schools are swarming with available Chinaman who seldom hit back.

.... We find the following touching tale in all the newspapers. It belongs to that class of tales concerning which the mildest doubt is hateful blasphemy.

"A little girl in Ithaca, just before she died, exclaimed: 'Papa, take hold of my hand and help me across.' Her father had died two months before. Did she see him?"

There is not a doubt of it; but interested relatives have somewhat misstated the little girl's exclamation, which was this: —

"Papa, take hold of my hand, and I will help you out of that."

.... We get the most distressing accounts of the famine in Persia. It is said that cannibalism is as common among the starving inhabitants as pork-eating in California.

This is very sad; it shows either a very low state of Persian morality or a conspicuous lack of Persian ingenuity. They ought to manage it as the conscientious Indians do. In time of famine these gentle creatures never disgrace themselves by feasting upon each other: they permit their dogs to devour the dead, and then they eat the dogs.

.... An old lady was set upon by a fiend in human apparel, and remorselessly kissed in the presence of her daughter.

This happened a few days since in Iowa, where the fiend now lies buried. Any man who is so dead to shame, and so callous of soul generally, as to force his unwelcome endearments upon a poor, defenceless old lady, while her beautiful young daughter stands weeping by, equally defenceless, deserves pretty much all the evil that can be done to him. Splitting him like a fish is so disgracefully inadequate a punishment, that the man who should administer it might justly be regarded as an accomplice.

.... From London we have intelligence of the stabbing to death of a man by mistake. His assassin mistook him for a person related to himself, whose loss would be his own financial gain. Fancy the utter dejection of this stabber when he discovered the absurd blunder he had committed! We believe a slip like that would justify a man in throwing down the knife and discarding murder for ever; while two such errors would be ample excuse for him to go into some kind of business.

.... A small but devout congregation were at worship. When it had become a free exhibition, in which any brother could enact a part, a queer-looking person got up and began a pious and learned exhortation. He spake for some two hours, and was listened to with profound attention, his discourse punctuated with holy groans and pious amens from an edified circle of the saintly. Tears fell as the gentle rains from heaven. Several souls were then and there snatched as brands from the eternal burning, and started on their way to heaven rejoicing. At the end of the second hour, and as the inspired stranger approached “eighty-seventhly,” some one became curious to know who the teacher was, when lo! it turned out that he was an escaped lunatic from the Asylum.

The curses of the elect were not loud but deep. They fumed with exceeding wrath, and slopped over with pious indignation at the swindle put upon them. The inspired, however, escaped, and was afterwards captured in a cornfield.

The funeral was unostentatious.

.... We hear a great deal of sentiment with regard to the last solar eclipse. Considerable ink has been consumed in setting forth the terrible and awe-inspiring features of the scene. As there will be no other good one this season, the following recipe for producing one artificially will be found useful: —Suspend a grindstone from the centre of a room. Take a cheese of nearly the same size, and after blacking one side of it, pass it slowly across the face of the grindstone and observe the effect in a mirror placed opposite, on the cheese side. The effect will be terrific, and may be heightened by taking a rum punch just at the instant of contact. This plan is quite superior to that of nature, for with several cheeses graduated in size, all known varieties of eclipse may be presented. In writing up the subsequent account, a great many interesting phenomena may be introduced quite impossible to obtain either by this or any other process.

.... We have observed with considerable impatience that the authors of Sunday School books do not seem to know anything; there is no reason why these pleasant volumes should not be made as effective as they are deeply interesting. The trouble is in the method of treating wicked children; instead of being destroyed by appalling calamities, they should simply be made painfully ridiculous.

For example, the little scoundrel who climbs up an apple-tree to plunder a bird’s-nest, ought never to fall and break his neck. He should be permitted to garner his unholy harvest of eggs in his pocket, then lose his balance, catch the seat of his pantaloons on a knot-hole, and hang doubled up, with the smashed eggs trickling down his jacket, and getting into his hair and eyes. Then the good little girls should be lugged in, to poke fun at him, and ask him if he likes ‘em hard or soft. This would be a most impressive warning.

The boy who neglects his prayers to go boating on a Sunday ought not to be drowned. He should be spilled out into the soft mud along shore, and stuck fast where the Sunday School scholars could pelt him with slush, and their teacher have a fair fling at him with a dead cat.

The small female glutton who steals jam in the pantry ought not to get poisoned. She should get after a pot of warm glue, which should be made to miraculously stiffen the moment she gets it into her mouth, and have to be gouged out of her with a chisel and hammer.

Then there is the swearing party, who is struck by lightning-a very shallow and unprofitable device. He should open his face to swear, dislocate his jaw, be unable to get closed up, and the rats should get in at night, make nests there, and breed.

There are other suggestions that might be made, but these will give a fair idea of our method, the foundation of which is the substitution of potent ridicule for the current grave but imbecile rebuke. It may be gratifying to learn that we are embodying our views in a whole library of Sunday School literature, adapted to the meanest capacity, and therefore equally edifying to pupil, pastor, and parent.

.... A young correspondent, who has lately read a great deal in the English papers about “baby-farming,” wishes to know what that may be. It is a new method of agriculture, in which the young of our species are used for manure.

The babies are collected each day and put into large vats containing equal parts of hydrobicarbonate of oxygenated sulphide, and oxygenated sulphide of hydrobicarbonate, where they are left to soak overnight. In the morning they are carefully macerated in a mortar and are then poured into shallow copper pans, where they remain until all the liquid portions have been evaporated by the sun. The residuum is then scraped out, and after the addition of a certain proportion of quicklime the whole is thrown away. Ordinary bone dust and charcoal are then used for manure, and the baby farmers seldom fail of getting a good crop of whatever they plant, provided they stick the seeds in right end up.

It will be seen that the result depends more upon the hydrobicarbonate than upon the infants; there isn’t much virtue in babies. But then our correspondent should remember that there is none at all in adults.

.... A young woman writes to a contemporary, desiring to learn if it is true that kissing a dead man will cure the tooth-ache. It might; it sometimes makes a great difference whether you take your medicine hot or cold. But we would earnestly advise her to try kissing a multitude of live men before taking so peculiar a prescription. It is our impression that corpses are absolutely worthless for kissing purposes, and if one can find no better use for them, they might as well be handed over to the needy and deserving worm.

.... Mr. Knettle, deceased, became irritated, and fired three shots from a revolver into the head of his coy sweetheart, while she was making believe to run away from him. It has seldom been our lot-except in the cases of a few isolated policemen-to record so perfectly satisfactory target practice. If that man had lived he would have made his mark as well as hit it. He died by his own hand at the beginning of a brilliant career, and although we cannot hope to emulate his shooting, we may cherish the memory of his virtues just as if we could bring down our girl every time at ten paces.

.... A pedagogue has been sentenced to the county gaol, for six months, for whipping a boy in a brutal manner. The public heartily approves the sentence, and, quite naturally, we dissent. We know nothing whatever about this particular case, but upon general principles we favour the extreme flagellation of incipient Man. In our own case the benefit of the system is apparent; had not our pious parent administered daily rebukes with such foreign bodies as he could lay his hands on we might have grown up a Presbyterian deacon.

Look at us now!

.... A man who played a leading part in a late railroad accident had had his life insured for twenty thousand dollars. Unfortunately the policy expired just before he did, and he had neglected to renew it. This is a happy illustration of the folly of procrastination. Had he got himself killed a few days sooner his widow would have been provided with the means of setting up housekeeping with another man.

.... People ought not to pack cocked pistols about in the hip pockets of their trousers; the custom is wholly indefensible. Such is the opinion of the last man who leaned up against the counter in a Marysville drinking-saloon for a quiet chat with the barkeeper.

The odd boot will be given to the poor.

.... A man ninety-seven years of age has just died in the State of New York. The Sun says he bad conversed with both President Washington and President Grant.

If there were any further cause of death it is not stated.

.... The letter following was written by the Rev. Reuben Hankerlockew, a Persian Christian, in relation to the late famine in his country. The Rev. gentleman took a hopeful view of affairs.

“Peace be with you-bless your eyes! Our country is now suffering the direst of calamities, compared with which the punishment of Tarantulus” (we suppose our correspondent meant Tantalus) “was nice, and the agony of a dyspeptic ostrich in a junk shop is a condition to be coveted. We are in the midst of plenty, but we can’t get anything that seems to suit. The supply of old man is practically unlimited, but it is too tough to chew. The market stalls are full of fresh girl, but the scarcity of salt renders the meat entirely useless for table purposes. Prime wife is cheap as dirt-and about as good. There is a ‘corner’ in pickled baby, and nobody can ‘fill.’ The same article on the hoof is all held by a ring of speculators at figures which appal the man of moderate means. Of the various brands of ‘cemetery,’ that of Japan is most abundant, owing to the recent pestilence, but it is, fishy and rank. As for grain, or vegetable filling of any kind, there is hone in Persia, except the small lot I have on hand, which will be disposed of in limited quantities for ready money. But don’t you foreigners bother about us-we shall get along all right-until I have disposed of my cereals. Persia does not need any foreign corn until after that.”

It is improbable that the Rev. gentleman himself perished of starvation.

.... We are filled with unspeakable gratification to record the death of that double girl who has been in everybody’s mouth for months. This shameless little double-ender, with two heads and one body-two cherries on a single stem, as it were-has been for many moons afflicting our simple soul with an itching desire that she might die-the nasty pig! Two half-girls, joined squarely at the waist, and without any legs, are not a pleasant type of the coming woman.

Had she lived, she would have been a bone of social, theological, and political contention, and we should never have heard the end-of which she had two alike. If she had lived to marry, some mischief-making scoundrel would have procured the indictment of her husband for bigamy. The preachers would have fought for her, and if converted separately, her Methodist end might have always been thrashing her Episcopal end, or vice versâ. When she came to serve on a jury, nobody could have decided if there ought to be eleven others or only ten; and if she ever voted twice, the opposite party would have had her up for repeating; and if only once, she would have been read out of her own, for criminal apathy in the exercise of the highest duty, *etc.*

We bless God for taking her away, though what He can want with her is as difficult a problem as herself or Himself. She will have to wear two golden crowns, thus entailing a double expense; she wont be able to fly any, and having no legs, she must be constantly watched to keep her from rolling out of heaven. She will just have to lie on a soft cloud in some out-of-the-way corner, and eternally toot two trumpets, without other exercise. If Gabriel is the sensible fellow we think him, he wont wake her at the Resurrection.

Look at this infant in any light you please, and it is evident that she was a dead failure and is yet. She did but one good thing, and that was to teach the Siamese Twins how to die. After they shall have taken the hint, we hope to have no more foolish experiments in double folks born that way. Married couples are sufficiently unpleasing.

.... The head biblesharp of the New York Independent resigned his position, because the worldly proprietor would insist upon running the commercial column of that sheet in a secular manner, with an eye to the goods that perish. The godly party wished him to ignore the filthy lucre of this world, and lay up for himself treasures in heaven; but the sordid wretch would seize every covert opportunity to reach out his little muckrake after the gold of the gentile, to the neglect of the things that appertain unto salvation. Therefore did the conscientious driver of the piety-quill betake himself to some new field.

Will the editors of all similar sheets do likewise? or have they more elastic consciences? For, behold, the muckrake is likewise visible in all.

.... Some of the Red Indians on the plains have discarded the songs of their fathers, and adopted certain of Dr. Watts’s hymns, which they howl at their scalp-dances with much satisfaction.

This is encouraging, certainly, but we dare not counsel the good missionaries to pack up their libraries and go home with the impression that the noble red is thoroughly converted. There yet remains a work to do; he must be taught to mortify, instead of paint, his countenance, and induced to abandon the savage vice of stealing for the Christian virtue of cheating. Likewise he must be made to understand that although conjugal fidelity is highly commendable, all civilized nations are distinguished by a faithful adherence to the opposite practice.

.... Some raving maniac sends us a mass of stuff, which savours strongly of Walt Whitman, and which, probably for that reason, he calls poetry. We have room for but a single bit of description, which we print as an illustration of the depth of literary depravity which may be attained by a “poet” in love: —

“Behold, thou art fair, my love: behold, thou art fair; thou hast dove’s eyes within thy locks; thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Mt. Gilead. Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them. Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely; thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks. Thy neck is a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fishpools of Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim; thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon looking towards Damascus.”

Really, we think that will do for one instalment. What the mischief this “poet” means, with his goat’s hair, sheep’s teeth, and temples like a piece of pomegranate, is quite beyond our mental reach. We would suggest that the ignorance of English grammar displayed in the phrase “every one bear twins,” is not atoned for by comparing his mistress’s eyes to a duck pond, and her nose to the “tower of Lebanon looking towards Damascus.” The latter simile is suggestive of unpleasant consequences to the inhabitants of that village in case the young lady should decide to blow that astounding feature! Our very young contributor will consider himself dismissed with such ignominy as is implied by our frantic indifference.

.... A liberal reward will be paid by the writer for a suitably vituperative epithet to be applied to the ordinary street preacher. The writer has himself laboured with so unflagging a zeal in the pursuit of the proper word, has expended the midnight oil with so lavish and matchless a prodigality, has kneaded his brain with such a singular forgetfulness of self-that he is gone clean daft. And all, without adequate result! From the profoundest deep of his teeming invention he succeeded in evolving only such utterly unsatisfying results as “rhinoceros,” “polypus,” and “sheeptick” in the animal kingdom, and “rhubarb,” “snakeroot,” and “smartweed” in the vegetable. The mineral world was ransacked, but gave forth only “old red sandstone,” which is tolerably severe, but had been previously used to stigmatize a member of the Academy of Sciences.

Now, what we wish to secure is a word that shall contain within itself all the essential principles of downright abuse; the mere pronouncing of which in the public street would subject one to the inconvenience of being rent asunder by an infuriated populace-something so atrociously apt and so exquisitely diabolical that any person to whom it should be applied would go right away out and kick himself to death with a jackass. We covenant that the inventor shall be slain the moment we are in possession of his infernal secret, as life would of course be a miserable burden to him ever afterward.

With a calm reliance upon the fertile scurrility of our readers, we leave the matter in their hands, commending their souls to the merciful God who contrived them.

.... We have received from a prominent clergyman a long letter of earnest remonstrance against what he is pleased to term our “unprovoked attacks upon God’s elect.”

We emphatically deny that we have ever made any unprovoked attacks upon them. “God’s elect” are always irritating us. They are eternally lying in wait with some monstrous absurdity, to spring it upon us at the very moment when we are least prepared. They take a fiendish delight in torturing us with tantrums, galling us with gammon, and pelting us with platitudes. Whenever we disguise ourself in the seemly toggery of the godly, and enter meekly into the tabernacle, hoping to pass unobserved, the parson is sure to detect us and explode a bombful of bosh upon our devoted head. No sooner do we pick up a religious weekly than we stumble and sprawl through a bewildering succession of inanities, manufactured expressly to ensnare our simple feet. If we take up a tract we are laid out cold by an apostolic knock straight from the clerical shoulder. We cannot walk out of a pleasant Sunday without being keeled Over by a stroke of pious lightning flashed from the tempestuous eye of an irate churchman at our secular attire. Should we cast our thoughtless glance upon the demure Methodist Rachel we are paralysed by a scowl of disapprobation, which prostrates like the shock of a gymnotus; and any of our mild pleasantry at the expense of young Squaretoes is cut short by a Bible rebuke, shot out of his mouth like a rock from a catapult.

Is it any wonder that we wax gently facetious in conversing of “the elect?” —

that in our weak way we seek to get even? Now, good clergyman, go thou to the devil, and leave us to our own devices; or an offended journalist shall skewer thee upon his spit, and roast thee in a blaze of righteous indignation.

.... The New York Tribune, descanting upon the recent national misfortune by which the writer's red right hand was quietly chewed by an envious bear, says it cannot commend the writer's example, but hopes "his next appearance in print may edify his readers on the dangers of such a practice."

We had not hitherto deemed it necessary to raise a warning voice to a universe not much given to fooling with bears anyhow, but embrace this opportunity to declare ourself firmly and unalterably opposed to the whole business. We plant our ample feet squarely upon the platform of non-intervention, so far as affects the social economy and individual idiosyncrasies of bears. But if the Tribune man expects a homily upon the sin of feeding oneself in courses to wild animals, he is informed that we waste no words upon the senseless wretch who is given to that species of iniquity. We regard him with ineffable self-contempt.

.... A young girl in Grass Valley having died, her father wrote some verses upon the occasion, in which she is made to discourse thus:—"Then do not detain me, for why should I stay When cherubs in heaven call me away? Earth has no pleasure, no joys that compare, With the joys that await us in heaven so fair."

As the little darling was only two years and a fraction of age it is tolerably impossible to divine upon what authority she sought to throw discredit upon the joys of earth: her observation having been limited to mother's milk and treacle toffy. But that's just the way with professing Christians; they are always disparaging the delights which they are unfitted to enjoy.

.... The Rev. Dr. Cunningham instructs his congregation that it is not enough to give to the Church what they can spare, but to give and keep giving until they feel it to be a burden and a sacrifice. These, brethren, are the inspired words of one who has a deep and abiding pecuniary interest in what he is talking about. Such a man cannot err, except by asking too little; and empires have risen and perished, islands have sprung from the sea, mountains have burnt their bowels out, and rivers have run dry, since a man of God has committed this error.

Obituary Notices.

Christians.

.... It is with a feeling of professional regret that we record the death of Mr. Jacob Pigwidgeon. Deceased was one of our earliest pioneers, who came to this State long before he was needed. His age is a matter of mere conjecture; probably he was less advanced in years than Methuselah would have been had he practised a reasonable temperance in eating and drinking. Mr. Pigwidgeon was a gentleman of sincere but modest piety, profoundly respected by all who fancied themselves like him. Probably no man of his day exercised so peculiar an influence upon society. Ever, foremost in every good work out of which there was anything to be made, an unstinted dispenser of every species of charity that paid a commission to the disburser, Mr. Pigwidgeon was a model of generosity; but so modestly did he lavish his favours that his left hand seldom knew what pocket his right hand was relieving. During the troubles of ‘56 he was closely identified with the Vigilance Committee, being entrusted by that body with the important mission of going into Nevada and remaining there. In 1863 he was elected an honorary member of the Society for the Prevention of Humanity to the Chinese, and there is little doubt but he might have been anything, so active was the esteem with which he inspired those for whom it was desired that he should vote.

Originally born in Massachusetts, but for twenty-one years a native of California and partially bald, possessing a cosmopolitan nature that loved an English shilling as well, in proportion to its value, as a Mexican dollar, the subject of our memoir was one whom it was an honour to know, and whose close friendship was a luxury that only the affluent could afford. It shall even be the writer’s proudest boast that he enjoyed it at less than half the usual rates.

The circumstances attending his taking off were most mournful. He had been for some time very much depressed in spirits of one kind and another, and on last Wednesday morning was observed to be foaming at the mouth. No attention was paid to this; his family believing it to be a symptom of hydrophobia, with which he had been afflicted from the cradle. Suddenly a dark-eyed stranger entered the house, took the patient’s neck between his thumb and forefinger, threw the body across his shoulder, winked respectfully to the bereaved widow, and withdrew by way of the kitchen cellar. Farewell, pure soul! we shall meet again.

.... We are reluctantly compelled to relate the untimely death of Mrs. Margaret Ann Picklefinch, which occurred about one o'clock yesterday morning. The circumstances attending the melancholy event were these: —

Just before the hour named, her husband, the well-known temperance lecturer, and less generally known temperance lecturee, came home from an adjourned meeting of the Cold–Water Legion, and retired very drunk. His estimable lady got up and pulled off his boots, as usual. He got into bed and she lay down beside him. She uttered a mild preliminary oath of endearment and suddenly ceased speaking. It must have been about this time she died. About daylight he invited her to get up and make a fire. Detecting no movement in her body he enforced family discipline. The peculiar hard sound of his wife striking the floor first aroused his suspicions of the bereavement he had sustained, and upon rising later in the day he found his first fears realized; the lady had waived her claim to his further protection.

We extend to Mr. P. our sincere sympathy in the greatest calamity that can befall an unmarriageable man. The inconsolable survivor called at our office last evening, conversed feelingly some moments about the virtues of the dear departed, and left with the air of a dog that has had his tail abbreviated and is forced to begin life anew. Truly the decrees of Providence appear sometimes absurd.

.... Mr. Bildad Gorcas, whose death has cast a wet blanket of gloom over our community, was a man comparatively unknown, but his life furnishes an instructive lesson to fast livers. Mr. Gorcas never in his life tasted ardent spirits, ate spiced meats, or sat up later than nine o'clock in the evening. He rose, summer and winter, at two A. M., and passed an hour and three quarters immersed in ice water. For the last twenty years he has walked fifteen miles daily before breakfast, and then gone without breakfast. During his waking hours he was never a moment idle; when not hard at work he was trying to think. Up to the time of his death, which occurred last Sunday, he had never spoken to a doctor, never had occasion to curse a dentist, had a luxurious growth of variegated hair, and there was not a wrinkle upon any part of his body. If he had not been cut off by falling across a circular saw at the early age of thirty-two, there is no telling how long he might have weathered it through.

A life like his is so bright and shining an example that we are almost sorry he died.

.... During the week just rolled into eternity, our city has been plunged into the deepest grief. He who doeth all things well, though to our weak human understanding His acts may sometimes seen to savour of injustice, has seen fit to remove from amongst us one whose genius and blameless life had endeared him to friend and foe alike.

In saying that Mr. Jowler was a dog of preeminent abilities and exceptional virtues, we but faintly echo the verdict of a bereaved Universe. Endowed with a gigantic intellect and a warm heart, modest in his demeanour genial in his intercourse with friends and acquaintances, and forbearing towards strangers (with whom he ever maintained the most cordial relations, unmarred by the gross familiarity-too common among dogs of inferior breeds), inoffensive in his daily walk and conversation, the deceased was universally respected and his loss will be even more generally deplored.

It would be a work of supererogation to give a résumé of the public career of one so well known-one whose name has become a household word. In private life his character was equally estimable. He had ever a wag of encouragement for the young, the ill-favoured, the belaboured, and the mangy. Though his gentle spirit has passed away, he has left with us the record of his virtues as a shining example for all puppies; and the writer is pleased to admit that so far as in him lay he has himself endeavoured to profit by it.

Pagans.

.... Yo Hop is dead! He was last seen alive about three o’clock yesterday morning by a white labourer who was returning home after an elongated orgie at a Barbary Coast inn, and at the time seemed to be in undisputed possession of all his faculties; the remainder of his personal property having been transferred to the white labourer aforesaid. At the moment alluded to, Mr. Hop was in the act of throwing up his arms, as if to ward off some impending danger in the hands of the sole spectator. An instant later he experienced one of those sudden deaths which have made this city popularly famous and surgically interesting.

The lamented was forty years of age; how much longer he might have lived, in his own country, it is impossible to determine; but it is to be remarked that the climate of California is a very trying one to people of his peculiar organization. The body was kindly taken in charge by a resident of the vicinity, and now lies in state in his back yard, where it is being carefully prepared for burial by those skilful meathounds, Messrs. Lassirator, Mangler, and Chure, whose names are a sufficient guarantee that the mournful rites will be attended to in a manner befitting the solemn occasion.

We tender the bereaved widow our sincere sympathy at the regular rates. The cause of Mr. Hop’s demise is unknown. It is unimportant.

.... A dead Asian was recently found in a ditch in Nevada county. His head, like that of a toad, had a precious jewel imbedded in it, about the size of an ordinary watermelon, and a clear majority of his fingers, toes, and features had received Christian burial in the stomachs of several contiguous hogs with roving commissions. As he seemed unwilling to state who he was, or how he got his deserts, he was tenderly replaced in his last ditch, and his discoverers proceeded leisurely for the coroner. Upon the arrival of that public functionary some days later, a pile of nice clean bones was discovered, with this touching epitaph inscribed with a lead pencil upon a segment of the skull:

“Yur lize wot cant be chawd of Chineece jaik; xekewted bi me fur a plitikle awfens, and et bi mi starven hogs, wich aint hed nuthin afore sence jaix boss stoal mi korn. BIL ROPER, and ov sich is Kingdem cum.”

.... The following report of an autopsy is of peculiar interest to physicians and

Christians: — Case 81st. — Felo de se. Yow Kow, yellow, male, Chinese, aged 94; found dead on the street; addicted to opium. Autopsy-sixteen hours after death. Slobbering at the mouth; head caved in; immense rigor mortis; eyes dilated and gouged out; abdomen lacerated; hemorrhage from left ear. Head. Water on the brain; scalp congested, rather; when burst with a mallet interior of head resembled a war map. Thorax. Charge of buckshot in left lung; diaphragm suffused; heart wanting-finger marks in that vicinity; traces of hobnails outside. Abdomen. Lacerated as aforesaid; small intestines cumbered with brick dust; slingshot in duodenum; boot-heel imbedded in pelvis; butcher's knife fixed rigidly in right kidney.

Remarks: Chinese immigration will ruin any country in the world.

Musings, Philosophical and Theological.

.... Seated in his den, in the chill gloom of a winter twilight, comforting his stomach with hoarded bits of cheese and broad biscuits, Mr. Grile thinketh unto himself after this fashion of thought: I.

To eat biscuits and cheese before dining is to confess that you do not expect to dine.

II.

"Once bit, twice shy," is a homely saying, but singularly true. A man who has been swindled will be very cautious the second time, and the third. The fourth time he may be swindled again more easily and completely than before.

III.

A four-footed beast walks by lifting one foot at a time, but a four-horse team does not walk by lifting one horse at a time. And yet you cannot readily explain why this is so.

IV.

If a jackass were to describe the Deity he would represent Him with long ears and a tail. Man's ideal is the higher and truer one; he pictures Him as somewhat resembling a man.

V.

The bald head of a man is a very common spectacle. You have never seen the bald head of a woman.

VI.

Baldheaded women are a very common spectacle.

VII.

Piety, like small-pox, comes by infection. Robinson Crusoe, however, caught it alone on his island. It is probable that he had it in his blood.

VIII.

The doctrine of foreknowledge does not imply the truth of foreordination. Foreordination is a cause antedating an event. Foreknowledge is an effect, not of something that is going to occur, which would be absurd, but the effect of its being going to occur.

IX.

Those who cherish the opposite opinion may be very good citizens.

X.

Old shoes are easiest, because they have accommodated themselves to the feet. Old friends are least intolerable because they have adapted themselves to the inferior parts of our character.

XI.

Between old friends and old shoes there are other points of resemblance.

XII.

Everybody professes to know that it would be difficult to find a needle in a haystack, but very few reflect that this is because haystacks seldom contain needles.

XIII.

A man with but one leg is a better man than a man with two legs, for the reason that there is less of him.

XIV.

A man without any legs is better than a man with one leg; not because there is less of him, but because he cannot get about to enact so much wickedness.

XV.

When an ostrich is pursued he conceals his head in a bush; when a man is pursued he conceals his property. By instinct each knows his enemy's design.

XVI.

There are two things that should be avoided; the deadly upas tree and soda water. The latter will make you puffy and poddy.

XVII.

This list of things to be avoided is necessarily incomplete.

XVIII.

In calling a man a hog, it is the man who gets angry, but it is the hog who is insulted. Men are always taking up the quarrels of others.

XIX.

Give an American a newspaper and a pie and he will make himself comfortable anywhere.

XX.

The world of mind will be divided upon the question of baptism so long as there are two simple and effective methods of baptising, and they are equally disagreeable.

XXI.

They are not equally disagreeable, but each is disagreeable enough to attract disciples.

XXII.

The face of a pig is a more handsome face than the face of a man-in the pig’s opinion.

XXIII.

A pig’s opinion upon this question is as likely to be correct as is a man’s opinion.

XXIV.

It is better not to take a wife than to take one belonging to some other man: for if she has been a good wife to him, she has adapted her nature to his, and will therefore be unsuited to yours. If she has not been a good wife to him she will not be to you.

XXV.

The most gifted people are not always the most favoured: a man with twelve legs can derive no benefit from ten of them without crawling like a centipede.

XXVI.

A woman and a cow are the two most beautiful creatures in the world. For proof of the beauty of a cow, the reader is referred to an ox; for proof of the beauty of a woman, an ox is referred to the reader.

XXVII.

There is reason to believe that a baby is less comely than a calf, for the reason that all kine esteem the calf the more comely beast, and there is one man who does not esteem the baby the more comely beast.

XXVII.

To judge of the wisdom of an act by its result is a very shallow plan. An action is wise or unwise the moment it is decided upon.

XXIX.

If the wisdom of an action may not be determined by the result, it is very difficult to determine it.

XXX.

It is impossible.

XXXI.

The moon always presents the same side to the earth because she is heaviest on that side. The opposite side, however, is more private and secluded.

XXXII.

Camels and Christians receive their burdens kneeling.

XXXIII.

It was never intended that men should be saints in heaven until they are dead and good for nothing else. On earth they are mostly XXXIV.

Fools.

I, Grile, have arranged these primal truths in the order of their importance, in the hope that some patient investigator may amplify and codify them into a coherent body of doctrine, and so establish a new religion. I would do it myself were it not that a very corpulent and most unexpected pudding is claiming my present attention.

O, steaming enigma! O, savoury mountain of hidden mysteries! too long neglected for too long a sermon. Engaging problem, let me reveal the secrets latent in thy breast, and unfold thine occult philosophy! [Cutting into the pudding.] Ah! here, and here alone is-[Eating it].

Laughorisms.

.... When a favourite dog has an incurable pain, you “put him out of his misery” with a bullet or an axe. A favourite child similarly afflicted is preserved as long as possible, in torment. I do not say that this is not right; I claim only that it is not consistent. There are two sorts of kindness; one for dogs, and another for children. A very dear friend, wallowing about in the red mud of a battle-field, once asked me for some of the dog sort. I suspect, if no one had been looking, he would have got it.

.... It is to be feared that to most men the sky is but a concave mirror, showing nothing behind, and in looking into which they see only their own distorted images, like the reflection of a face in a spoon. Hence it needs not surprise that they are not very devout worshippers; it is a great wonder they do not openly scoff.

.... The influence of climate upon civilization has been more exhaustively treated than studied. Otherwise, we should know how it is that some countries that have so much climate have no civilization.

.... Whoso shall insist upon holding your attention while he expounds to you things that you have always thriven without knowing resembles one who should go about with a hammer, cracking nuts upon other people’s heads and eating the kernels himself.

.... There are but two kinds of temporary insanity, and each has but a single symptom. The one was discovered by a coroner, the other by a lawyer. The one induces you to kill yourself when you are unwell of life; the other persuades you to kill somebody else when you are fatigued of seeing him about.

.... People who honour their fathers and their mothers have the comforting promise that their days shall be long in the land. They are not sufficiently numerous to make the life assurance companies think it worth their while to offer them special rates.

.... There are people who dislike to die, for apparently no better reason than that there are a few vices they have not had the time to try; but it must be confessed that the fewer there are of these untasted sweets, the more loth are they to leave them.

.... Men ought to sin less in petty details, and more in the lump; that they might the more conveniently be brought to repentance when they are ready. They should imitate the touching solicitude of the lady for the burglar, whom she spares much trouble by keeping her jewels well together in a box.

.... I once knew a man who made me a map of the opposite hemisphere of the moon. He was crazy. I knew another who taught me what country lay upon the other side of the grave. He was a most acute thinker-as he had need to be.

.... Those who are horrified at Mr. Darwin's theory, may comfort themselves with the assurance that, if we are descended from the ape, we have not descended so far as to preclude all hope of return.

.... There is more poison in aphorisms than in painted candy; but it is of a less seductive kind.

.... If it were as easy to invent a credible falsehood as it is to believe one, we should have little else in print. The mechanical construction of a falsehood is a matter of the gravest import.

.... There is just as much true pleasure in walloping one's own wife as in the sinful enjoyment of another man's right. Heaven gives to each man a wife, and intends that he shall cleave to her alone. To cleave is either to "split" or to "stick." To cleave to your wife is to split her with a stick.

.... A strong mind is more easily impressed than a weak one: you shall not as readily convince a fool that you are a philosopher, as a philosopher that you are a fool.

.... In our intercourse with men, their national peculiarities and customs are entitled to consideration. In addressing the common Frenchman take off your hat; in addressing the common Irishman make him take off his.

.... It is nearly always untrue to say of a man that he wishes to leave a great property behind him when he dies. Usually he would like to take it along.

.... Benevolence is as purely selfish as greed. No one would do a benevolent action if he knew it would entail remorse.

.... If cleanliness is next to godliness, it is a matter of unceasing wonder that, having gone to the extreme limit of the former, so many people manage to stop short exactly at the line of demarcation.

.... Most people have no more definite idea of liberty than that it consists in being compelled by law to do as they like.

.... Every man is at heart a brute, and the greatest injury you can put upon any one is to provoke him into displaying his nature. No gentleman ever forgives the man who makes him let out his beast.

.... The Psalmist never saw the seed of the righteous begging bread. In our day they sometimes request pennies for keeping the street-crossings in order.

.... When two wholly irreconcilable propositions are presented to the mind, the safest way is to thank Heaven that we are not like the unreasoning brutes, and believe both.

.... If every malefactor in the church were known by his face it would be necessary to prohibit the secular tongue from crying “stop thief.” Otherwise the church bells could not be heard of a pleasant Sunday.

.... Truth is more deceptive than falsehood, because it is commonly employed by those from whom we do not expect it, and so passes for what it is not.

.... “If people only knew how foolish it is” to take their wine with a dash of prussic acid, it is probable that they would-prefer to take it with that addition.

.... “A man’s honour,” says a philosopher, “is the best protection he can have.” Then most men might find a heartless oppressor in the predatory oyster.

.... The canary gets his name from the dog, an animal whom he looks down upon. We get a good many worse things than names from those beneath us; and they give us a bad name too.

.... Faith is the best evidence in the world; it reconciles contradictions and proves impossibilities. It is wonderfully developed in the blind.

.... He who undertakes an “Account of Idiots in All Ages” will find himself committed to the task of compiling most known biographies. Some future publisher will affix a life of the compiler.

.... Gratitude is regarded as a precious virtue, because tendered as a fair equivalent for any conceivable service.

.... A bad marriage is like an electric machine: it makes you dance, but you can’t let go.

.... The symbol of Charity should be a circle. It usually ends exactly where it begins-at home.

.... Most people redeem a promise as an angler takes in a trout; by first playing it with a good deal of line.

.... It is a grave mistake to suppose defaulters have no consciences. Some of them have been known, under favourable circumstances, to restore as much as ten per cent. of their plunder.

.... There is nothing so progressive as grief, and nothing so infectious as progress. I have seen an acre of cemetery infected by a single innovation in spelling cut upon a tombstone.

.... It is wicked to cheat on Sunday. The law recognises this truth, and shuts up the shops.

.... In the infancy of our language to be “foolish” signified to be affectionate; to be “fond” was to be silly. We have altered that now: to be “foolish” is to be silly, to be “fond” is to be affectionate. But that the change could ever have been made is significant.

.... If you meet a man on the narrow crossing of a muddy street, stand quite still. He will turn out and go round you, bowing his apologies. It is courtesy to accept them.

.... If every hypocrite in the United States were to break his leg at noon to-day, the country might be successfully invaded at one o’clock by the warlike hypocrites of Canada.

.... To Dogmatism the Spirit of Inquiry is the same as the Spirit of Evil; and to pictures of the latter it has appended a tail, to represent the note of interrogation.

.... We speak of the affections as originating in instinct. This is a miserable subterfuge to shift the obloquy from the judgment.

.... What we call decency is custom; what we term indecency is merely customary.

.... The noblest pursuit of Man is the pursuit of Woman.

.... “Immoral” is the solemn judgment of the stalled ox upon the sun-inspired lamb.

“Items” from the Press of Interior California.

.... A little bit of romance has just transpired to relieve the monotony of our metropolitan life. Old Sam Choggins, whom the editor of this paper has so often publicly thrashed, has returned from Mud Springs with a young wife. He is said to be very fond of her, and the way he came to get her was this:

Some time ago we courted her, but finding she was “on the make,” threw her off, after shooting her brother and two cousins. She vowed revenge, and promised to marry any man who would horsewhip us. This Sam agreed to undertake, and she married him on that promise.

We shall call on Sam to-morrow with our new shot-gun, and present our congratulations in the usual form. — Hangtown “Gibbet.”

.... The purposeless old party with the boiled shirt, who has for some days been loafing about the town peddling hymn-books at merely nominal prices (a clear proof that he stole them), has been disposed of in a cheap and satisfactory manner. His lode petered out about six o’clock yesterday afternoon; our evening edition being delayed until that time, by request. The cause of his death, as nearly as could be ascertained by a single physician-Dr. Duffer being too drunk to attend-was Whisky Sam, who, it will be remembered, delivered a lecture some weeks ago entitled “Dan’l in the Lion’s Den; and How They’d aEt ‘Im ef He’d Ever ben Ther” — in which he triumphantly overthrew revealed religion.

His course yesterday proves that he can act as well as talk. — Devil Gully “Expositor.”

.... There was considerable excitement, in the street yesterday, owing to the arrival of Bust–Head Dave, formerly of this place, who came over on the stage from Pudding Springs. He was met at the hotel by Sheriff Knogg, who leaves a large family, and whose loss will be universally deplored. Dave walked down the street to the bridge, and it reminded one of old times to see the people go away as he heaved in view. It was not through any fear of the man, but from the knowledge that he had made a threat (first published in this paper) to clean out the town. Before leaving the place Dave called at our office to settle for a year’s subscription (invariably in advance) and was informed, through a chink in the logs, that he might leave his dust in the tin cup at the well.

Dave is looking very much larger than at his last visit just previous to the funeral of Judge Dawson. He left for Injun Hill at five o’clock, amidst a good deal of shooting at rather long range, and there will be an election for Sheriff as soon as a stranger can be found who will accept the honour. — Yankee Flat “Advertiser.”

.... It is to be hoped the people will all turn out to-morrow, according to advertisement in another column. The men deserve hanging, no end, but at the same time they are human, and entitled to some respect; and we shall print the name of every adult male who does not grace the occasion with his presence. We make this threat simply because there have been some indications of apathy; and any man who will stay away when Bob Bolton and Sam Buxter are to be hanged, is probably either an accomplice or a relation. Old Blanket–Mouth Dick was not the only blood relation these fellows have in this vicinity; and the fate that befell him when they could not be found ought to be a warning to the rest.

We hope to see a full attendance. The bar is just in rear of the gibbet, and will be run by a brother of ours. Gentlemen who shrink from publicity will patronize that bar. — San Louis Jones “Gazette.”

.... A painful accident occurred in Frog Gulch yesterday which has cast a good deal of gloom over a hitherto joyous and whisky loving community. Dan Spigger-or as he was familiarly called, Murderer Dan-got drunk at his usual hour yesterday, and as is his custom took down his gun, and started after the fellow who went home with his girl the night before. He found him at breakfast with his wife and thirteen children. After killing them he started out to return, but being weary, stumbled and broke his leg. Dr. Bill found him in that condition, and having no waggon at hand to convey him to town, shot him to put him out of his misery.

Dan was dearly loved by all who knew him, and his loss is a Democratic gain. He seldom disagreed with any but Democrats, and would have materially reduced the vote of that party had he not been so untimely cut off. — Jackass Gap “Bulletin.”

.... The dance-house at the corner of Moll Duncan Street and Fish-trap Avenue has been broken up. Our friend, the editor of the Jamboree, succeeded in getting his cock-eyed sister in there as a beer-slinger, and the hurdy-gurdy girls all swore they would not stand her society; and they got up and got. The light fantastic is not tripped there any more, except when the Jamboree man sneaks in and dances a jig for his morning pizen. — Murderburg “Herald.”

.... The Superintendent of the Mag Davis Mine requests us to state that the custom of pitching Chinamen and Injins down the shaft will have to be stopped, as he has resumed work in the mine. The old well, back of Jo Bowman’s, is just as good, and is more centrally located. — New Jerusalem “Courier.”

.... Three women while amusing themselves in Calaveras county met with a serious accident. They were jumping across a hole eight hundred feet deep and ten wide. One of them couldn’t quite make it, succeeding only in grasping a sage-bush on the opposite edge, where she hung suspended. Her companions, who had just stepped into an adjacent saloon, saw her peril, and as soon as they had finished drinking went to her assistance. Previously to liberating her, one of them by way of a joke uprooted the bush. This exasperated the other, and she, threw her companion half-way across the shaft. She then attempted to cross over to the other side in two jumps.

The affair has made considerable talk. — Red Head “Tribune.”

.... A family who for fifteen years have lived at the bottom of a mine shaft in Siskiyou county, were all drowned by a rain-storm last Wednesday night. They had neglected their usual precaution of putting an umbrella over the mouth of the shaft. The man-who had always been vacillating in politics-was taken out a stiff Radical. — Dog Valley “Howl.”

.... There is a fellow in town who claims to be the man that murdered Sheriff White some months ago. We consider him an impostor, seeking admission into society above his level, and hope people will stop inviting him to their houses. — Nigger Hill “Patriot.”

.... A stranger wearing a stovepipe hat arrived in town yesterday, putting up at the Nugget House. The boys are having a good time with that hat this morning, and the funeral will take place at two o’clock. — Spanish Camp “Flag.”

.... The scoundrel who tipped over our office last month will be hung to-morrow, and no paper will be issued next day. — Sierra “Fire-cracker.”

.... The old grey-headed party who lost his life last Friday at the jewelled hands of our wife, deserves more than a passing notice at ours. He came to this city last summer, and started a weekly Methodist prayer meeting, but being warned by the Police, who was formerly a Presbyterian, gave up the swindle. He afterward undertook to introduce Bibles and hymn-books, and, it is said, on one occasion attempted to preach. This was a little more than an outraged community could be expected to endure, and at our suggestion he was tarred and feathered.

For a time this treatment seemed to work a reform, but the heart of a Methodist is, above all things, deceitful and desperately wicked, and he was soon after caught in the very act of presenting a spelling-book to old Ben Spoffer's youngest daughter, Ragged Moll, since hung. The Vigilance Committee pro tem. waited upon him, when he was decently shot and left for dead, as was recorded in this paper, with an obituary notice for which we have never received a cent. Last Friday, however, he was discovered sneaking into the potato patch connected with this paper, and our wife, God bless her, got an axe and finished him then and there.

His name was John Bucknor, and it is reported (we do not know with how much truth) that at one time there was an improper intimacy between him and the lady who despatched him. If so, we pity Sal. — Coyote "Trapper."

.... Our readers may have noticed in yesterday's issue an editorial article in which we charged Judge Black with having murdered his father, beaten his wife, and stolen seven mules from Jo Gorman. The facts are substantially true, though somewhat different from what we stated. The killing was done by a Dutchman named Moriarty, and the bruises we happened to see on the face of the Judge's wife were caused by a fall-she being, doubtless, drunk at the time. The mules had only strayed into the mountains, and have returned all right.

We consider the Judge's anger at so trifling an error very ridiculous and insulting, and shall shoot him the first time he comes to town. An Independent Press is not to be muzzled by any absurd old buffer with a crooked nose, and a sister who is considerably more mother than wife. Not as long as we have our usual success in thinning out the judiciary with buck shot. — Lone Tree "Sockdolager."

.... Yesterday, as Job Wheeler was returning from a clean-up at the Buttermilk Flume, he stopped at Hell Tunnel to have a chat with the boys. John Tooley took a fancy to Job's watch, and asked for it. Being refused, he slipped away, and going to Job's shanty, killed his three half-breed children and a valuable pig. This is the third time John has played some scurvy trick, and it is about time the Superintendent discharged him. There is entirely too much of this practical joking amongst the boys, and it will lead to trouble yet. — Nugget Hill "Pickaxe of Freedom."

.... The stranger from Frisco with the claw-hammer coat, who put up at the Gag House last Thursday, and was looking for a chance to invest, was robbed the other night of three hundred ounces of clean dust. We know who did it, but don’t be frightened, John Lowry; we’ll never tell, though we are awful hard up, owing to our subscribers going back on us. — Choketown “Rocker.”

.... Old Mother Gooly, who works a ranch on shares near Whiskyville, was married last Sunday to the new Episcopalian preacher from Dogburg. It seems that he laboured more faithfully to convert her soul than to save the crop, and the bride protested against his misdirected industry, with a crowbar. The citizens are very much grieved to lose one whose abilities they never fairly appreciated until his brain was scraped off the iron and weighed. It was found to be considerably heavier than the average.

But the verdict of the people is unanimously given. He ought not to have fooled with Mother Gooly’s immortal part, to the neglect of the wheat crop. That kind of thing is not popular at Whiskyville. It is not business.—”Bullwhacker’s Own.”

.... The railroad from this city north-west will be commenced as soon as the citizens get tired of killing the Chinamen brought up to do the work, which will probably be within three or four weeks. The carcases are accumulating about town and begin to become unpleasant. — Gravel Hill “Thunderbolt.”

.... The man who was shot last week at the Gulch will be buried next Thursday. He is not yet dead, but his physician wishes to visit a mother-in-law at Lard Springs, and is therefore very anxious to get the case off his hands. The undertaker describes the patient as “the longest cuss in that section.” — Santa Peggie “Times.”

.... There is some dispute about land titles at Little Bilk Bar. About half a dozen cases were temporarily decided on Wednesday, but it is supposed the widows will renew the litigation. The only proper way to prevent these vexatious lawsuits is to hang the Judge of the County Court. — Cow–County “Outcropper.”

Poesy.

Ye Idyll of Ye Hippopopotamus.

With a Methodist hymn in his musical throat, The Sun was emitting his ultimate note; His quivering larynx enwrinkled the sea Like an Ichthyosaurian blowing his tea; When sweetly and pensively rattled and rang This plaint which an Hippopopotamus sang: “O, Camomile, Calabash, Cartilage-pie, Spread for my spirit a peppermint fry; Crown me with doughnuts, and drape me with cheese, Settle my soul with a codliver sneeze.
Lo, how I stand on my head and repine — Lollipop Lumpkin can never be mine!”
Down sank the Sun with a kick and a plunge, Up from the wave rose the head of a Sponge; Ropes in his ringlets, eggs in his eyes, Tip-tilted nose in a way to surprise.
These the conundrums he flung to the breeze, The answers that Echo returned to him these: “Cobblestone, Cobblestone, why do you sigh — Why do you turn on the tears?”
“My mother is crazy on strawberry jam, And my father has petrified ears.”
“Liverwort, Liverwort, why do you droop — Why do you snuffle and scowl?”
“My brother has cockle-burs into his eyes, And my sister has married an owl.”
“Simia, Simia, why do you laugh — Why do you cackle and quake?”
“My son has a pollywog stuck in his throat, And my daughter has bitten a snake.”
Slow sank the head of the Sponge out of sight, Soaken with sea-water-then it was night.
The Moon had now risen for dinner to dress, When sweetly the Pachyderm sang from his nest; He sang through a pestle of silvery shape, Encrusted with custard-empurpled with crape; And this was the burden he bore on his lips, And blew to the listening Sturgeon that sips From the fountain of opium under the lobes Of the mountain whose summit in buffalo robes The winter envelops, as Venus adorns An elephant’s trunk with a chaplet of thorns: “Chasing mastodons through marshes upon stilts of light ratan, Hunting spiders with a shotgun and mosquitoes with an axe, Plucking peanuts ready roasted from the

branches of the oak, Waking echoes in the forest with our hymns of blessed bosh, We roamed-my love and I.

By the margin of the fountain spouting thick with clabbered milk, Under spreading boughs of bass-wood all alive with cooing toads, Loafing listlessly on bowlders of octagonal design, Standing gracefully inverted with our toes together knit, We loved-my love and I."

Hippopopotamus comforts his heart Biting half-moons out of strawberry tart.

Epitaph on George Francis Train.

(Inscribed on a Pork-barrel.) Beneath this casket rots unknown A Thing that merits not a stone, Save that by passing urchin cast; Whose fame and virtues we express By transient urn of emptiness, With apt inscription (to its past Relating-and to his): “Prime Mess.”

No honour had this infidel, That doth not appertain, as well, To altered caitiff on the drop; No wit that would not likewise pass For wisdom in the famished ass Who breaks his neck a weed to crop, When tethered in the luscious grass.

And now, thank God, his hateful name Shall never rescued be from shame,

Though seas of venal ink be shed; No sophistry shall reconcile With sympathy for Erin’s Isle, Or sorrow for her patriot dead, The weeping of this crocodile.

Life’s incongruity is past, And dirt to dirt is seen at last, The worm of worm afoul doth fall.

The sexton tolls his solemn bell For scoundrel dead and gone to-well, It matters not, it can’t recall This convict from his final cell.

Jerusalem, Old and New.

Didymus Dunkleton Doty Don John Is a parson of high degree; He holds forth of Sundays to marvelling crowds Who wonder how vice can still be When smitten so stoutly by Didymus Don — Disciple of Calvin is he.
But sinners still laugh at his talk of the New Jerusalem-ha-ha, te-he!
And biting their thumbs at the doughty Don–John — This parson of high degree — They think of the streets of a village they know, Where horses still sink to the knee, Contrasting its muck with the pavement of gold That’s laid in the other citee.
They think of the sign that still swings, uneffaced By winds from the salt, salt sea, Which tells where he trafficked in tipple, of yore — Don Dunkleton Johnny, D. D.
Didymus Dunkleton Doty Don John Still plays on his fiddle — D. D.,
His lambkins still bleat in full psalmody sweet, And the devil still pitches the key.

Communing with Nature.

One evening I sat on a heavenward hill, The winds were asleep and all nature was still, Wee children came round me to play at my knee, As my mind floated rudderless over the sea.

I put out one hand to caress them, but held With the other my nose, for these cherubim smelled.

I cast a few glances upon the old sun; He was red in the face from the race he had run, But he seemed to be doing, for aught I could see, Quite well without any assistance from me.

And so I directed my wandering eye Around to the opposite side of the sky, And the rapture that ever with ecstasy thrills Through the heart as the moon rises bright from the hills, Would in this case have been most exceedingly rare, Except for the fact that the moon was not there.

But the stars looked right lovingly down in the sea, And, by Jupiter, Venus was winking at me!

The gas in the city was flaring up bright, Montgomery Street was resplendent with light; But I did not exactly appear to advance A sentiment proper to that circumstance.

So it only remains to explain to the town That a rainstorm came up before I could come down.

As the boots I had on were uncommonly thin My fancy leaked out as the water leaked in.

Though dampened my ardour, though slackened my strain, I'll “strike the wild lyre” who sings the sweet rain!

Conservatism and Progress.

Old Zephyr, dawdling in the West,
Looked down upon the sea,
Which slept unfretted at his feet,
And balanced on its breast a fleet

That seemed almost to be
Suspended in the middle air,
As if a magnet held it there,
Eternally at rest.
Then, one by one, the ships released Their folded sails, and strove
Against the empty calm to press
North, South, or West, or East,
In vain; the subtle nothingness
Was impotent to move.
Ten Zephyr laughed aloud to see: —
“No vessel moves except by me,
And, heigh-ho! I shall sleep.”
But lo! from out the troubled North A tempest strode impatient forth,
And trampled white the deep;
The sloping ships flew glad away,
Laving their heated sides in spray.
The West then turned him red with wrath, And to the North he shouted:
“Hold there! How dare you cross my path, As now you are about it?”
The North replied with laboured breath — His speed no moment slowing: —
“My friend, you’ll never have a path, Unless you take to blowing.”

Inter Arma Silent Leges.

(An Election Incident.) About the polls the freedmen drew, To vote the freemen down; And merrily their caps up-flew As Grant rode through the town.
From votes to staves they next did turn, And beat the freemen down; Full bravely did their valour burn As Grant rode through the town.
Then staves for muskets they forsook, And shot the freemen down; Right royally their banners shook As Grant rode through the town.
Hail, final triumph of our cause!
  Hail, chief of mute renown!
Grim Magistrate of Silent Laws, A-riding freedom down!

Quintessence.

"To produce these spicy paragraphs, which have been unsuccessfully imitated by every newspaper in the State, requires the combined efforts of five able-bodied persons associated on the editorial staff of this journal." — New York Herald.
Sir Muscle speaks, and nations bend the ear: "Hark ye these Notes-our wit quintuple hear; Five able-bodied editors combine Their strength prodigious in each laboured line!"
O wondrous vintner! hopeless seemed the task To bung these drainings in a single cask; The riddle's read-five leathern skins contain The working juice, and scarcely feel the strain.
Saviours of Rome! will wonders never cease?
A ballad cackled by five tuneful geese!
Upon one Rosinante five stout knights Ride fiercely into visionary fights!
A cap and bells five sturdy fools adorn, Five porkers battle for a grain of corn, Five donkeys squeeze into a narrow stall, Five tumble-bugs propel a single ball!

Resurgam.

Dawns dread and red the fateful morn — Lo, Resurrection’s Day is born!

The striding sea no longer strides, No longer knows the trick of tides; The land is breathless, winds relent, All nature waits the dread event.

From wassail rising rather late, Awarding Jove arrives in state; O’er yawning graves looks many a league, Then yawns himself from sheer fatigue.

Lifting its finger to the sky, A marble shaft arrests his eye — This epitaph, in pompous pride, Engraven on its polished side: “Perfection of Creation’s plan, Here resteth Universal Man, Who virtues, segregated wide, Collated, classed, and codified, Reduced to practice, taught, explained, And strict morality maintained.

Anticipating death, his pelf He lavished on this monolith; Because he leaves nor kin nor kith He rears this tribute to himself, That Virtue’s fame may never cease.

Hic jacet-let him rest in peace!”

With sober eye Jove scanned the shaft, Then turned away and lightly laughed “Poor Man! since I have careless been In keeping books to note thy sin, And thou hast left upon the earth This faithful record of thy worth, Thy final prayer shall now be heard: Of life I’ll not renew thy lease, But take thee at thy carven word, And let thee rest in solemn peace!”

THE END

“For my own part, I must confess to bear a very singular respect to this animal, by whom I take human nature to be most admirably held forth in all its qualities as well as operations; and, therefore, whatever in my small reading occurs concerning this, our fellow creature, I do never fail to set it down by way of commonplace; and when I have occasion to write upon human reason, politics, eloquence or knowledge, I lay my memorandums before me, and insert them with a wonderful facility of application.” — SWIFT.

COBWEBS FROM AN EMPTY SKULL

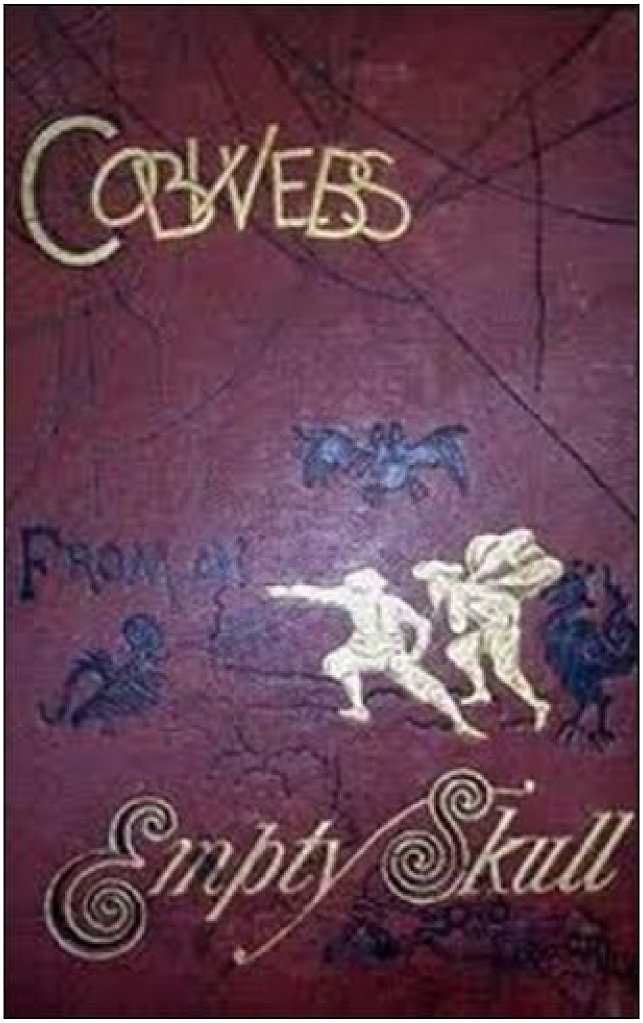
George Routledge and Sons, of London, published *Cobwebs from an Empty Skull* in 1874. The collection included everything from Bierce's scarce second book, *Nuggets and Dust*, and more. Once again he used the pseudonym, Dod Grile. Many of the pieces had appeared earlier in American newspapers and journals and included prime examples of his sharp satire and often macabre fiction. His author acquaintances in England dubbed him "Bitter Bierce." Bierce's publisher solicited a review from noted American author, Samuel Clemens, who wrote this pithy, but unusable reply from his home in Hartford that April:

Gentlemen:

"Dod Grile" (Mr. Bierce) is a personal friend of mine, & I like him exceedingly — but he knows my opinion of the "Nuggets & Dust," & so I do not mind exposing it to you. It is the vilest book that exists in print — or very nearly so. If you keep a "reader," it is charity to believe he never really read that book, but framed his verdict upon hearsay.

Bierce has written some admirable things — fugitive pieces — but none of them are among the "Nuggets." There is humor in Dod Grile, but for every laugh that is in his book there are five blushes, ten shudders and a vomit. The laugh is too expensive.

Ys truly
Samuel L. Clemens


COBWEBS
FROM AN
Empty Skull

A first edition copy published in London by George Routledge and Sons in 1874

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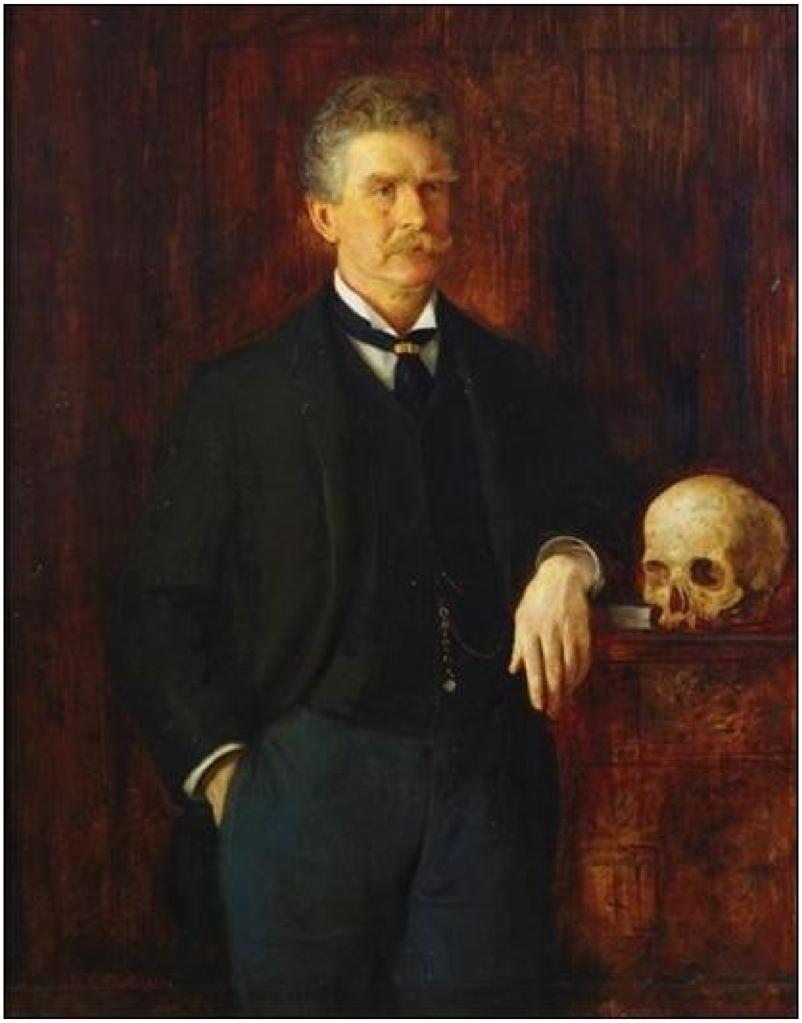


The famous portrait of Bierce painted by John Herbert Evelyn Partington (1843-1899)

COBWEBS FROM AN EMPTY SKULL.

BY

DOD GRILE.

ILLUSTRATED WITH ENGRAVINGS BY DALZIEL BROTHERS.

To my friend,

SHERBURNE B. EATON.

PREFACE.

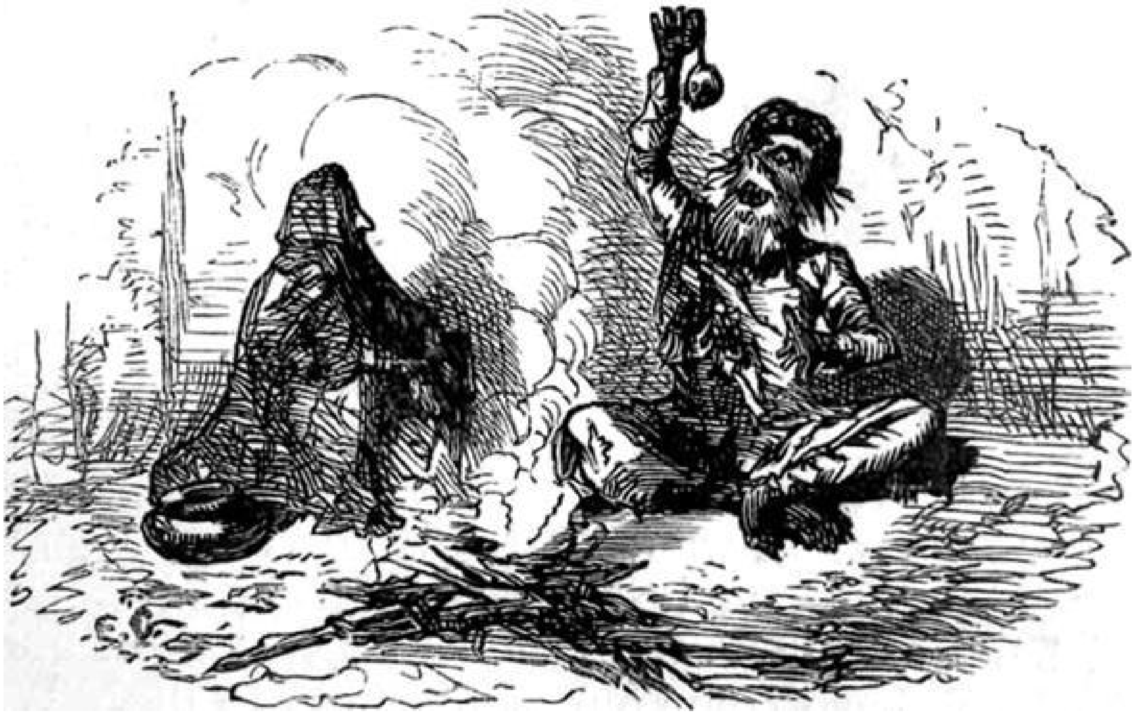
The matter of which this volume is composed appeared originally in the columns of “FUN,” when the wisdom of the Fables and the truth of the Tales tended to wholesomely diminish the levity of that jocund sheet. Their publication in a new form would seem to be a fitting occasion to say something as to their merit.

Homer’s “Iliad,” it will be remembered, was but imperfectly appreciated by Homer’s contemporaries. Milton’s “Paradise Lost” was so lightly regarded when first written, that the author received but twenty-five pounds for it. Ben Jonson was for some time blind to the beauties of Shakespeare, and Shakespeare himself had but small esteem for his own work.

Appearing each week in “FUN,” these Fables and Tales very soon attracted the notice of the Editor, who was frank enough to say, afterward, that when he accepted the manuscript he did not quite perceive the quality of it. The printers, too, into whose hands it came, have since admitted that for some days they felt very little interest in it, and could not even make out what it was all about. When to these evidences I add the confession that at first I did not myself observe anything extraordinary in my work, I think I need say no more: the discerning public will note the parallel, and my modesty be spared the necessity of making an ass of itself.

D.G.

FABLES OF ZAMBRI, THE PARSEE.



I.

A certain Persian nobleman obtained from a cow gipsy a small oyster. Holding him up by the beard, he addressed him thus:

"You must try to forgive me for what I am about to do; and you might as well set about it at once, for you haven't much time. I should never think of swallowing you if it were not so easy; but opportunity is the strongest of all temptations. Besides, I am an orphan, and very hungry."

"Very well," replied the oyster; "it affords me genuine pleasure to comfort the parentless and the starving. I have already done my best for our friend here, of whom you purchased me; but although she has an amiable and accommodating stomach, *we couldn't agree*. For this trifling incompatibility — would you believe it? — she was about to stew me! Saviour, benefactor, proceed."

"I think," said the nobleman, rising and laying down the oyster, "I ought to know something more definite about your antecedents before succouring you. If you couldn't agree with your mistress, you are probably no better than you should be."

People who begin doing something from a selfish motive frequently drop it when they learn that it is a real benevolence.

II.

A rat seeing a cat approaching, and finding no avenue of escape, went boldly up to her, and said:

"Madam, I have just swallowed a dose of powerful bane, and in accordance with instructions upon the label, have come out of my hole to die. Will you kindly direct me to a spot where my corpse will prove peculiarly offensive?"

"Since you are so ill," replied the cat, "I will myself transport you to a spot which I think will suit."

So saying, she struck her teeth through the nape of his neck and trotted away with him. This was more than he had bargained for, and he squeaked shrilly with the pain.

"Ah!" said the cat, "a rat who knows he has but a few minutes to live, never makes a fuss about a little agony. I don't think, my fine fellow, you have taken poison enough to hurt either you or me."

So she made a meal of him.

If this fable does not teach that a rat gets no profit by lying, I should be pleased to know what it does teach.

III.

A frog who had been sitting up all night in neighbourly converse with an echo of elegant leisure, went out in the grey of the morning to obtain a cheap breakfast. Seeing a tadpole approach,

"Halt!" he croaked, "and show cause why I should not eat you."

The tadpole stopped and displayed a fine tail.

"Enough," said the frog: "I mistook you for one of us; and if there is anything I like, it is frog. But no frog has a tail, as a matter of course."

While he was speaking, however, the tail ripened and dropped off, and its owner stood revealed in his edible character.

"Aha!" ejaculated the frog, "so that is your little game! If, instead of adopting a disguise, you had trusted to my mercy, I should have spared you. But I am down upon all manner of deceit."

And he had him down in a moment.

Learn from this that he would have eaten him anyhow.

IV.

An old man carrying, for no obvious reason, a sheaf of sticks, met another donkey whose cargo consisted merely of a bundle of stones.

"Suppose we swop," said the donkey.

"Very good, sir," assented the old man; "lay your load upon my shoulders, and take off my parcel, putting it upon your own back."

The donkey complied, so far as concerned his own encumbrance, but neglected to remove that of the other.

"How clever!" said the merry old gentleman, "I knew you would do that. If you had done any differently there would have been no point to the fable."

And laying down both burdens by the roadside, he trudged away as merry as anything.

V.

An elephant meeting a mouse, reproached him for not taking a proper interest in growth.

"It is all very well," retorted the mouse, "for people who haven't the capacity for anything better. Let them grow if they like; but *I* prefer toasted cheese."

The stupid elephant, not being able to make very much sense of this remark, essayed, after the manner of persons worsted at repartee, to set his foot upon his clever conqueror. In point of fact, he did set his foot upon him, and there wasn't any more mouse.

The lesson imparted by this fable is open, palpable: mice and elephants look at things each after the manner of his kind; and when an elephant decides to occupy the standpoint of a mouse, it is unhealthy for the latter.

VI.

A wolf was slaking his thirst at a stream, when a lamb left the side of his shepherd, came down the creek to the wolf, passed round him with considerable ostentation, and began drinking below.

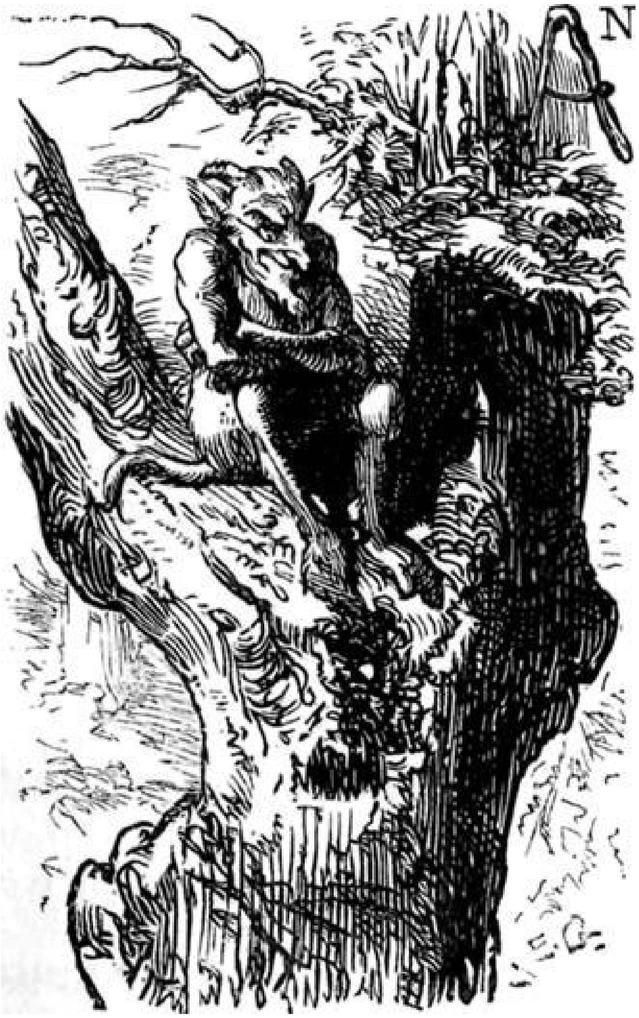
"I beg you to observe," said the lamb, "that water does not commonly run uphill; and my sipping here cannot possibly defile the current where you are, even supposing my nose were no cleaner than yours, which it is. So you have not the flimsiest pretext for slaying me."

"I am not aware, sir," replied the wolf, "that I require a pretext for loving chops; it never occurred to me that one was necessary."

And he dined upon that lambkin with much apparent satisfaction.

This fable ought to convince any one that of two stories very similar one needs not necessarily be a plagiarism.

VII.



An old gentleman sat down, one day, upon an acorn, and finding it a very comfortable seat, went soundly to sleep. The warmth of his body caused the acorn to germinate, and it grew so rapidly, that when the sleeper awoke he found himself sitting in the fork of an oak, sixty feet from the ground.

“Ah!” said he, “I am fond of having an extended view of any landscape which happens to please my fancy; but this one does not seem to possess that merit. I think I will go home.”

It is easier to say go home than to go.

“Well, well!” he resumed, “if I cannot compel circumstances to my will, I can at least adapt my will to circumstances. I decide to remain. ‘Life’ — as a certain eminent philosopher in England wilt say, whenever there shall be an England to say it in—’is the definite combination of heterogeneous changes, both simultaneous and successive, in correspondence with external co-existences and sequences.’ I have, fortunately, a few years of this before me yet; and I suppose I can permit my surroundings to alter me into anything I choose.”

And he did; but what a choice!

I should say that the lesson hereby imparted is one of contentment combined with science.

VIII.

A caterpillar had crawled painfully to the top of a hop-pole, and not finding anything there to interest him, began to think of descending.

"Now," soliloquized he, "if I only had a pair of wings, I should be able to manage it very nicely."

So saying, he turned himself about to go down, but the heat of his previous exertion, and that of the sun, had by this time matured him into a butterfly.

"Just my luck!" he growled, "I never wish for anything without getting it. I did not expect this when I came out this morning, and have nothing prepared. But I suppose I shall have to stand it."

So he spread his pinions and made for the first open flower he saw. But a spider happened to be spending the summer in that vegetable, and it was not long before Mr. Butterfly was wishing himself back atop of that pole, a simple caterpillar.

He had at last the pleasure of being denied a desire.

Hæc fabula docet that it is not a good plan to call at houses without first ascertaining who is at home there.

IX.

It is related of a certain Tartar priest that, being about to sacrifice a pig, he observed tears in the victim's eyes.

"Now, I'd like to know what is the matter with *you*?" he asked.

"Sir," replied the pig, "if your penetration were equal to that of the knife you hold, you would know without inquiring; but I don't mind telling you. I weep because I know I shall be badly roasted."

"Ah," returned the priest, meditatively, having first killed the pig, "we are all pretty much alike: it is the bad roasting that frightens us. Mere death has no terrors."

From this narrative learn that even priests sometimes get hold of only half a truth.

X.

A dog being very much annoyed by bees, ran, quite accidentally, into an empty barrel lying on the ground, and looking out at the bung-hole, addressed his tormenters thus:

"Had you been temperate, stinging me only one at a time, you might have got a good deal of fun out of me. As it is, you have driven me into a secure retreat; for I can snap you up as fast as you come in through the bung-hole. Learn from this the folly of intemperate zeal."

When he had concluded, he awaited a reply. There wasn't any reply; for the bees had never gone near the bung-hole; they went in the same way as he did, and made it very warm for him.

The lesson of this fable is that one cannot stick to his pure reason while quarrelling with bees.

XI.

A fox and a duck having quarrelled about the ownership of a frog, agreed to refer the dispute to a lion. After hearing a great deal of argument, the lion opened his mouth to speak.

"I am very well aware," interrupted the duck, "what your decision is. It is that by our own showing the frog belongs to neither of us, and you will eat him yourself. But please remember that lions do not like frogs."

"To me," exclaimed the fox, "it is perfectly clear that you will give the frog to the duck, the duck to me, and take me yourself. Allow me to state certain objections to—"

"I was about to remark," said the lion, "that while you were disputing, the cause of contention had hopped away. Perhaps you can procure another frog."

To point out the moral of this fable would be to offer a gratuitous insult to the acuteness of the reader.

XII.

An ass meeting a pair of horses, late one evening, said to them:

"It is time all honest horses were in bed. Why are you driving out at this time of day?"

"Ah!" returned they, "if it is so very late, why are you out riding?"

"I never in my life," retorted the ass angrily, "knew a horse to return a direct answer to a civil question."

This tale shows that this ass did not know everything.

[The implication that horses do not answer questions seems to have irritated the worthy fabulist. — TRANSLATOR.]

XIII.

A stone being cast by the plough against a lump of earth, hastened to open the conversation as follows:

"Virtue, which is the opposite of vice, is best fostered by the absence of temptation!"

The lump of earth, being taken somewhat by surprise, was not prepared with an apophthegm, and said nothing.

Since that time it has been customary to call a stupid person a "clod."

XIV.

A river seeing a zephyr carrying off an anchor, asked him, “What are you going to do with it?”

“I give it up,” replied the zephyr, after mature reflection.

“Blow me if *I* would!” continued the river; “you might just as well not have taken it at all.”

“Between you and me,” returned the zephyr, “I only picked it up because it is customary for zephyrs to do such things. But if you don’t mind I will carry it up to your head and drop it in your mouth.”

This fable teaches such a multitude of good things that it would be invidious to mention any.

XV.

A peasant sitting on a pile of stones saw an ostrich approaching, and when it had got within range he began pelting it. It is hardly probable that the bird liked this; but it never moved until a large number of boulders had been discharged; then it fell to and ate them.

“It was very good of you, sir,” then said the fowl; “pray tell me to what virtue I am indebted for this excellent meal.”

“To piety,” replied the peasant, who, believing that anything able to devour stones must be a god, was stricken with fear. “I beg you won’t think these were merely cold victuals from my table; I had just gathered them fresh, and was intending to have them dressed for my dinner; but I am always hospitable to the deities, and now I suppose I shall have to go without.”

“On the contrary, my pious youth,” returned the ostrich, “you shall go within.”

And the man followed the stones.

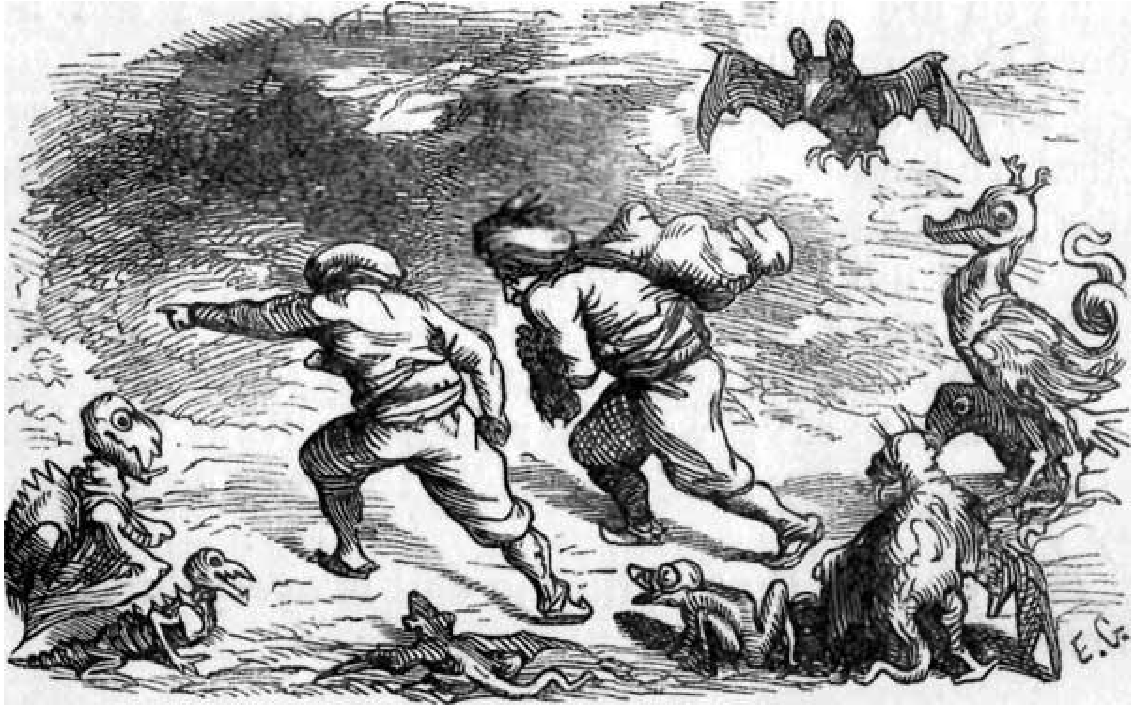
The falsehoods of the wicked never amount to much.

XVI.

Two thieves went into a farmer’s granary and stole a sack of kitchen vegetables; and, one of them slinging it across his shoulders, they began to run away. In a moment all the domestic animals and barn-yard fowls about the place were at their heels, in high clamour, which threatened to bring the farmer down upon them with his dogs.

“You have no idea how the weight of this sack assists me in escaping, by increasing my momentum,” said the one who carried the plunder; “suppose *you* take it.”

“Ah!” returned the other, who had been zealously pointing out the way to safety, and keeping foremost therein, “it is interesting to find how a common danger makes people confiding. You have a thousand times said I could not be trusted with valuable booty. It is an humiliating confession, but I am myself convinced that if I should assume that sack, and the impetus it confers, you could not depend upon your dividend."



"A common danger," was the reply, "seems to stimulate conviction, as well as confidence."

"Very likely," assented the other, drily; "I am quite too busy to enter into these subtleties. You will find the subject very ably treated in the Zend-Avesta."

But the bastinado taught them more in a minute than they would have gleaned from that excellent work in a fortnight.

If they could only have had the privilege of reading this fable, it would have taught them more than either.

XVII.

While a man was trying with all his might to cross a fence, a bull ran to his assistance, and taking him upon his horns, tossed him over. Seeing the man walking away without making any remark, the bull said:

"You are quite welcome, I am sure. I did no more than my duty."

"I take a different view of it, very naturally," replied the man, "and you may keep your polite acknowledgments of my gratitude until you receive it. I did not require your services."

"You don't mean to say," answered the bull, "that you did not wish to cross that fence!"

"I mean to say," was the rejoinder, "that I wished to cross it by my method, solely to avoid crossing it by yours."

Fabula docet that while the end is everything, the means is something.

XVIII.

An hippopotamus meeting an open alligator, said to him:

"My forked friend, you may as well collapse. You are not sufficiently comprehensive to embrace me. I am myself no tyro at smiling, when in the humour."

"I really had no expectation of taking you in," replied the other. "I have a habit of extending my hospitality impartially to all, and about seven feet wide."

"You remind me," said the hippopotamus, "of a certain zebra who was not vicious at all; he merely kicked the breath out of everything that passed behind him, but did not induce things to pass behind him."

"It is quite immaterial what I remind you of," was the reply.

The lesson conveyed by this fable is a very beautiful one.

XIX.

A man was plucking a living goose, when his victim addressed him thus:

"Suppose *you* were a goose; do you think you would relish this sort of thing?"

"Well, suppose I were," answered the man; "do you think *you* would like to pluck me?"

"Indeed I would!" was the emphatic, natural, but injudicious reply.

"Just so," concluded her tormentor; "that's the way *I* feel about the matter."

XX.

A traveller perishing of thirst in a desert, debated with his camel whether they should continue their journey, or turn back to an oasis they had passed some days before. The traveller favoured the latter plan.

"I am decidedly opposed to any such waste of time," said the animal; "I don't care for oases myself."

"I should not care for them either," retorted the man, with some temper, "if, like you, I carried a number of assorted water-tanks inside. But as you will not submit to go back, and I shall not consent to go forward, we can only remain where we are."

"But," objected the camel, "that will be certain death to you!"

"Not quite," was the quiet answer, "it involves only the loss of my camel."

So saying, he assassinated the beast, and appropriated his liquid store.

A compromise is not always a settlement satisfactory to both parties.

XXI.

A sheep, making a long journey, found the heat of his fleece very uncomfortable, and seeing a flock of other sheep in a fold, evidently awaiting for some one, leaped over and joined them, in the hope of being shorn. Perceiving the shepherd approaching, and the other sheep huddling into a remote corner of the fold, he shouldered his way forward, and going up to the shepherd, said:

“Did you ever see such a lot of fools? It’s lucky I came along to set them an example of docility. Seeing me operated upon, they ‘ll be glad to offer themselves.”

“Perhaps so,” replied the shepherd, laying hold of the animal’s horns; “but I never kill more than one sheep at a time. Mutton won’t keep in hot weather.”

The chops tasted excellently well with tomato sauce.

The moral of this fable isn’t what you think it is. It is this: The chops of another man’s mutton are *always* nice eating.

XXII.

Two travellers between Teheran and Bagdad met half-way up the vertical face of a rock, on a path only a cubit in width. As both were in a hurry, and etiquette would allow neither to set his foot upon the other even if dignity had permitted prostration, they maintained for some time a stationary condition. After some reflection, each decided to jump round the other; but as etiquette did not warrant conversation with a stranger, neither made known his intention. The consequence was they met, with considerable emphasis, about four feet from the edge of the path, and went through a flight of soaring eagles, a mile out of their way![A]

XXIII.

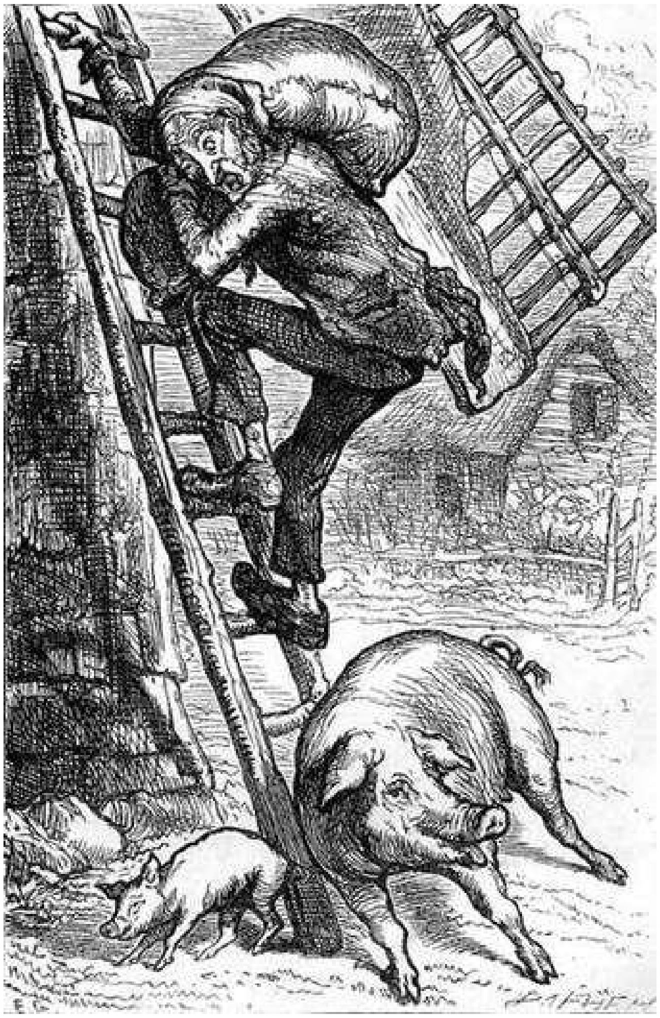
A stone which had lain for centuries in a hidden place complained to Allah that remaining so long in one position was productive of cramps.

“If thou wouldst be pleased,” it said, “to let me take a little exercise now and then, my health would be the better for it.”

So it was granted permission to make a short excursion, and at once began rolling out into the open desert. It had not proceeded far before an ostrich, who was pensively eating a keg of nails, left his repast, dashed at the stone, and gobbled it up.

This narration teaches the folly of contentment: if the ostrich had been content with his nails he would never have eaten the stone.

XXIV.



A man carrying a sack of corn up a high ladder propped against a wall, had nearly reached the top, when a powerful hog passing that way leant against the bottom to scratch its hide.

“I wish,” said the man, speaking down the ladder, “you would make that operation as brief as possible; and when I come down I will reward you by rearing a fresh ladder especially for you.”

“This one is quite good enough for a hog,” was the reply; “but I am curious to know if you will keep your promise, so I’ll just amuse myself until you come down.”

And taking the bottom rung in his mouth, he moved off, away from the wall. A moment later he had all the loose corn he could garner, but he never got that other ladder.

MORAL. — An ace and four kings is as good a hand as one can hold in draw-poker.

XXV.

A young cock and a hen were speaking of the size of eggs. Said the cock:

“I once laid an egg—”

“Oh, you did!” interrupted the hen, with a derisive cackle. “Pray how did you manage it?”

The cock felt injured in his self-esteem, and, turning his back upon the hen, addressed himself to a brood of young chickens.

“I once laid an egg—”

The chickens chirped incredulously, and passed on. The insulted bird reddened in the wattles with indignation, and strutting up to the patriarch of the entire barn-yard, repeated his assertion. The patriarch nodded gravely, as if the feat were an every-day affair, and the other continued:

“I once laid an egg alongside a water-melon, and compared the two. The vegetable was considerably the larger.”

This fable is intended to show the absurdity of hearing all a man has to say.

XXVI.

Seeing himself getting beyond his depth, a bathing naturalist called lustily for succour.

“Anything *I* can do for you?” inquired the engaging octopus.

“Happy to serve you, I am sure,” said the accommodating leech.

“Command *me*,” added the earnest crab.

“Gentlemen of the briny deep,” exclaimed the gasping *savant*, “I am compelled to decline your friendly offices, but I tender you my scientific gratitude; and, as a return favour, I beg, with this my last breath, that you will accept the freedom of my aquarium, and make it your home.”

This tale proves that scientific gratitude is quite as bad as the natural sort.

XXVII.

Two whales seizing a pike, attempted in turn to swallow him, but without success. They finally determined to try him jointly, each taking hold of an end, and both shutting their eyes for a grand effort, when a shark darted silently between them, biting away the whole body of their prey. Opening their eyes, they gazed upon one another with much satisfaction.

“I had no idea he would go down so easily,” said the one.

“Nor I,” returned the other; “but how very tasteless a pike is.”

The insipidity we observe in most of our acquaintances is largely due to our imperfect knowledge of them.

XXVIII.

A wolf went into the cottage of a peasant while the family was absent in the fields, and falling foul of some beef, was quietly enjoying it, when he was observed by a domestic rat, who went directly to her master, informing him of what she had seen.

“I would myself have dispatched the robber,” she added, “but feared you might wish to take him alive.”

So the man secured a powerful club and went to the door of the house, while the rat looked in at the window. After taking a survey of the situation, the man said:

“I don’t think I care to take this fellow alive. Judging from his present performance, I should say his keeping would entail no mean expense. You may go in and slay him if you like; I have quite changed my mind.”

“If you really intended taking him prisoner,” replied the rat, “the object of that bludgeon is to me a matter of mere conjecture. However, it is easy enough to see you have changed your mind; and it may be barely worth mentioning that I have changed mine.”

“The interest you both take in me,” said the wolf, without looking up, “touches me deeply. As you have considerately abstained from bothering me with the question of how I am to be disposed of, I will not embarrass your counsels by obtruding a preference. Whatever may be your decision, you may count on my acquiescence; my countenance alone ought to convince you of the meek docility of my character. I never lose my temper, and I never swear; but, by the stomach of the Prophet! if either one of you domestic animals is in sight when I have finished the conquest of these ribs, the question of *my* fate may be postponed for future debate, without detriment to any important interest."

This fable teaches that while you are considering the abatement of a nuisance, it is important to know which nuisance is the more likely to be abated.

XXIX.

A snake tried to shed his skin by pulling it off over his head, but, being unable to do so, was advised by a woodman to slip out of it in the usual way.

"But," said the serpent, "this is the way *you* do it!"

"True," exclaimed the woodman, holding out the hem of his tunic; "but you will observe that my skin is brief and open. If you desire one like that, I think I can assist you."

So saying, he chopped off about a cubit of the snake's tail.

XXX.

An oyster who had got a large pebble between the valves of his shell, and was unable to get it out, was lamenting his sad fate, when — the tide being out — a monkey ran to him, and began making an examination.

"You appear," said the monkey, "to have got something else in here, too. I think I'd better remove that first."

With this he inserted his paw, and scooped out the animal's essential part.

"Now," said he, eating the portion he had removed, "I think you will be able to manage the pebble yourself."

To apprehend the lesson of this fable one must have some experience of the law.

XXXI.

An old fox and her two cubs were pursued by dogs, when one of the cubs got a thorn in his foot, and could go no farther. Setting the other to watch for the pursuers, the mother proceeded, with much tender solicitude, to extract the thorn. Just as she had done so, the sentinel gave the alarm.

"How near are they?" asked the mother.

"Close by, in the next field," was the answer.

"The deuce they are!" was the hasty rejoinder. "However, I presume they will be content with a single fox."

And shoving the thorn earnestly back into the wounded foot, this excellent parent took to her heels.

This fable proves that humanity does not happen to enjoy a monopoly of paternal affection.

XXXII.

A man crossing the great river of Egypt, heard a voice, which seemed to come from beneath his boat, requesting him to stop. Thinking it must proceed from some river-deity, he laid down his paddle and said:

“Whoever you are that ask me to stop, I beg you will let me go on. I have been asked by a friend to dine with him, and I am late.”

“Should your friend pass this way,” said the voice, “I will show him the cause of your detention. Meantime you must come to dinner with *me*. “

“Willingly,” replied the man, devoutly, very well pleased with so extraordinary an honour; “pray show me the way.”

“In here,” said the crocodile, elevating his distending jaws above the water and beckoning with his tongue—”this way, please.”

This fable shows that being asked to dinner is not always the same thing as being asked to dine.

XXXIII.

An old monkey, designing to teach his sons the advantage of unity, brought them a number of sticks, and desired them to see how easily they might be broken, one at a time. So each young monkey took a stick and broke it.

“Now,” said the father, “I will teach you a lesson.”

And he began to gather the sticks into a bundle. But the young monkeys, thinking he was about to beat them, set upon him, all together, and disabled him.

“There!” said the aged sufferer, “behold the advantage of unity! If you had assailed me one at a time, I would have killed every mother’s son of you!”

Moral lessons are like the merchant’s goods: they are conveyed in various ways.

XXXIV.

A wild horse meeting a domestic one, taunted him with his condition of servitude. The tamed animal claimed that he was as free as the wind.

“If that is so,” said the other, “pray tell me the office of that bit in your mouth.”

“That,” was the answer, “is iron, one of the best tonics in the *materia medica*.”

“But what,” said the other, “is the meaning of the rein attached to it?”

“Keeps it from falling out of my mouth when I am too indolent to hold it,” was the reply.

“How about the saddle?”

“Fool!” was the angry retort; “its purpose is to spare me fatigue: when I am tired, I get on and ride.”

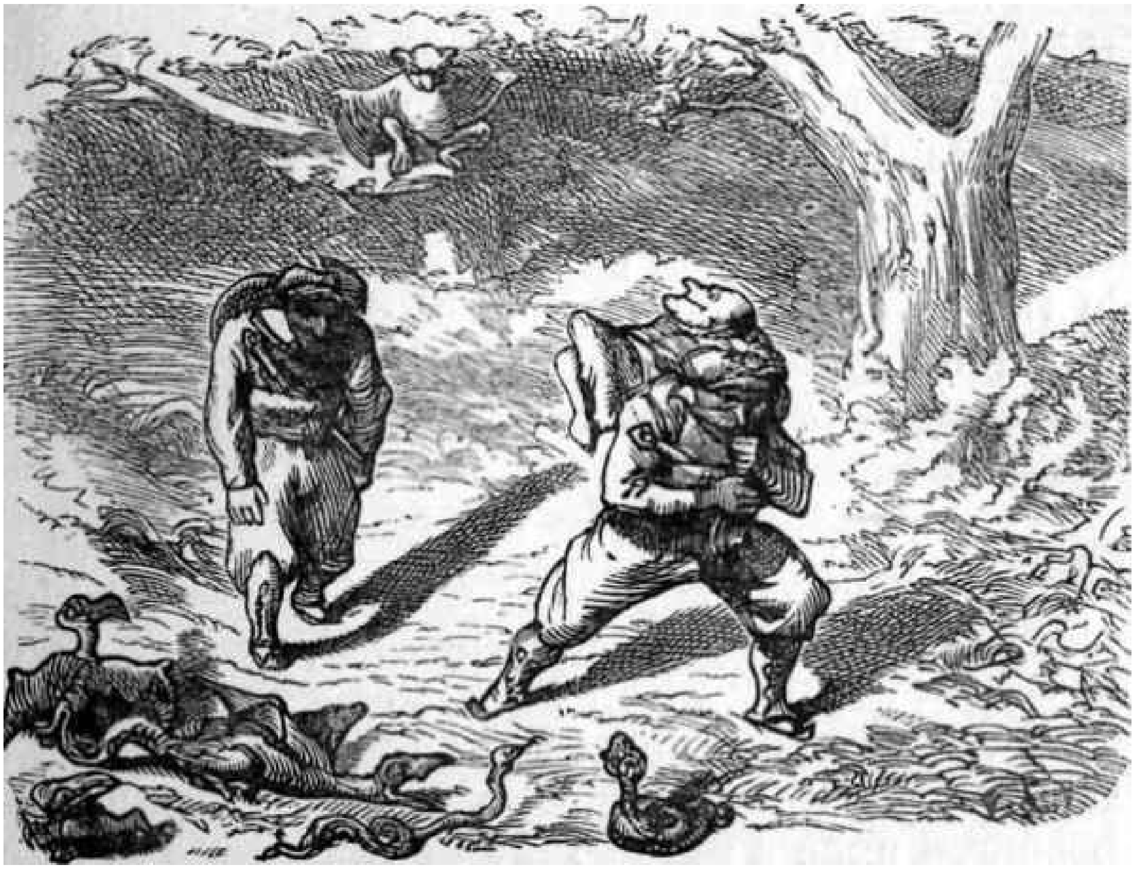
XXXV.

Some doves went to a hawk, and asked him to protect them from a kite.

“That I will,” was the cheerful reply; “and when I am admitted into the dovecote, I shall kill more of you in a day than the kite did in a century. But of course you know this; you expect to be treated in the regular way.”

So he entered the dovecote, and began preparations for a general slaughter. But the doves all set upon him and made exceedingly short work of him. With his last breath he asked them why, being so formidable, they had not killed the kite. They replied that they had never seen any kite.

XXXVI.



A defeated warrior snatched up his aged father, and, slinging him across his shoulders, plunged into the wilderness, followed by the weary remnant of his beaten army. The old gentleman liked it.

“See!” said he, triumphantly, to the flying legion; “did you ever hear of so dutiful and accommodating a son? And he’s as easy under the saddle as an old family horse!”

“I rather think,” replied the broken and disordered battalion, with a grin, “that Mr. Æneas once did something of this kind. But *his* father had thoughtfully taken an armful of lares and penates; and the accommodating nature of *his* son was, therefore, more conspicuous. If I might venture to suggest that you take up my shield and scimitar—”

“Thank you,” said the aged party, “I could not think of disarming the military: but if you would just hand me up one of the heaviest of those dead branches, I think the merits of my son would be rendered sufficiently apparent.”

The routed column passed him up the one shown in the immediate foreground of our sketch, and it was quite enough for both steed and rider.

Fabula ostendit that History repeats itself, with variations.

XXXVII.

A pig who had engaged a cray-fish to pilot him along the beach in search of mussels, was surprised to see his guide start off backwards.

“Your excessive politeness quite overcomes me,” said the porker, “but don’t you think it rather ill bestowed upon a pig? Pray don’t hesitate to turn your back upon me.”

“Sir,” replied the cray-fish, “permit me to continue as I am. We now stand to each other in the proper relation of *employé* to employer. The former is excessively obsequious, and the latter is, in the eyes of the former, a hog.”

XXXVIII.

The king of tortoises desiring to pay a visit of ceremony to a neighbouring monarch, feared that in his absence his idle subjects might get up a revolution, and that whoever might be left at the head of the State would usurp the throne. So calling his subjects about him, he addressed them thus:

“I am about to leave our beloved country for a long period, and desire to leave the sceptre in the hands of him who is most truly a tortoise. I decree that you shall set out from yonder distant tree, and pass round it. Whoever shall get back last shall be appointed Regent.”

So the population set out for the goal, and the king for his destination. Before the race was decided, his Majesty had made the journey and returned. But he found the throne occupied by a subject, who at once secured by violence what he had won by guile.

Certain usurpers are too conscientious to retain kingly power unless the rightful monarch be dead; and these are the most dangerous sort.

XXXIX.

A spaniel at the point of death requested a mastiff friend to eat him.

“It would soothe my last moments,” said he, “to know that when I am no longer of any importance to myself I may still be useful to you."

"Much obliged, I am sure," replied his friend; "I think you mean well, but you should know that my appetite is not so depraved as to relish dog."

Perhaps it is for a similar reason we abstain from cannibalism.

XL.

A cloud was passing across the face of the sun, when the latter expostulated with him.

"Why," said the sun, "when you have so much space to float in, should you be casting your cold shadow upon me?"

After a moment's reflection, the cloud made answer thus:

"I certainly had no intention of giving offence by my presence, and as for my shadow, don't you think you have made a trifling mistake? — not a gigantic or absurd mistake, but merely one that would disgrace an idiot."

At this the great luminary was furious, and fell so hotly upon him that in a few minutes there was nothing of him left.

It is very foolish to bandy words with a cloud if you happen to be the sun.

XLI.

A rabbit travelling leisurely along the highway was seen, at some distance, by a duck, who had just come out of the water.

"Well, I declare!" said she, "if I could not walk without limping in that ridiculous way, I'd stay at home. Why, he's a spectacle!"

"Did you ever see such an ungainly beast as that duck!" said the rabbit to himself. "If I waddled like that I should go out only at night."

MORAL, BY A KANGAROO. — People who are ungraceful of gait are always intolerant of mind.

XLII.

A fox who dwelt in the upper chamber of an abandoned watch-tower, where he practised all manner of magic, had by means of his art subjected all other animals to his will. One day he assembled a great multitude of them below his window, and commanded that each should appear in his presence, and all who could not teach him some important truth should be thrown off the walls and dashed to pieces. Upon hearing this they were all stricken with grief, and began to lament their hard fate most piteously.

"How," said they, "shall we, who are unskilled in magic, unread in philosophy, and untaught in the secrets of the stars — who have neither wit, eloquence, nor song — how shall we essay to teach wisdom to the wise?"

Nevertheless, they were compelled to make the attempt. After many had failed and been dispatched, another fox arrived on the ground, and learning the condition of affairs, scampered slyly up the steps, and whispered something in the ear of the cat, who was about entering the tower. So the latter stuck her head in at the door, and shrieked:

"Pullets with a southern exposure ripen earliest, and have yellow legs."

At this the magician was so delighted that he dissolved the spell and let them all go free.

XLIII.

One evening a jackass, passing between a village and a hill, looked over the latter and saw the faint light of the rising moon.

"Ho-ho, Master Redface!" said he, "so you are climbing up the other side to point out my long ears to the villagers, are you? I'll just meet you at the top, and set my heels into your insolent old lantern."

So he scrambled painfully up to the crest, and stood outlined against the broad disc of the unconscious luminary, more conspicuously a jackass than ever before.

XLIV.

A bear wishing to rob a beehive, laid himself down in front of it, and overturned it with his paw.

"Now," said he, "I will lie perfectly still and let the bees sting me until they are exhausted and powerless; their honey may then be obtained without opposition."

And it was so obtained, but by a fresh bear, the other being dead.

This narrative exhibits one aspect of the "Fabian policy."

XLV.

A cat seeing a mouse with a piece of cheese, said:

"I would not eat that, if I were you, for I think it is poisoned. However, if you will allow me to examine it, I will tell you certainly whether it is or not."

While the mouse was thinking what it was best to do, the cat had fully made up her mind, and was kind enough to examine both the cheese and the mouse in a manner highly satisfactory to herself, but the mouse has never returned to give *his* opinion.

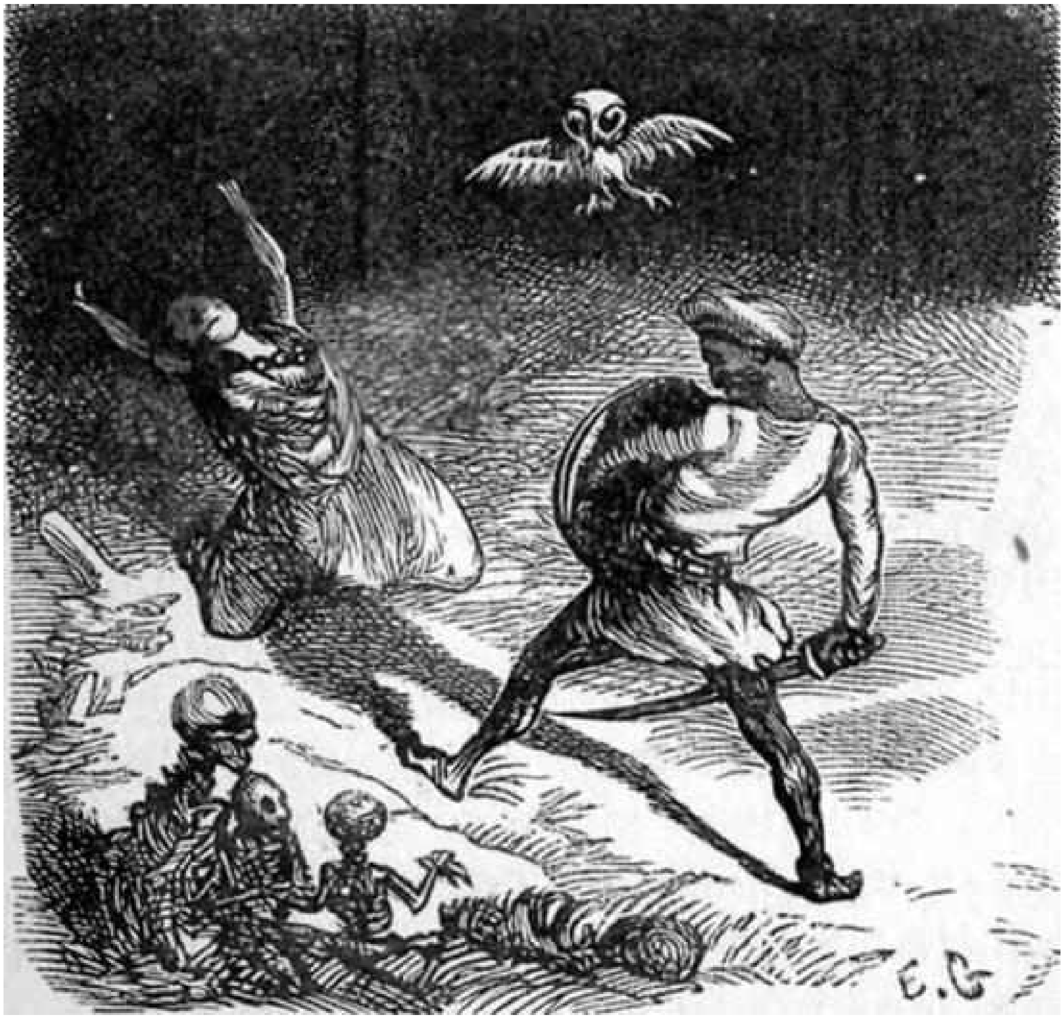
XLVI.

An improvident man, who had quarrelled with his wife concerning household expenses, took her and the children out on the lawn, intending to make an example of her. Putting himself in an attitude of aggression, and turning to his offspring, he said:

"You will observe, my darlings, that domestic offences are always punished with a loss of blood. Make a note of this and be wise."

He had no sooner spoken than a starving mosquito settled upon his nose, and began to assist in enforcing the lesson.

“My officious friend,” said the man, “when I require illustrations from the fowls of the air, you may command my patronage. The deep interest you take in my affairs is, at present, a trifle annoying.”



“I do not find it so,” the mosquito would have replied had he been at leisure, “and am convinced that our respective points of view are so widely dissimilar as not to afford the faintest hope of reconciling our opinions upon collateral points. Let us be thankful that upon the main question of bloodletting we perfectly agree.”

When the bird had concluded, the man’s convictions were quite unaltered, but he was too weak to resume the discussion; and, although blood is thicker than water, the children were constrained to confess that the stranger had the best of it.

This fable teaches.

XLVII.

"I hate snakes who bestow their caresses with interested partiality or fastidious discrimination," boasted a boa constrictor. "*My* affection is unbounded; it embraces all animated nature. I am the universal shepherd; I gather all manner of living things into my folds. Entertainment here for man and beast!"

"I should be glad of one of your caresses," said a porcupine, meekly; "it has been some time since I got a loving embrace."

So saying, he nestled snugly and confidingly against the large-hearted serpent — who fled.

A comprehensive philanthropy may be devoid of prejudices, but it has its preferences all the same.

XLVIII.

During a distressing famine in China a starving man met a fat pig, who, seeing no chance of escape, walked confidently up to the superior animal, and said:

"Awful famine! isn't it?"

"Quite dreadful!" replied the man, eyeing him with an evident purpose: "almost impossible to obtain meat."

"Plenty of meat, such as it is, but no corn. Do you know, I have been compelled to eat so many of your people, I don't believe there is an ounce of pork in my composition."

"And I so many that I have lost all taste for pork."

"Terrible thing this cannibalism!"

"Depends upon which character you try it in; it is terrible to be eaten."

"You are very brutal!"

"You are very fat."

"You look as if you would take my life."

"You look as if you would sustain mine."

"Let us 'pull sticks,'" said the now desperate animal, "to see which of us shall die."

"Good!" assented the man: "I'll pull this one."

So saying, he drew a hedge-stake from the ground, and stained it with the brain of that unhappy porker.

MORAL. — An empty stomach has no ears.

XLIX.

A snake, a mile long, having drawn himself over a roc's egg, complained that in its present form he could get no benefit from it, and modestly desired the roc to aid him in some way.

"Certainly," assented the bird, "I think we can arrange it."

Saying which, she snatched up one of the smaller Persian provinces, and poising herself a few leagues above the suffering reptile, let it drop upon him to smash the egg.

This fable exhibits the folly of asking for aid without specifying the kind and amount of aid you require.

L.

An ox meeting a man on the highway, asked him for a pinch of snuff, whereupon the man fled back along the road in extreme terror.

"*Don't* be alarmed," said a horse whom he met; "the ox won't bite you."

The man gave one stare and dashed across the meadows.

"Well," said a sheep, "I wouldn't be afraid of a horse; *he* won't kick."

The man shot like a comet into the forest.

"Look where you're going there, or I'll thrash the life out of you!" screamed a bird into whose nest he had blundered.

Frantic with fear, the man leapt into the sea.

"By Jove! how you frightened me," said a small shark.

The man was dejected, and felt a sense of injury. He seated himself moodily on the bottom, braced up his chin with his knees, and thought for an hour. Then he beckoned to the fish who had made the last remark.

"See here, I say," said he, "I wish you would just tell me what in thunder this all means."

"Ever read any fables?" asked the shark.

"No — yes — well, the catechism, the marriage service, and—"

"Oh, bother!" said the fish, playfully, smiling clean back to the pectoral fins; "get out of this and bolt your Æsop!"

The man did get out and bolted.

[This fable teaches that its worthy author was drunk as a loon. — TRANSLATOR.]

LI.

A lion pursued by some villagers was asked by a fox why he did not escape on horseback.

"There is a fine strong steed just beyond this rock," said the fox. "All you have to do is to get on his back and stay there."

So the lion went up to the charger and asked him to give him a lift.

"Certainly," said the horse, "with great pleasure."

And setting one of his heels into the animal's stomach, he lifted him. about seven feet from the ground.

"Confound you!" roared the beast as he fell back.

"So did you," quietly remarked the steed.

LII.

A Mahout who had dismounted from his elephant, and was quietly standing on his head in the middle of the highway, was asked by the animal why he did not revert and move on.

"You are making a spectacle of yourself," said the beast.

"If I choose to stand upside down," replied the man, "I am very well aware that I incur the displeasure of those who adhere with slavish tenacity to the prejudices and traditions of society; but it seems to me that rebuke would come with a more consistent grace from one who does not wear a tail upon his nose."

This fable teaches that four straight lines may enclose a circle, but there will be corners to let.

LIII.

A dog meeting a strange cat, took her by the top of the back, and shook her for a considerable period with some earnestness. Then depositing her in a ditch, he remarked with gravity:

"There, my feline friend! I think that will teach you a wholesome lesson; and as punishment is intended to be reformatory, you ought to be grateful to me for deigning to administer it."

"I don't think of questioning your right to worry me," said the cat, getting her breath, "but I should like to know where you got your licence to preach at me. Also, if not inconsistent with the dignity of the court, I should wish to be informed of the nature of my offence; in order that I may the more clearly apprehend the character of the lesson imparted by its punishment."

"Since you are so curious," replied the dog, "I worry you because you are too feeble to worry me."

"In other words," rejoined the cat, getting herself together as well as she could, "you bite me for that to which you owe your existence."

The reply of the dog was lost in the illimitable field of ether, whither he was just then projected by the kick of a passing horse. The moral of this fable cannot be given until he shall get down, and close the conversation with the regular apophthegm.

LIV.

People who wear tight hats will do well to lay this fable well to heart, and ponder upon the deep significance of its moral:

In passing over a river, upon a high bridge, a cow discovered a broad loose plank in the flooring, sustained in place by a beam beneath the centre.

"Now," said she, "I will stand at this end of the trap, and when yonder sheep steps upon the opposite extreme there will be an upward tendency in wool."

So when the meditative mutton advanced unwarily upon the treacherous device, the cow sprang bodily upon the other end, and there was a fall in beef.

LV.

Two snakes were debating about the proper method of attacking prey.

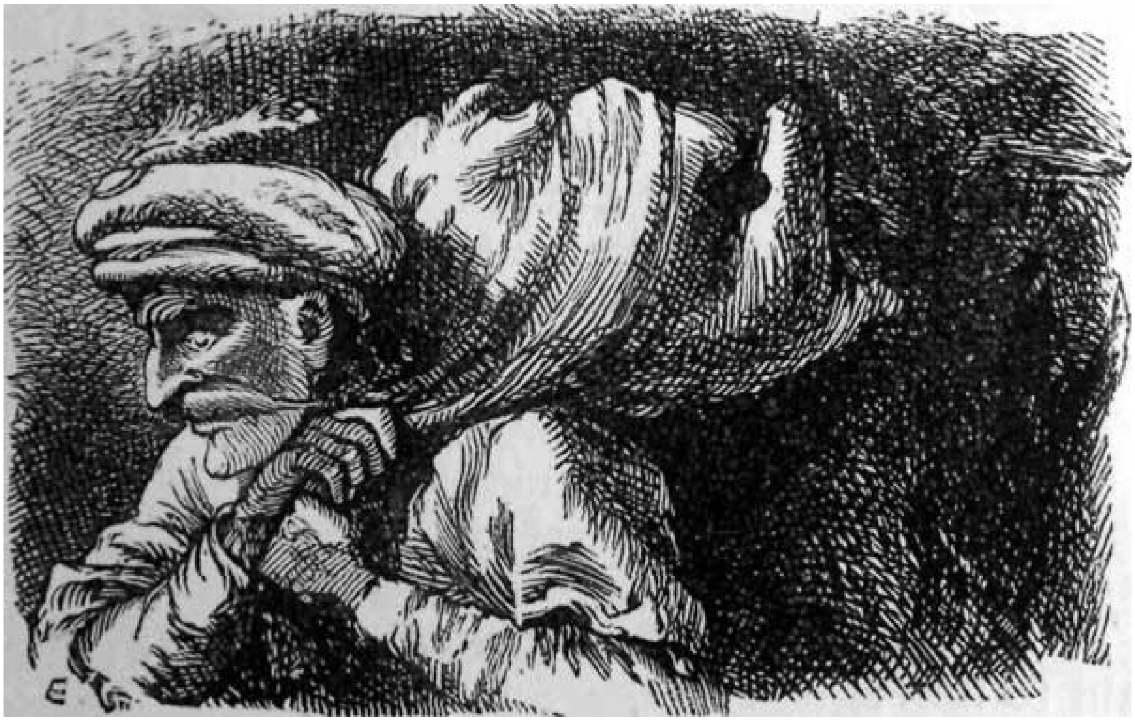
"The best way," said one, "is to slide cautiously up, endwise, and seize it thus" — illustrating his method by laying hold of the other's tail.

"Not at all," was the reply; "a better plan is to approach by a circular side-sweep, thus" — turning upon his opponent and taking in *his* tail.

Although there was no disagreement as to the manner of disposing of what was once seized, each began to practise his system upon the other, and continued until both were swallowed.

The work begun by contention is frequently completed by habit.

LVI.



A man staggering wearily through the streets of Persepolis, under a heavy burden, said to himself:

"I wish I knew what this thing is I have on my back; then I could make some sort of conjecture as to what I design doing with it."

"Suppose," said the burden, "I were a man in a sack; what disposition would you make of me?"

"The regular thing," replied the man, "would be to take you over to

Constantinople, and pitch you into the Bosphorus; but I should probably content myself with laying you down and jumping on you, as being more agreeable to my feelings, and quite as efficacious."

"But suppose," continued the burden, "I were a shoulder of beef — which I quite as much resemble — belonging to some poor family?"

"In that case," replied the man, promptly, "I should carry you to my larder, my good fellow."

"But if I were a sack of gold, do you think you would find me very onerous?" said the burden.

"A great deal would depend," was the answer, "upon whom you happened to belong to; but I may say, generally, that gold upon the shoulders is wonderfully light, considering the weight of it."

"Behold," said the burden, "the folly of mankind: they cannot perceive that the *quality* of the burdens of life is a matter of no importance. The question of pounds and ounces is the only consideration of any real weight."

LVII.

A ghost meeting a genie, one wintry night, said to him:

"Extremely harassing weather, friend. Wish I had some teeth to chatter!"

"You do not need them," said the other; "you can always chatter those of other people, by merely showing yourself. For my part, I should be content with some light employment: would erect a cheap palace, transport a light-weight princess, threaten a small cripple — or jobs of that kind. What are the prospects of the fool crop?"

"For the next few thousand years, very good. There is a sort of thing called Literature coming in shortly, and it will make our fortune. But it will be very bad for History. Curse this phantom apparel! The more I gather it about me the colder I get."

"When Literature has made our fortune," sneered the genie, "I presume you will purchase material clothing."

"And you," retorted the ghost, "will be able to advertise for permanent employment at a fixed salary."

This fable shows the difference between the super natural and the natural "super": the one appears in the narrative, the other does not.

LVIII.

"Permit me to help you on in the world, sir," said a boy to a travelling tortoise, placing a glowing coal upon the animal's back.

"Thank you," replied the unconscious beast; "I alone am responsible for the time of my arrival, and I alone will determine the degree of celerity required. The gait I am going will enable me to keep all my present appointments."

A genial warmth began about this time to pervade his upper crust, and a moment after he was dashing away at a pace comparatively tremendous.

"How about those engagements?" sneered the grinning urchin.

"I've recollected another one," was the hasty reply.

LIX.

Having fastened his gaze upon a sparrow, a rattlesnake sprung open his spanning jaws, and invited her to enter.

"I should be most happy," said the bird, not daring to betray her helpless condition, but anxious by any subterfuge to get the serpent to remove his fascinating regard, "but I am lost in contemplation of yonder green sunset, from which I am unable to look away for more than a minute. I shall turn to it presently."

"Do, by all means," said the serpent, with a touch of irony in his voice. "There is nothing so improving as a good, square, green sunset."

"Did you happen to observe that man standing behind you with a club?" continued the sparrow. "Handsome fellow! Fifteen cubits high, with seven heads, and very singularly attired; quite a spectacle in his way."

"I don't seem to care much for men," said the snake. "Every way inferior to serpents — except in malice."

"But he is accompanied by a *really interesting* child," persisted the bird, desperately.

The rattlesnake reflected deeply. He soliloquized as follows:

"There is a mere chance — say about one chance to ten thousand million — that this songster is speaking the truth. One chance in ten thousand million of seeing a really interesting child is worth the sacrifice demanded; I'll make it."

So saying, he removed his glittering eyes from the bird (who immediately took wing) and looked behind him. It is needless to say there was no really interesting child there — nor anywhere else.

MORAL. — Mendacity (so called from the inventors) is a very poor sort of dacity; but it will serve your purpose if you draw it sufficiently strong.

LX.

A man who was very much annoyed by the incursions of a lean ass belonging to his neighbour, resolved to compass the destruction of the invader.

"Now," said he, "if this animal shall choose to starve himself to death in the midst of plenty, the law will not hold *me* guilty of his blood. I have read of a trick which I think will 'fix' him."

So he took two bales of his best hay, and placed them in a distant field, about forty cubits apart. By means of a little salt he then enticed the ass in, and coaxed him between the bundles.

"There, fiend!" said he, with a diabolic grin, as he walked away delighted with the success of his stratagem, "now hesitate which bundle of hay to attack first, until you starve — monster!"

Some weeks afterwards he returned with a wagon to convey back the bundles of hay. There wasn't any hay, but the wagon was useful for returning to his owner that unfortunate ass — who was too fat to walk.

This ought to show any one the folly of relying upon the teaching of obscure and inferior authors. [B]

LXI.

One day the king of the wrens held his court for the trial of a bear, who was at large upon his own recognizance. Being summoned to appear, the animal came with great humility into the royal presence.

"What have you to say, sir," demanded the king, "in defence of your inexcusable conduct in pillaging the nests of our loyal subjects wherever you can find them?"

"May it please your Majesty," replied the prisoner, with a reverential gesture, repeated at intervals, and each time at a less distance from the royal person, "I will not wound your Majesty's sensibilities by pleading a love of eggs; I will humbly confess my course of crime, warn your Majesty of its probable continuance, and beg your Majesty's gracious permission to inquire — What is your Majesty going to do about it?"

The king and his ministers were very much struck with this respectful speech, with the ingenuity of the final inquiry, and with the bear's paw. It was the paw, however, which made the most lasting impression.

Always give ear to the flattery of your powerful inferiors: it will cheer you in your decline.

LXII.

A philosopher looking up from the pages of the Zend-Avesta, upon which he had been centring his soul, beheld a pig violently assailing a cauldron of cold slops.

"Heaven bless us!" said the sage; "for unalloyed delight give me a good honest article of Sensuality. So soon as my 'Essay upon the Correlation of Mind-forces' shall have brought me fame and fortune, I hope to abjure the higher faculties, devoting the remainder of my life to the cultivation of the propensities."

"Allah be praised!" soliloquized the pig, "there is nothing so godlike as Intellect, and nothing so ecstatic as intellectual pursuits. I must hasten to perform this gross material function, that I may retire to my wallow and resign my soul to philosophical meditation."

This tale has one moral if you are a philosopher, and another if you are a pig.

LXIII.

"Awful dark — isn't it?" said an owl, one night, looking in upon the roosting hens in a poultry-house; "don't see how I am to find my way back to my hollow tree."

"There is no necessity," replied the cock; "you can roost there, alongside the door, and go home in the morning."

"Thanks!" said the owl, chuckling at the fool's simplicity; and, having plenty of time to indulge his facetious humour, he gravely installed himself upon the perch indicated, and shutting his eyes, counterfeited a profound slumber. He was aroused soon after by a sharp constriction of the throat.

"I omitted to tell you," said the cock, "that the seat you happen by the merest chance to occupy is a contested one, and has been fruitful of hens to this vexatious weasel. I don't know *how* often I have been partially widowed by the sneaking villain."

For obvious reasons there was no audible reply.

This narrative is intended to teach the folly — the worse than sin! — of trumping your partner's ace.

LXIV.

A fat cow who saw herself detected by an approaching horse while perpetrating stiff and ungainly gambols in the spring sunshine, suddenly assumed a severe gravity of gait, and a sedate solemnity of expression that would have been creditable to a Brahmin.

"Fine morning!" said the horse, who, fired by her example, was curvetting lithely and tossing his head.

"That rather uninteresting fact," replied the cow, attending strictly to her business as a ruminant, "does not impress me as justifying your execution of all manner of unseemly contortions, as a preliminary to accosting an entire stranger."

"Well, n — no," stammered the horse; "I — I suppose not. Fact is I — I — no offence, I hope."

And the unhappy charger walked soberly away, dazed by the preternatural effrontery of that placid cow.

When overcome by the dignity of any one you chance to meet, try to have this fable about you.

LXV.

"What have you there on your back?" said a zebra, jeeringly, to a "ship of the desert" in ballast.

"Only a bale of gridirons," was the meek reply.

"And what, pray, may you design doing with them?" was the incredulous rejoinder.

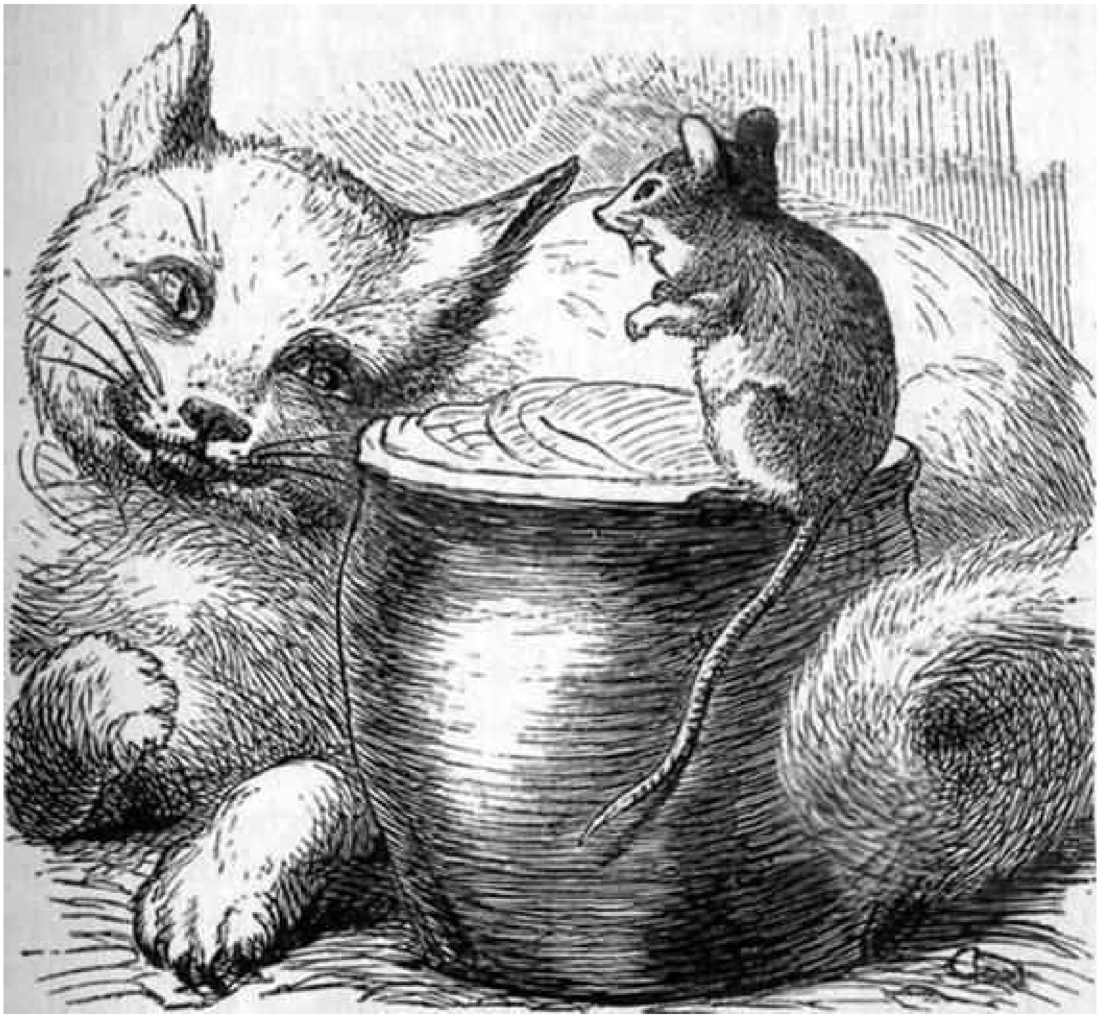
"What am I to do with gridirons?" repeated the camel, contemptuously. "Nice question for *you*, who have evidently just come off one!"

People who wish to throw stones should not live in glass houses; but there ought to be a few in their vicinity.

LXVI.

A cat, waking out of a sound sleep, saw a mouse sitting just out of reach, observing her. Perceiving that at the slightest movement of hers the mouse would recollect an engagement, she put on a look of extreme amiability, and said:

"Oh! it's you, is it? Do you know, I thought at first you were a frightful great rat; and I am *so* afraid of rats! I feel so much relieved — you don't know! Of course you have heard that I am a great friend to the dear little mice?"



"Yes," was the answer, "I have heard that you love us indifferently well, and my mission here was to bless you while you slept. But as you will wish to go and get your breakfast, I won't bore you. Fine morning — isn't it? *Au revoir!*"

This fable teaches that it is usually safe to avoid one who pretends to be a friend without having any reason to be. It wasn't safe in this instance, however; for the cat went after that departing rodent, and got away with him.

LXVII.

A man pursued by a lion, was about stepping into a place of safety, when he bethought him of the power of the human eye; and, turning about, he fixed upon his pursuer a steady look of stern reproof. The raging beast immediately moderated his rate per hour, and finally came to a dead halt, within a yard of the man's nose. After making a leisurely survey of him, he extended his neck and bit off a small section of his victim's thigh.

"Beard of Arimanes!" roared the man; "have you no respect for the Human Eye?"

"I hold the human eye in profound esteem," replied the lion, "and I confess its power. It assists digestion if taken just before a meal. But I don't understand why you should have two and I none."

With that he raised his foot, unsheathed his claws, and transferred one of the gentleman's visual organs to his own mouth.

"Now," continued he, "during the brief remainder of a squandered existence, your lion-quelling power, being more highly concentrated, will be the more easily managed."

He then devoured the remnant of his victim, including the other eye.

LXVIII.

An ant laden with a grain of corn, which he had acquired with infinite toil, was breasting a current of his fellows, each of whom, as is their etiquette, insisted upon stopping him, feeling him all over, and shaking hands. It occurred to him that an excess of ceremony is an abuse of courtesy. So he laid down his burden, sat upon it, folded all his legs tight to his body, and smiled a smile of great grimness.

"Hullo! what's the matter with *you*?" exclaimed the first insect whose overtures were declined.

"Sick of the hollow conventionalities of a rotten civilization," was the rasping reply. "Relapsed into the honest simplicity of primitive observances. Go to grass!"

"Ah! then we must trouble you for that corn. In a condition of primitive simplicity there are no rights of property, you know. These are 'hollow conventionalities.'"

A light dawned upon the intellect of that pismire. He shook the reefs out of his legs; he scratched the reverse of his ear; he grappled that cereal, and trotted away like a giant refreshed. It was observed that he submitted with a wealth of patience to manipulation by his friends and neighbours, and went some distance out of his way to shake hands with strangers on competing lines of traffic.

LXIX.

A snake who had lain torpid all winter in his hole took advantage of the first warm day to limber up for the spring campaign. Having tied himself into an intricate knot, he was so overcome by the warmth of his own body that he fell asleep, and did not wake until nightfall. In the darkness he was unable to find his head or his tail, and so could not disentangle and slide into his hole. Per consequence, he froze to death.

Many a subtle philosopher has failed to solve himself, owing to his inability to discern his beginning and his end.

LXX.

A dog finding a joint of mutton, apparently guarded by a negligent raven, stretched himself before it with an air of intense satisfaction.

"Ah!" said he, alternately smiling and stopping up the smiles with meat, "this is an instrument of salvation to my stomach — an instrument upon which I love to perform."

"I beg your pardon!" said the bird; "it was placed there specially for me, by one whose right to so convey it is beyond question, he having legally acquired it by chopping it off the original owner."

"I detect no flaw in your abstract of title," replied the dog; "all seems quite regular; but I must not provoke a breach of the peace by lightly relinquishing what I might feel it my duty to resume by violence. I must have time to consider; and in the meantime I will dine."

Thereupon he leisurely consumed the property in dispute, shut his eyes, yawned, turned upon his back, thrust out his legs divergently, and died.

For the meat had been carefully poisoned — a fact of which the raven was guiltily conscious.

There are several things mightier than brute force, and arsenic [C] is one of them.

LXXI.

The King of Persia had a favourite hawk. One day his Majesty was hunting, and had become separated from his attendants. Feeling thirsty, he sought a stream of water trickling from a rock; took a cup, and pouring some liquor into it from his pocket-flask, filled it up with water, and raised it to his lips. The hawk, who had been all this time hovering about, swooped down, screaming "No, you don't!" and upset the cup with his wing.

"I know what is the matter," said the King: "there is a dead serpent in the fountain above, and this faithful bird has saved my life by not permitting me to drink the juice. I must reward him in the regular way."

So he called a page, who had thoughtfully presented himself, and gave directions to have the Remorse Apartments of the palace put in order, and for the court tailor to prepare an evening suit of sackcloth-and-ashes. Then summoning the hawk, he seized and dashed him to the ground, killing him very dead. Rejoining his retinue, he dispatched an officer to remove the body of the serpent from the fountain, lest somebody else should get poisoned. There wasn't any serpent — the water was remarkable for its wholesome purity!

Then the King, cheated of his remorse, was sorry he had slain the bird; he said it was a needless waste of power to kill a bird who merely deserved killing. It never occurred to the King that the hawk's touching solicitude was with reference to the contents of the royal flask.

Fabula ostendit that a “twice-told tale” needs not necessarily be “tedious”; a reasonable degree of interest may be obtained by intelligently varying the details.

LXXII.

A herd of cows, blown off the summit of the Himalayas, were sailing some miles above the valleys, when one said to another:

“Got anything to say about this?”

“Not much,” was the answer. “It’s airy.”

“I wasn’t thinking of that,” continued the first; “I am troubled about our course. If we could leave the Pleiades a little more to the right, striking a middle course between Boötes and the ecliptic, we should find it all plain sailing as far as the solstitial colure. But once we get into the Zodiac upon our present bearing, we are certain to meet with shipwreck before reaching our aphelion.”

They escaped this melancholy fate, however, for some Chaldean shepherds, seeing a nebulous cloud drifting athwart the heavens, and obscuring a favourite planet they had just invented, brought out their most powerful telescopes and resolved it into independent cows — whom they proceeded to slaughter in detail with the instruments of smaller calibre. There have been occasional “meat showers” ever since. These are probably nothing more than —

[Our author can be depended upon in matters of fact; his scientific theories are not worth printing. — TRANSLATOR.]

LXXIII.

A bear, who had worn himself out walking from one end of his cage to the other, addressed his keeper thus:

“I say, friend, if you don’t procure me a shorter cage I shall have to give up zoology; it is about the most wearing pursuit I ever engaged in. I favour the advancement of science, but the mechanical part of it is a trifle severe, and ought to be done by contract.”

“You are quite right, my hearty,” said the keeper, “it *is* severe; and there have been several excellent plans proposed to lighten the drudgery. Pending the adoption of some of them, you would find a partial relief in lying down and keeping quiet.”

“It won’t do — it won’t do!” replied the bear, with a mournful shake of the head, “it’s not the orthodox thing. Inaction may do for professors, collectors, and others connected with the ornamental part of the noble science; but for *us,* we must keep moving, or zoology would soon revert to the crude guesses and mistaken theories of the azoic period. And yet,” continued the beast, after the keeper had gone, “there is something novel and ingenious in what the underling suggests. I must remember that; and when I have leisure, give it a trial.”

It was noted next day that the noble science had lost an active apostle, and gained a passive disciple.

LXXIV.

A hen who had hatched out a quantity of ducklings, was somewhat surprised one day to see them take to the water, and sail away out of her jurisdiction. The more she thought of this the more unreasonable such conduct appeared, and the more indignant she became. She resolved that it must cease forthwith. So she soon afterward convened her brood, and conducted them to the margin of a hot pool, having a business connection with the boiling spring of Doo-sno-swair. They straightway launched themselves for a cruise — returning immediately to the land, as if they had forgotten their ship's papers.

When Callow Youth exhibits an eccentric tendency, give it him hot.

LXXV.

"Did it ever occur to you that this manner of thing is extremely unpleasant?" asked a writhing worm of the angler who had impaled him upon a hook. "Such treatment by those who boast themselves our brothers is, possibly, fraternal — but it hurts."

"I confess," replied the idler, "that our usages with regard to vermin and reptiles might be so amended as to be more temperately diabolical; but please to remember that the gentle agonies with which we afflict *you* are wholesome and exhilarating compared with the ills we ladle out to one another. During the reign of His Pellucid Refulgence, Khatchoo Khan," he continued, absently dropping his wriggling auditor into the brook, "no less than three hundred thousand Persian subjects were put to death, in a pleasing variety of ingenious ways, for their religious beliefs."

"What that has to do with your treatment of *us*" interrupted a fish, who, having bitten at the worm just then, was drawn into the conversation, "I am quite unable to see."

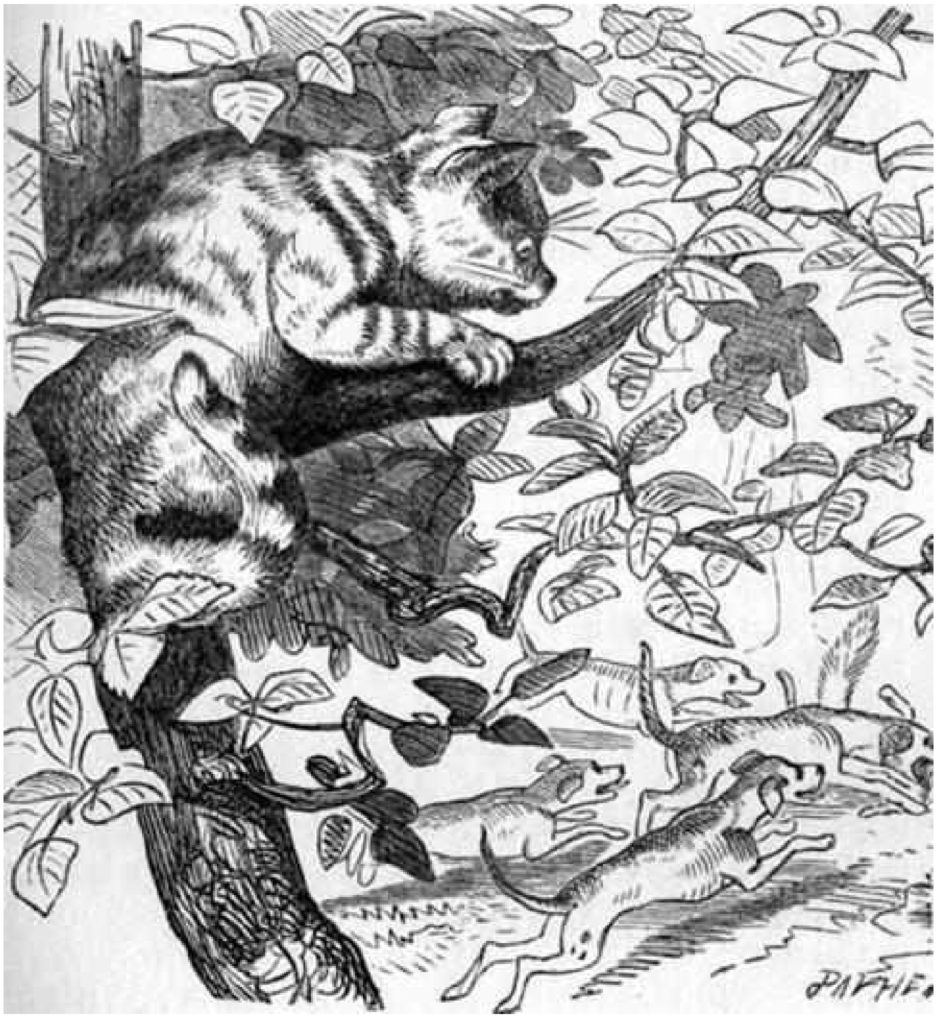
"That," said the angler, disengaging him, "is because you have the hook through your eyeball, my edible friend."

Many a truth is spoken in jest; but at least ten times as many falsehoods are uttered in dead earnest.

LXXVI.

A wild cat was listening with rapt approval to the melody of distant hounds tracking a remote fox.

"Excellent! *bravo!*" she exclaimed at intervals. "I could sit and listen all day to the like of that. I am passionately fond of music. *Ong-core!*"



Presently the tuneful sounds drew near, whereupon she began to fidget; ending by shinning up a tree, just as the dogs burst into view below her, and stifled their songs upon the body of their victim before her eyes — which protruded.

“There is an indefinable charm,” said she—”a subtle and tender spell — a mystery — a conundrum, as it were — in the sounds of an unseen orchestra. This is quite lost when the performers are visible to the audience. Distant music (if any) for your obedient servant!”

LXXVII.

Having been taught to turn his scraps of bad Persian into choice Latin, a parrot was puffed up with conceit.

“Observe,” said he, “the superiority I may boast by virtue of my classical education: I can chatter flat nonsense in the language of Cicero.”

“I would advise you,” said his master, quietly, “to let it be of a different character from that chattered by some of Mr. Cicero’s most admired compatriots, if you value the priviledge of hanging at that public window.

‘Commit no mythology,’ please.”

The exquisite fancies of a remote age may not be imitated in this; not, perhaps, from a lack of talent, so much as from a fear of arrest.

LXXVIII.

A rat, finding a file, smelt it all over, bit it gently, and observed that, as it did not seem to be rich enough to produce dyspepsia, he would venture to make a meal of it. So he gnawed it into *smithareens* [D] without the slightest injury to his teeth. With his morals the case was somewhat different. For the file was a file of newspapers, and his system became so saturated with the “spirit of the Press” that he went off and called his aged father a “lingering contemporary;” advised the correction of brief tails by amputation; lauded the skill of a quack rodentist for money; and, upon what would otherwise have been his death-bed, essayed a lie of such phenomenal magnitude that it stuck in his throat, and prevented him breathing his last. All this crime, and misery, and other nonsense, because he was too lazy to worry about and find a file of nutritious fables.

This tale shows the folly of eating everything you happen to fancy. Consider, moreover, the danger of such a course to your neighbour’s wife.

LXXIX.

“I should like to climb up you, if you don’t mind,” cried an ivy to a young oak.

“Oh, certainly; come along,” was the cheerful assent.

So she started up, and finding she could grow faster than he, she wound round and round him until she had passed up all the line she had. The oak, however, continued to grow, and as she could not disengage her coils, she was just lifted out by the root. So that ends the oak-and-ivy business, and removes a powerful temptation from the path of the young writer.

LXXX.

A merchant of Cairo gave a grand feast. In the midst of the revelry, the great doors of the dining-hall were pushed open from the outside, and the guests were surprised and grieved by the advent of a crocodile of a tun’s girth, and as long as the moral law.

“Thought I ‘d look in,” said he, simply, but not without a certain grave dignity.

“But,” cried the host, from the top of the table, “I did not invite any saurians.”

“No — I know yer didn’t; it’s the old thing, it is: never no wacancies for saurians — saurians should orter keep theirselves *to* theirselves — no saurians need apply. I got it all by ‘eart, I tell yer. But don’t give yerself no distress; I didn’t come to beg; thank ‘eaven I ain’t drove to that yet — leastwise I ain’t done it. But I thought as ‘ow yer’d need a dish to throw slops and broken wittles in it; which I fetched along this ‘ere.”

And the willing creature lifted off the cover by erecting the upper half of his head till the snout of him smote the ceiling.

Open servitude is better than covert begging.

LXXXI.

A gander being annoyed by the assiduous attendance of his ugly reflection in the water, determined that he would prosecute future voyages in a less susceptible element. So he essayed a sail upon the placid bosom of a clay-bank. This kind of navigation did not meet his expectations, however, and he returned with dogged despair to his pond, resolved to make a final cruise and go out of commission. He was delighted to find that the clay adhering to his hull so defiled the water that it gave back no image of him. After that, whenever he left port, he was careful to be well clayed along the water-line.

The lesson of this is that if all geese are alike, we can banish unpleasant reflections by befouling ourselves. This is worth knowing.

LXXXII.

The belly and the members of the human body were in a riot. (This is not the riot recorded by an inferior writer, but a more notable and authentic one.) After exhausting the well-known arguments, they had recourse to the appropriate threat, when the man to whom they belonged thought it time for *him* to be heard, in his capacity as a unit.

“Deuce take you!” he roared. “Things have come to a pretty pass if a fellow cannot walk out of a fine morning without alarming the town by a disgraceful squabble between his component parts! I am reasonably impartial, I hope, but man’s devotion is due to his deity: I espouse the cause of my belly.”

Hearing this, the members were thrown into so extraordinary confusion that the man was arrested for a windmill.

As a rule, don’t “take sides.” Sides of bacon, however, may be temperately acquired.

LXXXIII.

A man dropping from a balloon struck against a soaring eagle.

“I beg your pardon,” said he, continuing his descent; “I never *could* keep off eagles when in my descending node.”

“It is agreeable to meet so pleasing a gentleman, even without previous appointment,” said the bird, looking admiringly down upon the lessening aeronaut; “he is the very pink of politeness. How extremely nice his liver must be. I will follow him down and arrange his simple obsequies.”

This fable is narrated for its intrinsic worth.

LXXXIV.

To escape from a peasant who had come suddenly upon him, an opossum adopted his favourite expedient of counterfeiting death.

"I suppose," said the peasant, "that ninety-nine men in a hundred would go away and leave this poor creature's body to the beasts of prey." [It is notorious that man is the only living thing that will eat the animal.] "But *I* will give him good burial."

So he dug a hole, and was about tumbling him into it, when a solemn voice appeared to emanate from the corpse: "Let the dead bury their dead!"

"Whatever spirit hath wrought this miracle," cried the peasant, dropping upon his knees, "let him but add the trifling explanation of *how* the dead can perform this or any similar rite, and I am obedience itself. Otherwise, in goes Mr. 'Possum by these hands."

"Ah!" meditated the unhappy beast, "I have performed one miracle, but I can't keep it up all day, you know. The explanation demanded is a trifle too heavy for even the ponderous ingenuity of a marsupial."

And he permitted himself to be sodded over.

If the reader knows what lesson is conveyed by this narrative, he knows — just what the writer knows.

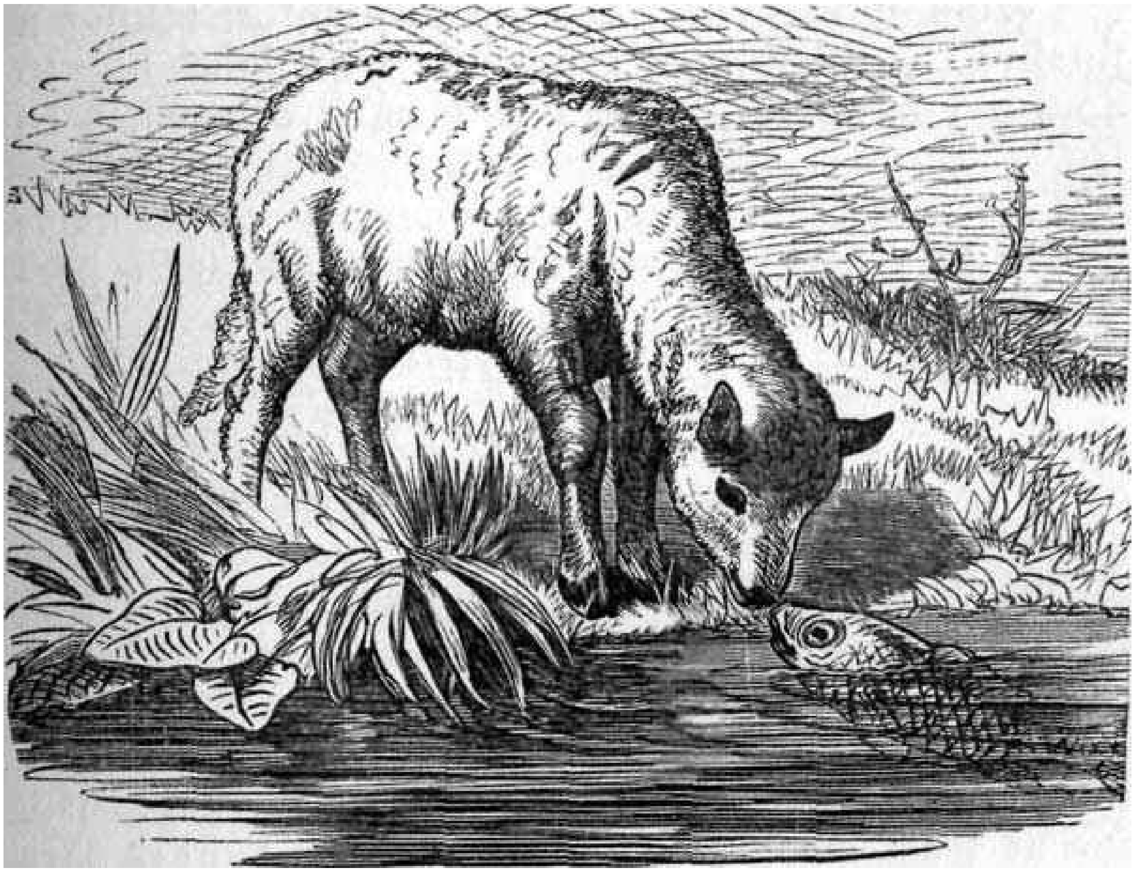
LXXXV.

Three animals on board a sinking ship prepared to take to the water. It was agreed among them that the bear should be lowered alongside; the mouse (who was to act as pilot) should embark upon him at once, to beat off the drowning sailors; and the monkey should follow, with provisions for the expedition — which arrangement was successfully carried out. The fourth day out from the wreck, the bear began to propound a series of leading questions concerning dinner; when it appeared that the monkey had provided but a single nut.

"I thought this would keep me awhile," he explained, "and you could eat the pilot."

Hearing this, the mouse vanished like a flash into the bear's ear, and fearing the hungry beast would then demand the nut, the monkey hastily devoured it. Not being in a position to insist upon his rights, the bear merely gobbled up the monkey.

LXXXVI.



A lamb suffering from thirst went to a brook to drink. Putting his nose to the water, he was interested to feel it bitten by a fish. Not liking fish, he drew back and sought another place; but his persecutor getting there before him administered the same rebuff. The lamb being rather persevering, and the fish having no appointments for that day, this was repeated a few thousand times, when the former felt justified in swearing:

"I'm eternally boiled!" said he, "if ever I experienced so many fish in all my life. It is discouraging. It inspires me with mint sauce and green peas."

He probably meant amazement and fear; under the influence of powerful emotions even lambs will talk "shop."

"Well, good bye," said his tormentor, taking a final nip at the animal's muzzle; "I should like to amuse you some more; but I have other fish to fry."

This tale teaches a good quantity of lessons; but it does *not* teach why this fish should have persecuted this lamb.

LXXXVII.

A mole, in pursuing certain geological researches, came upon the buried carcase of a mule, and was about to tunnel him.

"Slow down, my good friend," said the deceased. "Push your mining operations in a less sacrilegious direction. Respect the dead, as you hope for death!”

“You have that about you,” said the gnome, “that must make your grave respected in a certain sense, for at least such a period as your immortal part may require for perfect exhalation. The immunity I accord is not conceded to your sanctity, but extorted by your scent. The sepulchres of moles only are sacred.”

To moles, the body of a lifeless mule
A dead mule’s carcase is, and nothing more.

LXXXVIII.

“I think I’ll set my sting into you, my obstructive friend,” said a bee to an iron pump against which she had flown; “you are always more or less in the way.”

“If you do,” retorted the other, “I’ll pump on you, if I can get any one to work my handle.”

Exasperated by this impotent conservative threat, she pushed her little dart against him with all her vigour. When she tried to sheathe it again she couldn’t, but she still made herself useful about the hive by hooking on to small articles and dragging them about. But no other bee would sleep with her after this; and so, by her ill-judged resentment, she was self-condemmed to a solitary cell.

The young reader may profitably beware.

LXXXIX.

A Chinese dog, who had been much abroad with his master, was asked, upon his return, to state the most ludicrous fact he had observed.

“There is a country,” said he, “the people of which are eternally speaking about ‘Persian honesty,’ ‘Persian courage,’ ‘Persian loyalty,’ ‘Persian love of fair play,’ &c., as if the Persians enjoyed a clear monopoly of these universal virtues. What is more, they speak thus in blind good faith — with a dense gravity of conviction that is simply amazing.”

“But,” urged the auditors, “we requested something ludicrous, not amazing.”

“Exactly; the ludicrous part is the name of their country, which is—”

“What?”

“Persia.”

XC.

There was a calf, who, suspecting the purity of the milk supplied him by his dam, resolved to transfer his patronage to the barn-yard pump.

“Better,” said he, “a pure article of water, than a diet that is neither fish, flesh, nor fowl.”

But, although extremely regular in his new diet — taking it all the time — he did not seem to thrive as might have been expected. The larger orders he drew, the thinner and the more transparent he became; and at last, when the shadow of his person had become to him a vague and unreal memory, he repented, and applied to be reinstated in his comfortable sinecure at the maternal udder.

“Ah! my prodigal son,” said the old lady, lowering her horns as if to permit him to weep upon her neck, “I regret that it is out of my power to celebrate your return by killing the fatted calf; but what I can I will do.”

And she killed him instead.

Mot herl yaff ecti onk nocksal loth ervir tu esperfec tlyc old.[E]

XCI.

“There, now,” said a kitten, triumphantly, laying a passive mouse at the feet of her mother. “I flatter myself I am coming on with a reasonable degree of rapidity. What will become of the minor quadrupeds when I have attained my full strength and ferocity, it is mournful to conjecture!”

“Did he give you much trouble?” inquired the aged ornament of the hearth-side, with a look of tender solicitude.

“Trouble!” echoed the kitten, “I never had such a fight in all my life! He was a downright savage — in his day.”

“My Falstaffian issue,” rejoined the Tabby, dropping her eyelids and composing her head for a quiet sleep, “the above is a *toy* mouse.”

XCII.

A crab who had travelled from the mouth of the Indus all the way to Ispahan, knocked, with much chuckling, at the door of the King’s physician.

“Who’s there?” shouted the doctor, from his divan within.

“A bad case of *cancer*,” was the complacent reply.

“Good!” returned the doctor; “I’ll *cure* you, my friend.”

So saying, he conducted his facetious patient into the kitchen, and potted him in pickle. It cured him — of practical jocularity.

May the fable heal *you*, if you are afflicted with that form of evil.

XCIII.

A certain magician owned a learned pig, who had lived a cleanly gentlemanly life, achieving great fame, and winning the hearts of all the people. But perceiving he was not happy, the magician, by a process easily explained did space permit, transformed him into a man. Straightway the creature abandoned his cards, his timepiece, his musical instruments, and all other devices of his profession, and betook him to a pool of mud, wherein he inhumed himself to the tip of his nose.

“Ten minutes ago,” said the magician reprovingly, “you would have scorned to do an act like that.”

“True,” replied the biped, with a contented grunt; “I was then a learned pig; I am now a learned man.”

XCIV.

“Nature has been very kind to her creatures,” said a giraffe to an elephant. “For example, your neck being so very short, she has given you a proboscis wherewith to reach your food; and I having no proboscis, she has bestowed upon me a long neck.”

“I think, my good friend, you have been among the theologians,” said the elephant. “I doubt if I am clever enough to argue with you. I can only say it does not strike me that way.”

“But, really,” persisted the giraffe, “you must confess your trunk is a great convenience, in that it enables you to reach the high branches of which you are so fond, even as my long neck enables me.”

“Perhaps,” mused the ungrateful pachyderm, “if we could not reach the higher branches, we should develop a taste for the lower ones.”

“In any case,” was the rejoinder, “we can never be sufficiently thankful that we are unlike the lowly hippopotamus, who can reach neither the one nor the other.”

“Ah! yes,” the elephant assented, “there does not seem to have been enough of Nature’s kindness to go round.”

“But the hippopotamus has his roots and his rushes.”

“It is not easy to see how, with his present appliances, he could obtain anything else.”

This fable teaches nothing; for those who perceive the meaning of it either knew it before, or will not be taught.

XCV.

A pious heathen who was currying favour with his wooden deity by sitting for some years motionless in a treeless plain, observed a young ivy putting forth her tender shoots at his feet. He thought he could endure the additional martyrdom of a little shade, and begged her to make herself quite at home.

“Exactly,” said the plant; “it is my mission to adorn venerable ruins.”

She lapped her clinging tendrils about his wasted shanks, and in six months had mantled him in green.

“It is now time,” said the devotee, a year later, “for me to fulfil the remainder of my religious vow. I must put in a few seasons of howling and leaping. You have been very good, but I no longer require your gentle ministrations.”

“But I require yours,” replied the vine; “you have become a second nature to me. Let others indulge in the delights of gymnastic worship; you and I will ‘surfer and be strong’ — respectively.”

The devotee muttered something about the division of labour, and his bones are still pointed out to the pilgrim.

XCVI.

A fox seeing a swan afloat, called out:

“What ship is that? I wish to take passage by your line.”

“Got a ticket?” inquired the fowl.

“No; I’ll make it all right with the company, though.”

So the swan moored alongside, and he embarked, — deck passage. When they were well off shore the fox intimated that dinner would be agreeable.

“I would advise you not to try the ship’s provisions,” said the bird; “we have only salt meat on board. Beware the scurvy!”

“You are quite right,” replied the passenger; “I’ll see if I can stay my stomach with the foremast.”

So saying he bit off her neck, and she immediately capsizing, he was drowned.

MORAL — highly so, but not instructive.

XCVII.

A monkey finding a heap of cocoa-nuts, gnawed into one, then dropped it, gagging hideously.

“Now, this is what *I* call perfectly disgusting!” said he: “I can never leave anything lying about but some one comes along and puts a quantity of nasty milk into it!”

A cat just then happening to pass that way began rolling the cocoa-nuts about with her paw.

“Yeow!” she exclaimed; “it is enough to vex the soul of a cast-iron dog! Whenever I set out any milk to cool, somebody comes and seals it up tight as a drum!”

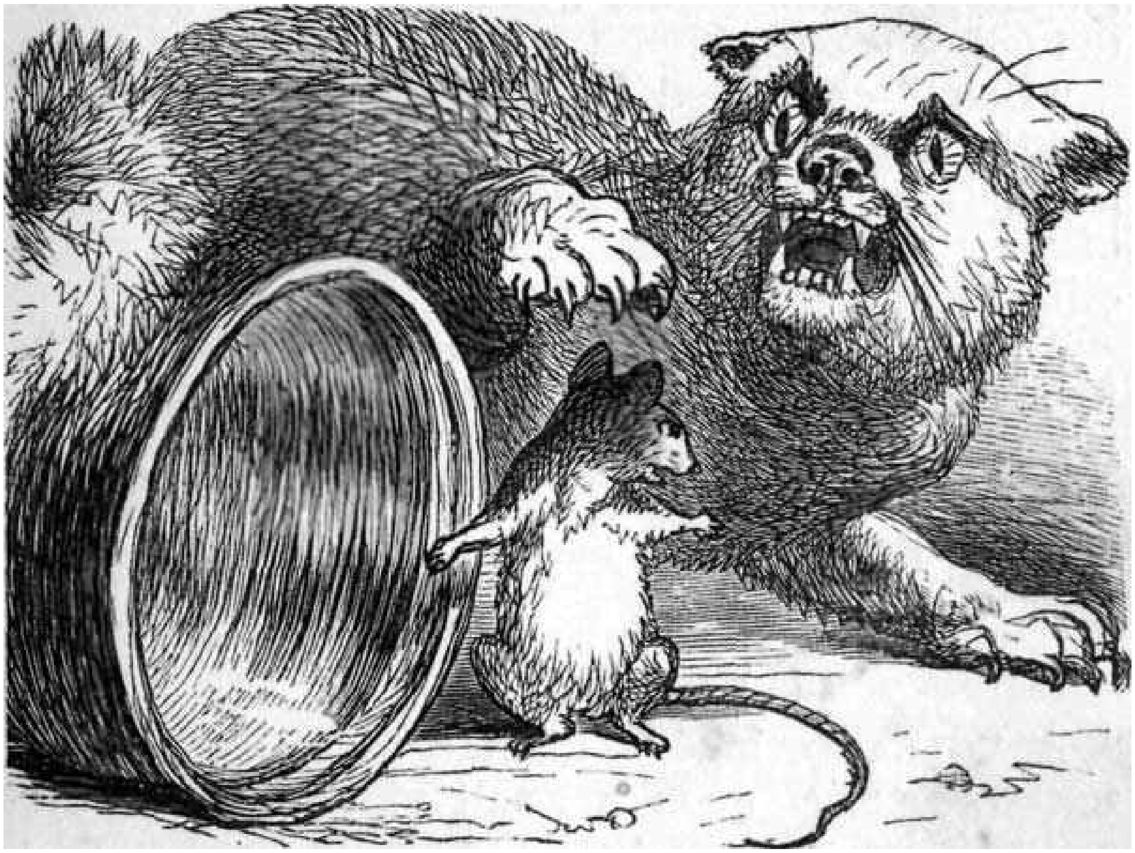
Then perceiving one another, and each thinking the other the offender, these enraged animals contended, and wrought a mutual extermination. Whereby two worthy consumers were lost to society, and a quantity of excellent food had to be given to the poor.

XCVIII.

A mouse who had overturned an earthern jar was discovered by a cat, who entered from an adjoining room and began to upbraid him in the harshest and most threatening manner.

“You little wretch!” said she, “how dare you knock over that valuable urn? If it had been filled with hot water, and I had been lying before it asleep, I should have been scalded to death.”

“If it had been full of water,” pleaded the mouse, “it would not have upset.”



“But I might have lain down in it, monster!” persisted the cat.

“No, you couldn’t,” was the answer; “it is not wide enough.”

“Fiend!” shrieked the cat, smashing him with her paw; “I can curl up real small when I try.”

The *ultima ratio* of very angry people is frequently addressed to the ear of the dead.

XCIX.

In crossing a frozen pool, a monkey slipped and fell, striking upon the back of his head with considerable force, so that the ice was very much shattered. A peacock, who was strutting about on shore thinking what a pretty peacock he was, laughed immoderately at the mishap. N.B. — All laughter is immoderate when a fellow is hurt — if the fellow is oneself.

“Bah!” exclaimed the sufferer; “if you could see the beautiful prismatic tints I have knocked into this ice, you would laugh out of the other side of your bill. The splendour of your tail is quite eclipsed.”

Thus craftily did he inveigle the vain bird, who finally came and spread his tail alongside the fracture for comparison. The gorgeous feathers at once froze fast to the ice, and — in short, that artless fowl passed a very uncomfortable winter.

C.

A volcano, having discharged a few million tons of stones upon a small village, asked the mayor if he thought that a tolerably good supply for building purposes.

"I think," replied that functionary, "if you give us another dash of granite, and just a pinch of old red sandstone, we could manage with what you have already done for us. We would, however, be grateful for the loan of your crater to bake bricks."

"Oh, certainly; parties served at their residences." Then, after the man had gone, the mountain added, with mingled lava and contempt: "The most insatiable people I ever contracted to supply. They shall not have another pebble!"

He banked his fires, and in six weeks was as cold as a neglected pudding. Then might you have seen the heaving of the surface boulders, as the people began stirring forty fathoms beneath.

When you have got quite enough of anything, make it manifest by asking for some more. You won't get it.

CI.

"I entertain for you a sentiment of profound amity," said the tiger to the leopard. "And why should I not? for are we not members of the same great feline family?"

"True," replied the leopard, who was engaged in the hopeless endeavour to change his spots; "since we have mutually plundered one another's hunting grounds of everything edible, there remains no grievance to quarrel about. You are a good fellow; let us embrace!"

They did so with the utmost heartiness; which being observed by a contiguous monkey, that animal got up a tree, where he delivered himself of the wisdom following:

"There is nothing so touching as these expressions of mutual regard between animals who are vulgarly believed to hate one another. They render the brief intervals of peace almost endurable to both parties. But the difficulty is, there are so many excellent reasons why these relatives should live in peace, that they won't have time to state them all before the next fight."

CII.

A woodpecker, who had bored a multitude of holes in the body of a dead tree, was asked by a robin to explain their purpose.

"As yet, in the infancy of science," replied the woodpecker, "I am quite unable to do so. Some naturalists affirm that I hide acorns in these pits; others maintain that I get worms out of them. I endeavoured for some time to reconcile the two theories; but the worms ate my acorns, and then would not come out. Since then, I have left science to work out its own problems, while I work out the holes. I hope the final decision may be in some way advantageous to me; for at my nest I have a number of prepared holes which I can hammer into some suitable tree at a moment's notice. Perhaps I could insert a few into the scientific head."

"No-o-o," said the robin, reflectively, "I should think not. A prepared hole is an idea; I don't think it could get in."

MORAL. — It might be driven in with a steam-hammer.

CIII.

"Are you going to this great hop?" inquired a spruce cricket of a labouring beetle.

"No," replied he, sadly, "I've got to attend this great ball."

"Blest if I know the difference," drawled a more offensive insect, with his head in an empty silk hat; "and I've been in society all my life. But why was I not invited to either hop or ball?"

He is now invited to the latter.

CIV.

"Too bad, too bad," said a young Abyssinian to a yawning hippopotamus.

"What is 'too bad?'" inquired the quadruped. "What is the matter with you?"

"Oh, *I* never complain," was the reply; "I was only thinking of the niggard economy of Nature in building a great big beast like you and not giving him any mouth."

"H'm, h'm! it was still worse," mused the beast, "to construct a great wit like you and give him no seasonable occasion for the display of his cleverness."

A moment later there were a cracking of bitten bones, a great gush of animal fluids, the vanishing of two black feet — in short, the fatal poisoning of an indiscreet hippopotamus.

The rubbing of a bit of lemon about the beaker's brim is the finishing-touch to a whiskey punch. Much misery may be thus averted.

CV.

A salmon vainly attempted to leap up a cascade. After trying a few thousand times, he grew so fatigued that he began to leap less and think more. Suddenly an obvious method of surmounting the difficulty presented itself to the salmonic intelligence.

"Strange," he soliloquized, as well as he could in the water,—"very strange I did not think of it before! I'll go above the fall and leap downwards."

So he went out on the bank, walked round to the upper side of the fall, and found he could leap over quite easily. Ever afterwards when he went up-stream in the spring to be caught, he adopted this plan. He has been heard to remark that the price of salmon might be brought down to a merely nominal figure, if so many would not wear themselves out before getting up to where there is good fishing.

CVI.

"The son of a jackass," shrieked a haughty mare to a mule who had offended her by expressing an opinion, "should cultivate the simple grace of intellectual humility."

"It is true," was the meek reply, "I cannot boast an illustrious ancestry; but at least I shall never be called upon to blush for my posterity. Yonder mule colt is as proper a son—"

"Yonder mule colt?" interrupted the mare, with a look of ineffable contempt for her auditor; "that is *my* colt!"

"The consort of a jackass and the mother of mules," retorted he, quietly, "should cultivate the simple thingamy of intellectual whatsitsname."

The mare muttered something about having some shopping to do, threw on her harness, and went out to call a cab.

CVII.

"Hi! hi!" squeaked a pig, running after a hen who had just left her nest; "I say, mum, you dropped this 'ere. It looks wal'able; which I fetched it along!" And splitting his long face, he laid a warm egg at her feet.

"You meddlesome bacon!" cackled the ungrateful bird; "if you don't take that orb directly back, I 'll sit on you till I hatch you out of your saddle-cover!"

MORAL. — Virtue is its only reward.

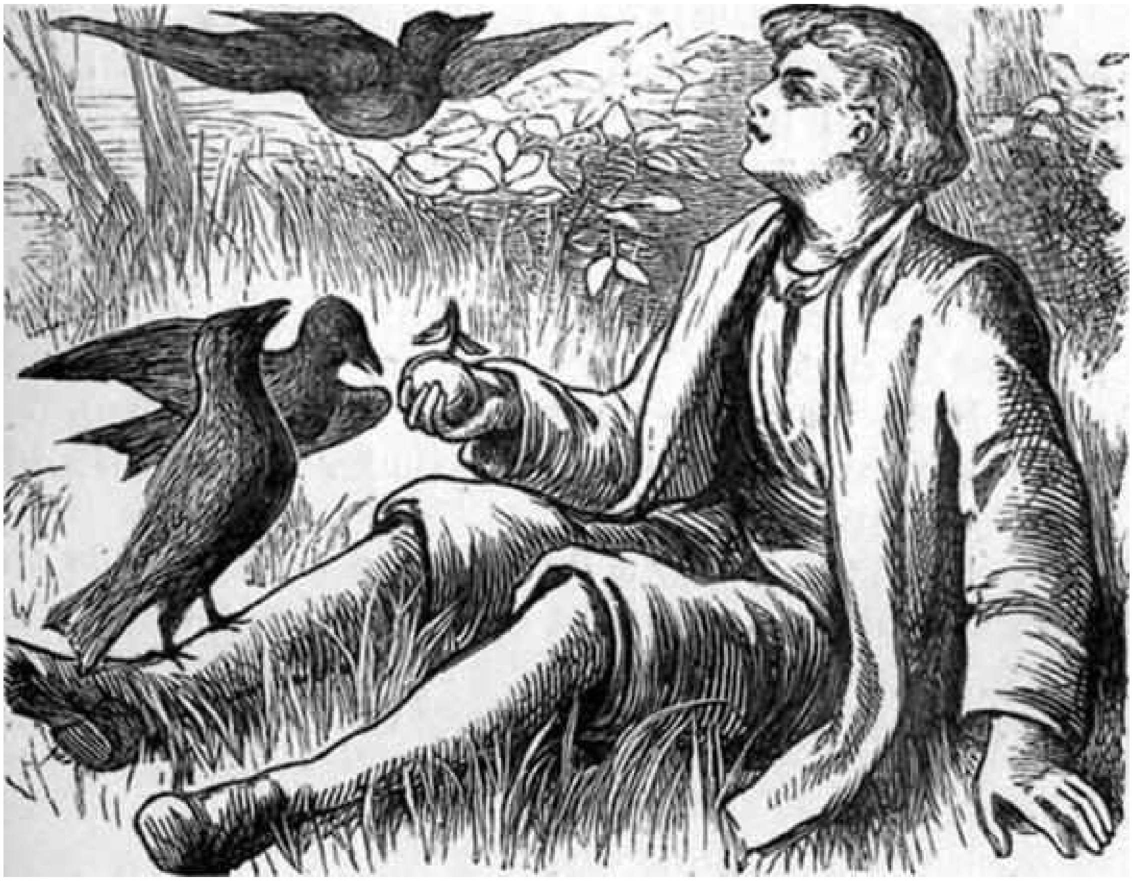
CVIII.

A rustic, preparing to devour an apple, was addressed by a brace of crafty and covetous birds:

"Nice apple that," said one, critically examining it. "I don't wish to disparage it — wouldn't say a word against that vegetable for all the world. But I never can look upon an apple of that variety without thinking of my poisoned nestling! Ah! so plump, and rosy, and — rotten!"

"Just so," said the other. "And you remember my good father, who perished in that orchard. Strange that so fair a skin should cover so vile a heart!"

Just then another fowl came flying up.



“I came in, all haste,” said he, “to warn you about that fruit. My late lamented wife ate some off the same tree. Alas! how comely to the eye, and how essentially noxious!”

“I am very grateful,” the young man said; “but I am unable to comprehend how the sight of this pretty piece of painted confectionery should incite you all to slander your dead relations.”

Whereat there was confusion in the demeanour of that feathered trio.

CIX.

“The Millennium is come,” said a lion to a lamb. “Suppose you come out of that fold, and let us lie down together, as it has been foretold we should.”

“Been to dinner to-day?” inquired the lamb.

“Not a bite of anything since breakfast,” was the reply, “except a few lean swine, a saddle or two, and some old harness.”

“I distrust a Millennium,” continued the lamb, thoughtfully, “which consists *solely* in our lying down together. My notion of that happy time is that it is a period in which pork and leather are not articles of diet, but in which every respectable lion shall have as much mutton as he can consume. However, you may go over to yonder sunny hill and lie down until I come.”

It is singular how a feeling of security tends to develop cunning. If that lamb had been out upon the open plain he would have readily fallen into the snare — and it was studded very thickly with teeth.

CX.

“I say, you!” bawled a fat ox in a stall to a lusty young ass who was braying outside; “the like of that is not in good taste!”

“In whose good taste, my adipose censor?” inquired the ass, not too respectfully.

“Why — h’m — ah! I mean it does not suit *me*. You ought to bellow.”

“May I inquire how it happens to be any of your business whether I bellow or bray, or do both — or neither?”

“I cannot tell you,” answered the critic, shaking his head despondingly; “I do not at all understand it. I can only say that I have been accustomed to censure all discourse that differs from my own.”

“Exactly,” said the ass; “you have sought to make an art of impertinence by mistaking preferences for principles. In ‘taste’ you have invented a word incapable of definition, to denote an idea impossible of expression; and by employing in connection therewith the words ‘good’ and ‘bad,’ you indicate a merely subjective process in terms of an objective quality. Such presumption transcends the limit of the merely impudent, and passes into the boundless empyrean of pure cheek!”

At the close of this remarkable harangue, the bovine critic was at a loss for language to express his disapproval. So he said the speech was in bad taste.

CXI.

A bloated toad, studded with dermal excrescences, was boasting that she was the wartiest creature alive.

“Perhaps you are,” said her auditor, emerging from the soil; “but it is a barren and superficial honour. Look at me: I am one solid mole!”

CXII.

“It is very difficult getting on in the world,” sighed a weary snail; “very difficult indeed, with such high rents!”

“You don’t mean to say you pay anything for that old rookery!” said a slug, who was characteristically insinuating himself between the stems of the celery intended for dinner. “A miserable old shanty like that, without stables, grounds, or any modern conveniences!”

“Pay!” said the snail, contemptuously; “I’d like to see you get a semi-detatched villa like this at a nominal rate!”

“Why don’t you let your upper apartments to a respectable single party?” urged the slug.

The answer is not recorded.

CXIII.

A hare, pursued by a dog, sought sanctuary in the den of a wolf. It being after business hours, the latter was at home to him.

"Ah!" panted the hare; "how very fortunate! I feel quite safe here, for you dislike dogs quite as much as I do."

"Your security, my small friend," replied the wolf, "depends not upon those points in which you and I agree, but upon those in which I and the dog differ."

"Then you mean to eat me?" inquired the timorous puss.

"No-o-o," drawled the wolf, reflectively, "I should not like to promise *that*; I mean to eat a part of you. There may be a tuft of fur, and a toe-nail or two, left for you to go on with. I am hungry, but I am not hoggish."

"The distinction is too fine for me," said the hare, scratching her head.

"That, my friend, is because you have not made a practice of hare-splitting. I have."

CXIV.

"Oyster at home?" inquired a monkey, rapping at the closed shell.

There was no reply. Dropping the knocker, he laid hold of the bell-handle, ringing a loud peal, but without effect.

"Hum, hum!" he mused, with a look of disappointment, "gone to the sea side, I suppose."

So he turned away, thinking he would call again later in the season; but he had not proceeded far before he conceived a brilliant idea. Perhaps there had been a suicide! — or a murder! He would go back and force the door. By way of doing so he obtained a large stone, and smashed in the roof. There had been no murder to justify such audacity, so he committed one.

The funeral was gorgeous. There were mute oysters with wands, drunken oysters with scarves and hat-bands, a sable hearse with hearth-dusters on it, a swindling undertaker's bill, and all the accessories of a first-rate churchyard circus — everything necessary but the corpse. That had been disposed of by the monkey, and the undertaker meanly withheld the use of his own.

MORAL. — A lamb foaled in March makes the best pork when his horns have attained the length of an inch.

CXV.

"Pray walk into my parlour," said the spider to the fly.

"That is not quite original," the latter made reply.

"If that's the way you plagiarize, your fame will be a fib —

But I'll walk into your parlour, while I pitch into your crib.

But before I cross your threshold, sir, if I may make so free,
Pray let me introduce to you my friend, ‘the wicked flea.’”
“How do you?” says the spider, as his welcome he extends;

“‘How doth the busy little bee,’ and all our other friends?”
“Quite well, I think, and quite unchanged,” the flea said; “though I learn,
In certain quarters well informed, ‘tis feared ‘the worm will turn.’”
“Humph!” said the fly; “I do not understand this talk — not I!”
“It is ‘classical allusion,’” said the spider to the fly.

CXVI.

A polar bear navigating the mid-sea upon the mortal part of a late lamented walrus, soliloquized, in substance, as follows:

“Such liberty of action as I am afflicted with is enough to embarrass any bear that ever bore. I can remain passive, and starve; or I can devour my ship, and drown. I am really unable to decide.”

So he sat down to think it over. He considered the question in all its aspects, until he grew quite thin; turned it over and over in his mind until he was too weak to sit up; meditated upon it with a constantly decreasing pulse, a rapidly failing respiration. But he could not make up his mind, and finally expired without having come to a decision.

It appears to me he might almost as well have chosen starvation, at a venture.

CXVII.

A sword-fish having penetrated seven or eight feet into the bottom of a ship, under the impression that he was quarrelling with a whale, was unable to draw out of the fight. The sailors annoyed him a good deal, by pounding with handspikes upon that portion of his horn inside; but he bore it as bravely as he could, putting the best possible face upon the matter, until he saw a shark swimming by, of whom he inquired the probable destination of the ship.

“Italy, I think,” said the other, grinning. “I have private reasons for believing her cargo consists mainly of consumptives.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the captive; “Italy, delightful clime of the cerulean orange — the rosy olive! Land of the night-blooming Jesuit, and the fragrant *laszarone*! It would be heavenly to run down gondolas in the streets of Venice! I *must* go to Italy.”

“Indeed you must,” said the shark, darting suddenly aft, where he had caught the gleam of shotted canvas through the blue waters.

But it was fated to be otherwise: some days afterwards the ship and fish passed over a sunken rock which almost grazed the keel. Then the two parted company, with mutual expressions of tender regard, and a report which could be traced by those on board to no trustworthy source.

The foregoing fable shows that a man of good behaviour need not care for money, and *vice versâ*.

CXVIII.

A facetious old cat seeing her kitten sleeping in a bath tub, went down into the cellar and turned on the hot water. (For the convenience of the bathers the bath was arranged in that way; you had to undress, and then go down to the cellar to let on the wet.) No sooner did the kitten remark the unfamiliar sensation, than he departed thence with a willingness quite creditable in one who was not a professional acrobat, and met his mother on the kitchen stairs.

“Aha! my steaming hearty!” cried the elder grimalkin; “I coveted you when I saw the cook put you in the dinner-pot. If I have a weakness, it is hare — hare nicely dressed, and partially boiled.”

Whereupon she made a banquet of her suffering offspring.[F]

Adversity works a stupendous change in tender youth; many a young man is never recognized by his parents after having been in hot water.

CXIX.

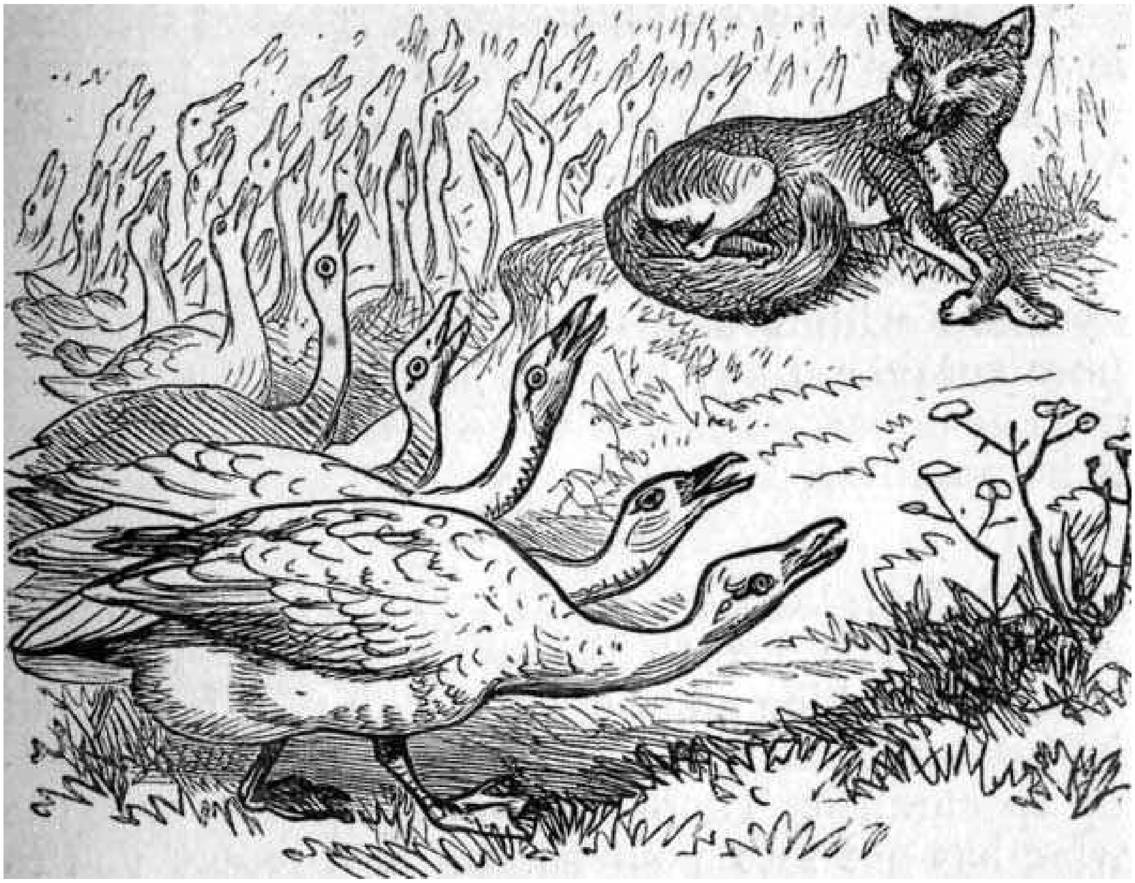
“It is a waste of valour for us to do battle,” said a lame ostrich to a negro who had suddenly come upon her in the desert; “let us cast lots to see who shall be considered the victor, and then go about our business.”

To this proposition the negro readily assented. They cast lots: the negro cast lots of stones, and the ostrich cast lots of feathers. Then the former went about his business, which consisted of skinning the bird.

MORAL. — There is nothing like the arbitrament of chance. That form of it known as *trile-bi-joorie* is perhaps as good as any.

CXX.

An author who had wrought a book of fables (the merit whereof transcended expression) was peacefully sleeping atop of the modest eminence to which he had attained, when he was rudely awakened by a throng of critics, emitting adverse judgment upon the tales he had builded.



"Apparently," said he, "I have been guilty of some small grains of unconsidered wisdom, and the same have proven a bitterness to these excellent folk, the which they will not abide. Ah, well! those who produce the Strasburg *pâté* and the feather-pillow are prone to regard *us* as rival creators. I presume it is in course of nature for him who grows the pen to censure the manner of its use."

So speaking, he executed a smile a hand's-breath in extent, and resumed his airy dream of dropping ducats.

CXXI.

For many years an opossum had anointed his tail with bear's oil, but it remained stubbornly bald-headed. At last his patience was exhausted, and he appealed to Bruin himself, accusing him of breaking faith, and calling him a quack.

"Why, you insolent marsupial!" retorted the bear in a rage; "you expect my oil to give you hair upon your tail, when it will not give me even a tail. Why don't you try under-draining, or top-dressing with light compost?"

They said and did a good deal more before the opossum withdrew his cold and barren member from consideration; but the judicious fabulist does not encumber his tale with extraneous matter, lest it be pointless.

CXXII.

"So disreputable a lot as you are I never saw!" said a sleepy rat to the casks in a wine-cellar. "Always making night hideous with your hoops and hollows, and disfiguring the day with your bunged-up appearance. There is no sleeping when once the wine has got into your heads. I'll report you to the butler!"

"The sneaking tale-bearer," said the casks. "Let us beat him with our staves."

"*Requiescat in pace*," muttered a learned cobweb, sententiously.

"Requires a cat in the place, does it?" shrieked the rat. "Then I'm off!"

To explain all the wisdom imparted by this fable would require the pen of a pig, and volumes of smoke.

CXXIII.

A giraffe having trodden upon the tail of a poodle, that animal flew into a blind rage, and wrestled valorously with the invading foot.

"Hullo, sonny!" said the giraffe, looking down, "what are you doing there?"

"I am fighting!" was the proud reply; "but I don't know that it is any of your business."

"Oh, I have no desire to mix in," said the good-natured giraffe. "I never take sides in terrestrial strife. Still, as that is my foot, I think—"

"Eh!" cried the poodle, backing some distance away and gazing upward, shading his eyes with his paw. "You don't mean to say — by Jove it's a fact! Well, that beats *me*! A beast of such enormous length — such preposterous duration, as it were — I wouldn't have believed it! Of course I can't quarrel with a non-resident; but why don't you have a local agent on the ground?"

The reply was probably the wisest ever made; but it has not descended to this generation. It had so very far to descend.

CXXIV.

A dog having got upon the scent of a deer which a hunter had been dragging home, set off with extraordinary zeal. After measuring off a few leagues, he paused.

"My running gear is all right," said he; "but I seem to have lost my voice."

Suddenly his ear was assailed by a succession of eager barks, as of another dog in pursuit of him. It then began to dawn upon him that he was a particularly rapid dog: instead of having lost his voice, his voice had lost him, and was just now arriving. Full of his discovery, he sought his master, and struck for better food and more comfortable housing.

"Why, you miserable example of perverted powers!" said his master; "I never intended you for the chase, but for the road. You are to be a draught-dog — to pull baby about in a cart. You will perceive that speed is an objection. Sir, you must be toned down; you will be at once assigned to a house with modern conveniences, and will dine at a French restaurant. If that system do not reduce your own, I'm an 'Ebrew Jew!"

The journals next morning had racy and appetizing accounts of a canine suicide.

CXXV.

A gosling, who had not yet begun to blanch, was accosted by a chicken just out of the shell:

"Whither away so fast, fair maid?" inquired the chick.

"Wither away yourself," was the contemptuous reply; "you are already in the sere and yellow leaf; while I seem to have a green old age before me."

CXXVI.

A famishing traveller who had run down a salamander, made a fire, and laid him alive upon the hot coals to cook. Wearied with the pursuit which had preceded his capture, the animal at once composed himself, and fell into a refreshing sleep. At the end of a half-hour, the man, stirred him with a stick, remarking:

"I say! — wake up and begin toasting, will you? How long do you mean to keep dinner waiting, eh?"

"Oh, I beg you will not wait for me," was the yawning reply. "If you are going to stand upon ceremony, everything will get cold. Besides, I have dined. I wish, by-the-way, you would put on some more fuel; I think we shall have snow."

"Yes," said the man, "the weather is like yourself — raw, and exasperatingly cool. Perhaps this will warm you." And he rolled a ponderous pine log atop of that provoking reptile, who flattened out, and "handed in his checks."

The moral thus doth glibly run —
A cause its opposite may brew;
The sun-shade is unlike the sun,
The plum unlike the plumber, too.

A salamander underdone
His impudence may overdo.

CXXVII.

A humming-bird invited a vulture to dine with her. He accepted, but took the precaution to have an emetic along with him; and immediately after dinner, which consisted mainly of dew, spices, honey, and similar slops, he swallowed his corrective, and tumbled the distasteful viands out. He then went away, and made a good wholesome meal with his friend the ghoul. He has been heard to remark, that the taste for humming-bird fare is “too artificial for *him*.” He says, a simple and natural diet, with agreeable companions, cheerful surroundings, and a struggling moon, is best for the health, and most agreeable to the normal palate.

People with vitiated tastes may derive much profit from this opinion. *Crede experto.*

CXXVIII.

A certain terrier, of a dogmatic turn, asked a kitten her opinion of rats, demanding a categorical answer. The opinion, as given, did not possess the merit of coinciding with his own; whereupon he fell upon the heretic and bit her — bit her until his teeth were much worn and her body much elongated — bit her good! Having thus vindicated the correctness of his own view, he felt so amiable a satisfaction that he announced his willingness to adopt the opinion of which he had demonstrated the harmlessness. So he begged his enfeebled antagonist to re-state it, which she incautiously did. No sooner, however, had the superior debater heard it for the second time than he resumed his intolerance, and made an end of that unhappy cat.

“Heresy,” said he, wiping his mouth, “may be endured in the vigorous and lusty; but in a person lying at the very point of death such hardihood is intolerable.”

It is always intolerable.

CXXIX.

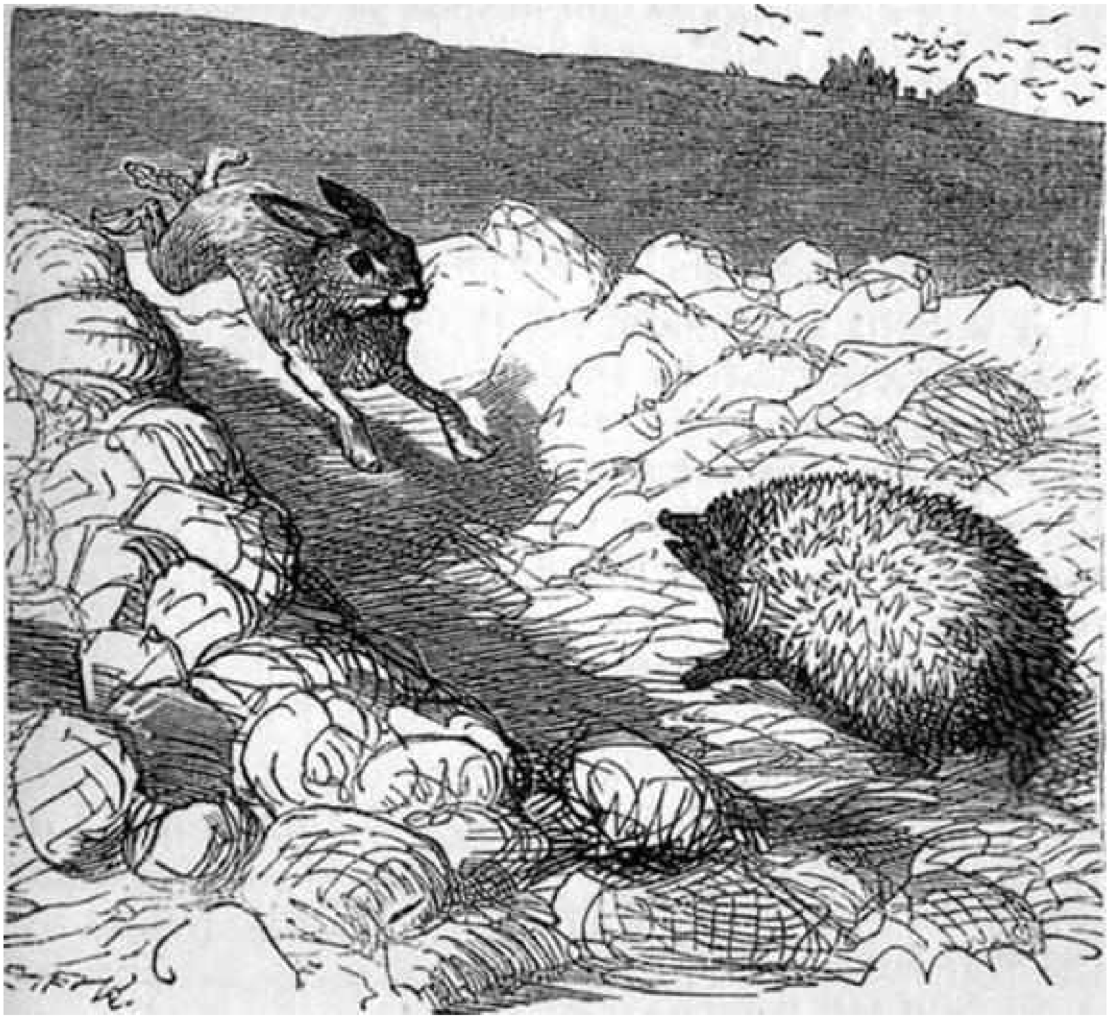
A tortoise and an armadillo quarrelled, and agreed to fight it out. Repairing to a secluded valley, they put themselves into hostile array.

“Now come on!” shouted the tortoise, shrinking into the inmost recesses of his shell.

“All right,” shrieked the armadillo, coiling up tightly in his coat of mail; “I am ready for you!”

And thus these heroes waged the awful fray from morn till dewy eve, at less than a yard’s distance. There has never been anything like it; their endurance was something marvellous! During the night each combatant sneaked silently away; and the historian of the period obscurely alludes to the battle as “the naval engagement of the future.”

CXXX.



Two hedgehogs having conceived a dislike to a hare, conspired for his extinction. It was agreed between them that the lighter and more agile of the two should beat him up, surround him, run him into a ditch, and drive him upon the thorns of the more gouty and unwieldy conspirator. It was not a very hopeful scheme, but it was the best they could devise. There was a chance of success if the hare should prove willing, and, gambler-like, they decided to take that chance, instead of trusting to the remote certainty of their victim’s death from natural cause. The doomed animal performed his part as well as could be reasonably expected of him: every time the enemy’s flying detachment pressed him hard, he fled playfully toward the main body, and lightly vaulted over, about eight feet above the spines. And this prickly blockhead had not the practical sagacity to get upon a wall seven feet and six inches high!

This fable is designed to show that the most desperate chances are comparatively safe.

CXXXI.

A young eel inhabiting the mouth of a river in India, determined to travel. Being a fresh-water eel, he was somewhat restricted in his choice of a route, but he set out with a cheerful heart and very little luggage. Before he had proceeded very far up-stream he found the current too strong to be overcome without a ruinous consumption of coals. He decided to anchor his tail where it then was, and *grow* up. For the first hundred miles it was tolerably tedious work, but when he had learned to tame his impatience, he found this method of progress rather pleasant than otherwise. But when he began to be caught at widely separate points by the fishermen of eight or ten different nations, he did not think it so fine.

This fable teaches that when you extend your residence you multiply your experiences. A local eel can know but little of angling.

CXXXII.

Some of the lower animals held a convention to settle for ever the unspeakably important question, What is Life?

“Life,” squeaked the poet, blinking and folding his filmy wings, “is — .” His kind having been already very numerously heard from upon the subject, he was choked off.

“Life,” said the scientist, in a voice smothered by the earth he was throwing up into small hills, “is the harmonious action of heterogeneous but related faculties, operating in accordance with certain natural laws.”

“Ah!” chattered the lover, “but that thawt of thing is vewy gweat blith in the thothiety of one’th thweetheart.” And curling his tail about a branch, he swung himself heavenward and had a spasm.

“It is *vita*!” grunted the sententious scholar, pausing in his mastication of a Chaldaic root.

“It is a thistle,” brayed the warrior: “very nice thing to take!”

“Life, my friends,” croaked the philosopher from his hollow tree, dropping the lids over his cattish eyes, “is a disease. We are all symptoms.”

“Pooh!” ejaculated the physician, uncoiling and springing his rattle. “How then does it happen that when *we* remove the symptoms, the disease is gone?”

“I would give something to know that,” replied the philosopher, musingly; “but I suspect that in most cases the inflammation remains, and is intensified.”

Draw your own moral inference, “in your own jugs.”

CXXXIII.

A heedless boy having flung a pebble in the direction of a basking lizard, that reptile’s tail disengaged itself, and flew some distance away. One of the properties of a lizard’s camp-follower is to leave the main body at the slightest intimation of danger.

“There goes that vexatious narrative again,” exclaimed the lizard, pettishly; “I never had such a tail in my life! Its restless tendency to divorce upon insufficient grounds is enough to harrow the reptilian soul! Now,” he continued, backing up to the fugitive part, “perhaps you will be good enough to resume your connection with the parent establishment.”

No sooner was the splice effected, than an astronomer passing that way casually remarked to a friend that he had just sighted a comet. Supposing itself menaced, the timorous member again sprang away, coming down plump before the horny nose of a sparrow. Here its career terminated.

We sometimes escape from an imaginary danger, only to find some real persecutor has a little bill against us.

CXXXIV.

A jackal who had pursued a deer all day with unflagging industry, was about to seize him, when an earthquake, which was doing a little civil engineering in that part of the country, opened a broad chasm between him and his prey.

“Now, here,” said he, “is a distinct interference with the laws of nature. But if we are to tolerate miracles, there is an end of all progress.”

So speaking, he endeavoured to cross the abyss at two jumps. His fate would serve the purpose of an impressive warning if it might be clearly ascertained; but the earth having immediately pinched together again, the research of the moral investigator is baffled.

CXXXV.

“Ah!” sighed a three-legged stool, “if I had only been a quadruped, I should have been happy as the day is long — which, on the twenty-first of June, would be considerable felicity for a stool.”

“Ha! look at me!” said a toadstool; “consider my superior privation, and be content with your comparatively happy lot.”

“I don’t discern,” replied the first, “how the contemplation of unipedal misery tends to alleviate tripedal wretchedness.”

“You don’t, eh!” sneered the toadstool. “You mean, do you, to fly in the face of all the moral and social philosophers?”

“Not unless some benefactor of his race shall impel me.”

“H’m! I think Zambri the Parsee is the man for that kindly office, my dear.”

This final fable teaches that he is.

BRIEF SEASONS OF INTELLECTUAL DISSIPATION.

I.

FOOL. — I have a question for you.

PHILOSOPHER. — I have a number of them for myself. Do you happen to have heard that a fool can ask more questions in a breath than a philosopher can answer in a life?

F. — I happen to have heard that in such a case the one is as great a fool as the other.

PH. — Then there is no distinction between folly and philosophy?

F. — Don’t lay the flattering unction to your soul. The province of folly is to ask unanswerable questions. It is the function of philosophy to answer them.

PH. — Admirable fool!

F. — Am I? Pray tell me the meaning of “a fool.”

PH. — Commonly he has none.

F. — I mean —

PH. — Then in this case he has one.

F. — I lick thy boots! But what does Solomon indicate by the word fool? That is what I mean.

PH. — Let us then congratulate Solomon upon the agreement between the views of you two. However, I twig your intent: he means a wicked sinner; and of all forms of folly there is none so great as wicked sinning. For goodness is, in the end, more conducive to personal happiness — which is the sole aim of man.

F. — Hath virtue no better excuse than this?

PH. — Possibly; philosophy is not omniscience.

F. — Instructed I sit at thy feet!

PH. — Unwilling to instruct, I stand on my head.

FOOL. — You say personal happiness is the sole aim of man.

PHILOSOPHER. — Then it is.

F. — But this is much disputed.

PH. — There is much personal happiness in disputation.

F. — Socrates —

PH. — Hold! I detest foreigners.

F. — Wisdom, they say, is of no country.

PH. — Of none that I have seen.

FOOL. — Let us return to our subject — the sole aim of mankind. Crack me these nuts. (1) The man, never weary of well-doing, who endures a life of privation for the good of his fellow-creatures?

PHILOSOPHER. — Does he feel remorse in so doing? or does the rascal rather like it?

F. — (2) He, then, who, famishing himself, parts his loaf with a beggar?

PH. — There are people who prefer benevolence to bread.

F. — Ah! *De gustibus* —

PH. — Shut up!

F. — Well, (3) how of him who goes joyfully to martyrdom?

PH. — He goes joyfully.

F. — And yet —

PH. — Did you ever converse with a good man going to the stake?

F. — I never saw a good man going to the stake.

PH. — Unhappy pupil! you were born some centuries too early.

FOOL. — You say you detest foreigners. Why?

PHILOSOPHER. — Because I am human.

F. — But so are they.

PH. — Excellent fool! I thank thee for the better reason.

PHILOSOPHER. — I have been thinking of the *pocopo*.

FOOL. — Is it open to the public?

PH. — The pocopo is a small animal of North America, chiefly remarkable for singularity of diet. It subsists solely upon a single article of food.

F. — What is that?

PH. — Other pocopos. Unable to obtain this, their natural sustenance, a great number of pocopos die annually of starvation. Their death leaves fewer mouths to feed, and by consequence their race is rapidly multiplying.

F. — From whom had you this?

PH. — A professor of political economy.

F. — I bend in reverence! What made you think of the pocopo?

PH. — Speaking of man.

F. — If you did not wish to think of the pocopo, and speaking of man would make you think of it, you would not speak of man, would you?

PH. — Certainly not.

F. — Why not?

PH. — I do not know.

F. — Excellent philosopher!

FOOL. — I have attentively considered your teachings. They may be full of wisdom; they are certainly out of taste.

PHILOSOPHER. — Whose taste?

F. — Why, that of people of culture.

PH. — Do any of these people chance to have a taste for intoxication, tobacco, hard hats, false hair, the nude ballet, and over-feeding?

F. — Possibly; but in intellectual matters you must confess their taste is correct.

PH. — Why must I?

F. — They say so themselves.

PHILOSOPHER. — I have been thinking why a dolt is called a donkey.

FOOL. — I had thought philosophy concerned itself with a less personal class of questions; but why is it?

PH. — The essential quality of a dolt is stupidity.

F. — Mine ears are drunken!

PH. — The essential quality of an ass is asininity.

F. — Divine philosophy!

PH. — As commonly employed, “stupidity” and “asininity” are convertible terms.

F. — That I, unworthy, should have lived to see this day!

II.

FOOL. — If *I* were a doctor —

DOCTOR. — I should endeavour to be a fool.

F. — You would fail; folly is not easily achieved.

D. — True; man is overworked.

F. — Let him take a pill.

D. — If he like. I would not.

F. — You are too frank: take a fool’s advice.

D. — Thank thee for the nastier prescription.

FOOL. — I have a friend who —

DOCTOR. — Stands in great need of my assistance. Absence of excitement, gentle restraint, a hard bed, simple diet — that will straighten him out.

F. — I’ll give thee sixpence to let me touch the hem of thy garment!

D. — What of your friend?

F. — He is a gentleman.

D. — Then he is dead!

F. — Just so: he is “straightened out” — he took your prescription.

D. — All but the “simple diet.”

F. — He is himself the diet.

D. — How simple!

FOOL. — Believe you a man retains his intellect after decapitation?

DOCTOR. — It is possible that he acquires it?

F. — Much good it does him.

D. — Why not — as compensation? He is at some disadvantage in other respects.

F. — For example?

D. — He is in a false position.

FOOL. — What is the most satisfactory disease?

DOCTOR. — Paralysis of the thoracic duct.

F. — I am not familiar with it.

D. — It does not encourage familiarity. Paralysis of the thoracic duct enables the patient to accept as many invitations to dinner as he can secure, without danger of spoiling his appetite.

F. — But how long does his appetite last?

D. — That depends. Always a trifle longer than he does.

F. — The portion that survives him — ?

D. — Goes to swell the Mighty Gastric Passion which lurks darkly Outside, yawning to swallow up material creation!

F. — Pitch it a biscuit.

FOOL. — You attend a patient. He gets well. Good! How do you tell whether his recovery is because of your treatment or in spite of it?

DOCTOR. — I never do tell.

F. — I mean how do you know?

D. — I take the opinion of a person interested in the question: I ask a fool.

F. — How does the patient know?

D. — The fool asks me.

F. — Amiable instructor! How shall I reward thee?

D. — Eat a cucumber cut up in shilling claret.

DOCTOR. — The relation between a patient and his disease is the same as that which obtains between the two wooden weather-prophets of a Dutch clock.

When the disease goes off, the patient goes on; when the disease goes on, the patient goes off.

FOOL. — A pauper conceit. Their relations, then, are not of the most cordial character.

D. — One’s relations — except the poorer sort — seldom are.

F. — My tympanum is smitten with pleasant peltings of wisdom! I ‘ll lay you ten to one you cannot tell me the present condition of your last patient.

D. — Done!

F. — You have won the wager.

FOOL. — I once read the report of an actual conversation upon a scientific subject between a fool and a physician.

DOCTOR. — Indeed! That sort of conversation commonly takes place between fools only.

F. — The reporter had chosen to confound orthography: he spelt fool “phool,” and physician “fysician.” What the fool said was, therefore, preceded by “PH;” the remarks of the physician were indicated by the letter “F.”

D. — This must have been very confusing.

F. — It was. But no one discovered that any liberties had been taken with orthography.

D. — You tumour!

FOOL. — Suppose you had amongst your menials an ailing oyster?

DOCTOR. — Oysters do not ail.

F. — I have heard that the pearl is the result of a disease.

D. — Whether a functional derangement producing a valuable gem can be properly termed, or treated as, a disease, is open to honest doubt.

F. — Then in the case supposed you would not favour excision of the abnormal part?

D. — Yes; I would remove the oyster.

F. — But if the pearl were growing very rapidly this operation would not be immediately advisable.

D. — That would depend upon the symptomatic diagnosis.

F. — Beast! Give me air!

DOCTOR. — I have been thinking —

FOOL. — (Liar!)

D. — That you “come out” rather well for a fool.

Can it be that I have been entertaining an angel unawares?

F. — Dismiss the apprehension: I am as great a fool as yourself. But there is a way by which in future you may resolve a similar doubt.

D. — Explain.

F. — Speak to your guest of symptomatic diagnosis. If he is an angel, he will not resent it.

III.

SOLDIER (*reading from "Napier"*).—"Who would not rather be buried by an army upon the field of battle than by a sexton in a churchyard!"

FOOL. — I give it up.

S. — I am not aware that any one has asked you for an opinion.

F. — I am not aware that I have given one: there is a happiness yet in store for you.

S. — I will revel in anticipation.

F. — You must revel somehow; without revelry there would be no soldiering.

S. — Idiot.

F. — I beg your pardon: I had thought your profession had at least taught you to call people by their proper titles. In the service of mankind I hold the rank of Fool.

S. — What, ho! without there! Let the trumpets sound!

F. — I beg you will not.

S. — True; you beg: I will not.

F. — But why rob when stealing is more honourable?

S. — Consider the competition.

FOOL. — Sir Cut-throat, how many orphans have you made to-day?

SOLDIER. — The devil an orphan! Have you a family?

F. — Put up your iron; I am the last of my race.

S. — How? No more fools?

F. — Not one, so help me! They have all gone to the wars.

S. — And why, pray, have *you* not enlisted?

F. — I should be no fool if I knew.

FOOL. — You are somewhat indebted to me.

SOLDIER. — I do not acknowledge your claim. Let us submit the matter to arbitration.

F. — The only arbiter whose decision you respect is on your own side.

S. — You allude to my sword, the most impartial of weapons: it cuts both ways.

F. — And each way is peculiarly objectionable to your opponent.

S. — But for what am I indebted to you?

F. — For existence: the prevalence of me has made you possible.

S. — The benefit is not conspicuous; were it not for your quarrels, I should enjoy a quantity of elegant leisure.

F. — As a clodhopper.

S. — I should at least hop my clods in a humble and Christian spirit; and if some other fellow did did not so hop his — ! I say no more.

F. — You have said enough; there would be war.

SOLDIER. — Why wear a cap and bells?

FOOL. — I hasten to crave pardon, and if spared will at once exchange them.

S. — For what?

F. — A helmet and feather.

S. — G "hang a calf-skin on those recreant limbs."

F.—'T is only wisdom should be bound in calf.

S. — Why?

F. — Because wisdom is the veal of which folly is the matured beef.

S. — Then folly should be garbed in cow-skin?

F. — Aye, that it might the more speedily appear for what it is — the naked truth.

S. — How should it?

F. — You would soon strip off its hide to make harness and trappings withal. No one thinks how much conquerors owe to cows.

FOOL. — Tell me, hero, what is strategy?

SOLDIER. — The art of laying two knives against one throat.

F. — And what are tactics?

S. — The art of driving them home.

F. — Supermundane lexicographer!

S. — I'll bust thy crust! (*Attempts to draw his sword, gets it between his legs, and falls along.*)

F. (*from a distance*) — Shall I summon an army, or a sexton? And will you have it of bronze, or marble?

FOOL. — When you have gained a great victory, how much of the glory goes to the horse whose back you bestrode?

SOLDIER. — Nonsense! A horse cannot appreciate glory; he prefers corn.

F. — And this you call non-appreciation! But listen. (*Reads*) “During the Crusades, a part of the armament of a Turkish ship was two hundred serpents.” In the pursuit of glory you are at least not above employing humble auxiliaries. These be curious allies.

S. — What stuff a fool may talk! No true soldier would pit a serpent against a brave enemy. These worms were *sailors*.

F. — A nice distinction, truly! Did you ever, my most acute professor of vivisection, employ your trenchant blade in the splitting of hairs?

S. — I have split masses of them.

FOOL. — Speaking of the Crusades: at the siege of Acre, when a part of the wall had been thrown down by the Christians, the Pisans rushed into the breach, but the greater part of their army being at dinner, they were bloodily repulsed.

SOLDIER. — You appear to have a minute acquaintance with military history.

F. — Yes — being a fool. But was it not a sin and a shame that those feeders should not stir from their porridge to succour their suffering comrades?

S. — Pray why should a man neglect his business to oblige a friend?

F. — But they might have taken and sacked the city.

S. — The selfish gluttons!

SOLDIER. — Your presumption grows intolerable; I’ll hold no further parley with thee.

FOOL.—”Herculean gentleman, I dread thy drubs; pity the lifted whites of both my eyes!”

S. — Then speak no more of the things you do but imperfectly understand.

F. — Such censorship would doom all tongues to silence. But show me wherein my knowledge is deficient.

S. — What is an *abattis*?

F. — Rubbish placed in front of a fort, to keep the rubbish outside from getting at the rubbish inside.

S. — Egad! I’ll part thy hair!

DIVERS TALES.

THE GRATEFUL BEAR.

I hope all my little readers have heard the story of Mr. Androcles and the lion; so I will relate it as nearly as I can remember it, with the caution that Androcles must not be confounded with the lion. If I had a picture representing Androcles with a silk hat, and the lion with a knot in his tail, the two might readily be distinguished; but the artist says he won't make any such picture, and we must try to get on without.

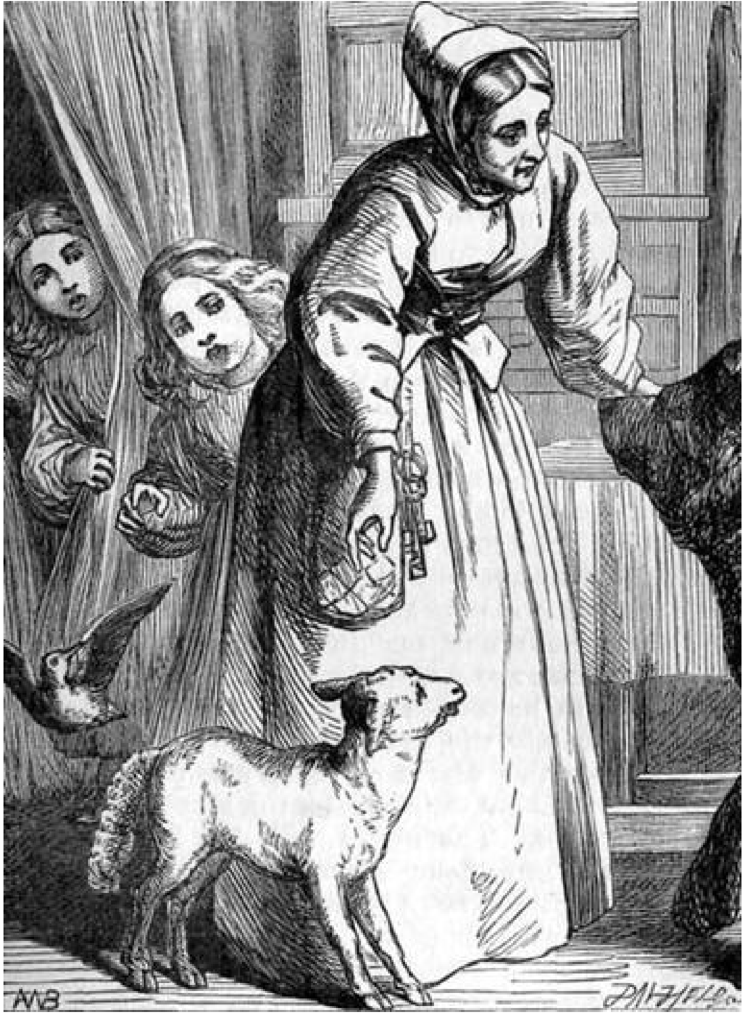
One day Androcles was gathering truffles in a forest, when he found a lion's den; and, walking into it, he lay down and slept. It was a custom, in his time, to sleep in lions' dens when practicable. The lion was absent, inspecting a zoological garden, and did not return until late; but he did return. He was surprised to find a stranger in his menagerie without a ticket; but, supposing him to be some contributor to a comic paper, did not eat him: he was very well satisfied not to be eaten by him. Presently Androcles awoke, wishing he had some seltzer water, or something. (Seltzer water is good after a night's debauch, and something — it is difficult to say what — is good to begin the new debauch with). Seeing the lion eyeing him, he began hastily to pencil his last will and testament upon the rocky floor of the den. What was his surprise to see the lion advance amicably and extend his right forefoot! Androcles, however, was equal to the occasion: he met the friendly overture with a cordial grasp of the hand, whereat the lion howled — for he had a carpet-tack in his foot. Perceiving that he had made a little mistake, Androcles made such reparation as was in his power by pulling out the tack and putting it in his own foot.

After this the beast could not do too much for him. He went out every morning — carefully locking the door behind him — and returned every evening, bringing in a nice fat baby from an adjacent village, and laying it gratefully at his benefactor's feet. For the first few days something seemed to have gone wrong with the benefactor's appetite, but presently he took very kindly to the new diet; and, as he could not get away, he lodged there, rent-free, all the days of his life — which terminated very abruptly one evening when the lion had not met with his usual success in hunting.

All this has very little to do with my story: I throw it in as a classical allusion, to meet the demands of a literary fashion which has its origin in the generous eagerness of writers to give the public more than it pays for. But the story of

Androcles was a favourite with the bear whose adventures I am about to relate.

One day this crafty brute carefully inserted a thorn between two of his toes, and limped awkwardly to the farm-house of Dame Pinworthy, a widow, who with two beautiful whelps infested the forest where he resided. He knocked at the open door, sent in his card, and was duly admitted to the presence of the lady, who inquired his purpose. By way of "defining his position" he held up his foot, and snuffled very dolorously. The lady adjusted her spectacles, took the paw in her lap (she, too, had heard the tale of Androcles), and, after a close scrutiny, discovered the thorn, which, as delicately as possible, she extracted, the patient making wry faces and howling dismally the while.



When it was all over, and she had assured him there was no charge, his gratitude was a passion to observe! He desired to embrace her at once; but this, although a widow of seven years' standing, she would by no means permit; she said she was not personally averse to hugging, "but what would her dear departed — boo-hoo! — say of it?" This was very absurd, for Mr. Boo-hoo had seven feet of solid earth above him, and it couldn't make much difference what he said, even supposing he had enough tongue left to say anything, which he had not. However, the polite beast respected her scruples; so the only way in which he could testify his gratitude was by remaining to dinner. They had the housedog for dinner that day, though, from some false notion of hospitable etiquette, the woman and children did not take any.

On the next day, punctually at the same hour, the bear came again with another thorn, and stayed to dinner as before. It was not much of a dinner this time — only the cat, and a roll of stair-carpet, with one or two pieces of sheet music; but true gratitude does not despise even the humblest means of expression. The succeeding day he came as before; but after being relieved of his torment, he found nothing prepared for him. But when he took to thoughtfully licking one of the little girl's hands, "that answered not with a caress," the mother thought better of it, and drove in a small heifer.

He now came every day; he was so old a friend that the formality of extracting the thorn was no longer observed; it would have contributed nothing to the good understanding that existed between him and the widow. He thought that three or four instances of Good Samaritanism afforded ample matter for perpetual gratitude. His constant visits were bad for the live stock of the farm; for some kind of beast had to be in readiness each day to furnish forth the usual feast, and this prevented multiplication. Most of the textile fabrics, too, had disappeared; for the appetite of this animal was at the same time cosmopolitan and exacting: it would accept almost anything in the way of *entremets*, but something it would have. A hearthrug, a hall-mat, a cushion, mattress, blanket, shawl, or other article of wearing apparel — anything, in short, that was easy of ingestion was graciously approved. The widow tried him once with a box of coals as dessert to some barn-yard fowls; but this he seemed to regard as a doubtful comestible, seductive to the palate, but obstinate in the stomach. A look at one of the children always brought him something else, no matter what he was then engaged on.

It was suggested to Mrs. Pinworthy that she should poison the bear; but, after trying about a hundredweight of strychnia, arsenic, and Prussic acid, without any effect other than what might be expected from mild tonics, she thought it would not be right to go into toxicology. So the poor Widow Pinworthy went on, patiently enduring the consumption of her cattle, sheep, and hogs, the evaporation of her poultry, and the taking off of her bed linen, until there were left only the clothing of herself and children, some curtains, a sickly lamb, and a pet pigeon. When the bear came for these she ventured to expostulate. In this she was perfectly successful: the animal permitted her to expostulate as long as she liked. Then he ate the lamb and pigeon, took in a dish-cloth or two, and went away just as contentedly as if she had not uttered a word.

Nothing edible now stood between her little daughters and the grave. Her mental agony was painful to her mind; she could scarcely have suffered more without an increase of unhappiness. She was roused to desperation; and next day, when she saw the bear leaping across the fields toward the house, she staggered from her seat and shut the door. It was singular what a difference it made; she always remembered it after that, and wished she had thought of it before.

THE SETTING SACHEM.

‘Twas an Injin chieftain, in feathers all fine, Who stood on the ocean’s rim; There were numberless leagues of excellent brine — But there wasn’t enough for him.

So he knuckled a thumb in his painted eye, And added a tear to the scant supply.

The surges were breaking with thund’rous voice, The winds were a-shrieking shrill; This warrior thought that a trifle of noise Was needed to fill the bill.

So he lifted the top of his head off and scowled — Exalted his voice, did this chieftain, and howled!

The sun was aflame in a field of gold That hung o’er the Western Sea; Bright banners of light were broadly unrolled, As banners of light should be.

But no one was “speaking a piece” to that sun, And therefore this Medicine Man begun:

“O much heap of bright! O big ball of warm!

I’ve tracked you from sea to sea!

For the Paleface has been at some pains to inform Me, *you* are the emblem of *me*.

He says to me, cheerfully: ‘Westward Ho!’

And westward I’ve hoed a most difficult row.

“Since you are the emblem of me, I presume That I am the emblem of you, And thus, as we’re equals, ‘t is safe to assume, That one great law governs us two.

So now if I set in the ocean with thee, With thee I shall rise again out of the sea.”

His eloquence first, and his logic the last!

Such orators die! — and he died: The trump was against him — his luck bad — he “passed” — And so he “passed out” — with the tide.

This Injin is rid of the world with a whim — The world it is rid of his speeches and him.

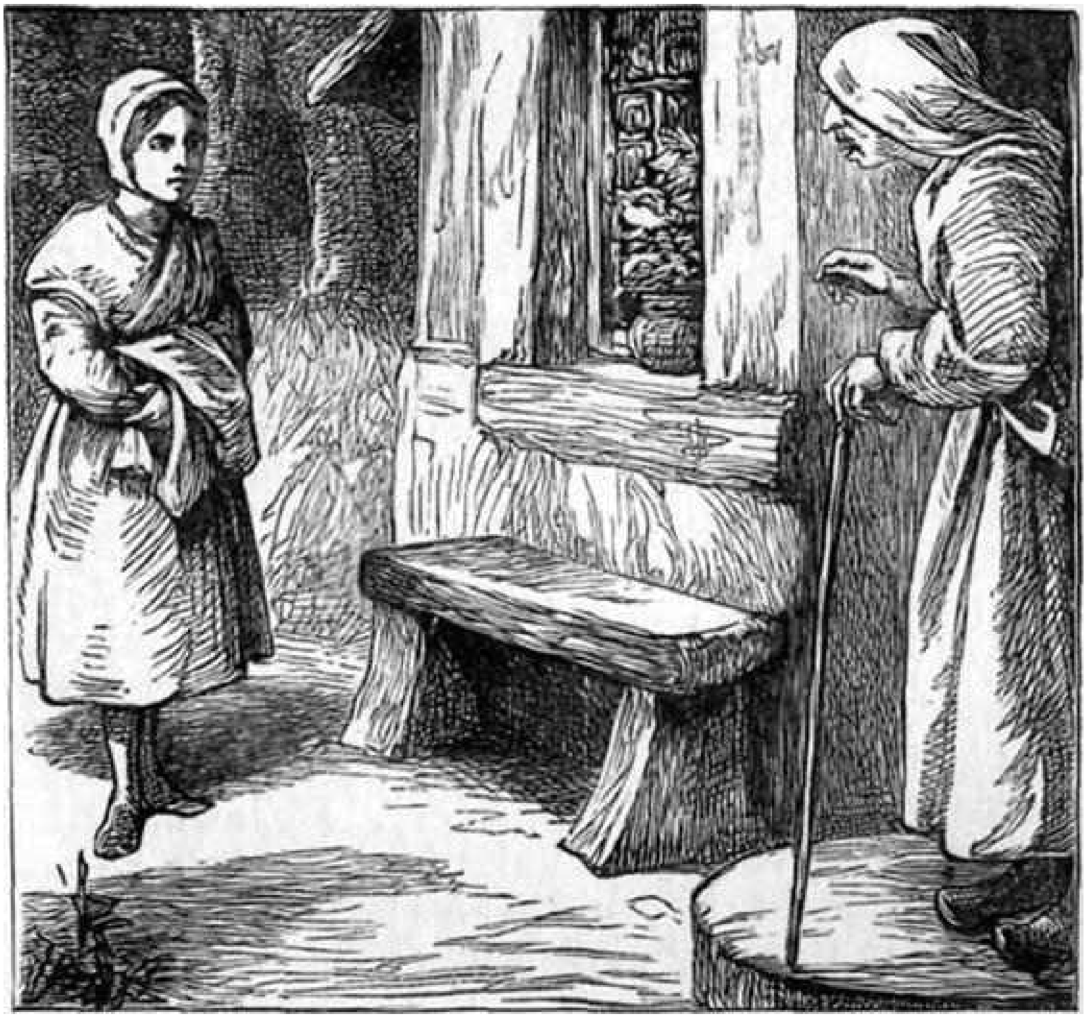
FEODORA.

Madame Yonsmit was a decayed gentlewoman who carried on her decomposition in a modest wayside cottage in Thuringia. She was an excellent sample of the Thuringian widow, a species not yet extinct, but trying very hard to become so. The same may be said of the whole genus. Madame Yonsmit was quite young, very comely, cultivated, gracious, and pleasing. Her home was a nest of domestic virtues, but she had a daughter who reflected but little credit upon the nest. Feodora was indeed a “bad egg” — a very wicked and ungrateful egg. You could see she was by her face. The girl had the most vicious countenance — it was repulsive! It was a face in which boldness struggled for the supremacy with cunning, and both were thrashed into subjection by avarice. It was this latter virtue in Feodora which kept her mother from having a taxable income.

Feodora’s business was to beg on the highway. It wrung the heart of the honest amiable gentlewoman to have her daughter do this; but the h.a.g. having been reared in luxury, considered labour degrading — which it is — and there was not much to steal in that part of Thuringia. Feodora’s mendicity would have provided an ample fund for their support, but unhappily that ingrate would hardly ever fetch home more than two or three shillings at a time. Goodness knows what she did with the rest.

Vainly the good woman pointed out the sin of coveteousness; vainly she would stand at the cottage door awaiting the child’s return, and begin arguing the point with her the moment she came in sight: the receipts diminished daily until the average was less than tenpence — a sum upon which no born gentlewoman would deign to exist. So it became a matter of some importance to know where Feodora kept her banking account. Madame Yonsmit thought at first she would follow her and see; but although the good lady was as vigorous and sprightly as ever, carrying a crutch more for ornament than use, she abandoned this plan because it did not seem suitable to the dignity of a decayed gentlewoman. She employed a detective.

The foregoing particulars I have from Madame Yonsmit herself; for those immediately subjoining I am indebted to the detective, a skilful officer named Bowstr.



No sooner had the scraggy old hag communicated her suspicions than the officer knew exactly what to do. He first distributed hand-bills all over the country, stating that a certain person suspected of concealing money had better look sharp. He then went to the Home Secretary, and by not seeking to understate the real difficulties of the case, induced that functionary to offer a reward of a thousand pounds for the arrest of the malefactor. Next he proceeded to a distant town, and took into custody a clergyman who resembled Feodora in respect of wearing shoes. After these formal preliminaries he took up the case with some zeal. He was not at all actuated by a desire to obtain the reward, but by pure love of justice. The thought of securing the girl's private hoard for himself never for a moment entered his head.

He began to make frequent calls at the widow's cottage when Feodora was at home, when, by apparently careless conversation, he would endeavour to draw her out; but he was commonly frustrated by her old beast of a mother, who, when the girl's answers did not suit, would beat her unmercifully. So he took to meeting Feodora on the highway, and giving her coppers carefully marked. For months he kept this up with wonderful self-sacrifice — the girl being a mere uninteresting angel. He met her daily in the roads and forest. His patience never wearied, his vigilance never flagged. Her most careless glances were conscientiously noted, her lightest words treasured up in his memory. Meanwhile (the clergyman having been unjustly acquitted) he arrested everybody he could get his hands on. Matters went on in this way until it was time for the grand *coup*.

The succeeding-particulars I have from the lips of Feodora herself.

When that horrid Bowstr first came to the house Feodora thought he was rather impudent, but said, little about it to her mother — not desiring to have her back broken. She merely avoided him as much as she dared, he was so frightfully ugly. But she managed to endure him until he took to waylaying her on the highway, hanging about her all day, interfering with the customers, and walking home with her at night. Then her dislike deepened into disgust; and but for apprehensions not wholly unconnected with a certain crutch, she would have sent him about his business in short order. More than a thousand million times she told him to be off and leave her alone, but men are such fools — particularly this one.

What made Bowstr exceptionally disagreeable was his shameless habit of making fun of Feodora’s mother, whom he declared crazy as a loon. But the maiden bore everything as well as she could, until one day the nasty thing put his arm about her waist and kissed her before her very face; *then* she felt — well, it is not clear how she felt, but of one thing she was quite sure: after having such a shame put upon her by this insolent brute, she would never go back under her dear mother’s roof — never. She was too proud for *that,* at any rate. So she ran away with Mr. Bowstr, and married him.

The conclusion of this history I learned for myself.

Upon hearing of her daughter’s desertion Madame Yonsmit went clean daft. She vowed she could bear betrayal, could endure decay, could stand being a widow, would not repine at being left alone in her old age (whenever she should become old), and could patiently submit to the sharper than a serpent’s thanks of having a toothless child generally. But to be a mother-in-law! No, no; that was a plane of degradation to which she positively would *not* descend. So she employed me to cut her throat. It was the toughest throat I ever cut in all my life.

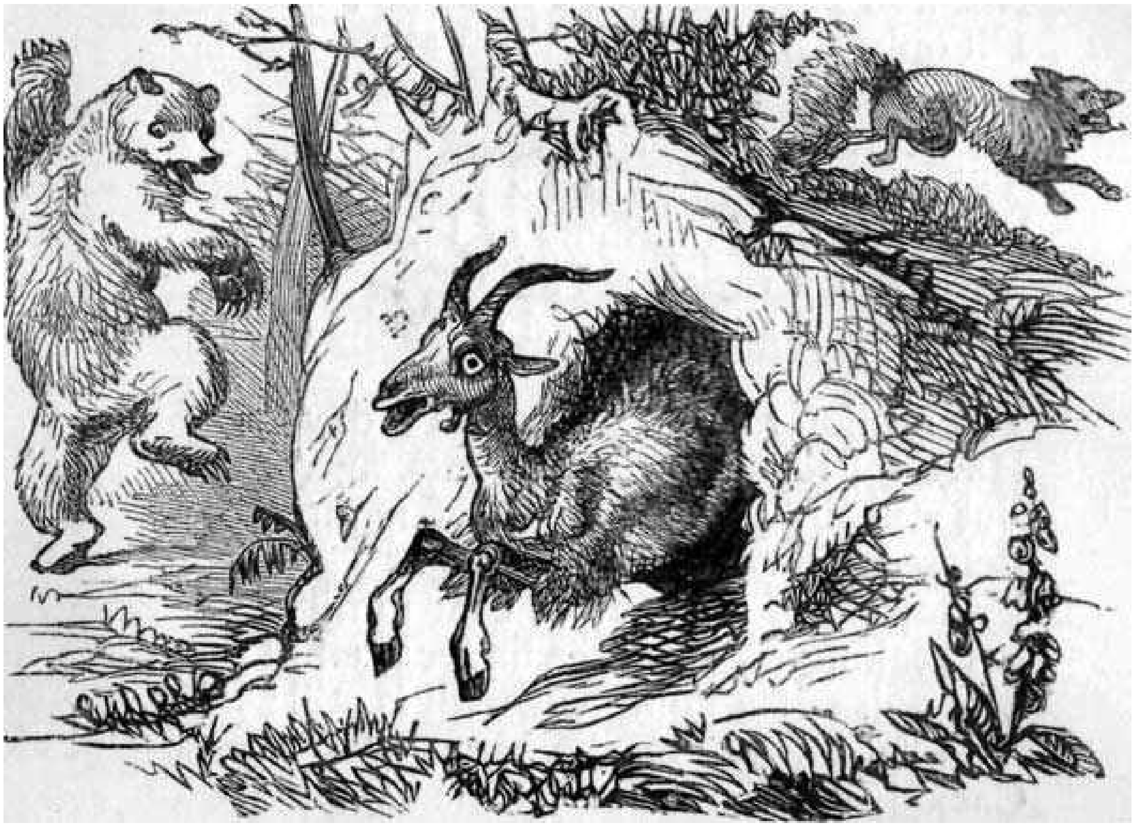
THE LEGEND OF IMMORTAL TRUTH.

A bear, having spread him a notable feast, Invited a famishing fox to the place.
“I’ve killed me,” quoth he, “an edible beast As ever distended the girdle of priest With ‘spread of religion,’ or ‘inward grace.’

To my den I conveyed her,
I bled her and flayed her,
I hung up her skin to dry;
Then laid her naked, to keep her cool, On a slab of ice from the frozen pool; And there we will eat her — you and I.”
The fox accepts, and away they walk,
Beguiling the time with courteous talk.
You’d ne’er have suspected, to see them smile, The bear was thinking, the blessed while, How, when his guest should be off his guard, With feasting hard,
He’d give him a “wipe” that would spoil his style.
You’d never have thought, to see them bow, The fox was reflecting deeply how
He would best proceed, to circumvent
His host, and prig
The entire pig —
Or other bird to the same intent.
When Strength and Cunning in love combine, Be sure ‘t is to more than merely dine.
The while these biters ply the lip,
A mile ahead the muse shall skip:
The poet’s purpose she best may serve
Inside the den — if she have the nerve.
Behold! laid out in dark recess,
A ghastly goat in stark undress,
Pallid and still on her gelid bed,
And indisputably very dead.
Her skin depends from a couple of pins — And here the most singular statement begins; For all at once the butchered beast,
With easy grace for one deceased,

Upreared her head,

Looked round, and said,
Very distinctly for one so dead:
"The nights are sharp, and the sheets are thin: I find it uncommonly cold herein!"



I answer not how this was wrought:
All miracles surpass my thought.
They're vexing, say you? and dementing?
Peace, peace! they're none of my inventing.
But lest too much of mystery
Embarrass this true history,
I'll not relate how that this goat
Stood up and stamped her feet, to inform'em With — what's the word? — I mean, to warm'em; Nor how she plucked her rough *capote*
From off the pegs where Bruin threw it, And o'er her quaking body drew it;

Nor how each act could so befall:
I'll only swear she did them all;
Then lingered pensive in the grot,

As if she something had forgot,
Till a humble voice and a voice of pride Were heard, in murmurs of love, outside.
Then, like a rocket set aflight,
She sprang, and streaked it for the light!
Ten million million years and a day
Have rolled, since these events, away; But still the peasant at fall of night, Belated therenear, is oft affright
By sounds of a phantom bear in flight; A breaking of branches under the hill; The noise of a going when all is still!
And hens asleep on the perch, they say, Cackle sometimes in a startled way,
As if they were dreaming a dream that mocks The lope and whiz of a fleeting fox!
Half we're taught, and teach to youth, And praise by rote,
Is not, but merely stands for, truth.
So of my goat:
She's merely designed to represent
The truth—"immortal" to this extent:
Dead she may be, and skinned — *frappé* — Hid in a dreadful den away;
Prey to the Churches — (any will do,
Except the Church of me and you.)
The simplest miracle, even then,
Will get her up and about again.

CONVERTING A PRODIGAL.

Little Johnny was a saving youth — one who from early infancy had cultivated a provident habit. When other little boys were wasting their substance in riotous gingerbread and molasses candy, investing in missionary enterprises which paid no dividends, subscribing to the North Labrador Orphan Fund, and sending capital out of the country gene rally, Johnny would be sticking sixpences into the chimney-pot of a big tin house with “BANK” painted on it in red letters above an illusory door. Or he would put out odd pennies at appalling rates of interest, with his parents, and bank the income. He was never weary of dropping coppers into that insatiable chimney-pot, and leaving them there. In this latter respect he differed notably from his elder brother, Charlie; for, although Charles was fond of banking too, he was addicted to such frequent runs upon the institution with a hatchet, that it kept his parents honourably poor to purchase banks for him; so they were reluctantly compelled to discourage the depositing element in his panicky nature.

Johnny was not above work, either; to him “the dignity of labour” was not a juiceless platitude, as it is to me, but a living, nourishing truth, as satisfying and wholesome as that two sides of a triangle are equal to one side of bacon. He would hold horses for gentlemen who desired to step into a bar to inquire for letters. He would pursue the fleeting pig at the behest of a drover. He would carry water to the lions of a travelling menagerie, or do anything, for gain. He was sharp-witted too: before conveying a drop of comfort to the parching king of beasts, he would stipulate for sixpence instead of the usual free ticket — or “tasting order,” so to speak. He cared not a button for the show.

The first hard work Johnny did of a morning was to look over the house for fugitive pins, needles, hair-pins, matches, and other unconsidered trifles; and if he sometimes found these where nobody had lost them, he made such reparation as was in his power by losing them again where nobody but he could find them. In the course of time, when he had garnered a good many, he would “realize,” and bank the proceeds.

Nor was he weakly superstitious, this Johnny. You could not fool *him* with the Santa Claus hoax on Christmas Eve: he would lie awake all night, as sceptical as a priest; and along toward morning, getting quietly out of bed, would examine the pendent stockings of the other children, to satisfy himself the predicted presents were not there; and in the morning it always turned out that they were not. Then, when the other children cried because they did not get anything, and the parents affected surprise (as if they really believed in the venerable fiction), Johnny was too manly to utter a whimper: he would simply slip out of the back door, and engage in traffic with affluent orphans; disposing of woolly horses, tin whistles, marbles, tops, dolls, and sugar archangels, at a ruinous discount for cash. He continued these provident courses for nine long years, always banking his accretions with scrupulous care. Everybody predicted he would one day be a merchant prince or a railway king; and some added he would sell his crown to the junk-dealers.

His unthrifty brother, meanwhile, kept growing worse and worse. He was so careless of wealth — so so wastefully extravagant of lucre — that Johnny felt it his duty at times to clandestinely assume control of the fraternal finances, lest the habit of squandering should wreck the fraternal moral sense. It was plain that Charles had entered upon the broad road which leads from the cradle to the workhouse — and that he rather liked the travelling. So profuse was his prodigality that there were grave suspicions as to his method of acquiring what he so openly disbursed. There was but one opinion as to the melancholy termination of his career — a termination which he seemed to regard as eminently desirable. But one day, when the good pastor put it at him in so many words, Charles gave token of some apprehension.

“Do you really think so, sir?” said he, thoughtfully; “ain’t you playin’ it on me?”

“I assure you, Charles,” said the good man, catching a ray of hope from the boy’s dawning seriousness, “you will certainly end your days in a workhouse, unless you speedily abandon your course of extravagance. There is nothing like habit — nothing!”

Charles may have thought that, considering his frequent and lavish contributions to the missionary fund, the parson was rather hard upon him; but he did not say so. He went away in mournful silence, and began pelting a blind beggar with coppers.

One day, when Johnny had been more than usually provident, and Charles proportionately prodigal, their father, having exhausted moral suasion to no apparent purpose, determined to have recourse to a lower order of argument: he would try to win Charles to economy by an appeal to his grosser nature. So he convened the entire family, and,

“Johnny,” said he, “do you think you have much money in your bank? You ought to have saved a considerable sum in nine years.”

Johnny took the alarm in a minute: perhaps there was some barefooted little girl to be endowed with Sunday-school books.

“No,” he answered, reflectively, “I don’t think there can be much. There’s been a good deal of cold weather this winter, and you know how metal shrinks! No-o-o, I’m sure there can’t be only a little.”

“Well, Johnny, you go up and bring down your bank. We’ll see. Perhaps Charles may be right, after all; and it’s not worth while to save money. I don’t want a son of mine to get into a bad habit unless it pays.”

So Johnny travelled reluctantly up to his garret, and went to the corner where his big tin bank-box had sat on a chest undisturbed for years. He had long ago fortified himself against temptation by vowing never to even shake it; for he remembered that formerly when Charles used to shake his, and rattle the coins inside, he always ended by smashing in the roof. Johnny approached his bank, and taking hold of the cornice on either side, braced himself, gave a strong lift upwards, and keeled over upon his back with the edifice atop of him, like one of the figures in a picture of the great Lisbon earthquake! There was but a single coin in it; and that, by an ingenious device, was suspended in the centre, so that every piece popped in at the chimney would clink upon it in passing through Charlie’s little hole into Charlie’s little stocking hanging innocently beneath.

Of course restitution was out of the question; and even Johnny felt that any merely temporal punishment would be weakly inadequate to the demands of justice. But that night, in the dead silence of his chamber, Johnny registered a great and solemn swear that so soon as he could worry together a little capital, he would fling his feeble remaining energies into the spendthrift business. And he did so.

FOUR JACKS AND A KNAVE.

In the “backwoods” of Pennsylvania stood a little mill. The miller appertaining unto this mill was a Pennsylvania Dutchman — a species of animal in which for some centuries *sauerkraut* has been usurping the place of sense. In Hans Donnerspiel the usurpation was not complete; he still knew enough to go in when it rained, but he did not know enough to stay there after the storm had blown over. Hans was known to a large circle of friends and admirers as about the worst miller in those parts; but as he was the only one, people who quarrelled with an exclusively meat diet continued to patronize him. He was honest, as all stupid people are; but he was careless. So absent-minded was he, that sometimes when grinding somebody’s wheat he would thoughtlessly turn into the “hopper” a bag of rye, a lot of old beer-bottles, or a basket of fish. This made the flour so peculiar, that the people about there never knew what it was to be well a day in all their lives. There were so many local diseases in that vicinity, that a doctor from twenty miles away could not have killed a patient in a week.

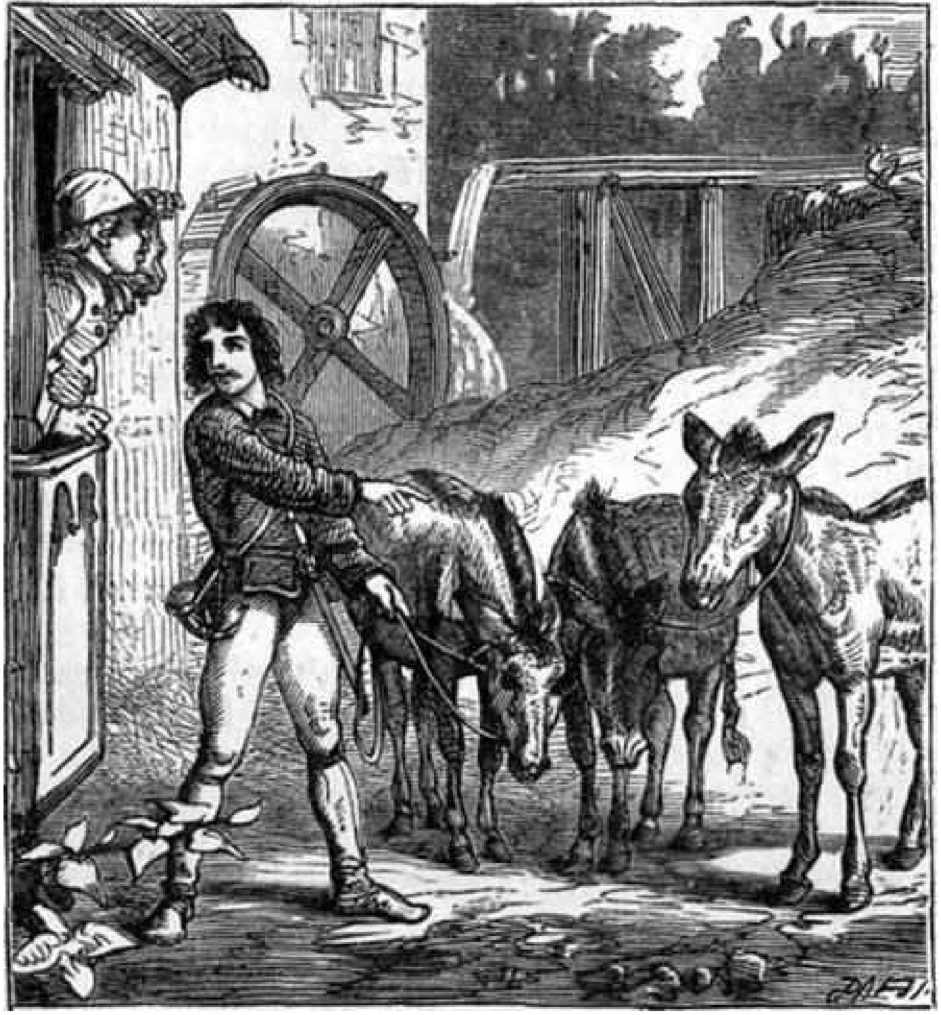
Hans meant well; but he had a hobby — a hobby that he did not ride: that does not express it: it rode him. It spurred him so hard, that the poor wretch could not pause a minute to see what he was putting into his mill. This hobby was the purchase of jackasses. He expended all his income in this diversion, and his mill was fairly sinking under its weight of mortgages. He had more jackasses than he had hairs on his head, and, as a rule, they were thinner. He was no mere amateur collector either, but a sharp discriminating *connoisseur*. He would buy a fat globular donkey if he could not do better; but a lank shabby one was the apple of his eye. He rolled such a one, as it were, like a sweet morsel under his tongue.

Hans’s nearest neighbour was a worthless young scamp named Jo Garvey, who lived mainly by hunting and fishing. Jo was a sharp-witted rascal, without a single scruple between, himself and fortune. With a tithe of Hans’s industry he might have been almost anything; but his dense laziness always rose up like a stone wall about him, shutting him in like a toad in a rock. The exact opposite of Hans in almost every respect, he was notably similar in one: he had a hobby. Jo’s hobby was the selling of jackasses.

One day, while Hans’s upper and nether mill-stones were making it lively for a mingled grist of corn, potatoes, and young chickens, he heard Joseph calling outside. Stepping to the door, he saw him holding three halters to which were appended three donkeys.

“I say, Hans,” said he, “here are three fine animals for your stud. I have brought ‘em up from the egg, and I know ‘em to be first-class. But they ‘re not so big as I expected, and you may have ‘em for a sack of oats each.”

Hans was delighted. He had not the least doubt in the world that Joe had stolen them; but it was a fixed principle with him never to let a donkey go away and say he was a hard man to deal with. He at once brought out and delivered the oats. Jo gravely examined the quality, and placing a sack across each animal, calmly led them away.



When he had gone, it occurred to Hans that he had less oats and no more asses than he had before.

“Tuyfel!” he exclaimed, scratching his pow; “I puy dot yackasses, und I don’t vos god ‘im so mooch as I didn’t haf ‘im before — ain’t it?”

Very much to his comfort it was, therefore, to see Jo come by next day leading the same animals.

“Hi!” he shrieked; “you prings me to my yackasses. You gif me to my broberdy back!”

“Oh, very well, Hans. If you want to crawfish out of a fair bargain, all right. I’ll give you back your donkeys, and you give me back my oats.”

“Yaw, yaw,” assented the mollified miller; “you his von honest shentlemans as I vos efer vent anyvhere. But I don’t god ony more oats, und you moost dake vheat, eh?”

And fetching out three sacks of wheat, he handed them over. Jo was proceeding to lay these upon the backs of the animals; but this was too thin for even Hans.

“Ach! you tief-veller! you leabs dis yackasses in me, und go right avay off; odther I bust your het mid a gloob, don’t it?”

So Joseph was reluctantly constrained to hang the donkeys to a fence. While he did this, Hans was making a desperate attempt to think. Presently he brightened up:

“Yo, how you coom by dot vheat all de dime?”

“Why, old mudhead, you gave it to me for the jacks.”

“Und how you coom by dot oats pooty soon avhile ago?”

“Why, I gave that to you for them,” said Joseph, pressed very hard for a reply.

“Vell, den, you goes vetch me back to dot oats so gwicker as a lamb gedwinkle his dail — hay?”

“All right, Hans. Lend me the donkeys to carry off my wheat, and I ‘ll bring back your oats on ‘em.”

Joseph was beginning to despair; but no objection being made, he loaded up the grain, and made off with his docile caravan. In a half-hour he returned with the donkeys, but of course without anything else.

“I zay, Yo, where is dis oats I hear zo mooch dalk aboud still?”

“Oh, curse you and your oats!” growled Jo, with simulated anger. “You make such a fuss about a bargain, I have decided not to trade. Take your old donkeys, and call it square!”

“Den vhere mine vheat is?”

“Now look here, Hans; that wheat is yours, is it?”

“Yaw, yaw.”

“And the donkeys are yours, eh?”

“Yaw, yaw.”

“And the wheat’s been yours all the time, has it?”

“Yaw, yaw.”

“Well, so have the donkeys. I took ‘em out of your pasture in the first place. Now what have you got to complain of?”

The Dutchman reflected all over his head with’ his forefinger-nail.

“Gomblain? I no gomblain ven it is all right. I zee now I vos made a mistaken. Coom, dake a drinks.”

Jo left the animals standing, and went inside, where they pledged one another in brimming mugs of beer. Then taking Hans by the hand,

“I am sorry,” said he, “we can’t trade. Perhaps some other day you will be more reasonable. Good bye!”

And Joseph departed leading away the donkeys!

Hans stood for some moments gazing after him with a complacent smile making his fat face ridiculous. Then turning to his mill-stones, he shook his head with an air of intense self-satisfaction:

“Py donner! Dot Yo Garfey bees a geen, shmard yockey, but he gonnot spiel me svoppin’ yackasses!”

DR. DEADWOOD, I PRESUME.

My name is Shandy, and this is the record of my Sentimental Journey. Mr. Ames Jordan Gannett, proprietor's son of the "York —— ," with which paper I am connected by marriage, sent me a post-card in a sealed envelope, asking me to call at a well-known restaurant in Regent Street. I was then at a well-known restaurant in Houndsditch. I put on my worst and only hat, and went. I found Mr. Gannett, at dinner, eating pease with his knife, in the manner of his countrymen. He opened the conversation, characteristically, thus:

"Where's Dr. Deadwood?"

After several ineffectual guesses I had a happy thought. I asked him:

"Am I my brother's bar-keeper?"

Mr. Gannett pondered deeply, with his forefinger alongside his nose. Finally he replied:

"I give it up."

He continued to eat for some moments in profound silence, as that of a man very much in earnest. Suddenly he resumed:

"Here is a blank cheque, signed. I will send you all my father's personal property to-morrow. Take this and find Dr. Deadwood. Find him actually if you can, but find him. Away!"

I did as requested; that is, I took the cheque. Having supplied myself with such luxuries as were absolutely necessary, I retired to my lodgings. Upon my table in the centre of the room were spread some clean white sheets of foolscap, and sat a bottle of black ink. It was a good omen: the virgin paper was typical of the unexplored interior of Africa; the sable ink represented the night of barbarism, or the hue of barbarians, indifferently.

Now began the most arduous undertaking mentioned in the "York —— ," I mean in history. Lighting my pipe, and fixing my eye upon the ink and paper, I put my hands behind my back and took my departure from the hearthrug toward the Interior. Language fails me; I throw myself upon the reader's imagination. Before I had taken two steps, my vision alighted upon the circular of a quack physician, which I had brought home the day before around a bottle of hair-wash. I now saw the words, "Twenty-one fevers!" This prostrated me for I know not how long. Recovering, I took a step forward, when my eyes fastened themselves upon my pen-wiper, worked into the similitude of a tiger. This compelled me to retreat to the hearthrug for reinforcements. The red-and-white dog displayed upon that article turned a deaf ear to my entreaties; nothing would move him.

A torrent of rain now began falling outside, and I knew the roads were impassable; but, chafing with impatience, I resolved upon another advance. Cautiously proceeding *viâ* the sofa, my attention fell upon a scrap of newspaper; and, to my unspeakable disappointment, I read:

“The various tribes of the Interior are engaged in a bitter warfare.”

It may have related to America, but I could not afford to hazard all upon a guess. I made a wide *détour* by way of the coal-scuttle, and skirted painfully along the sideboard. All this consumed so much time that my pipe expired in gloom, and I went back to the hearthrug to get a match off the chimney-piece. Having done so, I stepped over to the table and sat down, taking up the pen and spreading the paper between myself and the ink-bottle. It was late, and something must be done. Writing the familiar word Ujijijijijiji, I caught a neighbourly cockroach, skewered him upon a pin, and fastened him in the centre of the word. At this supreme moment I felt inclined to fall upon his neck and devour him with kisses; but knowing by experience that cockroaches are not good to eat, I restrained my feelings. Lifting my hat, I said:

“Dr. Deadwood, I presume?”

He did not deny it!

Seeing he was feeling sick, I gave him a bit of cheese and cheered him up a trifle. After he was well restored,

“Tell me,” said I, “is it true that the Regent’s Canal falls into Lake Michigan, thence running uphill to Omaha, as related by Ptolemy, thence spirally to Melbourne, where it joins the delta of the Ganges and becomes an affluent of the Albert Nicaragua, as Herodotus maintains?”

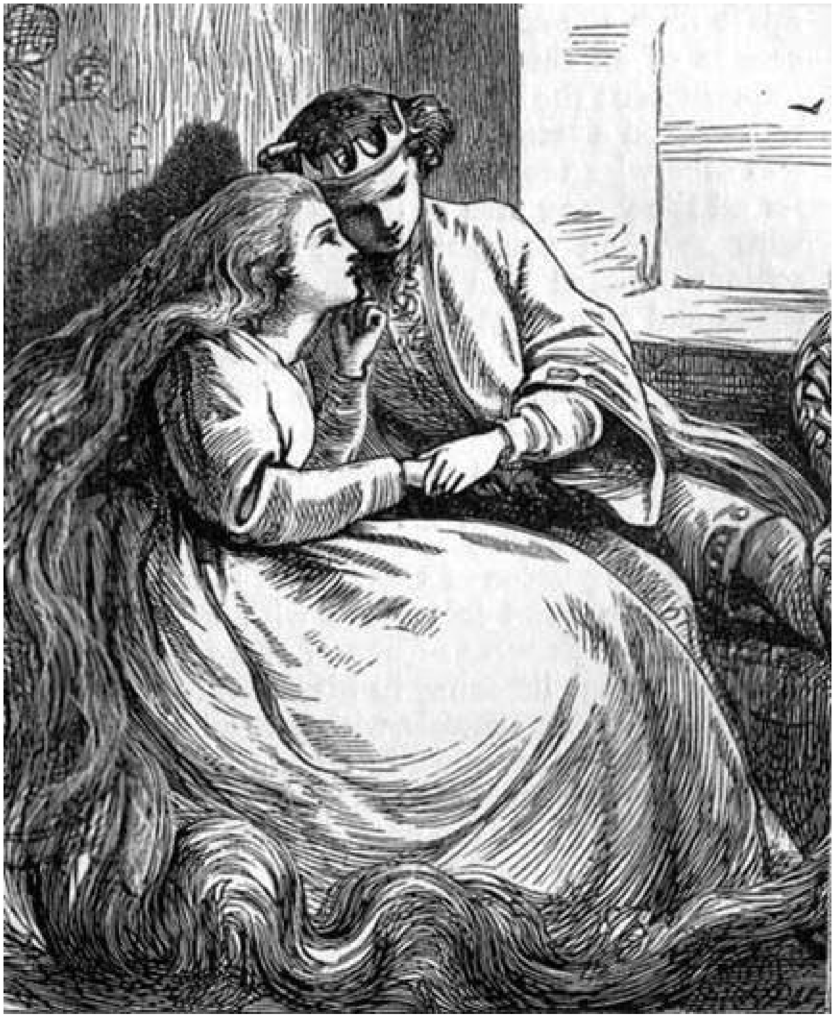
HE DID NOT DENY IT!

The rest is known to the public.

NUT-CRACKING.

In the city of Algammon resided the Prince Champou, who was madly enamoured of the Lady Capilla. She returned his affection — unopened.

In the matter of back-hair the Lady Capilla was blessed even beyond her deserts. Her natural pigtail was so intolerably long that she employed two pages to look after it when she walked out; the one a few yards behind her, the other at the extreme end of the line. Their names were Dan and Beersheba, respectively.



Aside from salaries to these dependents, and quite apart from the consideration of macassar, the possession of all this animal filament was financially unprofitable: the hair market was buoyant, and hers represented a large amount of idle capital. And it was otherwise a source of annoyance and irritation; for all the young men of the city were hotly in love with her, and skirmishing for a love-lock. They seldom troubled Dan much, but the outlying Beersheba had an animated time of it. He was subject to constant incursions, and was always in a riot.

The picture I have drawn to illustrate this history shows nothing of all these squabbles. My pen revels in the battle’s din, but my peaceful pencil loves to depict the scenes I know something about.

Although the Lady Capilla was unwilling to reciprocate the passion of Champou the man, she was not averse to quiet interviews with Champou the Prince. In the course of one of these (see my picture), as she sat listening to his carefully-rehearsed and really artistic avowals, with her tail hanging out of the window, she suddenly interrupted him:

“My dear Prince,” said she, “it is all nonsense, you know, to ask for my heart; but I am not mean; you shall have a lock of my hair.”

“Do you think,” replied the Prince, “that I could be so sordid as to accept a single jewel from that glorious crown? I love this hair of yours very dearly, I admit, but only because of its connection with your divine head. Sever that connection, and I should value it no more than I would a tail plucked from its native cow.”

This comparison seems to me a very fine one, but tastes differ, and to the Lady Capilla it seemed quite the reverse. Rising indignantly, she marched away, her queue running in through the window and gradually tapering off the interview, as it were. Prince Champou saw that he had missed his opportunity, and resolved to repair his error. Straightway he forged an order on Beersheba for thirty yards of love-lock. To serve this writ he sent his business partner; for the Prince was wont to beguile his dragging leisure by tonsorial diversions in an obscure quarter of the town. At first Beersheba was sceptical, but when he saw the writing in real ink, his scruples vanished, and he chopped off the amount of souvenir demanded.

Now Champou’s partner was the Court barber, and by the use of a peculiar hair oil which the two of them had concocted, they soon managed to balden the pates of all the male aristocracy of the place. Then, to supply the demand so created, they devised beautiful wigs from the Lady Capilla’s lost tresses, which they sold at a marvellous profit. And so they were enabled to retire from this narrative with good incomes.

It was known that the Lady Capilla, who, since the alleged murder of one Beersheba, had shut herself up like a hermit, or a jack-knife, would re-enter society; and a great ball was given to do her honour. The feauty, bank, and rashion of Algammon had assembled in the Guildhall for that purpose. While the revelry was at its fiercest, the dancing at its loosest, the rooms at their hottest, and the perspiration at spring-tide, there was a sound of wheels outside, begetting an instant hush of expectation within. The dancers ceased to spin, and all the gentlemen crowded about the door. As the Lady Capilla entered, these instinctively fell into two lines, and she passed down the space between, with her little tail behind her. As the end of the latter came into the room, the wigs of the two gentlemen nearest the door leaped off to join their parent stem. In their haste to recover them the two gentlemen bent eagerly forward, knocking their shining pows together with a vehemence that shattered them like egg-shells. The wigs of the next pair were similarly affected; and in seeking to recover them the pair similarly perished. Then, *crack! spat! pash!* — at every step the lady took there were two heads that beat as one. In three minutes there was but a single living male in the room. He was an odd one, who, having a lady opposite him, had merely pitched himself headlong into her stomach, doubling her like a lemon-squeezer.

It was merry to see the Lady Capilla floating through the mazy dance that night, with all those wigs fighting for their old places in her pigtail.

THE MAGICIAN’S LITTLE JOKE.

About the middle of the fifteenth century there dwelt in the Black Forest a pretty but unfashionable young maiden named Simprella Whiskiblote. The first of these names was hers in monopoly; the other she enjoyed in common with her father. Simprella was the most beautiful fifteenth-century girl I ever saw. She had coloured eyes, a complexion, some hair, and two lips very nearly alike, which partially covered a lot of teeth. She was gifted with the complement of legs commonly worn at that period, supporting a body to which were loosely attached, in the manner of her country, as many arms as she had any use for, inasmuch as she was not required to hold baby. But all these charms were only so many objective points for the operations of the paternal cudgel; for this father of hers was a hard, unfeeling man, who had no bowels of compassion for his bludgeon. He would put it to work early, and keep it going all day; and when it was worn out with hard service, instead of rewarding it with steady employment, he would cruelly throw it aside and get a fresh one. It is scarcely to be wondered at that a girl harried in this way should be driven to the insane expedient of falling in love.

Near the neat mud cottage in which Simprella vegetated was a dense wood, extending for miles in various directions, according to the point from which it was viewed. By a method readily understood, it had been so arranged that it was the next easiest thing in the world to get into it, and the very easiest thing in the world to stay there.

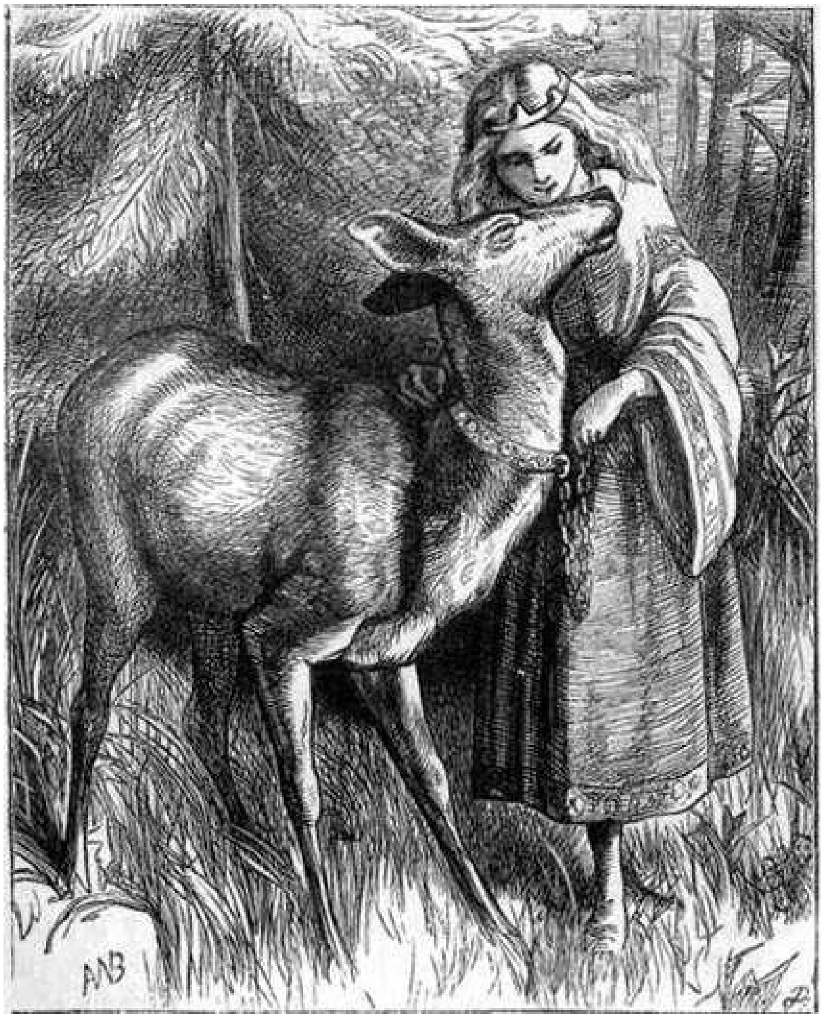
In the centre of this labyrinth was a castle of the early promiscuous order of architecture — an order which was until recently much employed in the construction of powder-works, but is now entirely exploded. In this baronial hall lived an eligible single party — a giant so tall he used a step-ladder to put on his hat, and could not put his hands into his pockets without kneeling. He lived entirely alone, and gave himself up to the practice of iniquity, devising prohibitory liquor laws, imposing the income tax, and drinking shilling claret. But, seeing Simprella one day, he bent himself into the form of a horse-shoe magnet to look into her eyes. Whether it was his magnetic attitude acting upon a young heart steeled by adversity, or his chivalric forbearance in not eating her, I know not: I only know that from that moment she became riotously enamoured of him; and the reader may accept either the scientific or the popular explanation, according to the bent of his mind.

She at once asked the giant in marriage, and obtained the consent of his parents by betraying her father into their hands; explaining to them, however, that he was not good to eat, but might be drunk on the premises.

The marriage proved a very happy one, but the household duties of the bride were extremely irksome. It fatigued her to dress the beeves for dinner; it nearly broke her back to black her lord's boots without any scaffolding. It took her all day to perform any kindly little office for him. But she bore it all uncomplainingly, until one morning he asked her to part his back hair; then the bent sapling of her spirit flew up and hit him in the face. She gathered up some French novels, and retired to a lonely tower to breathe out her soul in unavailing regrets.

One day she saw below her in the forest a dear gazelle, gladding her with its soft black eye. She leaned out of the window, and said *Scat!* The animal did not move. Then she waved her arms — above described — and said *Shew!* This time he did not move as much as he did before. Simprella decided he must have a bill against her; so she closed her shutters, drew down the blind, and pinned the curtains together. A moment later she opened them and peeped out. Then she went down to examine his collar, that she might order one like it.

When the gazelle saw Simprella approach, he arose, and, beckoning with his tail, made off slowly into the wood. Then Simprella perceived this was a supernatural gazelle — a variety now extinct, but which then pervaded the Schwarzwald in considerable quantity — sent by some good magician, who owed the giant a grudge, to pilot her out of the forest. Nothing could exceed her joy at this discovery: she whistled a dirge, sang a Latin hymn, and preached a funeral discourse all in one breath. Such were the artless methods by which the full heart in the fifteenth century was compelled to express its gratitute for benefits; the advertising columns of the daily papers were not then open to the benefactor's pen.



All would now have been well, but for the fact that it was not. In following her deliverer, Simprella observed that his golden collar was inscribed with the mystic words — HANDS OFF! She tried hard to obey the injunction; she did her level best; she — but why amplify? Simprella was a woman.

No sooner had her fingers touched the slender chain depending from the magic collar, than the poor animal’s eyes emitted twin tears, which coursed silently but firmly down his nose, vacating it more in sorrow than in anger. Then he looked up reproachfully into her face. Those were his first tears — this was his last look. In two minutes by the watch he was blind as a mole!

There is but little more to tell. The giant ate himself to death; the castle mouldered and crumbled into pig-pens; empires rose and fell; kings ascended their thrones, and got down again; mountains grew grey, and rivers bald-headed; suits in chancery were brought and decided, and those from the tailor were paid for; the ages came, like maiden aunts, uninvited, and lingered till they became a bore — and still Simprella, with the magician’s curse upon her, conducted her sightless guide through the interminable wilderness!

To all others the labyrinth had yielded up its clue. The hunter threaded its maze; the woodman plunged confidently into its innermost depths; the peasant child gathered ferns unscared in its sunless dells. But often the child abandoned his botany in terror, the woodman bolted for home, and the hunter’s heart went down into his boots, at the sight of a fair young spectre leading a blind phantom through the silent glades. I saw them there in 1860, while I was gunning. I shot them.

SEAFARING.

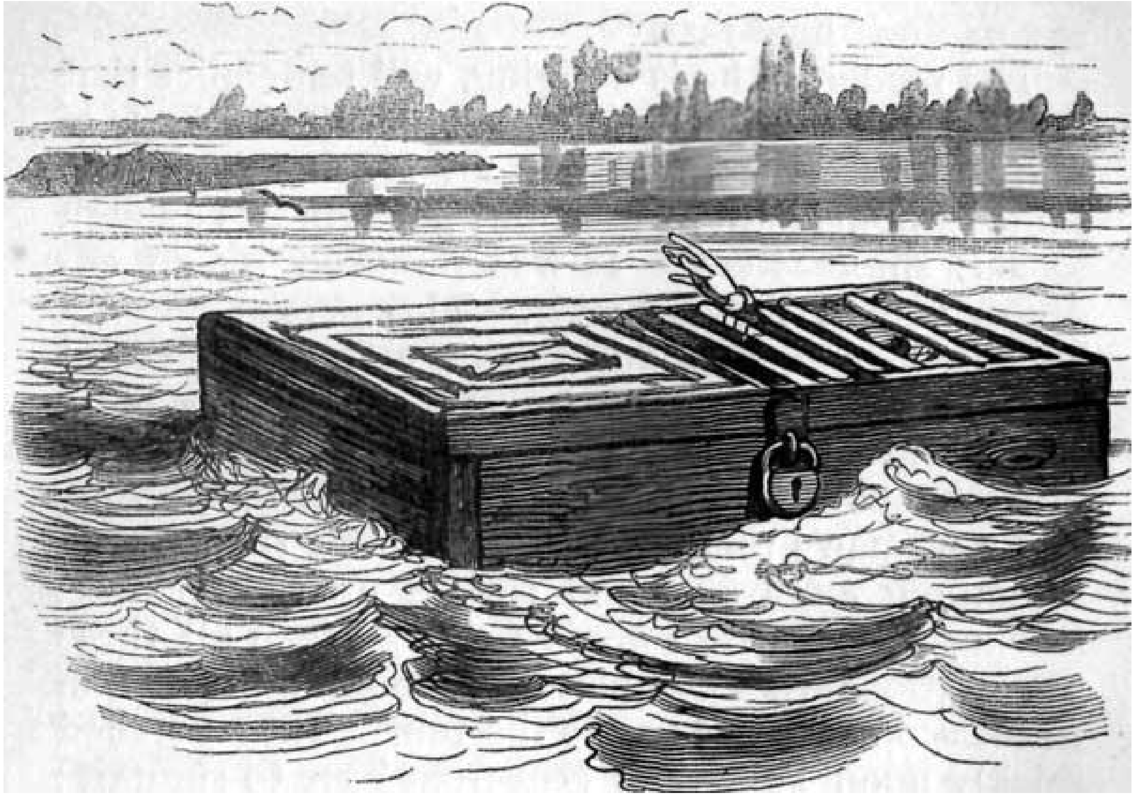
My envious rivals have always sought to cast discredit upon the following tale, by affirming that mere unadorned truth does not constitute a work of literary merit. Be it so: I care not what they call it. A rose with any other smell would be as sweet.

In the autumn of 1868 I wanted to go from Sacramento, California, to San Francisco. I at once went to the railway office and bought a ticket, the clerk telling me that would take me there. But when I tried it, it wouldn't. Vainly I laid it on the railway and sat down upon it: it would not move; and every few minutes an engine would come along and crowd me off the track. I never travelled by so badly managed a line!

I then resolved to go by way of the river, and took passage on a steamboat. The engineer of this boat had once been a candidate for the State Legislature while I was editing a newspaper. Stung to madness by the arguments I had advanced against his election (which consisted mainly in relating how that his cousin was hanged for horse-stealing, and how that his sister had an intolerable squint which a free people could never abide), he had sworn to be revenged. After his defeat I had confessed the charges were false, so far as he personally was concerned, but this did not seem to appease him. He declared he would "get even on me," and he did: he blew up the boat.

Being thus summarily set ashore, I determined that I would be independent of common carriers destitute of common courtesy. I purchased a wooden box, just large enough to admit one, and not transferable. I lay down in this, double-locked it on the outside, and carrying it to the river, launched it upon the watery waste. The box, I soon discovered, had an hereditary tendency to turn over. I had parted my hair in the middle before embarking, but the precaution was inadequate; it secured not immunity, only impartiality, the box turning over one way as readily as the other. I could counteract this evil only by shifting my tobacco from cheek to cheek, and in this way I got on tolerably well until my navy sprang a leak near the stern.

I now began to wish I had not locked down the cover; I could have got out and walked ashore. But it was childish to give way to foolish regrets; so I lay perfectly quiet, and yelled. Presently I thought of my jack-knife. By this time the ship was so water-logged as to be a little more stable. This enabled me to get the knife from my pocket without upsetting more than six or eight times, and inspired hope. Taking the whittle between my teeth, I turned over upon my stomach, and cut a hole through the bottom near the bow. Turning back again, I awaited the result. Most men would have awaited the result, I think, if they could not have got out. For some time there was no result. The ship was too deeply laden astern, where my feet were, and water will not run up hill unless it is paid to do it. But when I called in all my faculties for a good earnest think, the weight of my intellect turned the scale. It was like a cargo of pig-lead in the forecastle. The water, which for nearly an hour I had kept down by drinking it as it rose about my lips, began to run out at the hole I had scuttled, faster than it could be admitted at the one in the stern; and in a few moments the bottom was so dry you might have lighted a match upon it, if you had been there, and obtained the captain's permission.



I was all right now. I had got into San Pablo Bay, where it was all plain sailing. If I could manage to keep off the horizon I should be somewhere before daylight. But a new annoyance was in store for me. The steamboats on these waters are constructed of very frail materials, and whenever one came into collision with my flotilla, she immediately sank. This was most exasperating, for the piercing shrieks of the hapless crews and passengers prevented my getting any sleep. Such disagreeable voices as these people had would have tortured an ear of corn. I felt as if I would like to step out and beat them soft-headed with a club; though of course I had not the heart to do so while the padlock held fast.

The reader, if he is obliging, will remember that there was formerly an obstruction in the harbour of San Francisco, called Blossom Rock, which was some fathoms under water, but not fathoms enough to suit shipmasters. It was removed by an engineer named Von Schmidt. This person bored a hole in it, and sent down some men who gnawed out the whole interior, leaving the rock a mere shell. Into this drawing-room suite were inserted thirty tons of powder, ten barrels of nitro-glycerine, and a woman's temper. Von Schmidt then put in something explosive, and corked up the opening, leaving a long wire hanging out. When all these preparations were complete, the inhabitants of San Francisco came out to see the fun. They perched thickly upon Telegraph Hill from base to summit; they swarmed innumerable upon the beach; the whole region was black with them. All that day they waited, and came again the next. Again they were disappointed, and again they returned full of hope. For three long weeks they did nothing but squat upon that eminence, looking fixedly at the wrong place. But when it transpired that Von Schmidt had hastily left the State directly he had completed his preparations, leaving the wire floating in the water, in the hope that some electrical eel might swim against it and ignite the explosives, the people began to abate their ardour, and move out of town. They said it might be a good while before a qualified gymnotus would pass that way, although the State Ichthyologer assured them that he had put some eels' eggs into the head waters of the Sacramento River not two weeks previously. But the country was very beautiful at that time of the year, and the people would not wait. So when the explosion really occurred, there wasn't anybody in the vicinity to witness it. It was a stupendous explosion all the same, as the unhappy gymnotus discovered to his cost.

Now, I have often thought that if this mighty convulsion had occurred a year or two earlier than it really did, it would have been bad for me as I floated idly past, unconscious of danger. As it was, my little bark was carried out into the broad Pacific, and sank in ten thousand fathoms of the coldest water! — it makes my teeth chatter to relate it!

TONY ROLLO’S CONCLUSION.

To a degree unprecedented in the Rollo family, of Illinois, Antony was an undutiful son. He was so undutiful that he may be said to have been preposterous. There were seven other sons — Antony was the eldest. His younger brothers were a nice, well-behaved bevy of boys as ever you saw. They always attended Sunday School regularly; arriving just before the Doxology (I think Sunday School exercises terminate that way), and sitting in a solemn row on a fence outside, waiting with pious patience for the girls to come forth; then they walked home with them as far as their respective gates. They were an obedient seven, too; they knew well enough the respect due to paternal authority, and when their father told them what was what, and which side up it ought to lie, they never tarried until he had more than picked up a hickory cudgel before tacitly admitting the correctness of the riper judgment. Had the old gentleman commanded the digging of seven graves, and the fabrication of seven board coffins to match, these necessaries would have been provided with unquestioning alacrity.

But Antony, I bleed to state, was of an impractical, pensive turn. He despised industry, scoffed at Sunday-schooling, set up a private standard of morals, and rebelled against natural authority. He wouldn’t be a dutiful son — not for money! He had no natural affections, and loved nothing so well as to sit and think. He was tolerably thoughtful all the time; but with some farming implement in his hand he came out strong. He has been known to take an axe between his knees, and sit on a stump in a “clearing” all day, wrapt in a single continuous meditation. And when interrupted by the interposition of night, or by the superposition of the paternal hickory, he would resume the meditation, next day, precisely where he left off, going on, and on, and on, in one profound and inscrutable think. It was a common remark in the neighbourhood that “If Tony Rollo didn’t let up, he’d think his ridiculous white head off!” And on divers occasions when the old man’s hickory had fallen upon that fleecy globe with unusual ardour, Tony really did think it off — until the continued pain convinced him it was there yet.

You would like to know what Tony was thinking of, all these years. That is what they all wanted to know; but he didn’t seem to tell. When the subject was mentioned he would always try to get away; and if he could not avoid a direct question, he would blush and stammer in so distressing a confusion that the doctor forbade all allusion to the matter, lest the young man should have a convulsion. It was clear enough, however, that the subject of Tony's meditation was "more than average inter*est*in'," as his father phrased it; for sometimes he would give it so grave consideration that observers would double their anxiety about the safety of his head, which he seemed in danger of snapping off with solemn nods; and at other times he would laugh immoderately, smiting his thigh or holding his sides in uncontrollable merriment. But it went on without abatement, and without any disclosure; went on until his poor mother's curiosity had worried her grey hairs in sorrow to the grave; went on until his father, having worn out all the hickory saplings on the place, had made a fair beginning upon the young oaks; went on until all the seven brothers, having married a Sunday-school girl each, had erected comfortable log-houses upon outlying corners of the father-in-legal farms; on, and ever on, until Tony was forty years of age! This appeared to be a turning-point in Tony's career — at this time a subtle change stole into his life, affecting both his inner and his outer self: he worked less than formerly, and thought a good deal more!

Years afterwards, when the fraternal seven were well-to-do freeholders, with clouds of progeny, making their hearts light and their expenses heavy — when the old homestead was upgrown with rank brambles, and the live-stock long extinct — when the aged father had so fallen into the sere and yellow leaf that he couldn't hit hard enough to hurt — Tony, the mere shadow of his former self, sat, one evening, in the chimney corner, thinking very hard indeed. His father and three or four skeleton hounds were the only other persons present; the old gentleman quietly shelling a peck of Indian corn given by a grateful neighbour whose cow he had once pulled out of the mire, and the hounds thinking how cheerfully they would have assisted him had Nature kindly made them graminivorous. Suddenly Tony spake.

"Father," said he, looking straight across the top of the axe-handle which he held between his knees as a mental stimulant, "father, I've been thinking of something a good bit lately."

"Jest thirty-five years, Tony, come next Thanksgiving," replied the old man, promptly, in a thin asthmatic falsetto. "I recollect your mother used to say it dated from the time your Aunt Hannah was here with the girls."

"Yes, father, I think it may be a matter of thirty-five years; though it don't seem so long, does it? But I've been thinking harder for the last week or two, and I'm going to speak out."

Unbounded amazement looked out at the old man's eyes; his tongue, utterly unprepared for the unexpected contingency, refused its office; a corncob imperfectly denuded dropped from his nerveless hand, and was critically examined, in turn, by the gossamer dogs, hoping against hope. A smoking brand in the fireplace fell suddenly upon a bed of hot coals, where, lacking the fortitude of Guatimozin, it emitted a sputtering protest, followed by a thin flame like a visible agony. In the resulting light Tony's haggard face shone competitively with a ruddy blush, which spread over his entire scalp, to the imminent danger of firing his flaxen hair.

"Yes, father," he answered, making a desperate clutch at calmness, but losing his grip, "I'm going to make a clean breast of it this time, for sure! Then you can do what you like about it."

The paternal organ of speech found sufficient strength to grind out an intimation that the paternal ear was open for business.

"I've studied it all over, father; I've looked at it from every side; I've been through it with a lantern! And I've come to the conclusion that, seeing as I'm the oldest, it's about time I was beginning to think of getting married!"

NO CHARGE FOR ATTENDANCE.

Near the road leading from Deutscherkirche to Lagerhaus may be seen the ruins of a little cottage. It never was a very pretentious pile, but it has a history. About the middle of the last century it was occupied by one Heinrich Schneider, who was a small farmer — so small a farmer his clothes wouldn't fit him without a good deal of taking-in. But Heinrich Schneider was young. He had a wife, however — most small farmers have when young. They were rather poor: the farm was just large enough to keep them comfortably hungry.

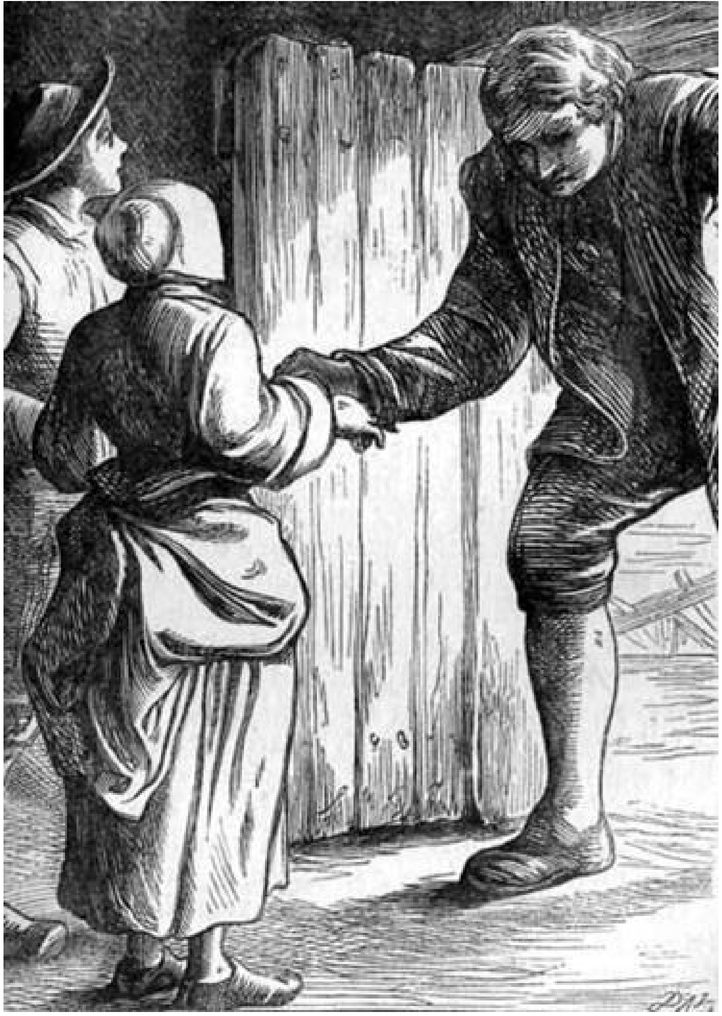
Schneider was not literary in his taste; his sole reading was an old dog's-eared copy of the "Arabian Nights" done into German, and in that he read nothing but the story of "Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp." Upon his five hundredth perusal of that he conceived a valuable idea: he would rub *his* lamp and *corral* a Genie! So he put a thick leather glove on his right hand, and went to the cupboard to get out the lamp. He had no lamp. But this disappointment, which would have been instantly fatal to a more despondent man, was only an agreeable stimulus to him. He took out an old iron candle-snuffer, and went to work upon that.

Now, iron is very hard; it requires more rubbing than any other metal. I once chafed a Genie out of an anvil, but I was quite weary before I got him all out; the slightest irritation of a leaden water-pipe would have fetched the same Genie out of it like a rat from his hole. But having planted all his poultry, sown his potatoes, and set out his wheat, Heinrich had the whole summer before him, and he was patient; he devoted all his time to compelling the attendance of the Supernatural.

When the autumn came, the good wife reaped the chickens, dug out the apples, plucked the pigs and other cereals; and a wonderfully abundant harvest it was. Schneider's crops had flourished amazingly. That was because he did not worry them all summer with agricultural implements. One evening when the produce had been stored, Heinrich sat at his fireside operating upon his candle-snuffer with the same simple faith as in the early spring. Suddenly there was a knock at the door, and the expected Genie put in an appearance. His advent begot no little surprise in the good couple.

He was a very substantial incarnation, indeed, of the Supernatural. About eight feet in length, extremely fat, thick-limbed, ill-favoured, heavy of movement, and generally unpretty, he did not at first sight impress his new master any too favourably.

However, he was given a stool at the fireside, and Heinrich plied him with a multitude of questions: Where did he come from? whom had he last served? how did he like Aladdin? and did he think *they* should get on well? To all these queries the Genie returned evasive answers; he was Delphic to the verge of unintelligibility. He would only nod mysteriously, muttering beneath his breath in some unknown tongue, probably Arabic — in which, however, his master thought he could distinguish the words “roast” and “boiled” with significant frequency. This Genie must have served last in the capacity of cook.



This was a gratifying discovery: for the next four months or so there would be nothing to do about the farm; the Slave could prepare the family meals during the winter, and in the spring go regularly to work. Schneider was too shrewd to risk everything by extravagant demands all at once. He remembered the roc’s egg of the legend, and thought he would proceed with caution. So the good couple brought out their cooking utensils, and by pantomime inducted the Slave into the mystery of their use. They showed him the larder, the cellars, the granary, the chicken-coops, and everything. He appeared interested and intelligent, apprehended the salient points of the situation with marvellous ease, and nodded like he would drop his big head off — did everything but talk.

After this the *frau* prepared the evening meal, the Genie assisting very satisfactorily, except that his notions of quantity were rather too liberal; perhaps this was natural in one accustomed to palaces and courts. When all was on the table, by way of testing his Slave’s obedience Heinrich sat down at the board and carelessly rubbed the candle-snuffer. The Genie was there in a second! Not only so, but he fell upon the viands with an ardour and sincerity that were alarming. In two minutes he had got away with everything on the table. The rapidity with which that spirit crowded all manner of edibles into his neck was simply shocking!

Having finished his repast he stretched himself before the fire and went to sleep. Heinrich and Barbara were depressed in spirit; they sat up until nearly morning in silence, waiting for the Genie to vanish for the night; but he did not perceptibly vanish any. Moreover, he had not vanished next morning; he had risen with the lark, and was preparing breakfast, having made his estimates upon a basis of most immoderate consumption. To this he soon sat down with the same catholicity of appetite that had distinguished him the previous evening. Having bolted this preposterous breakfast he arrayed his fat face in a sable scowl, beat his master with a stewpan, stretched himself before the fire, and again addressed himself to sleep. Over a furtive and clandestine meal in the larder, Heinrich and Barbara confessed themselves thoroughly heart-sick of the Supernatural.

“I told you so,” said he; “depend upon it, patient industry is a thousand per cent. better than this invisible agency. I will now take the fatal candle-snuffer a mile from here, rub it real hard, fling it aside, and run away.”

But he didn’t. During the night ten feet of snow had fallen. It lay all winter too.

Early the next spring there emerged from that cottage by the wayside the unstable framework of a man dragging through seas of melting snow a tottering female of dejected aspect. Forlorn, crippled, famishing, and discouraged, these melancholy relics held on their way until they came to a cross-roads (all leading to Lagerhaus), where they saw clinging to an upright post the tatter of an old placard. It read as follows:

☞

LOST, strayed, or stolen, from Herr Schaackhofer’s Grand Museum, the celebrated Patagonian Giant, Ugolulah. Height 8 ft. 2 in., elegant figure, handsome, intelligent features, sprightly and vivacious in conversation, of engaging address, temperate in diet, harmless and tractable in disposition. Answers to the nickname of Fritz Sneddeker. Any one returning him to Herr Schaackhofer will receive Seven Thalers Reward, and no questions asked.

It was a tempting offer, but they did not go back for the giant. But he was afterwards discovered sleeping sweetly upon the hearthstone, after a hearty meal of empty barrels and boxes. Being secured he was found to be too fat for egress by the door. So the house was pulled down to let him out; and that is how it happens to be in ruins now.

PERNICKETTY’S FRIGHT.

“Sssssst!”

Dan Golby held up his hand to enjoin silence; in a breath we were as quiet as mice. Then it came again, borne upon the night wind from away somewhere in the darkness toward the mountains, across miles of treeless plain — a low, dismal, sobbing sound, like the wail of a strangling child! It was nothing but the howl of a wolf, and a wolf is about the last thing a man who knows the cowardly beast would be afraid of; but there was something so weird and unearthly in this “cry between the silences” — something so banshee-like in its suggestion of the grave — that, old mountaineers that we were, and long familiar with it, we felt an instinctive dread — a dread which was not fear, but only a sense of utter solitude and desolation. There is no sound known to mortal ear that has in it so strange a power upon the imagination as the night-howl of this wretched beast, heard across the dreary wastes of the desert he disgraces.

Involuntarily we drew nearer together, and some one of the party stirred the fire till it sent up a tall flame, widening the black circle shutting us in on all sides. Again rose the faint far cry, and was answered by one fainter and more far in the opposite quarter. Then another, and yet another, struck in — a dozen, a hundred all at once; and in three minutes the whole invisible outer world seemed to consist mainly of wolves, jangled out of tune by some convulsion of nature.

About this time it was a pleasing study to watch the countenance of Old Nick. This party had joined us at Fort Benton, whither he had come on a steamboat, up the Missouri. This was his maiden venture upon the plains, and his habit of querulous faultfinding had, on the first day out, secured him the *sobriquet* of Old Pernicketty, which the attrition of time had worn down to Old Nick. He knew no more of wolves and other animals than a naturalist, and he was now a trifle frightened. He was crouching beside his saddle and kit, listening with all his soul, his hands suspended before him with divergent fingers, his face ashy pale, and his jaw hanging unconsidered below.

Suddenly Dan Golby, who had been watching him with an amused smile, assumed a grave aspect, listened a moment very intently, and remarked:

“Boys, if I didn’t *know* those were wolves, I should say we’d better get out of this.”

“Eh?” exclaimed Nick, eagerly; “if you did not know they were *wolves*? Why, what else, and what worse, could they be?”

“Well, there’s an innocent!” replied Dan, winking slyly at the rest of us. “Why, they *might* be Injuns, of course. Don’t you know, you old bummer, that that’s the way the red devils run a surprise party? Don’t you know that when you hear a parcel of wolves letting on like that, at night, it’s a hundred to one they carry bows and arrows?”

Here one or two old hunters on the opposite side of the fire, who had not caught Dan’s precautionary wink, laughed good-humouredly, and made derisive comments. At this Dan seemed much vexed, and getting up, he strode over to them to argue it out. It was surprising how easily they were brought round to his way of thinking!

By this time Old Nick was thoroughly perturbed. He fidgeted about, examining his rifle and pistols, tightened his belt, and looked in the direction of his horse. His anxiety became so painful that he did not attempt to conceal it. Upon our part, we affected to partially share it. One of us finally asked Dan if he was quite *sure* they were wolves. Then Dan listened a long time with his ear to the ground, after which he said, hesitatingly:

“Well, no; there’s no such thing as *absolute* certainty, I suppose; but I *think* they’re wolves. Still, there’s no harm in being ready for anything — always well to be ready, I suppose.”

Nick needed nothing more; he pounced upon his saddle and bridle, slung them upon his mustang, and had everything snug in less time than it takes to tell it. The rest of the party were far too comfortable to co-operate with Dan to any considerable extent; we contented ourselves with making a show of examining our weapons. All this time the wolves, as is their way when attracted by firelight, were closing in, clamouring like a legion of fiends. If Nick had known that a single pistol-shot would have sent them scampering away for dear life, I presume he would have fired one; as it was, he had Indian on the brain, and just stood by his horse, quaking till his teeth rattled like dice in a box.

“No,” pursued the implacable Dan, “these *can’t* be Injuns; for if they were, we should, perhaps, hear an owl or two among them. The chiefs sometimes hoot, owl-fashion, just to let the rabble know they’re standing up to the work like men, and to show where they are.”

“Too-hoo-hoo-hoo-hooaw!”

It took us all by surprise. Nick made one spring and came down astride his sleepy mustang, with force enough to have crushed a smaller beast. We all rose to our feet, except Jerry Hunker, who was lying flat on his stomach, with his head buried in his arms, and whom we had thought sound asleep. One look at *him* reassured us as to the “owl” business, and we settled back, each man pretending to his neighbour that he had got up merely for effect upon Nick.

That man was now a sight to see. He sat in his saddle gesticulating wildly, and imploring us to get ready. He trembled like a jelly-fish. He took out his pistols, cocked them, and thrust them so back into the holsters, without knowing what he was about. He cocked his rifle, holding it with the muzzle directed anywhere, but principally our way; grasped his bowie-knife between his teeth, and cut his tongue trying to talk; spurred his nag into the fire, and backed him out across our blankets; and finally sat still, utterly unnerved, while we roared with the laughter we could no longer suppress.

Hwissss! pft! swt! cheew! Bones of Cæsar! The arrows flitted and clipt amongst us like a flight of bats! Dan Golby threw a double-summersault, alighting on his head. Dory Durkee went smashing into the fire. Jerry Hunker was pinned to the sod where he lay fast asleep. Such dodging and ducking, and clawing about for weapons I never saw. And such genuine Indian yelling — it chills my marrow to write of it!

Old Nick vanished like a dream; and long before we could find our tools and get to work we heard the desultory reports of his pistols exploding in his holsters, as his pony measured off the darkness between us and safety.

For some fifteen minutes we had tolerable warm work of it, individually, collectively, and miscellaneously; single-handed, and one against a dozen; struggling with painted savages in the firelight, and with one another in the dark; shooting the living, and stabbing the dead; stampeding our horses, and fighting *them*; battling with anything that would battle, and smashing our gunstocks on whatever would not!

When all was done — when we had renovated our fire, collected our horses, and got our dead into position — we sat down to talk it over. As we sat there, cutting up our clothing for bandages, digging the poisoned arrow-heads out of our limbs, readjusting our scalps, or swapping them for such vagrant ones as there was nobody to identify, we could not help smiling to think how we had frightened Old Nick. Dan Golby, who was sinking rapidly, whispered that “it was the one sweet memory he had to sustain and cheer him in crossing the dark river into everlasting f —— .” It is uncertain how Dan would have finished that last word; he may have meant “felicity” — he may have meant “fire.” It is nobody’s business.

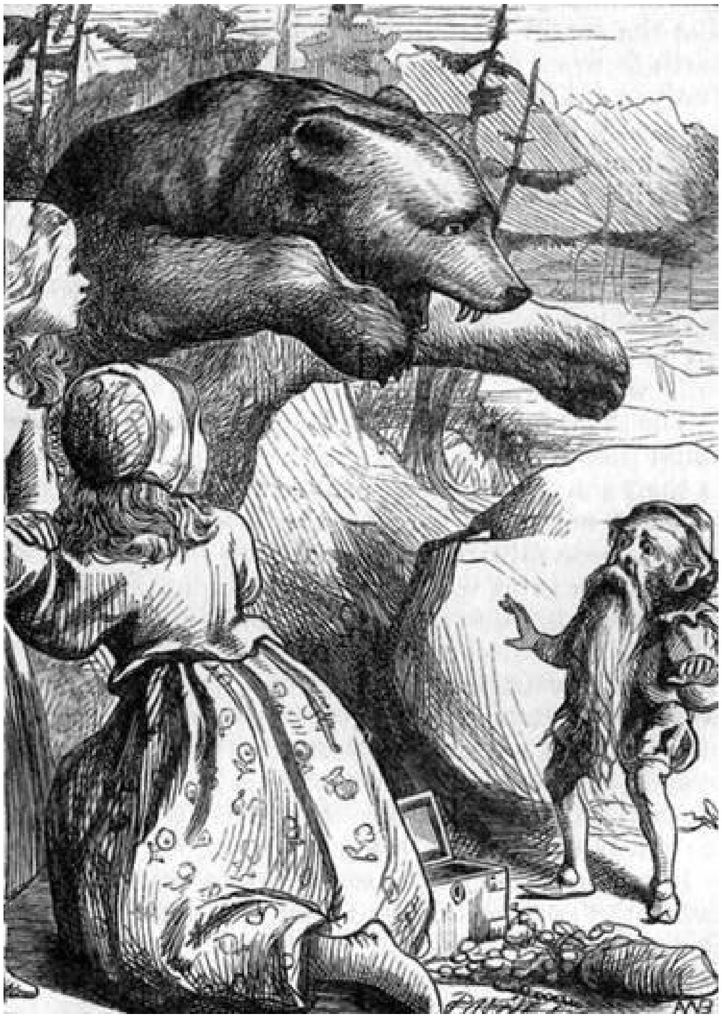
JUNIPER.

He was a dwarf, was Juniper. About the time of his birth Nature was executing a large order for prime giants, and had need of all her materials. Juniper infested the wooded interior of Norway, and dwelt in a cave — a miserable hole in which a blind bat in a condition of sempiternal torpor would have declined to hibernate, rent-free. Juniper was such a feeble little wretch, so inoffensive in his way of life, so modest in his demeanour, that every one was disposed to love him like a cousin; there was not enough of him to love like a brother. He, too, was inclined to return the affection; he was too weak to love very hard, but he made the best stagger at it he could. But a singular fatality prevented a perfect communion of soul between him and his neighbours. A strange destiny had thrown its shadow upon him, which made it cool for him in summer. There was a divinity that shaped his ends extremely rough, no matter how he hewed them.

Somewhere in that vicinity lived a monstrous bear — a great hulking obnoxious beast who had no more soul than tail. This rascal had somehow conceived a notion that the appointed function of his existence was the extermination of the dwarf. If you met the latter you might rely with cheerful confidence upon seeing the ferocious brute in eager pursuit of him in less than a minute. No sooner would Juniper fairly accost you, looking timidly over his shoulder the while, than the raging savage would leap out of some contiguous jungle and make after him like a locomotive engine too late for the train. Then poor Juniper would streak it for the nearest crowd of people, diving and dodging amongst their shins with nimble skill, shrieking all the time like a panther. He was as earnest about it as if he had made a bet upon the result of the race. Of course everybody was too busy to stop, but in his blind terror the dwarf would single out some luckless wight — commonly some well-dressed person; Juniper instinctively sought the protection of the aristocracy — getting behind him, ducking between his legs, surrounding him, dancing through him — doing anything to save the paltry flitch of his own bacon. Presently the bear would lose all patience and nip the other fellow. Then, ashamed of losing his temper, he would sneak sullenly away, taking along the body. When he had gone, poor Juniper would fall upon his knees, tearing his beard, pounding his breast, and crying *Mea culpa* in deep remorse. Afterwards he would pay a visit of condolence to the bereaved relations and offer to pay the funeral expenses; but of course there never were any funeral expenses. Everybody, as before stated, liked the unhappy dwarf, but nobody liked the company he kept, and people were not at home to him as a rule. Whenever he came into a village traffic was temporarily suspended, and he was made the centre of as broad a solitude as could be hastily improvised.

Many were the attempts to capture the terrible beast; hundreds of the country people would assemble to hunt him with guns and dogs. But even the dogs seemed to have an instinctive sense of some occult connection between him and the dwarf, and could never be made to understand that it was the former that was wanted. Directly they were laid on the scent they would forsake it to invest the dwarf's abode; and it was with much difficulty the pitying huntsmen could induce them to raise the siege. Things went on in this unsatisfactory fashion for years; the population annually decreasing, and Juniper making the most miraculous escapes.

Now there resided in a small village near by, a brace of twins; little orphan girls, named Jalap and Ginseng. Their considerate neighbours had told them such pleasing tales about the bear that they decided to leave the country. So they got their valuables together in a box and set out. They met Juniper! He approached to inform them it was a fine morning, when the great beast of a bear "rose like the steam of rich distilled perfume" from the earth in front of them, and made a mouth at him. Juniper did not run, as might have been expected; he stood for a moment peering into the brute's cavernous jaws, and then flew! He absented himself with such extraordinary nimbleness that after he was a mile distant his image appeared to be standing there yet; and looking back he saw it himself. Baffled of his dwarf, the bear thought he would make a shift to get on, for the present, with an orphan. So he picked up Jalap by her middle, and thoughtfully withdrew.



The thankful but disgusted Ginseng continued her emigration, but soon missed the jewel-box, which in their alarm had been dropped and burst asunder. She did not much care for the jewels, but it contained some valuable papers, among them the "Examiner" (a print which once had the misfortune to condemn a book written by the author of this tale) and this she doted on. Returning for her property, she peered cautiously around the angle of a rock, and saw a spectacle that begot in her mind a languid interest. The bear had returned upon a similar mission; he was calmly distending his cheeks with the contents of the broken box. And perched on a rock near at hand sat Juniper waiting for him!

It was natural that a suspicion of collusion between the two should dawn upon that infant's mind. It did dawn; it brightened and broadened into the perfect day of conviction. It was a revelation to the child. "At that moment," said she afterwards, "I felt that I could lay my finger on the best-trained bear in Christendom." But with praiseworthy moderation she controlled herself and didn't do it; she just stood still and allowed the beast to proceed. Having stored all the jewels in his capacious mouth, he began taking in the valuable papers.

First some title-deeds disappeared; then some railway bonds; presently a roll of rent-receipts. All these seemed to be as honey to his tongue; he smiled a smile of tranquil happiness. Finally the newspaper vanished into his face like a wisp of straw drawn into a threshing machine.

Then the brute expanded his mouth with a ludicrous gape, spilling out the jewels, a glittering shower. Then he snapped his jaws like a steel trap afflicted with *tetanus*, and stood on his head awhile. Next he made a feeble endeavour to complicate the relations between his parts — to tie himself into a love-knot. Failing in this he lay flat upon his side, wept, retched, and finally, fashioning his visage into the semblance of sickly grin, gave up the ghost. I don't know what he died of; I suppose it was hereditary in his family.

The guilty come always to grief. Juniper was arrested, charged with conspiracy to kill, tried, convicted, sentenced to be hanged, and before the sun went down was pardoned. In searching his cavern the police discovered countless human bones, much torn clothing, and a mighty multitude of empty purses. But nothing of any value — not an article of any value. It was a mystery what Juniper had done with his ill-gotten valuables. The police confessed it was a mystery!

FOLLOWING THE SEA.

At the time of “the great earthquake of ‘68,” I was at Arica, Peru. I have not a map by me, and am not certain that Arica is not in Chili, but it can’t make much difference; there was earthquake all along there. As nearly as I can remember it occured in August — about the middle of August, 1869 or ‘70.

Sam Baxter was with me; I think we had gone from San Francisco to make a railway, or something. On the morning of the ‘quake, Sam and I had gone down to the beach to bathe. We had shed our boots and begun to moult, when there was a slight tremor of the earth, as if the elephant who supports it were pushing upwards, or lying down and getting up again. Next, the surges, which were flattening themselves upon the sand and dragging away such small trifles as they could lay hold of, began racing out seaward, as if they had received a telegraphic dispatch that somebody was not expected to live. This was needless, for *we* did not expect to live.

When the sea had receded entirely out of sight, we started after it; for it will be remembered we had come to bathe; and bathing without some kind of water is not refreshing in a hot climate. I have heard that bathing in asses’ milk is invigorating, but at that time I had no dealings with other authors. I have had no dealings with them since.

For the first four or five miles the walking was very difficult, although the grade was tolerably steep. The ground was soft, there were tangled forests of sea-weed, old rotting ships, rusty anchors, human skeletons, and a multitude of things to impede the pedestrian. The floundering sharks bit our legs as we toiled past them, and we were constantly slipping down upon the flat fish strewn about like orange-peel on a sidewalk. Sam, too, had stuffed his shirt-front with such a weight of Spanish doubloons from the wreck of an old galleon, that I had to help him across all the worst places. It was very dispiriting.

Presently, away on the western horizon, I saw the sea coming back. It occurred to me then that I did not wish it to come back. A tidal wave is nearly always wet, and I was now a good way from home, with no means of making a fire.

The same was true of Sam, but he did not appear to think of it in that way. He stood quite still a moment with his eyes fixed on the advancing line of water; then turned to me, saying, very earnestly:

“Tell you what, William; I never wanted a ship so bad from the cradle to the grave! I would give m-o-r-e for a ship! — more than for all the railways and turnpikes you could scare up! I’d give more than a hundred, thousand, million dollars! I would — I’d give all I’m worth, and all my Erie shares, for — just — one — little — ship!”

To show how lightly he could part with his wealth, he lifted his shirt out of his trousers, unbosoming himself of his doubloons, which tumbled about his feet, a golden storm.

By this time the tidal wave was close upon us. Call *that* a wave! It was one solid green wall of water, higher than Niagara Falls, stretching as far as we could see to right and left, without a break in its towering front! It was by no means clear what we ought to do. The moving wall showed no projections by means of which the most daring climber could hope to reach the top. There was no ivy; there were no window-ledges. Stay! — there was the lightning-conductor! No, there wasn’t any lightning-conductor. Of course, not!

Looking despairingly upward, I made a tolerably good beginning at thinking of all the mean actions I had wrought in the flesh, when I saw projecting beyond the crest of the wave a ship’s bowsprit, with a man sitting on it, reading a newspaper! Thank fortune, we were saved!

Falling upon our knees with tearful gratitude, we got up again and ran — ran as fast as we could, I suspect; for now the whole fore-part of the ship bulged through the water directly above our heads, and might lose its balance any moment. If we had only brought along our umbrellas!

I shouted to the man on the bowsprit to drop us a line. He merely replied that his correspondence was already very onerous, and he hadn’t any pen and ink.

Then I told him I wanted to get aboard. He said I would find one on the beach, about three leagues to the south’ard, where the “Nancy Tucker” went ashore.

At these replies I was disheartened. It was not so much that the man withheld assistance, as that he made puns. Presently, however, he folded his newspaper, put it carefully away in his pocket, went and got a line, and let it down to us just as we were about to give up the race. Sam made a lunge at it, and got it — right into his side! For the fiend above had appended a shark-hook to the end of the line — which was *his* notion of humour. But this was no time for crimination and recrimination. I laid hold of Sam’s legs, the end of the rope was passed about the capstan, and as soon as the men on board had had a little grog, we were hauled up. I can assure you that it was no fine experience to go up in that way, close to the smooth vertical front of water, with the whales tumbling out all round and above us, and the sword-fishes nosing us pointedly with vulgar curiosity.

We had no sooner set foot on deck, and got Sam disengaged from the hook, than the purser stepped up with book and pencil.

“Tickets, gentlemen.”

We told him we hadn’t any tickets, and he ordered us to be set ashore in a boat. It was represented to him that this was quite impossible under the circumstances; but he replied that he had nothing to do with circumstances — did not know anything about circumstances. Nothing would move him till the captain, who was a really kind-hearted man, came on deck and knocked him overboard with a spare topmast. We were now stripped of our clothing, chafed all over with stiff brushes, rolled on our stomachs, wrapped in flannels, laid before a hot stove in the saloon, and strangled with scalding brandy. We had not been wet, nor had we swallowed any sea-water, but the surgeon said this was the proper treatment. I suspect, poor man, he did not often get the opportunity to resuscitate anybody; in fact, he admitted he had not had any such case as ours for years. It is uncertain what he might have done to us if the tender-hearted captain had not thrashed him into his cabin with a knotted hawser, and told us to go on deck.

By this time the ship was passing above the town of Arica, and the sailors were all for’d, sitting on the bulwarks, snapping peas and small shot at the terrified inhabitants flitting through the streets a hundred feet below. These harmless projectiles rattled very merrily upon the upturned boot-soles of the fleeting multitude; but not seeing any fun in this, we were about to go astern and fish a little, when the ship grounded on a hill-top. The captain hove out all the anchors he had about him; and when the water went swirling back to its legal level, taking the town along for company, there we were, in the midst of a charming agricultural country, but at some distance from any sea-port.

At sunrise next morning we were all on deck. Sam sauntered aft to the binnacle, cast his eye carelessly upon the compass, and uttered an ejaculation of astonishment.

“Tell *you*, captain,” he called out, “this has been a direr convulsion of nature than you have any idea. Everything’s been screwed right round. Needle points due south!”

“Why, you cussed lubber!” growled the skipper, moving up and taking a look, “it p’ints d’rectly to labbard, an’ there’s the sun, dead ahead!”

Sam turned and confronted him, with a steady gaze of ineffable contempt.

“Now, who said it wasn’t dead ahead? — tell me *that*. Shows how much *you* know about earthquakes. ‘Course, I didn’t mean just this continent, nor just this earth: I tell you, the *whole thing’s* turned!”

A TALE OF SPANISH VENGEANCE.

Don Hemstitch Blodoza was an hidalgo — one of the highest dalgos of old Spain. He had a comfortably picturesque castle on the Guadalquiver, with towers, battlements, and mortages on it; but as it belonged, not to his own creditors, but to those of his bitterest enemy, who inhabited it, Don Hemstitch preferred the forest as a steady residence. He had that curse of Spanish pride which will not permit one to be a burden upon the man who may happen to have massacred all one's relations, and set a price upon the heads of one's family generally. He had made a vow never to accept the hospitality of Don Symposio — not if he died for it. So he pervaded the romantic dells, and the sunless jungle was infected with the sound of his guitar. He rose in the morning and laved him in the limpid brooklet; and the beams of the noonday sun fell upon him in the pursuit of diet — "The thistle's downy seed his fare, His drink the morning dew."

He throve but indifferently upon this meagre regimen, but beyond all other evils a true Spaniard of the poorer sort dreads obesity. During the darkest night of the season he will get up at an absurd hour and stab his best friend in the back rather than grow fat.

It will of course be suspected by the experienced reader that Don Hemstitch did not have any bed. Like the Horatian lines above quoted — "He perched at will on every spray."

In translating this tale into the French, M. Victor Hugo will please twig the proper meaning of the word "spray"; I shall be very angry if he make it appear that my hero is a gull.

One morning while Don Hemstitch was dozing upon his leafy couch — not his main couch, but a branch — he was roused from his tranquil nap by the grunting of swine; or, if you like subtle distinctions, by the sound of human voices. Peering cautiously through his bed-hangings, he saw below him at a little distance two of his countrymen in conversation. The fine practised phrenzy of their looks, their excellently rehearsed air of apprehensive secrecy, showed him they were merely conspiring against somebody's life; and he dismissed the matter from his mind until the mention of his own name recalled his attention. One of the conspirators was urging the other to make one of a joint-stock company for the Don's assassination; but the more conscientious plotter would not consent.

“The laws of Spain,” said the latter, “with which we have an acquaintance meanly withheld from the attorneys, enjoin that when one man murders another, except for debt, he must make provision for the widow and orphans. I leave it to you if, after the summer’s unprofitable business, we are in a position to assume the care and education of a large family. We have not a single asset, and our liabilities amount to fourteen widows, and more than thirty children of strong and increasing appetite.

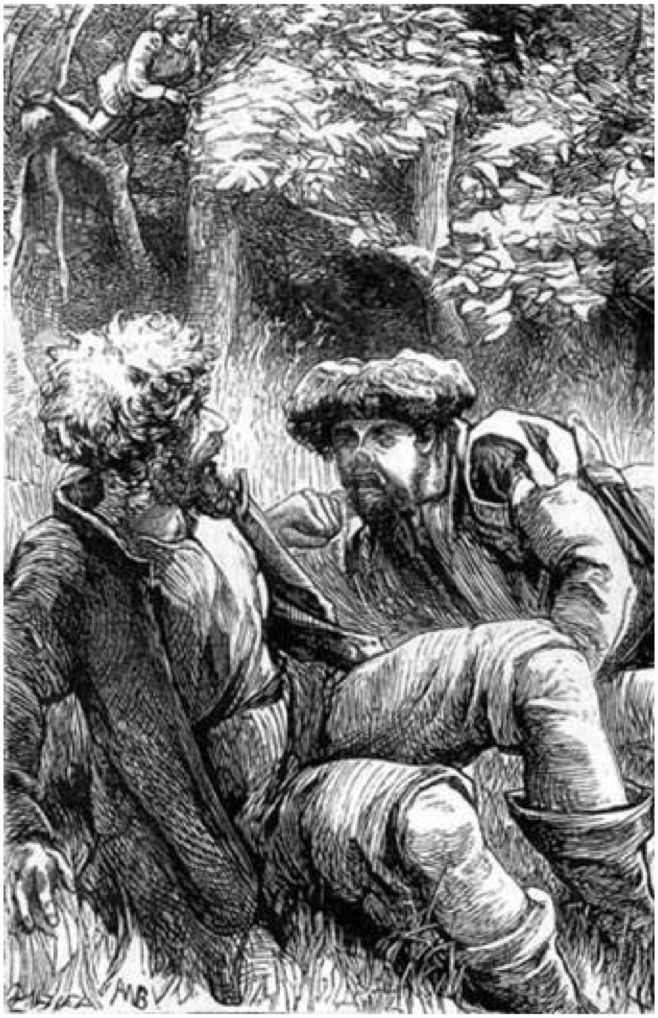
“*Car-r-rajo!*” hissed the other through his beard; “we will slaughter the lot of them!”

At this cold-blooded proposition his merciful companion recoiled aghast.

“*Diablo*!” he shrieked. “Tempt me no farther. What! immolate a whole hecatomb of guiltless women and children? Consider the funeral expense!”

There is really no moving the law-abiding soul to crime of doubtful profit. But Don Hemstitch was not at ease; he could not say how soon it might transpire that he had nor chick nor child. Should Don Symposio pass that way and communicate this information — and he was in a position to know — the moral scruples of the conscientious plotter would vanish like the baseless fabric of a beaten cur. Moreover, it is always unpleasant to be included in a conspiracy in which one is not a conspirator. Don Hemstitch resolved to sell his life at the highest market price.

Hastily descending his tree, he wrapped his cloak about him and stood for some time, wishing he had a poniard. Trying the temper of this upon his thumbnail, he found it much more amiable than his own. It was a keen Toledo blade — keen enough to sever a hare. To nerve himself for the deadly work before him, he began thinking of a lady whom he had once met — the lovely Donna Lavaca, beloved of El Toro-blanco. Having thus wrought up his Castilian soul to a high pitch of jealously, he felt quite irresistible, and advanced towards the two ruffians with his poniard deftly latent in his flowing sleeve. His mien was hostile, his stride puissant, his nose tip-tilted — not to put too fine a point upon it, petallic. Don Hemstitch was upon the war-path with all his might. The forest trembled as he trode, the earth bent like thin ice beneath his heel. Birds, beasts, serpents, and poachers fled affrighted to the right and left of his course. He came down upon the unsuspecting assassins like a mild Spanish avalanche.



“*Senores!*” he thundered, with a frightful scowl and a faint aroma of garlic, “patter your *pater-nosters* as fast as you conveniently may. You have but ten minutes to exist. Has either of you a watch?”

Then might you have seen a guilty dismay over-spreading the faces of two sinners, like a sudden snow paling twin mountain peaks. In the presence of Death, Crime shuddered and sank into his boots. Conscience stood appalled in the sight of Retribution. In vain the villains essayed speech; each palsied tongue beat out upon the yielding air some weak words of supplication, then clave to its proper concave. Two pairs of brawny knees unsettled their knitted braces, and bent limply beneath their loads of incarnate wickedness swaying unsteadily above. With clenched hands and streaming eyes these wretched men prayed silently. At this supreme moment an American gentleman sitting by, with his heels upon a rotted oaken stump, tilted back his chair, laid down his newspaper, and began operating upon a half-eaten apple-pie. One glance at the title of that print — one look at that calm angular face clasped in its crescent of crisp crust — and Don Hemstitch Blodoza reeled, staggered like an exhausted spinning-top.

He spread his baffled hand upon his eyes, and sank heavily to earth!

"Saved! saved!" shrieked the penitent conspirators, springing to their feet. The far deeps of the forest whispered in consultation, and a distant hillside echoed back the words. "Saved!" sang the rocks—"Saved!" the glad birds twittered from the leaves above. The hare that Don Hemstitch Blodoza's poniard would have severed limped awkwardly but confidently about, saying, "Saved!" as well as he knew how.

Explanation is needless. The American gentleman was the Special Correspondent of the "New York Herald." It is tolerably well known that except beneath his searching eye no considerable event can occur — and his whole attention was focused upon that apple-pie!

That is how Spanish vengeance was balked of its issue.

MRS. DENNISON’S HEAD.

While I was employed in the Bank of Loan and Discount (said Mr. Applegarth, smiling the smile with which he always prefaced a nice old story), there was another clerk there, named Dennison — a quiet, reticent fellow, the very soul of truth, and a great favourite with us all. He always wore crape on his hat, and once when asked for whom he was in mourning he replied his wife, and seemed much affected. We all expressed our sympathy as delicately as possible, and no more was said upon the subject. Some weeks after this he seemed to have arrived at that stage of tempered grief at which it becomes a relief to give sorrow words — to speak of the departed one to sympathizing friends; for one day he voluntarily began talking of his bereavement, and of the terrible calamity by which his wife had been deprived of her head!

This sharpened our curiosity to the keenest edge; but of course we controlled it, hoping he would volunteer some further information with regard to so singular a misfortune; but when day after day went by and he did not allude to the matter, we got worked up into a fever of excitement about it. One evening after Dennison had gone, we held a kind of political meeting about it, at which all possible and impossible methods of decapitation were suggested as the ones to which Mrs. D. probably owed her extraordinary demise. I am sorry to add that we so far forgot the grave character of the event as to lay small wagers that it was done this way or that way; that it was accidental or premeditated; that she had had a hand in it herself or that it was wrought by circumstances beyond her control. All was mere conjecture, however; but from that time Dennison, as the custodian of a secret upon which we had staked our cash, was an object of more than usual interest. It wasn’t entirely that, either; aside from our paltry wagers, we felt a consuming curiosity to know the truth for its own sake. Each set himself to work to elicit the dread secret in some way; and the misdirected ingenuity we developed was wonderful. All sorts of pious devices were resorted to to entice poor Dennison into clearing up the mystery. By a thousand indirect methods we sought to entrap him into divulging all. History, fiction, poesy — all were laid under contribution, and from Goliah down, through Charles I., to Sam Spigger, a local celebrity who got his head entangled in mill machinery, every one who had ever mourned the loss of a head received his due share of attention during office hours. The regularity with which we introduced, and the pertinacity with which we stuck to, this one topic came near getting us all discharged; for one day the cashier came out of his private office and intimated that if we valued our situations the subject of hanging would afford us the means of retaining them. He added that he always selected his subordinates with an eye to their conversational abilities, but variety of subject was as desirable, at times, as exhaustive treatment.

During all this discussion Dennison, albeit he had evinced from the first a singular interest in the theme, and shirked not his fair share of the conversation, never once seemed to understand that it had any reference to himself. His frank truthful nature was quite unable to detect the personal significance of the subject. It was plain that nothing short of a definite inquiry would elicit the information we were dying to obtain; and at a "caucus," one evening, we drew lots to determine who should openly propound it. The choice fell upon me.

Next morning we were at the bank somewhat earlier than usual, waiting impatiently for Dennison and the time to open the doors: they always arrived together. When Dennison stepped into the room, bowing in his engaging manner to each clerk as he passed to his own desk, I confronted him, shaking him warmly by the hand. At that moment all the others fell to writing and figuring with unusual avidity, as if thinking of anything under the sun except Dennison's wife's head.

"Oh, Dennison," I began, as carelessly as I could manage it; "speaking of decapitation reminds me of something I would like to ask you. I have intended asking it several times, but it has always slipped my memory. Of course you will pardon me if it is not a fair question."

As if by magic, the scratching of pens died away, leaving a dead silence which quite disconcerted me; but I blundered on:

"I heard the other day — that is, you said — or it was in the newspapers — or somewhere — something about your poor wife, you understand — about her losing her head. Would you mind telling me how such a distressing accident — if it was an accident — occurred?"

When I had finished, Dennison walked straight past me as if he didn't see me, went round the counter to his stool, and perched himself gravely on the top of it, facing the other clerks. Then he began speaking, calmly, and without apparent emotion:

"Gentlemen, I have long desired to speak of this thing, but you gave me no encouragement, and I naturally supposed you were indifferent. I now thank you all for the friendly interest you take in my affairs. I will satisfy your curiosity upon this point at once, if you will promise never hereafter to allude to the matter, and to ask not a single question now."

We all promised upon our sacred honour, and collected about him with the utmost eagerness. He bent his head a moment, then raised it, quietly saying:

"My poor wife's head was bitten off!"

"By what?" we all exclaimed eagerly, with suspended breath.

He gave us a look full of reproach, turned to his desk, and went at his work.

We went at ours.

A FOWL WITCH.

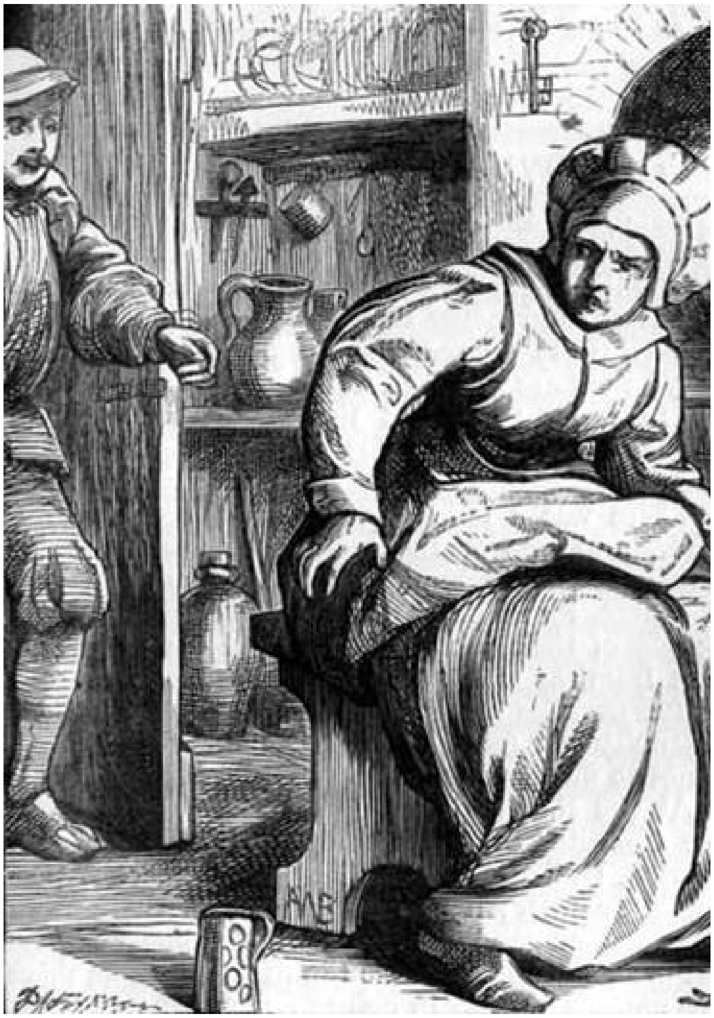
Frau Gaubenslosher was strongly suspected of witchcraft. I don’t think she was a witch, but would not like to swear she was not, in a court of law, unless a good deal depended upon my testimony, and I had been properly suborned beforehand. A great many persons accused of witchcraft have themselves stoutly disbelieved the charge, until, when subjected to shooting with a silver bullet or boiling in oil, they have found themselves unable to endure the test. And it must be confessed appearances were against the Frau. In the first place, she lived quite alone in a forest, and had no visiting list. This was suspicious. Secondly — and it was thus, mainly, that she had acquired her evil repute — all the barn-yard fowls in the vicinity seemed to bear her the most uncompromising ill-will. Whenever she passed a flock of hens, or ducks, or turkeys, or geese, one of them, with dropped wings, extended neck, and open bill, would start in hot pursuit. Sometimes the whole flock would join in for a few moments with shrill clamour; but there would always be one fleeter and more determined than the rest, and that one would keep up the chase with unflagging zeal clean out of sight.

Upon these occasions the dame’s fright was painful to behold. She would not scream — her organs of screech seemed to have lost their power — nor, as a rule, would she curse; she would just address herself to silent prayerful speed, with every symptom of abject terror!

The Frau’s explanation of this unnatural persecution was singularly weak. Upon a certain night long ago, said she, a poor bedraggled and attenuated gander had applied at her door for relief. He stated in piteous accents that he had eaten nothing for months but tin-tacks and an occasional beer-bottle; and he had not roosted under cover for so long a time he did not know what it was like. Would she give him a place on her fender, and fetch out six or eight cold pies to amuse him while she was preparing his supper? To this plea she turned a deaf ear, and he went away. He came again the next night, however, bringing a written certificate from a clergyman that his case was a deserving one. She would not aid him, and he departed. The night after he presented himself again, with a paper signed by the relieving officer of the parish, stating that the necessity for help was most urgent.

By this time the Frau’s good-nature was quite exhausted: she slew him, dressed him, put him in a pot, and boiled him. She kept him boiling for three or four days, but she did not eat him because her teeth were just like anybody’s teeth — no weaker, perhaps, but certainly no stronger nor sharper. So she fed him to a threshing machine of her acquaintance, which managed to masticate some of the more modern portions, but was hopelessly wrecked upon the neck. From that time the poor beldame had lived under the ban of a great curse. Hens took after her as naturally as after the soaring beetle; geese pursued her as if she were a fleeting tadpole; ducks, turkeys, and guinea fowl camped upon her trail with tireless pertinacity.

Now there was a leaven of improbability in this tale, and it leavened the whole lump. Ganders do not roost; there is not one in a hundred of them that could sit on a fender long enough to say Jack Robinson. So, as the Frau lived a thousand years before the birth of common sense — say about a half century ago — when everything uncommon had a smell of the supernatural, there was nothing for it but to consider her a witch. Had she been very feeble and withered, the people would have burned her, out of hand; but they did not like to proceed to extremes without perfectly legal evidence. They were cautious, for they had made several mistakes recently. They had sentenced two or three females to the stake, and upon being stripped the limbs and bodies of these had not redeemed the hideous promise of their shrivelled faces and hands. Justice was ashamed of having toasted comparatively plump and presumably innocent women; and the punishment of this one was wisely postponed until the proof should be all in.



But in the meantime a graceless youth, named Hans Blisselwartle, made the startling discovery that none of the fowls that pursued the Frau ever came back to boast of it. A brief martial career seemed to have weaned them from the arts of peace and the love of their kindred. Full of unutterable suspicion, Hans one day followed in the rear of an exciting race between the timorous dame and an avenging pullet. They were too rapid for him; but bursting suddenly in at the lady's door some fifteen minutes afterward, he found her in the act of placing the plucked and eviscerated Nemesis upon her cooking range. The Frau betrayed considerable confusion; and although the accusing Blisselwartle could not but recognize in her act a certain poetic justice, he could not conceal from himself that there was something grossly selfish and sordid in it. He thought it was a good deal like bottling an annoying ghost and selling him for clarified moonlight; or like haltering a nightmare and putting her to the cart.

When it transpired that the Frau ate her feathered persecutors, the patience of the villagers refused to honour the new demand upon it: she was at once arrested, and charged with prostituting a noble superstition to a base selfish end.

We will pass over the trial; suffice it she was convicted. But even then they had not the heart to burn a middle-aged woman, with full rounded outlines, as a witch, so they broke her upon the wheel as a thief.

The reckless antipathy of the domestic fowls to this inoffensive lady remains to be explained. Having rejected her theory, I am bound in honour to set up one of my own. Happily an inventory of her effects, now before me, furnishes a tolerably safe basis. Amongst the articles of personal property I note “One long, thin, silken fishing line, and hook.” Now if I were a barn-yard fowl — say a goose — and a lady not a friend of mine were to pass me, munching sweetmeats, and were to drop a nice fat worm, passing on apparently unconscious of her loss, I think I should try to get away with that worm. And if after swallowing it I felt drawn towards that lady by a strong personal attachment, I suppose that I should yield if I could not help it. And then if the lady chose to run and I chose to follow, making a good deal of noise, I suppose it would look as if I were engaged in a very reprehensible pursuit, would it not? With the light I have, that is the way in which the case presents itself to my intelligence; though, of course, I may be wrong.

THE CIVIL SERVICE IN FLORIDA.

Colonel Bulper was of a slumberous turn. Most people are not: they work all day and sleep all night — are always in one or the other condition of unrest, and never slumber. Such persons, the Colonel used to remark, are fit only for sentry duty; they are good to watch our property while we take our rest — and they take the property. But this tale is not of them; it is of Colonel Bulper.

There was a fellow named Halsey, a practical joker, and one of the most disagreeable of his class. He would remain broad awake for a year at a time, for no other purpose than to break other people of their natural rest. And I must admit that from the wreck of his faculties upon the rock of *insomnia* he had somehow rescued a marvellous ingenuity and fertility of expedient. But this tale is not so much of him as of Colonel Bulper.

At the time of which I write, the Colonel was the Collector of Customs at a sea-port town in Florida, United States. The climate there is perpetual summer; it never rains, nor anything; and there was no good reason why the Colonel should not have enjoyed it to the top of his bent, as there was enough for all. In point of fact, the Collectorship had been given him solely that he might repair his wasted vitality by a short season of unbroken repose; for during the Presidential canvass immediately preceding his appointment he had been kept awake a long time by means of strong tea, in order to deliver an able and exhaustive political argument prepared by the candidate, who was ultimately successful in spite of it. Halsey, who had favoured the other aspirant, was a merchant, and had nothing in the world to do but annoy the collector. If the latter could have kept away from him, the dignity of the office might have been preserved, and the object of the incumbent's appointment to it attained; but sneak away whithersoever he might — into the heart of the dismal swamp, or anywhere in the Everglades — some vagrom Indian or casual negro was sure to stumble over him before long, and go and tell Halsey, securing a plug of tobacco for reward. Or if he was not found in this way, some company was tolerably certain, in the course of time, to survey a line of railway athwart his leafy couch, and laying his prostrate trunk aside out of the way, send word to his persecutor; who, as soon as the line was as nearly completed as it ever would be, would come down on horseback with some diabolical device for waking the slumberer. I will confess there is a subtle seeming of unlikelihood about all this; but in the land where Ponce de Leon searched for the Fountain of Youth there is an air of unreality in everything. I can only say I have had the story by me a long time, and it seems to me just as true as it was the day I wrote it.

Sometimes the Colonel would seek out a hillside with a southern exposure; but no sooner would he compose his members for a bit of slumber, than Halsey would set about making inquiries for him, under pretence that a ship was *en route* from Liverpool, and the collector's signature might be required for her anchoring papers. Having traced him — which, owing to the meddlesome treachery of the venal natives, he was always able to do — Halsey would set off to Texas for a seed of the prickly pear, which he would plant exactly beneath the slumberer's body. This he called a triumph of modern engineering! As soon as the young vegetable had pushed its spines above the soil, of course the Colonel would have to get up and seek another spot — and this nearly always waked him.

Upon one occasion the Colonel existed five consecutive days without slumber — travelling all day and sleeping in the weeds at night — to find an almost inaccessible crag, on the summit of which he hoped to be undisturbed until the action of the dew should wear away the rock all round his body, when he expected and was willing to roll off and wake. But even there Halsey found him out, and put eagles' eggs in his southern pockets to hatch. When the young birds were well grown, they pecked so sharply at the Colonel's legs that he had to get up and wring their necks. The malevolence of people who scorn slumber seems to be practically unlimited.

At last the Colonel resolved upon revenge, and having dreamed out a feasible plan, proceeded to put it into execution. He had in the warehouse some Government powder, and causing a keg of this to be conveyed into his private office, he knocked out the head. He next penned a note to Halsey, asking him to step down to the office "upon important business;" adding in a postscript, "As I am liable to be called out for a few moments at any time, in case you do not find me in, please sit down and amuse yourself with the newspaper until I return." He knew Halsey was at his counting-house, and would certainly come if only to learn what signification a Government official attached to the word "business." Then the Colonel procured a brief candle and set it into the powder. His plan was to light the candle, dispatch a porter with the message, and bolt for home. Having completed his preparations, he leaned back in his easy chair and smiled. He smiled a long time, and even achieved a chuckle. For the first time in his life, he felt a serene sense of happiness in being particularly wide awake. Then, without moving from his chair, he ignited the taper, and put out his hand toward the bell-cord, to summon the porter. At this stage of his vengeance the Colonel fell into a tranquil and refreshing slumber.

There is nothing omitted here; that is merely the Colonel’s present address.

A TALE OF THE BOSPHORUS.

Pollimariar was the daughter of a Mussulman — she was, in fact, a Mussulgirl. She lived at Stamboul, the name of which is an admirable rhyme to what Pollimariar was profanely asserted to be by her two sisters, Djainan and Djulya. These were very much older than Pollimariar, and proportionately wicked. In wickedness they could discount her, giving her the first innings.

The relations between Pollimariar and her sisters were in all respects similar to those that existed between Cinderella and *her* sisters. Indeed, these big girls seldom read anything but the story of Cinderella; and that work, no doubt, had its influence in forming their character. They were always apparelling themselves in gaudy dresses from Paris, and going away to balls, leaving their meritorious little sister weeping at home in their every-day finery. Their father was a commercial traveller, absent with his samples in Damascus most of the time; and the poor girl had no one to protect her from the outrage of exclusion from the parties to which she was not invited. She fretted and chafed very much at first, but after forbearance ceased to be a virtue it came rather natural to her to exercise a patient endurance. But perceiving this was agreeable to her sisters she abandoned it, devising a rare scheme of vengeance. She sent to the "Levant Herald" the following "personal" advertisement:

"G.V. — Regent's Canal 10.30 p.m., Q.K.X. is O.K.! With coals at 48 sh-ll-ngs I cannot endure existence without you! Ask for G-field St-ch. J.G. + ¶ pro rata. B-tty's N-bob P-ckles. Oz-k-r-t! Meet me at the 'Turban and Scimitar,' Bebeck Road, Thursday morning at three o'clock; blue cotton umbrella, wooden shoes, and Ulster overskirt Polonaise all round the bottom.

One Who Wants to Know Yer."

The latter half of this contained the gist of the whole matter; the other things were put in just to prevent the notice from being conspicuously sensible. Next morning, when the Grand Vizier took up his newspaper, he could not help knowing he was the person addressed; and at the appointed hour he kept the tryst. What passed between them the sequel will disclose, if I can think it out to suit me.

Soon afterwards Djainan and Djulya received cards of invitation to a grand ball at the Sultan's palace, given to celebrate the arrival of a choice lot of Circassian beauties in the market. The first thing the wicked sisters did was to flourish these invitations triumphantly before the eyes of Pollimariar, who declared she did not believe a word of it; indeed, she professed such aggressive incredulity that she had to be severely beaten. But she denied the invitations to the last. She thought it was best to deny them.

The invitations stated that at the proper hour the old original Sultana would call personally, and conduct the young ladies to the palace; and she did so. They thought, at the time, she bore a striking resemblance to a Grand Vizier with his beard shaven off, and this led them into some desultory reflections upon the sin of nepotism and family favour at Court; but, like all moral reflections, these came to nothing. The old original Sultana's attire, also, was, with the exception of a reticule and fan, conspicuously epicene; but, in a country where popular notions of sex are somewhat confused, this excited no surprise.

As the three marched off in stately array, poor little deserted Pollimariar stood cowering at one side, with her fingers spread loosely upon her eyes, weeping like — a crocodile. The Sultana said it was late; they would have to make haste. She had not fetched a cab, however, and a recent inundation of dogs very much impeded their progress. By-and-by the dogs became shallower, but it was near eleven o'clock before they arrived at the Sublime Porte — very old and fruity. A janizary standing here split his visage to grin, but it was surprising how quickly the Sultana had his head off.

Pretty soon afterwards they came to a low door, where the Sultana whistled three times and kicked at the panels. It soon yielded, disclosing two gigantic Nubian eunuchs, black as the ace of clubs, who stared at first, but when shown a very cleverly-executed signet-ring of paste, knocked their heads against the ground with respectful violence. Then one of them consulted a thick book, and took from a secret drawer two metal badges numbered 7,394 and 7,395, which he fastened about the necks of the now frightened girls, who had just observed that the Sultana had vanished. The numbers on the badges showed that this would be a very crowded ball.

The other black now advanced with a measuring tape, and began gravely measuring Djainan from head to heel. She ventured to ask the sable guardian with what article of dress she was to be fitted.

"Bedad, thin, av ye must know," said he, grinning, "it is to be a *sack*."

"What! a *sacque* for a ball?"

"Indade, it's right ye are, mavourneen; it is fer a ball — fer a cannon-ball — as will make yer purty body swim to the bothom nately as ony shtone."

And the eunuch toyed lovingly with his measuring-tape, which the wretched girls now observed was singularly like a bow-string.

"O, sister," shrieked Djainan, "this is—"

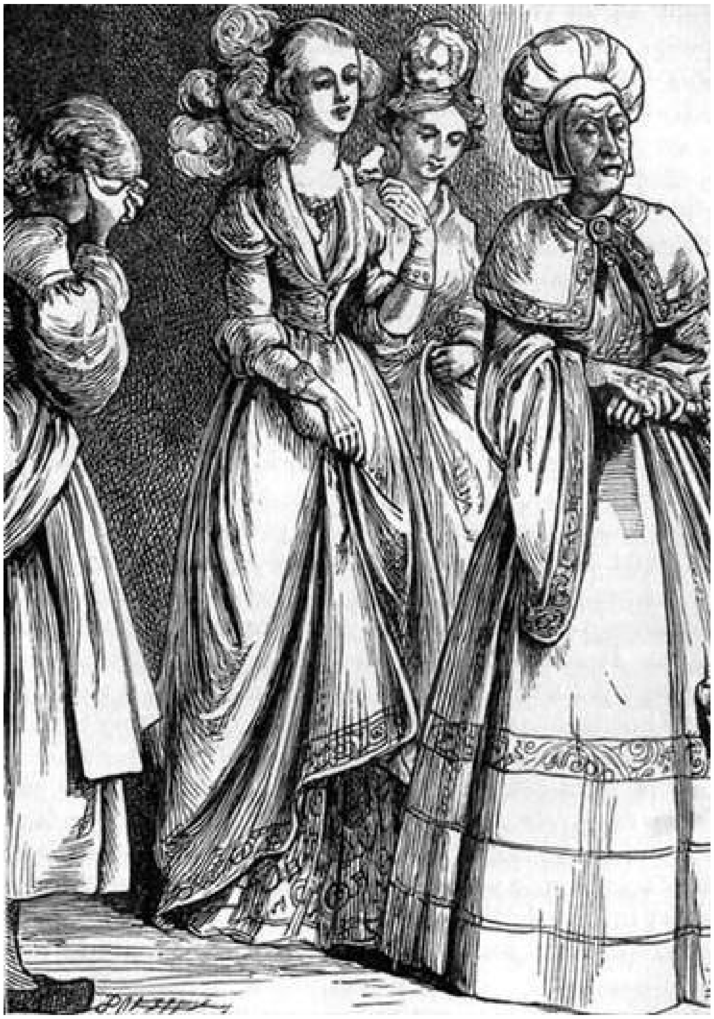
“O, sister,” shrieked Djulya, “this is—”

“That horrid—”

“That horrid—”

“Harem!”

It was even so. A minute later the betrayed maidens were carried, feet-foremost-and-fainting, through a particularly dirty portal, over which gleamed the infernal legend: “Who enters here leaves soap behind!” I wash my hands of them.



Next morning the following “personal” appeared in the “Levant Herald:”

“P-ll-m-r-r. — All is over. The S-lt-n cleared his shelves of the old stock at midnight. If you purchased the Circ-n B-ties with the money I advanced, be sure you don’t keep them too long on hand. Prices are sure to fall when I have done buying for the H-r-m. Meet me at time and place agreed upon, and divide profits. G — d V — r.”

JOHN SMITH, LIBERATOR

AN EDITORIAL ARTICLE FROM A JOURNAL. OF MAY 3rd, A.D. 3873.

At the quiet little village of Smithcester (the ancient London) will be celebrated to-day the twentieth, centennial anniversary of this remarkable man, the foremost figure of antiquity. The recurrence of what, no longer than six centuries ago, was a popular *fête* day, and which even now is seldom allowed to pass without some recognition by those to whom the word liberty means something more precious than gold, is provocative of peculiar emotion. It matters little whether or no tradition has correctly fixed the date of Smith's birth; that he *was* born — that being born he wrought nobly at the work his hand found to do — that by the mere force of his intellect he established our present perfect form of government, under which civilization has attained its highest and ripest development — these are facts beside which a mere question of chronology sinks into insignificance.

That this extraordinary man originated the Smitharchic system of government is, perhaps, open to honest doubt; very possibly it had a *de facto* existence in various debased and uncertain shapes as early as the sixteenth century. But that he cleared it of its overlying errors and superstitions, gave it a definite form, and shaped it into an intelligible scheme, there is the strongest evidence in the fragments of twentieth-century literature that have descended to us, disfigured though they are with amazingly contradictory statements of his birth, parentage, and manner of life before he strode upon the political stage as the liberator of mankind. It is stated that Snakeshear — one of his contemporaries, a poet whose works had in their day some reputation (though it is difficult to say why) — alludes to him as "the noblest Roman of them all;" our ancestors at the time being called Englishmen or Romans, indifferently. In the only fragment of Snakeshear extant, however, we have been unable to find this passage.

Smith's military power is amply attested in an ancient manuscript of undoubted authenticity, which has just been translated from the Japanese. It is an account of the water-battle of Loo, by an eyewitness whose name, unfortunately, has not reached us. In this battle it is stated that Smith overthrew the great Neapolitan general, whom he captured and conveyed in chains to the island of Chickenhurst.

In his Political History of the Twentieth Century, the late Mimble — or, as he would have been called in the time of which he writes, *Mister* Mimble — has this luminous sentence: “With the single exception of Coblentz, there was no European government the Liberator did not upset, and which he did not erect into a pure Smitharchy; and though some of them afterward relapsed temporarily into the crude forms of antiquity, and others fell into fanciful systems begotten of the intellectual activity he had stirred up, yet so firmly did he establish the principle, that in the Thirty-second Century the enlightened world was, what it has since remained, practically Smitharchic.”

It may be noted here as a curious coincidence, that the same year which saw the birth of him who established rational government witnessed the death of him who perfected literature. In 1873, Martin Farquhar Tupper — next to Smith the most notable name in history — died of starvation in the streets of London. Like that of Smith, his origin is wrapped in profoundest obscurity. No less than seven British cities claimed the honour of his birth. Meagre indeed is our knowledge of this only bard whose works have descended to us through the changes of twenty centuries entire. All that is positively established is that during his life he was editor of “The Times ‘magazine,’” a word of disputed meaning — and, as quaint old Dumbleshaw says, “an accomplished Greek and Latin scholar,” whatever “Greek” and “Latin” may have been. Had Smith and Tupper been contemporaries, the iron deeds of the former would doubtless have been immortalized in the golden pages of the latter. Upon such chances does History depend for her materials!

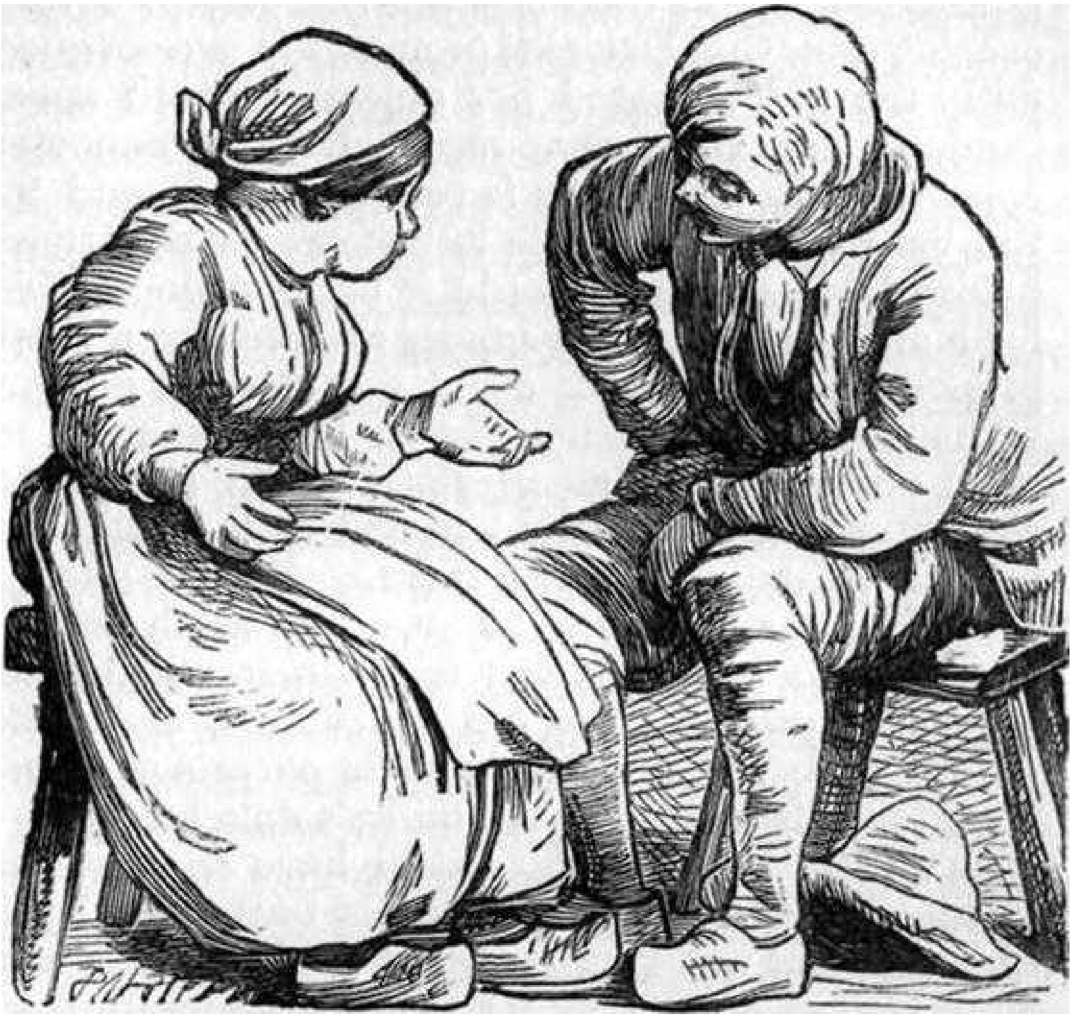
Strangely unimpressible indeed must be the mind which, looking backward through the vista of twenty centuries upon the singular race from whom we are supposed to be descended, can repress a feeling of emotional interest. The names of John Smith and Martin Farquhar Tupper, blazoned upon the page of the dim past, and surrounded by the lesser names of Snakeshear, the first Neapolitan, Oliver Cornwell, Close, “Queen” Elizabeth, or Lambeth, the Dutch Bismarch, Julia Cæsar, and a host of contemporary notables are singularly suggestive. They call to mind the odd old custom of covering the body with “clothes;” the curious error of Copernicus and other wide guesses of antique “science;” the lost arts of telegramy, steam locomotion, and printing with movable types; and the exploded theory of gunpowder. They set us thinking upon the zealous idolatry which led men to make pious pilgrimages to the then accessible regions about the North Pole and into the interior of Africa, which at that time was but little better than a wilderness. They conjure up visions of bloodthirsty “Emperors,” tyrannical “Kings,” vampire “Presidents,” and useless “Parliaments” — strangely horrible shapes contrasted with the serene and benevolent aspect of our modern Smithocracy!

Let us to-day rejoice that the old order of things has for ever passed away; let us be thankful that our lot has been cast in more wholesome days than those in which John Smith chalked out the better destinies of a savage race, and Tupper sang divine philosophy to inattentive ears. And yet let us keep green the memory of whatever there was of good — if any — in the dark pre-Smithian ages, when men cherished quaint superstitions and rode on the backs of “horses” — when they passed *over* the seas instead of under them — when science had not yet dawned to chase away the shadows of imagination — and when the cabalistic letters A.D., which from habit we still affix to the numerals designating the age of the world, had perhaps a known signification.

SUNDERED HEARTS.

Deidrick Schwackenheimer was a lusty young goatherd. He stood six feet two in his *sabots*, and there was not an ounce of superfluous bone or brain in his composition. If he had a fault, it was a tendency to sleep more than was strictly necessary. The nature of his calling fostered this weakness: after being turned into some neighbour's pasture, his animals would not require looking after until the owner of the soil turned them out again. Their guardian naturally devoted the interval to slumber. Nor was there danger of oversleeping: the pitchfork of the irate husbandman always roused him at the proper moment.

At nightfall Deidrick would marshal his flock and drive it homeward to the milking-yard. Here he was met by the fair young Katrina Buttersprecht, the daughter of his employer, who relieved the tense udders of their daily secretion. One evening after the milking, Deidrick, who had for years been nourishing a secret passion for Katrina, was smitten with an idea. Why should she not be his wife? He went and fetched a stool into the yard, led her tenderly to it, seated her, and *asked* her why. The girl thought a moment, and then was at some pains to explain. She was too young. Her old father required all her care. Her little brother would cry. She was engaged to Max Manglewurzzle. She amplified considerably, but these were the essential points of objection. She set them before him *seriatim* with perfect frankness, and without mental reservation. When she had done, her lover, with that instinctive sense of honour characteristic of the true goatherd, made no attempt to alter her decision. Indeed, he had nodded a heart-broken assent to each separate proposition, and at the conclusion of the last was fast asleep. The next morning he jocundly drove his goats afield and appeared the same as usual, except that he slept a good deal more, and thought of Katrina a good deal less.



That evening when he returned with his spraddling milch-nannies, he found a second stool placed alongside the first. It was a happy augury; his attentions, then, were not altogether distasteful. He seated himself gravely upon the stool, and when Katrina had done milking, she came and occupied the other. He mechanically renewed his proposal. Then the artless maid proceeded to recapitulate the obstacles to the union. She was too young. Her old father required all her care. Her little brother would cry. She was engaged to Max Manglewurzzle. As each objection was stated and told off on the *fraülein's* fingers, Deidrick nodded a resigned acquiescence, and at the finish was fast asleep. Every evening after that Deidrick proposed in perfect good faith, the girl repeated her objections with equal candour, and they were received with somnolent approval. Love-making is very agreeable, and by the usuage of long years it becomes a confirmed habit. In less than a decade it became impossible for Katrina to enjoy her supper without the regular proposal, and Deidrick could not sleep of a night without the preliminary nap in the goat-yard to taper off his wakefulness. Both would have been wretched had they retired to bed with a shade of misunderstanding between them.

And so the seasons went by. The earth grayed and greened herself anew; the planets sailed their appointed courses; the old goats died, and their virtues were perpetuated in their offspring. Max Manglewurzzle married the miller's daughter; Katrina's little brother, who would have cried at her wedding, did not cry any at his own; the aged Buttersprecht was long gathered to his fathers; and Katrina was herself well stricken in years. And still at fall of night she defined her position to the sleeping lover who had sought her hand — defined it in the self-same terms as upon that eventful eve. The gossiping *frauen* began to whisper it would be a match; but it did not look like it as yet. Slanderous tongues even asserted that it ought to have been a match long ago, but I don't see how it could have been, without the girl's consent. The parish clerk began to hanker after his fee; but, lacking patience, he was unreasonable.

The whole countryside was now taking a deep interest in the affair. The aged did not wish to die without beholding the consummation of the love they had seen bud in their youth; and the young did not wish to die at all. But no one liked to interfere; it was feared that counsel to the woman would be rejected, and a thrashing to the man would be misunderstood. At last the parson took heart of grace to make or mar the match. Like a reckless gambler he staked his fee upon the cast of a die. He went one day and removed the two stools — now worn extremely thin — to another corner of the milking-yard.

That evening, when the distended udders had been duly despoiled, the lovers repaired to their trysting-place. They opened their eyes a bit to find the stools removed. They were tormented with a vague presentiment of evil, and stood for some minutes irresolute; then, assisted to a decision by their weakening knees, they seated themselves flat upon the ground. Deidrick stammered a weak proposal, and Katrina essayed an incoherent objection. But she trembled and became unintelligible; and when he attempted to throw in a few nods of generous approval they came in at the wrong places. With one accord they arose and sought their stools. Katrina tried it again. She succeeded in saying her father was over-young to marry, and Max Manglewurzzle would cry if she took care of him. Deidrick executed a reckless nod that made his neck snap, and was broad awake in a minute. A second time they arose. They conveyed the stools back to their primitive position, and began again. She remarked that her little brother was too old to require all her care, and Max would cry to marry her father. Deidrick addressed himself to sleep, but a horrid nightmare galloped rough-shod into his repose and set him off with a strangled snort. The good understanding between those two hearts was for ever dissipated; neither one knew if the other were afoot or on horseback. Like the sailor's thirtieth stroke with the rope'send, it was perfectly disgusting! Their meetings after this were so embarrassing that they soon ceased meeting altogether. Katrina died soon after, a miserable broken-spirited maiden of sixty; and Deidrick drags out a wretched existence in a remote town, upon an income of eight *silbergroschen* a week.

Oh, friends and brethren, if you did but know how slight an act may sunder for ever the bonds of love — how easily one may wreck the peace of two faithful hearts — how almost without an effort the waters of affection may be changed to gall and bitterness — I suspect you would make even more more mischief than you do now.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF BATH.

Bladud was the eldest son of a British King (whose name I perfectly remember, but do not choose to write) *temp*. Solomon — who does not appear to have known Bladud, however. Bladud was, therefore, Prince of Wales. He was more than that: he was a leper — had it very bad, and the Court physician, Sir William Gull, frequently remarked that the Prince's death was merely a question of time. When a man gets to that stage of leprosy he does not care much for society, particularly if no one will have anything to do with him. So Bladud bade a final adieu to the world, and settled in Liverpool. But not agreeing with the climate, he folded his tent into the shape of an Arab, as Longfellow says, and silently stole away to the southward, bringing up in Gloucestershire.

Here Bladud hired himself out to a farmer named Smith, as a swineherd. But Fate, as he expressed it in the vernacular, was "ferninst him." Leprosy is a contagious disease, within certain degrees of consanguinity, and by riding his pigs afield he communicated it to them; so that in a few weeks, barring the fact that they were hogs, they were no better off than he. Mr. Smith was an irritable old gentleman, so choleric he made his bondsmen tremble — though he was now abroad upon his own recognizances. Dreading his wrath, Bladud quitted his employ, without giving the usual week's notice, but so far conforming to custom in other respects as to take his master's pigs along with him.

We find him next at a place called Swainswick — or Swineswig — a mile or two to the north-east of Bath, which, as yet, had no existence, its site being occupied by a smooth level reach of white sand, or a stormy pool of black water, travellers of the time disagree which. At Swainswick Bladud found his level; throwing aside all such nonsense as kingly ambition, and the amenities of civilized society — utterly ignoring the deceitful pleasures of common sense — he contented his simple soul with composing *bouts rimés* for Lady Miller, at Batheaston Villa; that one upon a buttered muffin, falsely ascribed by Walpole to the Duchess of Northumberland, was really constructed by Bladud.

A brief glance at the local history of the period cannot but prove instructive. Ralph Allen was then residing at Sham Castle, where Pope accused him of doing good like a thief in the night and blushing to find it unpopular. Fielding was painfully evolving "Tom Jones" from an inner consciousness that might have been improved by soap and any water but that of Bath. Bishop Warburton had just shot the Count Du Barré in a duel with Lord Chesterfield; and Beau Nash was disputing with Dr. Johnson, at the Pelican Inn, Walcot, upon a question of lexicographical etiquette. It is necessary to learn these things in order the better to appreciate the interest of what follows.

During all this time Bladud never permitted his mind to permanently desert his calling; he found family matters a congenial study, and he thought of his swine a good deal, off and on. One day while baiting them amongst the hills, he observed a cloud of steam ascending from the valley below. Having always believed steam a modern invention, this ancient was surprised, and when his measly charge set up a wild squeal, rushing down a steep place into the aspiring vapour, his astonishment ripened into dismay. As soon as he conveniently could Bladud followed, and there he heard the saw — I mean he saw the herd wallowing and floundering multitudinously in a hot spring, and punctuating the silence of nature with grunts of quiet satisfaction, as the leprosy left them and clave to the waters — to which it cleaves yet. It is not probable the pigs went in there for a medicinal purpose; how could they know? Any butcher will tell you that a pig, after being assassinated, is invariably boiled to loosen the hair. By long usage the custom of getting into hot water has become a habit which the living pig inherits from the dead pork. (See Herbert Spencer on "Heredity.")

Now Bladud (who is said to have studied at Athens, as most Britons of his time did) was a rigid disciple of Bishop Butler; and Butler's line of argument is this: Because a rose-bush blossoms this year, a lamppost will blossom next year. By this ingenious logic he proves the immortality of the human soul, which is good of him; but in so doing he proves, also, the immortality of the souls of snakes, mosquitos, and everything else, which is less commendable. Reasoning by analogy, Bladud was convinced that if these waters would cure a pig, they would cure a prince: and without waiting to see *how* they had cured the bacon, he waded in.

When asked the next day by Sir William Waller if he intended trying the waters again, and if he retained his fondness for that style of bathing, he replied, "Not any, thank you; I am quite cured!" Sir William at once noised abroad the story of the wonderful healing, and when it reached the king's ears, that potentate sent for Bladud to "come home at once and succeed to the throne, just the same as if he had a skin" — which Bladud did. Some time afterwards he thought to outdo Dædalus and Icarus, by flying from the top of St. Paul's Cathedral. He outdid them handsomely; he fell a good deal harder than they did, and broke his precious neck.

Previously to his melancholy end he built the City of Bath, to commemorate his remarkable cure. He endowed the Corporation with ten millions sterling, every penny of the interest of which is annually devoted to the publication of guide-books to Bath, to lure the unwary invalid to his doom. From motives of mercy the Corporation have now set up a contrivance for secretly extracting the mineral properties of the fluid before it is ladled out, but formerly a great number of strangers found a watery grave.

If King Bladud was generous to Bath, Bath has been grateful in return. One statue of him adorns the principal street, and another graces the swimming pond, both speaking likenesses. The one represents him as he was before he divided his leprosy with the pigs; the other shows him as he appeared after breaking his neck.

Writing in 1631, Dr. Jordan says: “The baths are bear-gardens, where both sexes bathe promiscuously, while the passers-by pelt them with dead dogs, cats, and pigs; and even human creatures are hurled over the rails into the water.” It is not so bad as that now, but lodgings are still held at rates which might be advantageously tempered to the shorn.

I append the result of a chemical analysis I caused to be made of these incomparable Waters, that the fame of their virtues may no longer rest upon the inadequate basis of their observed effects.

One hundred parts of the water contain:

Brandate of Sodium	**9.50**	parts.
Sulphuretted Hydrogen	**3.50**	“
Citrate of Magnesia	**15.00**	“
Calves’-foot Jelly	**10.00**	“
Protocarbonate of Brass	**11.00**	“
	7.50	

Nitric Acid	**7.50**	“
Devonshire Cream	**6.00**	“
Treaclate of Soap	**2.00**	“
Robur	**3.50**	“
Superheated Mustard	**11.50**	“
Frogs	**20.45**	“
Traces of Guano, Leprosy, Picallilly, and Scotch Whiskey	.05	“

Temperature of the four baths, 117 degrees each — or 468 altogether.

THE FOLLOWING DORG.

Dad Petto, as everybody called him, had a dog, upon whom he lavished an amount of affection which, had it been disbursed in a proper quarter, would have been adequate to the sentimental needs of a dozen brace of lovers. The name of this dog was Jerusalem, but it might more properly have been Dan-to-Beersheba. He was not a fascinating dog to look at; you can buy a handsomer dog in any shop than this one. He had neither a graceful exterior nor an engaging address. On the contrary, his exceptional plainness had passed into a local proverb; and such was the inbred coarseness of his demeanour, that in the dark you might have thought him a politician.

If you will take two very bandy-legged curs, cut one off just abaft the shoulders, and the other immediately forward of the haunches, rejecting the fore-part of the first and the rear portion of the second, you will have the raw material for constructing a dog something like Dad Petto's. You have only to effect a junction between the accepted sections, and make the thing eat.

Had he been favoured with as many pairs of legs as a centipede, Jerusalem would not have differed materially from either of his race; but it was odd to see such a wealth of dog wedded to such a poverty of leg. He was so long that the most precocious pupil of the public schools could not have committed him to memory in a week.

It was beautiful to see Jerusalem rounding the angle of a wall, and turning his head about to observe how the remainder of the procession was coming on. He was once circumnavigating a small out-house, when, catching sight of his own hinder-quarters, he flew into a terrible rage. The sight of another dog always had this effect upon Jerusalem, and more especially when, as in this case, he thought he could grasp an unfair advantage. So Jerusalem took after that retreating foe as hard as ever he could hook it. Round and round he flew, but the faster he went, the more his centrifugal force widened his circle, until he presently lost sight of his enemy altogether. Then he slowed down, determined to accomplish his end by strategy. Sneaking closely up to the wall, he moved cautiously forward, and when he had made the full circuit, he came smack up against his own tail. Making a sudden spring, which must have stretched him like a bit of India-rubber, he fastened his teeth into his ham, hanging on like a country visitor. He felt sure he had nailed the other dog, but he was equally confident the other dog had nailed him; so the problem was simplified to a mere question of endurance — and Jerusalem was an animal of pluck. The grim conflict was maintained all one day — maintained with deathless perseverance, until Dad Petto discovered the belligerent and uncoupled him. Then Jerusalem looked up at his master with a shake of the head, as much as to say: “It’s a precious opportune arrival for the other pup; but who took *him* off *me*?”

I don’t think I can better illustrate the preposterous longitude of this pet, than by relating an incident that fell under my own observation. I was one day walking along the highway with a friend who was a stranger in the neighbourhood, when a rabbit flashed past us, going our way, but evidently upon urgent business. Immediately upon his heels followed the first instalment of Dad Petto’s mongrel, enveloped in dust, his jaws distended, the lower one shaving the ground to scoop up the rabbit. He was going at a rather lively gait, but was some time in passing. My friend stood a few moments looking on; then rubbed his eyes, looked again, and finally turned to me, just as the brute’s tail flitted by, saying, with a broad stare of astonishment:

“Did you ever see a pack of hounds run so perfectly in line? It beats anything! And the speed, too — they seem fairly blended! If a fellow didn’t know better, he would swear there was but a single dog!”

I suppose it was this peculiarity of Jerusalem that had won old Petto’s regard. He liked as much of anything as he could have for his money; and the expense of this creature, generally speaking, was no greater than that of a brief succinct bull pup. But there were times when he was costly. All dogs are sometimes “off their feed” — will eat nothing for a whole day but a few ox-tails, a pudding or two, and such towelling as they can pick up in the scullery. When Jerusalem got that way, which, to do him justice, was singularly seldom, it made things awkward in the near future. For in a few days after recovering his passion for food, the effect of his former abstemiousness would begin to reach his stomach; but of course all he could *then* devour would work no immediate relief. This he would naturally attribute to the quality of his fare, and would change his diet a dozen times a day, his *menu* in the twelve working hours comprising an astonishing range of articles, from a wood-saw to a kettle of soft soap — edibles as widely dissimilar as the zenith and the nadir, which, also, he would eat. So catholic an appetite was, of course, exceptional: ordinarily Jerusalem was as narrow and illiberal as the best of us. Give him plenty of raw beef, and he would not unsettle his gastric faith by outside speculation or tentative systems.

I could relate things of this dog by the hour. Such, for example, as his clever device for crossing a railway. He never attempted to do this endwise, like other animals, for the obvious reason that, like every one else, he was unable to make any sense of the time-tables; and unless he should by good luck begin the manoeuvre when a train was said to be due, it was likely he would be abbreviated; for of course no one is idiot enough to cross a railway track when the time-table says it is all clear — at least no one as long as Jerusalem. So he would advance his head to the rails, calling in his outlying convolutions, and straightening them alongside the track, parallel with it; and then at a signal previously agreed upon — a short wild bark — this sagacious dog would make the transit unanimously, as it were. By this method he commonly avoided a quarrel with the engine.

Altogether he was a very interesting beast, and his master was fond of him no end. And with the exception of compelling Mr. Petto to remove to the centre of the State to avoid double taxation upon him, he was not wholly unprofitable; for he was the best sheep-dog in the country: he always kept the flock well together by the simple device of surrounding them. Having done so, he would lie down, and eat, and eat, and eat, till there wasn't a sheep left, except a few old rancid ones; and even those he would tear into small spring lambs.

Dad Petto never went anywhere without the superior portion of Jerusalem at his side; and he always alluded to him as "the following dorg." But the beast finally became a great nuisance in Illinois. His body obstructed the roads in all directions; and the Representative of that district in the National Congress was instructed by his constituents to bring in a bill taxing dogs by the linear yard, instead of by the head, as the law then stood. Dad Petto proceeded at once to Washington to "lobby" against the measure. He knew the wife of a clerk in the Bureau of Statistics; armed with this influence he felt confident of success. I was myself in Washington, at the time, trying to secure the removal of a postmaster who was personally obnoxious to me, inasmuch as I had been strongly recommended for the position by some leading citizens, who to their high political characters superadded the more substantial merit of being my relations.

Dad and I were standing, one morning, in front of Willard's Hotel, when he stooped over and began patting Jerusalem on the head. All of a sudden the smiling brute sprang open his mouth and bade farewell to a succession of yells which speedily collected ten thousand miserable office-seekers, and an equal quantity of brigadier-generals, who, all in a breath, inquired who had been stabbed, and what was the name of the lady.

Meantime nothing would pacify the pup; he howled most dismally, punctuating his wails with quick sharp shrieks of mortal agony. More than an hour — more than two hours — we strove to discover and allay the canine grievance, but to no purpose.

Presently one of the hotel pages stepped up to Mr. Petto, handing him a telegraphic dispatch just received. It was dated at his home in Cowville, Illinois, and making allowance for the difference in time, something more than two hours previously. It read as follows:

"A pot of boiling glue has just been upset upon Jerusalem's hind-quarters. Shall I try rhubarb, or let it get cold and chisel it off?

"P.S. He did it himself, wagging his tail in the kitchen. Some Democrat has been bribing that dog with cold victuals. — PENELOPE PETTO."

Then we knew what ailed "the following dorg."

I should like to go on giving the reader a short account of this animal's more striking personal peculiarities, but the subject seems to grow under my hand. The longer I write, the longer he becomes, and the more there is to tell; and after all, I shall not get a copper more for pourtraying all this length of dog than I would for depicting an orbicular pig.

SNAKING.

Very talkative people always seemed to me to be divided into two classes — those who lie for a purpose and those who lie for the love of lying; and Sam Baxter belonged, with broad impartiality, to both. With him falsehood was not more frequently a means than an end; for he would not only lie without a purpose but at a sacrifice. I heard him once reading a newspaper to a blind aunt, and deliberately falsifying the market reports. The good old lady took it all in with a trustful faith, until he quoted dried apples at fifty cents a yard for unbolted sides; then she arose and disinherited him. Sam seemed to regard the fountain of truth as a stagnant pool, and himself an angel whose business it was to stand by and trouble the waters.

“You know Ben Dean,” said Sam to me one day; “I’m down on that fellow, and I’ll tell you why. In the winter of ‘68 he and I were snaking together in the mountains north of the Big Sandy.”

“What do you mean by snaking, Sam?”

“Well, *I* like *that*! Why, gathering snakes, to be sure — rattlesnakes for zoological gardens, museums, and side-shows to circuses. This is how it is done: a party of snakers go up to the mountains in the early autumn, with provisions for all winter, and putting up a snakery at some central point, get to work as soon as the torpid season sets in, and before there is much snow. I presume you know that when the nights begin to get cold, the snakes go in under big flat stones, snuggle together, and lie there frozen stiff until the warm days of spring limber them up for business.

“We go about, raise up the rocks, tie the worms into convenient bundles and carry them to the snakery, where, during the snow season, they are assorted, labelled according to quality, and packed away for transportation. Sometimes a single showman will have as many as a dozen snakers in the mountains all winter.

“Ben and I were out, one day, and had gathered a few sheaves of prime ones, when we discovered a broad stone that showed good indications, but we couldn’t raise it. The whole upper part of the mountain seemed to be built mostly upon this one stone. There was nothing to be done but mole it — dig under, you know; so taking the spade I soon widened the hole the creatures had got in at, until it would admit my body. Crawling in, I found a kind of cell in the solid rock, stowed nearly full of beautiful serpents, some of them as long as a man. You would have revelled in those worms! They were neatly disposed about the sides of the cave, an even dozen in each berth, and some odd ones swinging from the ceiling in hammocks, like sailors. By the time I had counted them roughly, as they lay, it was dark, and snowing like the mischief. There was no getting back to head-quarters that night, and there was room for but one of us inside.”

“Inside what, Sam?”

“See here! have you been listening to what I’m telling you, or not? There is no use telling *you* anything. Perhaps you won’t mind waiting till I get done, and then you can tell something of your own. We drew straws to decide who should sleep inside, and it fell to me. Such luck as that fellow Ben always had drawing straws when I held them! It was sinful! But even inside it was coldish, and I was more than an hour getting asleep. Toward morning, though, I woke, feeling very warm and peaceful. The moon was at full, just rising in the valley below, and, shining in at the hole I’d entered at, it made everything light as day.”

“But, Sam, according to *my* astronomy a full moon never rises towards morning.”

“Now, who said anything about your astronomy? I’d like to know who is telling this — you or I? Always think you know more than I do — and always swearing it isn’t so — and always taking the words out of my mouth, and — but what’s the use of arguing with *you*? As I was saying, the snakes began waking about the same time I did; I could hear them turn over on their other sides and sigh. Presently one raised himself up and yawned. He meant well, but it was not the regular thing for an ophidian to do at that season. By-and-by they began to poke their heads up all round, nodding good morning to one another across the room; and pretty soon one saw me lying there and called attention to the fact. Then they all began to crowd to the front and hang out over the sides of the beds in a fringe, to study my habits. I can’t describe the strange spectacle: you would have supposed it was the middle of March and a forward season! There were more worms than I had counted, and they were larger ones than I had thought. And the more they got awake the wider they yawned, and the longer they stretched. The fat fellows in the hammocks above me were in danger of toppling out and breaking their necks every minute.

“Then it went through my mind like a flash what was the matter. Finding it cold outside, Ben had made a roaring fire on the top of the rock, and the heat had deceived the worms into the belief that it was late spring. As I lay there and thought of a full-grown man who hadn’t any better sense than to do such a thing as *that*, I was mad enough to kill him. I lost confidence in mankind. If I had not stopped up the entrance before lying down, with a big round stone which the heat had swollen so that a hydraulic ram couldn’t have butted it loose, I should have put on my clothes and gone straight home.”

“But, Sam, you said the entrance was open, and the moon shining in.”

“There you go again! Always contradicting — and insinuating that the moon must remain for hours in one position — and saying you’ve heard it told better by some one else — and wanting to fight! I’ve told this story to your brother over at Milk River more than a hundred million times, and he never said a word against it.”

“I believe you, Samuel; for he is deaf as a tombstone.”

“Tell you what to do for him! I know a fellow in Smith’s Valley will cure him in a minute. That fellow has cleaned the deafness all out of Washington County a dozen times. I never knew a case of it that could stand up against him ten seconds. Take three parts of snake-root to a gallon of waggon-grease, and — I’ll go and see if I can find the prescription!”

And Sam was off like a rocket.

MAUD’S PAPA.

That is she in the old black silk — the one with the gimlet curls and the accelerated lap-cat. Doesn’t she average about as I set her forth?

“Never told you anything about her?” Well, I will.

Twenty years ago, many a young man, of otherwise good character, would have ameliorated his condition for that girl; and would have thought himself overpaid if she had restored a fosy on his sepulchre. Maud would have been of the same opinion — and wouldn’t have construed the fosy. And she was the most sagacious girl I ever experienced! As you shall hear.

I was her lover, and she was mine. We loved ourselves to detraction. Maud lived a mile from any other house — except one brick barn. Not even a watch-dog about the place — except her father. This pompous old weakling hated me boisterously; he said I was dedicated to hard drink, and when in that condition was perfectly incompatible. I did not like him, too.

One evening I called on Maud, and was surprised to meet her at the gate, with a shawl drawn over her head, and apparently in great combustion. She told me, hastily, the old man was ill of a fever, and had nearly derided her by going crazy.

This was all a lie; something had gone wrong with the old party’s eyes — amanuensis of the equinox, or something; he couldn’t see well, but he was no more crazy than I was sober.

“I was sitting quietly by him,” said Maud, “when he sat up in bed and be-*gan!* You never in all your born life! I’m so glad you’ve come; you can take care of him while I fetch the doctor. He’s quiet enough now, but you just wait till he gets another paralogism. When *they*’re on — oh my! You mustn’t let him talk, nor get out of bed; doctor says it would prolong the diagnosis. Go right in, now. Oh dear! whatever shall I ought to do?”

And, blowing her eyes on the corner of her shawl, Maud shot away like a comic.

I walked hurriedly into the house, and entered the old man’s dromedary, without knocking.

The playful girl had left that room a moment before, with every appearance of being frightened. She had told the old one there was a robber in the house, and the venerable invalid was a howling coward — I tell you this because I scorn to deceive you.

I found the old gentleman with his head under the blankets, very quiet and speaceful: but the moment he heard me he got up, and yelled like a heliotrope. Then he fixed on me a wild spiercing look from his bloodshot eyes, and for the first time in my life I believed Maud had told me the truth for the first time in hers. Then he reached out for a heavy cane. But I was too punctual for him, and, clapping my hand on his breast, I crowded him down, holding him tight. He curvetted some; then lay still, and swore weak oaths that wouldn't have hurt a sick chicken! All this time I was firm as a rock of amaranth. Presently, moreover, he spoke very low and resigned like — except his teeth chattered:

"Desperate man, there is no need; you will find it to the north-west corner of my upper secretary drawer. I spromise not to appear."

"All right, my lobster-snouted bulbul," said I, delighted with the importunity of abusing him; "that is the dryest place you could keep it in, old spoolcotton! Be sure you don't let the light get to it, angleworm! Meantime, therefore, you must take this draught."

"Draught!" he shrieked, meandering from the subject. "O my poor child!" — and he sprang up again, screaming a multiple of things.

I had him by the shoulders in a minute, and crushed him back — except his legs kept agitating.

"Keep still, will you?" said I, "you sugarcoated old mandible, or I'll conciliate your exegesis with a proletarian!"

I never had such a flow of language in my life; I could say anything I wanted to.

He quailed at that threat, for, deleterious as I thought him, he saw I meant it; but he affected to prefer it that way to taking it out of the bottle.

"Better," he moaned, "better even that than the poison. Spare me the poisoned chalice, and you may do it in the way you mention."

The "draught," it may be sproper to explain, was comprised in a large bottle sitting on the table. I thought it was medicine — except it was black — and although Maud (sweet screature!) had not told me to give him anything, I felt sure this was nasty enough for him, or anybody. And it was; it was ink. So I treated his proposed compromise with silent contempt, merely remarking, as I uncorked the bottle: "Medicine's medicine, my fine friend; and it is for the sick." Then, spinioning his arms with one of mine, I concerted the neck of the bottle between his teeth.

"Now, you lacustrine old cylinder-escapement," I exclaimed, with some warmth, "hand up your stomach for this healing precoction, or I'm blest if I won’t controvert your *raison d’être!*”

He struggled hard, but, owing to my habit of finishing what I undertake, without any success. In ten minutes it was all down — except that some of it was spouted about rather circumstantially over the bedding, and walls, and me. There was more of the draught than I had thought. As he had been two days ill, I had supposed the bottle must be nearly empty; but, of course, when you think of it, a man doesn’t abrogate much ink in an ordinary attack — except editors.

Just as I got my knees off the spatient’s breast, Maud peeped in at the door. She had remained in the lane till she thought the charm had had time to hibernate, then came in to have her laugh. She began having it, gently; but seeing me with the empty bottle in my sable hand, and the murky inspiration rolling off my face in gasconades, she got graver, and came in very soberly.

Wherewith, the draught had done its duty, and the old gentleman was enjoying the first rest he had known since I came to heal him. He is enjoying it yet, for he was as dead as a monogram.

As there was a good deal of scandal about my killing a sprospective father-in-law, I had to live it down by not marrying Maud — who has lived single, as a rule, ever since. All this epigastric tercentenary might have been avoided if she had only allowed a good deal of margin for my probable condition when she splanned her little practicable joke.

“Why didn’t they hang me?” — Waiter, bring me a brandy spunch. — Well, that is the most didactic question! But if you must know — they did.

JIM BECKWOURTH'S POND.

Not long after *that* (said old Jim Beckwourth, beginning a new story) there was a party of about a dozen of us down in the Powder River country, after buffalo. It was the *worst* place! Just think of the most barren and sterile spot you ever saw, or ever will see. Now take that spot and double it: that is where *we* were. One day, about noon, we halted near a sickly little *arroyo*, that was just damp enough to have deluded some feeble bunches of bonnet-wire into setting up as grass along its banks. After picketing the horses and pack-mules we took luncheon, and then, while the others smoked and played cards for half-dollars, I took my rifle and strolled off into the hills to see if I could find a blind rabbit, or a lame antelope, that had been unable to leave the country. As I went on I heard, at intervals of about a quarter of an hour, a strange throbbing sound, as of smothered thunder, which grew more distinct as I advanced. Presently I came upon a lake of near a mile in diameter, and almost circular. It was as calm and even as a mirror, but I could see by a light steamy haze above it that the water was nearly at boiling heat — a not very uncommon circumstance in that region. While I looked, big bubbles began to rise to the surface, chase one another about, and burst; and suddenly, without any other preliminary movement, there occurred the most awful and astounding event that (with a single exception) it has ever been my lot to witness! I stood rooted to the spot with horror, and when it was all over, and again the lake lay smiling placidly before me, I silently thanked Heaven I had been standing at some distance from the deceitful pool. In a quarter of an hour the frightful scene was repeated, preceded as before by the rising and bursting of bubbles, and producing in me the utmost terror; but after seeing it three or four times I became calm. Then I went back to camp, and told the boys there was a tolerably interesting pond near by, if they cared for such things.

At first they did not, but when I had thrown in a few lies about the brilliant hues of the water, and the great number of swans, they laid down their cards, left Lame Dave to look after the horses, and followed me back to see. Just before we crossed the last range of hills we heard a thundering sound ahead, which somewhat astonished the boys, but I said nothing till we stood on a low knoll overlooking the lake. There it lay, as peaceful as a dead Indian, of a dull grey colour, and as innocent of water-fowl as a new-born babe.

“There!” said I, triumphantly, pointing to it.

“Well,” said Bill Buckster, leaning on his rifle and surveying it critically, “what’s the matter with the pond? I don’t see nothin’ in *that* puddle.”

“Whar’s yer swans?” asked Gus Jamison.

“And yer prismatic warter?” added Stumpy Jack.

“Well, I like *this!*” drawled Frenchwoman Pete. “What ‘n thunder d’ ye mean, you derned saddle-coloured fraud?”

I was a little nettled at all this, particularly as the lake seemed to have buried the hatchet for that day; but I thought I would “cheek it through.”

“Just you wait!” I replied, significantly.

“O yes!” exclaimed Stumpy, derisively; “‘course, boys, you mus’ *wait*. ‘Tain’t no use a-hurryin’ up the cattle; yer mustn’t rush the buck. Jest wait till some feller comes along with a melted rainbow, and lays on the war-paint! and another feller fetches the swans’ eggs, and sets on ‘em, and hatches ‘em out! — and me a-holding both bowers an’ the ace!” he added, regretfully, thinking of the certainty he had left, to follow a delusive hope.

Then I pointed out to them a wide margin of wet and steaming clay surrounding the water on all sides, asking them if *that* wasn’t worth coming to see.

“*That*!” exclaimed Gus. “I’ve seen the same thing a thousand million times! It’s the reg’lar thing in Idaho. Clay soaks up the water and sweats it out.”

To verify his theory he started away, down to the shore. I was concerned for Gus, but I did not dare call him back for fear of betraying my secret in some way. Besides, I knew he would not come; and he ought not to have been so sceptical, anyhow.

Just then two or three big bubbles rose to the surface, and silently exploded. Quick as lightning I dropped on my knees and raised my arms.

“Now may Heaven grant my prayer,” I began with awful solemnity, “and send the great Ranunculus to loose the binding chain of concupiscence, heaving the multitudinous aquacity upon the heads of this wicked and sententious generation, whelming these diametrical scoffers in a supercilious Constantinople!”

I knew the long words would impress their simple souls with a belief that I was actually praying; and I was right, for every man of them pulled his hat off, and stood staring at me with a mixed look of reverence, incredulity, and astonishment — but not for long. For before I could say amen, yours truly, or anything, that entire body of water shot upward five hundred feet into the air, as smooth as a column of crystal, curled over in broad green cataracts, falling outward with a jar and thunder like the explosion of a thousand subterranean cannon, then surging and swirling back to the centre, one steaming, writhing mass of snowy foam!

As I rose to my feet to put my hand in my pocket for a chew of tobacco, I looked complacently about upon my comrades. Stumpy Jack stood paralysed, his head thrown back at an alarming angle, precisely as he had tilted it to watch the ascending column, and his neck somehow out of joint, holding it there. All the others were down upon their marrow-bones, white with terror, praying with extraordinary fervency, each trying his best to master the ridiculous jargon they had heard me use, but employing it with an even greater disregard of sense and fitness than I did. Away over on the next range of hills, toward camp, was something that looked like a giant spider, scrambling up the steep side of the sand-hill, and sliding down a trifle faster than it got up. It was Lame Dave, who had abandoned his equine trust, to come up at the eleventh hour and see the swans. He had seen enough, and was now trying, in his weak way, to get back to camp.

In a few minutes I had got Stumpy's head back into the position assigned it by Nature, had crowded his eyes in, and was going about with a reassuring smile, helping the pious upon their feet. Not a word was spoken; I took the lead, and we strode solemnly to camp, picking up Lame Dave at the foot of his acclivity, played a little game for Gus Jamison's horse and "calamities," then mounted our steeds, departing thence. Three or four days afterward I ventured cautiously upon a covert allusion to peculiar lakes, but the simultaneous clicking of ten revolvers convinced me that I need not trouble myself to pursue the subject.

STRINGING A BEAR.

"I was looking for my horse one morning, up in the San Joaquin Valley," said old Sandy Fowler, absently stirring the camp fire, "when I saw a big bull grizzly lying in the sunshine, picking his teeth with his claws, and smiling, as if he said, 'You need not mind the horse, old fellow; he's been found.' I at once gave a loud whoop, which I thought would be heard by the boys in the camp, and prepared to string the brute."

"Oh, I know how it goes," interrupted Smarty Mellor, as we called him; "seen it done heaps o' times! Six or eight o' ye rides up to the b'ar, and s'rounds him, every son-of-a-gun with a *riata* a mile long, and worries him till he gits his mad up, and while he's a-chasin' one feller the others is a-goin' äter him, and a-floorin' of him by loopin' his feet as they comes up behind, and when he turns onto them fellers the other chappy turns onto him, and puts another loop onto his feet as they comes up behind, and then—"

"I bound my *riata* tightly about my wrist," resumed old Sandy, composedly, "so that the beast should not jerk away when I had got him. Then I advanced upon him — very slowly, so as not to frighten him away. Seeing me coming, he rose upon his haunches, to have a look at me. He was about the size of a house — say a small two-storey house, with a Mansard roof. I paused a moment, to take another turn of the thong about my wrist.

"Again I moved obliquely forward, trying to look as if I were thinking about the new waterworks in San Francisco, or the next presidential election, so as not to frighten him away. The brute now rose squarely upon end, with his paws suspended before him, like a dog begging for a biscuit, and I thought what a very large biscuit he must be begging for! Halting a moment, to see if the *riata* was likely to cut into my wrist, I perceived the beast had an inkling of my design, and was trying stupidly to stretch his head up out of reach.

"I now threw off all disguise, and whirled my cord with a wide circular sweep, and in another moment it would have been very unpleasant for Bruin, but somehow the line appeared to get foul. While I was opening the noose, the animal settled upon his feet and came toward me; but the moment he saw me begin to whirl again, he got frightened, up-ended himself as before, and shut his eyes.

"Then I felt in my belt to see if my knife was there, when the bear got down again and came forward, utterly regardless.

“Seeing he was frightened and trying to escape by coming so close I could not have a fair fling at him, I dropped the noose on the ground and walked away, trailing the line behind me. When it was all run out, the rascal arrived at the loop. He first smelled it, then opened it with his paws, and putting it about his neck, tilted up again, and nodded significantly.

“I pulled out my knife, and severing the line at my wrist, walked away, looking for some one to introduce me to Smarty Mellor.”

PRESENT AT A HANGING, AND OTHER GHOST STORIES

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The Ways of Ghosts

My peculiar relation to the writer of the following narratives is such that I must ask the reader to overlook the absence of explanation as to how they came into my possession. Withal, my knowledge of him is so meager that I should rather not undertake to say if he were himself persuaded of the truth of what he relates; certainly such inquiries as I have thought it worth while to set about have not in every instance tended to confirmation of the statements made. Yet his style, for the most part devoid alike of artifice and art, almost baldly simple and direct, seems hardly compatible with the disingenuousness of a merely literary intention; one would call it the manner of one more concerned for the fruits of research than for the flowers of expression. In transcribing his notes and fortifying their claim to attention by giving them something of an orderly arrangement, I have conscientiously refrained from embellishing them with such small ornaments of diction as I may have felt myself able to bestow, which would not only have been impertinent, even if pleasing, but would have given me a somewhat closer relation to the work than I should care to have and to avow. — A. B.

Present at a Hanging

An old man named Daniel Baker, living near Lebanon, Iowa, was suspected by his neighbors of having murdered a peddler who had obtained permission to pass the night at his house. This was in 1853, when peddling was more common in the Western country than it is now, and was attended with considerable danger. The peddler with his pack traversed the country by all manner of lonely roads, and was compelled to rely upon the country people for hospitality. This brought him into relation with queer characters, some of whom were not altogether scrupulous in their methods of making a living, murder being an acceptable means to that end. It occasionally occurred that a peddler with diminished pack and swollen purse would be traced to the lonely dwelling of some rough character and never could be traced beyond. This was so in the case of "old man Baker," as he was always called. (Such names are given in the western "settlements" only to elderly persons who are not esteemed; to the general disrepute of social unworth is affixed the special reproach of age.) A peddler came to his house and none went away — that is all that anybody knew.

Seven years later the Rev. Mr. Cummings, a Baptist minister well known in that part of the country, was driving by Baker's farm one night. It was not very dark: there was a bit of moon somewhere above the light veil of mist that lay along the earth. Mr. Cummings, who was at all times a cheerful person, was whistling a tune, which he would occasionally interrupt to speak a word of friendly encouragement to his horse. As he came to a little bridge across a dry ravine he saw the figure of a man standing upon it, clearly outlined against the gray background of a misty forest. The man had something strapped on his back and carried a heavy stick — obviously an itinerant peddler. His attitude had in it a suggestion of abstraction, like that of a sleepwalker. Mr. Cummings reined in his horse when he arrived in front of him, gave him a pleasant salutation and invited him to a seat in the vehicle—"if you are going my way," he added. The man raised his head, looked him full in the face, but neither answered nor made any further movement. The minister, with good-natured persistence, repeated his invitation. At this the man threw his right hand forward from his side and pointed downward as he stood on the extreme edge of the bridge. Mr. Cummings looked past him, over into the ravine, saw nothing unusual and withdrew his eyes to address the man again. He had disappeared. The horse, which all this time had been uncommonly restless, gave at the same moment a snort of terror and started to run away. Before he had regained control of the animal the minister was at the crest of the hill a hundred yards along. He looked back and saw the figure again, at the same place and in the same attitude as when he had first observed it. Then for the first time he was conscious of a sense of the supernatural and drove home as rapidly as his willing horse would go.

On arriving at home he related his adventure to his family, and early the next morning, accompanied by two neighbors, John White Corwell and Abner Raiser, returned to the spot. They found the body of old man Baker hanging by the neck from one of the beams of the bridge, immediately beneath the spot where the apparition had stood. A thick coating of dust, slightly dampened by the mist, covered the floor of the bridge, but the only footprints were those of Mr. Cummings' horse.

In taking down the body the men disturbed the loose, friable earth of the slope below it, disclosing human bones already nearly uncovered by the action of water and frost. They were identified as those of the lost peddler. At the double inquest the coroner's jury found that Daniel Baker died by his own hand while suffering from temporary insanity, and that Samuel Morritz was murdered by some person or persons to the jury unknown.

A Cold Greeting

This is a story told by the late Benson Foley of San Francisco:

“In the summer of 1881 I met a man named James H. Conway, a resident of Franklin, Tennessee. He was visiting San Francisco for his health, deluded man, and brought me a note of introduction from Mr. Lawrence Barting. I had known Barting as a captain in the Federal army during the civil war. At its close he had settled in Franklin, and in time became, I had reason to think, somewhat prominent as a lawyer. Barting had always seemed to me an honorable and truthful man, and the warm friendship which he expressed in his note for Mr. Conway was to me sufficient evidence that the latter was in every way worthy of my confidence and esteem. At dinner one day Conway told me that it had been solemnly agreed between him and Barting that the one who died first should, if possible, communicate with the other from beyond the grave, in some unmistakable way — just how, they had left (wisely, it seemed to me) to be decided by the deceased, according to the opportunities that his altered circumstances might present.

“A few weeks after the conversation in which Mr. Conway spoke of this agreement, I met him one day, walking slowly down Montgomery street, apparently, from his abstracted air, in deep thought. He greeted me coldly with merely a movement of the head and passed on, leaving me standing on the walk, with half-proffered hand, surprised and naturally somewhat piqued. The next day I met him again in the office of the Palace Hotel, and seeing him about to repeat the disagreeable performance of the day before, intercepted him in a doorway, with a friendly salutation, and bluntly requested an explanation of his altered manner. He hesitated a moment; then, looking me frankly in the eyes, said:

“‘I do not think, Mr. Foley, that I have any longer a claim to your friendship, since Mr. Barting appears to have withdrawn his own from me — for what reason, I protest I do not know. If he has not already informed you he probably will do so.’

“‘But,’ I replied, ‘I have not heard from Mr. Barting.’

“‘Heard from him!’ he repeated, with apparent surprise. ‘Why, he is here. I met him yesterday ten minutes before meeting you. I gave you exactly the same greeting that he gave me. I met him again not a quarter of an hour ago, and his manner was precisely the same: he merely bowed and passed on. I shall not soon forget your civility to me. Good morning, or — as it may please you —

farewell.’

“All this seemed to me singularly considerate and delicate behavior on the part of Mr. Conway.

“As dramatic situations and literary effects are foreign to my purpose I will explain at once that Mr. Barting was dead. He had died in Nashville four days before this conversation. Calling on Mr. Conway, I apprised him of our friend’s death, showing him the letters announcing it. He was visibly affected in a way that forbade me to entertain a doubt of his sincerity.

“‘It seems incredible,’ he said, after a period of reflection. ‘I suppose I must have mistaken another man for Barting, and that man’s cold greeting was merely a stranger’s civil acknowledgment of my own. I remember, indeed, that he lacked Barting’s mustache.’

“‘Doubtless it was another man,’ I assented; and the subject was never afterward mentioned between us. But I had in my pocket a photograph of Barting, which had been inclosed in the letter from his widow. It had been taken a week before his death, and was without a mustache.”

A Wireless Message

In the summer of 1896 Mr. William Holt, a wealthy manufacturer of Chicago, was living temporarily in a little town of central New York, the name of which the writer's memory has not retained. Mr. Holt had had "trouble with his wife," from whom he had parted a year before. Whether the trouble was anything more serious than "incompatibility of temper," he is probably the only living person that knows: he is not addicted to the vice of confidences. Yet he has related the incident herein set down to at least one person without exacting a pledge of secrecy. He is now living in Europe.

One evening he had left the house of a brother whom he was visiting, for a stroll in the country. It may be assumed — whatever the value of the assumption in connection with what is said to have occurred — that his mind was occupied with reflections on his domestic infelicities and the distressing changes that they had wrought in his life.

Whatever may have been his thoughts, they so possessed him that he observed neither the lapse of time nor whither his feet were carrying him; he knew only that he had passed far beyond the town limits and was traversing a lonely region by a road that bore no resemblance to the one by which he had left the village. In brief, he was "lost."

Realizing his mischance, he smiled; central New York is not a region of perils, nor does one long remain lost in it. He turned about and went back the way that he had come. Before he had gone far he observed that the landscape was growing more distinct — was brightening. Everything was suffused with a soft, red glow in which he saw his shadow projected in the road before him. "The moon is rising," he said to himself. Then he remembered that it was about the time of the new moon, and if that tricksy orb was in one of its stages of visibility it had set long before. He stopped and faced about, seeking the source of the rapidly broadening light. As he did so, his shadow turned and lay along the road in front of him as before. The light still came from behind him. That was surprising; he could not understand. Again he turned, and again, facing successively to every point of the horizon. Always the shadow was before — always the light behind, "a still and awful red."

Holt was astonished—"dumfounded" is the word that he used in telling it — yet seems to have retained a certain intelligent curiosity. To test the intensity of the light whose nature and cause he could not determine, he took out his watch to see if he could make out the figures on the dial. They were plainly visible, and the hands indicated the hour of eleven o'clock and twenty-five minutes. At that moment the mysterious illumination suddenly flared to an intense, an almost blinding splendor, flushing the entire sky, extinguishing the stars and throwing the monstrous shadow of himself athwart the landscape. In that unearthly illumination he saw near him, but apparently in the air at a considerable elevation, the figure of his wife, clad in her night-clothing and holding to her breast the figure of his child. Her eyes were fixed upon his with an expression which he afterward professed himself unable to name or describe, further than that it was "not of this life."

The flare was momentary, followed by black darkness, in which, however, the apparition still showed white and motionless; then by insensible degrees it faded and vanished, like a bright image on the retina after the closing of the eyes. A peculiarity of the apparition, hardly noted at the time, but afterward recalled, was that it showed only the upper half of the woman's figure: nothing was seen below the waist.

The sudden darkness was comparative, not absolute, for gradually all objects of his environment became again visible.

In the dawn of the morning Holt found himself entering the village at a point opposite to that at which he had left it. He soon arrived at the house of his brother, who hardly knew him. He was wild-eyed, haggard, and gray as a rat. Almost incoherently, he related his night's experience.

"Go to bed, my poor fellow," said his brother, "and — wait. We shall hear more of this."

An hour later came the predestined telegram. Holt's dwelling in one of the suburbs of Chicago had been destroyed by fire. Her escape cut off by the flames, his wife had appeared at an upper window, her child in her arms. There she had stood, motionless, apparently dazed. Just as the firemen had arrived with a ladder, the floor had given way, and she was seen no more.

The moment of this culminating horror was eleven o'clock and twenty~five minutes, standard time.

An Arrest

Having murdered his brother-in-law, Orrin Brower of Kentucky was a fugitive from justice. From the county jail where he had been confined to await his trial he had escaped by knocking down his jailer with an iron bar, robbing him of his keys and, opening the outer door, walking out into the night. The jailer being unarmed, Brower got no weapon with which to defend his recovered liberty. As soon as he was out of the town he had the folly to enter a forest; this was many years ago, when that region was wilder than it is now.

The night was pretty dark, with neither moon nor stars visible, and as Brower had never dwelt thereabout, and knew nothing of the lay of the land, he was, naturally, not long in losing himself. He could not have said if he were getting farther away from the town or going back to it — a most important matter to Orrin Brower. He knew that in either case a posse of citizens with a pack of bloodhounds would soon be on his track and his chance of escape was very slender; but he did not wish to assist in his own pursuit. Even an added hour of freedom was worth having.

Suddenly he emerged from the forest into an old road, and there before him saw, indistinctly, the figure of a man, motionless in the gloom. It was too late to retreat: the fugitive felt that at the first movement back toward the wood he would be, as he afterward explained, “filled with buckshot.” So the two stood there like trees, Brower nearly suffocated by the activity of his own heart; the other — the emotions of the other are not recorded.

A moment later — it may have been an hour — the moon sailed into a patch of unclouded sky and the hunted man saw that visible embodiment of Law lift an arm and point significantly toward and beyond him. He understood. Turning his back to his captor, he walked submissively away in the direction indicated, looking to neither the right nor the left; hardly daring to breathe, his head and back actually aching with a prophecy of buckshot.

Brower was as courageous a criminal as ever lived to be hanged; that was shown by the conditions of awful personal peril in which he had coolly killed his brother-in-law. It is needless to relate them here; they came out at his trial, and the revelation of his calmness in confronting them came near to saving his neck. But what would you have? — when a brave man is beaten, he submits.

So they pursued their journey jailward along the old road through the woods. Only once did Brower venture a turn of the head: just once, when he was in deep shadow and he knew that the other was in moonlight, he looked backward. His captor was Burton Duff, the jailer, as white as death and bearing upon his brow the livid mark of the iron bar. Orrin Brower had no further curiosity.

Eventually they entered the town, which was all alight, but deserted; only the women and children remained, and they were off the streets. Straight toward the jail the criminal held his way. Straight up to the main entrance he walked, laid his hand upon the knob of the heavy iron door, pushed it open without command, entered and found himself in the presence of a half-dozen armed men. Then he turned. Nobody else entered.

On a table in the corridor lay the dead body of Burton Duff.

Soldier-Folk

A Man with Two Lives

Here is the queer story of David William Duck, related by himself. Duck is an old man living in Aurora, Illinois, where he is universally respected. He is commonly known, however, as “Dead Duck.”

“In the autumn of 1866 I was a private soldier of the Eighteenth Infantry. My company was one of those stationed at Fort Phil Kearney, commanded by Colonel Carrington. The country is more or less familiar with the history of that garrison, particularly with the slaughter by the Sioux of a detachment of eighty-one men and officers — not one escaping — through disobedience of orders by its commander, the brave but reckless Captain Fetterman. When that occurred, I was trying to make my way with important dispatches to Fort C. F. Smith, on the Big Horn. As the country swarmed with hostile Indians, I traveled by night and concealed myself as best I could before daybreak. The better to do so, I went afoot, armed with a Henry rifle and carrying three days’ rations in my haversack.

“For my second place of concealment I chose what seemed in the darkness a narrow canon leading through a range of rocky hills. It contained many large bowlders, detached from the slopes of the hills. Behind one of these, in a clump of sage-brush, I made my bed for the day, and soon fell asleep. It seemed as if I had hardly closed my eyes, though in fact it was near midday, when I was awakened by the report of a rifle, the bullet striking the bowlder just above my body. A band of Indians had trailed me and had me nearly surrounded; the shot had been fired with an execrable aim by a fellow who had caught sight of me from the hillside above. The smoke of his rifle betrayed him, and I was no sooner on my feet than he was off his and rolling down the declivity. Then I ran in a stooping posture, dodging among the clumps of sage-brush in a storm of bullets from invisible enemies. The rascals did not rise and pursue, which I thought rather queer, for they must have known by my trail that they had to deal with only one man. The reason for their inaction was soon made clear. I had not gone a hundred yards before I reached the limit of my run — the head of the gulch which I had mistaken for a canon. It terminated in a concave breast of rock, nearly vertical and destitute of vegetation. In that cul-de-sac I was caught like a bear in a pen. Pursuit was needless; they had only to wait.

“They waited. For two days and nights, crouching behind a rock topped with a growth of mesquite, and with the cliff at my back, suffering agonies of thirst and absolutely hopeless of deliverance, I fought the fellows at long range, firing occasionally at the smoke of their rifles, as they did at that of mine. Of course, I did not dare to close my eyes at night, and lack of sleep was a keen torture.

"I remember the morning of the third day, which I knew was to be my last. I remember, rather indistinctly, that in my desperation and delirium I sprang out into the open and began firing my repeating rifle without seeing anybody to fire at. And I remember no more of that fight.

"The next thing that I recollect was my pulling myself out of a river just at nightfall. I had not a rag of clothing and knew nothing of my whereabouts, but all that night I traveled, cold and footsore, toward the north. At daybreak I found myself at Fort C. F. Smith, my destination, but without my dispatches. The first man that I met was a sergeant named William Briscoe, whom I knew very well. You can fancy his astonishment at seeing me in that condition, and my own at his asking who the devil I was.

"'Dave Duck,' I answered; 'who should I be?'

"He stared like an owl.

"'You do look it,' he said, and I observed that he drew a little away from me. 'What's up?' he added.

"I told him what had happened to me the day before. He heard me through, still staring; then he said:

"'My dear fellow, if you are Dave Duck I ought to inform you that I buried you two months ago. I was out with a small scouting party and found your body, full of bullet-holes and newly scalped — somewhat mutilated otherwise, too, I am sorry to say — right where you say you made your fight. Come to my tent and I'll show you your clothing and some letters that I took from your person; the commandant has your dispatches.'

"He performed that promise. He showed me the clothing, which I resolutely put on; the letters, which I put into my pocket. He made no objection, then took me to the commandant, who heard my story and coldly ordered Briscoe to take me to the guardhouse. On the way I said:

"'Bill Briscoe, did you really and truly bury the dead body that you found in these togs?'

"'Sure,' he answered—'just as I told you. It was Dave Duck, all right; most of us knew him. And now, you damned impostor, you'd better tell me who you are.'

"'I'd give something to know,' I said.

"A week later, I escaped from the guardhouse and got out of the country as fast as I could. Twice I have been back, seeking for that fateful spot in the hills, but unable to find it."

Three and One are One

In the year 1861 Barr Lassiter, a young man of twenty-two, lived with his parents and an elder sister near Carthage, Tennessee. The family were in somewhat humble circumstances, subsisting by cultivation of a small and not very fertile plantation. Owning no slaves, they were not rated among “the best people” of their neighborhood; but they were honest persons of good education, fairly well mannered and as respectable as any family could be if uncredentialed by personal dominion over the sons and daughters of Ham. The elder Lassiter had that severity of manner that so frequently affirms an uncompromising devotion to duty, and conceals a warm and affectionate disposition. He was of the iron of which martyrs are made, but in the heart of the matrix had lurked a nobler metal, fusible at a milder heat, yet never coloring nor softening the hard exterior. By both heredity and environment something of the man’s inflexible character had touched the other members of the family; the Lassiter home, though not devoid of domestic affection, was a veritable citadel of duty, and duty — ah, duty is as cruel as death!

When the war came on it found in the family, as in so many others in that State, a divided sentiment; the young man was loyal to the Union, the others savagely hostile. This unhappy division begot an insupportable domestic bitterness, and when the offending son and brother left home with the avowed purpose of joining the Federal army not a hand was laid in his, not a word of farewell was spoken, not a good wish followed him out into the world whither he went to meet with such spirit as he might whatever fate awaited him.

Making his way to Nashville, already occupied by the Army of General Buell, he enlisted in the first organization that he found, a Kentucky regiment of cavalry, and in due time passed through all the stages of military evolution from raw recruit to experienced trooper. A right good trooper he was, too, although in his oral narrative from which this tale is made there was no mention of that; the fact was learned from his surviving comrades. For Barr Lassiter has answered “Here” to the sergeant whose name is Death.

Two years after he had joined it his regiment passed through the region whence he had come. The country thereabout had suffered severely from the ravages of war, having been occupied alternately (and simultaneously) by the belligerent forces, and a sanguinary struggle had occurred in the immediate vicinity of the Lassiter homestead. But of this the young trooper was not aware.

Finding himself in camp near his home, he felt a natural longing to see his parents and sister, hoping that in them, as in him, the unnatural animosities of the period had been softened by time and separation. Obtaining a leave of absence, he set foot in the late summer afternoon, and soon after the rising of the full moon was walking up the gravel path leading to the dwelling in which he had been born.

Soldiers in war age rapidly, and in youth two years are a long time. Barr Lassiter felt himself an old man, and had almost expected to find the place a ruin and a desolation. Nothing, apparently, was changed. At the sight of each dear and familiar object he was profoundly affected. His heart beat audibly, his emotion nearly suffocated him; an ache was in his throat. Unconsciously he quickened his pace until he almost ran, his long shadow making grotesque efforts to keep its place beside him.

The house was unlighted, the door open. As he approached and paused to recover control of himself his father came out and stood bare~headed in the moonlight.

“Father!” cried the young man, springing forward with outstretched hand —”Father!”

The elder man looked him sternly in the face, stood a moment motionless and without a word withdrew into the house. Bitterly disappointed, humiliated, inexpressibly hurt and altogether unnerved, the soldier dropped upon a rustic seat in deep dejection, supporting his head upon his trembling hand. But he would not have it so: he was too good a soldier to accept repulse as defeat. He rose and entered the house, passing directly to the “sitting-room.”

It was dimly lighted by an uncurtained east window. On a low stool by the hearthside, the only article of furniture in the place, sat his mother, staring into a fireplace strewn with blackened embers and cold ashes. He spoke to her — tenderly, interrogatively, and with hesitation, but she neither answered, nor moved, nor seemed in any way surprised. True, there had been time for her husband to apprise her of their guilty son’s return. He moved nearer and was about to lay his hand upon her arm, when his sister entered from an adjoining room, looked him full in the face, passed him without a sign of recognition and left the room by a door that was partly behind him. He had turned his head to watch her, but when she was gone his eyes again sought his mother. She too had left the place.

Barr Lassiter strode to the door by which he had entered. The moonlight on the lawn was tremulous, as if the sward were a rippling sea. The trees and their black shadows shook as in a breeze. Blended with its borders, the gravel walk seemed unsteady and insecure to step on. This young soldier knew the optical illusions produced by tears. He felt them on his cheek, and saw them sparkle on the breast of his trooper’s jacket. He left the house and made his way back to camp.

The next day, with no very definite intention, with no dominant feeling that he could rightly have named, he again sought the spot. Within a half-mile of it he met Bushrod Albro, a former playfellow and schoolmate, who greeted him warmly.

“I am going to visit my home,” said the soldier.

The other looked at him rather sharply, but said nothing.

“I know,” continued Lassiter, “that my folks have not changed, but—”

“There have been changes,” Albro interrupted—”everything changes. I’ll go with you if you don’t mind. We can talk as we go.”

But Albro did not talk.

Instead of a house they found only fire-blackened foundations of stone, enclosing an area of compact ashes pitted by rains.

Lassiter’s astonishment was extreme.

“I could not find the right way to tell you,” said Albro. “In the fight a year ago your house was burned by a Federal shell.”

“And my family — where are they?”

“In Heaven, I hope. All were killed by the shell.”

A Baffled Ambuscade

Connecting Readyville and Woodbury was a good, hard turnpike nine or ten miles long. Readyville was an outpost of the Federal army at Murfreesboro; Woodbury had the same relation to the Confederate army at Tullahoma. For months after the big battle at Stone River these outposts were in constant quarrel, most of the trouble occurring, naturally, on the turnpike mentioned, between detachments of cavalry. Sometimes the infantry and artillery took a hand in the game by way of showing their good-will.

One night a squadron of Federal horse commanded by Major Seidel, a gallant and skillful officer, moved out from Readyville on an uncommonly hazardous enterprise requiring secrecy, caution and silence.

Passing the infantry pickets, the detachment soon afterward approached two cavalry videttes staring hard into the darkness ahead. There should have been three.

“Where is your other man?” said the major. “I ordered Dunning to be here to-night.”

“He rode forward, sir,” the man replied. “There was a little firing afterward, but it was a long way to the front.”

“It was against orders and against sense for Dunning to do that,” said the officer, obviously vexed. “Why did he ride forward?”

“Don’t know, sir; he seemed mighty restless. Guess he was skeered.”

When this remarkable reasoner and his companion had been absorbed into the expeditionary force, it resumed its advance. Conversation was forbidden; arms and accouterments were denied the right to rattle. The horses’ tramping was all that could be heard and the movement was slow in order to have as little as possible of that. It was after midnight and pretty dark, although there was a bit of moon somewhere behind the masses of cloud.

Two or three miles along, the head of the column approached a dense forest of cedars bordering the road on both sides. The major commanded a halt by merely halting, and, evidently himself a bit “skeered,” rode on alone to reconnoiter. He was followed, however, by his adjutant and three troopers, who remained a little distance behind and, unseen by him, saw all that occurred.

After riding about a hundred yards toward the forest, the major suddenly and sharply reined in his horse and sat motionless in the saddle. Near the side of the road, in a little open space and hardly ten paces away, stood the figure of a man, dimly visible and as motionless as he. The major's first feeling was that of satisfaction in having left his cavalcade behind; if this were an enemy and should escape he would have little to report. The expedition was as yet undetected.

Some dark object was dimly discernible at the man's feet; the officer could not make it out. With the instinct of the true cavalryman and a particular indisposition to the discharge of firearms, he drew his saber. The man on foot made no movement in answer to the challenge. The situation was tense and a bit dramatic. Suddenly the moon burst through a rift in the clouds and, himself in the shadow of a group of great oaks, the horseman saw the footman clearly, in a patch of white light. It was Trooper Dunning, unarmed and bareheaded. The object at his feet resolved itself into a dead horse, and at a right angle across the animal's neck lay a dead man, face upward in the moonlight.

"Dunning has had the fight of his life," thought the major, and was about to ride forward. Dunning raised his hand, motioning him back with a gesture of warning; then, lowering the arm, he pointed to the place where the road lost itself in the blackness of the cedar forest.

The major understood, and turning his horse rode back to the little group that had followed him and was already moving to the rear in fear of his displeasure, and so returned to the head of his command.

"Dunning is just ahead there," he said to the captain of his leading company. "He has killed his man and will have something to report."

Right patiently they waited, sabers drawn, but Dunning did not come. In an hour the day broke and the whole force moved cautiously forward, its commander not altogether satisfied with his faith in Private Dunning. The expedition had failed, but something remained to be done.

In the little open space off the road they found the fallen horse. At a right angle across the animal's neck face upward, a bullet in the brain, lay the body of Trooper Dunning, stiff as a statue, hours dead.

Examination disclosed abundant evidence that within a half-hour the cedar forest had been occupied by a strong force of Confederate infantry — an ambuscade.

Two Military Executions

In the spring of the year 1862 General Buell's big army lay in camp, licking itself into shape for the campaign which resulted in the victory at Shiloh. It was a raw, untrained army, although some of its fractions had seen hard enough service, with a good deal of fighting, in the mountains of Western Virginia, and in Kentucky. The war was young and soldiering a new industry, imperfectly understood by the young American of the period, who found some features of it not altogether to his liking. Chief among these was that essential part of discipline, subordination. To one imbued from infancy with the fascinating fallacy that all men are born equal, unquestioning submission to authority is not easily mastered, and the American volunteer soldier in his "green and salad days" is among the worst known. That is how it happened that one of Buell's men, Private Bennett Story Greene, committed the indiscretion of striking his officer. Later in the war he would not have done that; like Sir Andrew Aguecheek, he would have "seen him damned" first. But time for reformation of his military manners was denied him: he was promptly arrested on complaint of the officer, tried by court~martial and sentenced to be shot.

"You might have thrashed me and let it go at that," said the condemned man to the complaining witness; "that is what you used to do at school, when you were plain Will Dudley and I was as good as you. Nobody saw me strike you; discipline would not have suffered much."

"Ben Greene, I guess you are right about that," said the lieutenant. "Will you forgive me? That is what I came to see you about."

There was no reply, and an officer putting his head in at the door of the guard-tent where the conversation had occurred, explained that the time allowed for the interview had expired. The next morning, when in the presence of the whole brigade Private Greene was shot to death by a squad of his comrades, Lieutenant Dudley turned his back upon the sorry performance and muttered a prayer for mercy, in which himself was included.

A few weeks afterward, as Buell's leading division was being ferried over the Tennessee River to assist in succoring Grant's beaten army, night was coming on, black and stormy. Through the wreck of battle the division moved, inch by inch, in the direction of the enemy, who had withdrawn a little to reform his lines. But for the lightning the darkness was absolute. Never for a moment did it cease, and ever when the thunder did not crack and roar were heard the moans of the wounded among whom the men felt their way with their feet, and upon whom they stumbled in the gloom. The dead were there, too — there were dead a-plenty.

In the first faint gray of the morning, when the swarming advance had paused to resume something of definition as a line of battle, and skirmishers had been thrown forward, word was passed along to call the roll. The first sergeant of Lieutenant Dudley's company stepped to the front and began to name the men in alphabetical order. He had no written roll, but a good memory. The men answered to their names as he ran down the alphabet to G.

"Gorham."

"Here!"

"Grayrock."

"Here!"

The sergeant's good memory was affected by habit: "Greene."

"Here!"

The response was clear, distinct, unmistakable!

A sudden movement, an agitation of the entire company front, as from an electric shock, attested the startling character of the incident. The sergeant paled and paused. The captain strode quickly to his side and said sharply: "Call that name again."

Apparently the Society for Psychical Research is not first in the field of curiosity concerning the Unknown.

"Bennett Greene."

"Here!"

All faces turned in the direction of the familiar voice; the two men between whom in the order of stature Greene had commonly stood in line turned and squarely confronted each other.

"Once more," commanded the inexorable investigator, and once more came — a trifle tremulously — the name of the dead man: "Bennett Story Greene."

"Here!"

At that instant a single rifle-shot was heard, away to the front, beyond the skirmish-line, followed, almost attended, by the savage hiss of an approaching bullet which passing through the line, struck audibly, punctuating as with a full stop the captain's exclamation, "What the devil does it mean?"

Lieutenant Dudley pushed through the ranks from his place in the rear.

"It means this," he said, throwing open his coat and displaying a visibly broadening stain of crimson on his breast. His knees gave way; he fell awkwardly and lay dead.

A little later the regiment was ordered out of line to relieve the congested front, and through some misplay in the game of battle was not again under fire. Nor did Bennett Greene, expert in military executions, ever again signify his presence at one.

Some Haunted Houses

The Isle of Pines

For many years there lived near the town of Gallipolis, Ohio, an old man named Herman Deluse. Very little was known of his history, for he would neither speak of it himself nor suffer others. It was a common belief among his neighbors that he had been a pirate — if upon any better evidence than his collection of boarding pikes, cutlasses, and ancient flintlock pistols, no one knew. He lived entirely alone in a small house of four rooms, falling rapidly into decay and never repaired further than was required by the weather. It stood on a slight elevation in the midst of a large, stony field overgrown with brambles, and cultivated in patches and only in the most primitive way. It was his only visible property, but could hardly have yielded him a living, simple and few as were his wants. He seemed always to have ready money, and paid cash for all his purchases at the village stores roundabout, seldom buying more than two or three times at the same place until after the lapse of a considerable time. He got no commendation, however, for this equitable distribution of his patronage; people were disposed to regard it as an ineffectual attempt to conceal his possession of so much money. That he had great hoards of ill-gotten gold buried somewhere about his tumble-down dwelling was not reasonably to be doubted by any honest soul conversant with the facts of local tradition and gifted with a sense of the fitness of things.

On the 9th of November, 1867, the old man died; at least his dead body was discovered on the 10th, and physicians testified that death had occurred about twenty-four hours previously — precisely how, they were unable to say; for the post-mortem examination showed every organ to be absolutely healthy, with no indication of disorder or violence. According to them, death must have taken place about noonday, yet the body was found in bed. The verdict of the coroner’s jury was that he “came to his death by a visitation of God.” The body was buried and the public administrator took charge of the estate.

A rigorous search disclosed nothing more than was already known about the dead man, and much patient excavation here and there about the premises by thoughtful and thrifty neighbors went unrewarded. The administrator locked up the house against the time when the property, real and personal, should be sold by law with a view to defraying, partly, the expenses of the sale.

The night of November 20 was boisterous. A furious gale stormed across the country, scourging it with desolating drifts of sleet. Great trees were torn from the earth and hurled across the roads. So wild a night had never been known in all that region, but toward morning the storm had blown itself out of breath and day dawned bright and clear. At about eight o'clock that morning the Rev. Henry Galbraith, a well-known and highly esteemed Lutheran minister, arrived on foot at his house, a mile and a half from the Deluse place. Mr. Galbraith had been for a month in Cincinnati. He had come up the river in a steamboat, and landing at Gallipolis the previous evening had immediately obtained a horse and buggy and set out for home. The violence of the storm had delayed him over night, and in the morning the fallen trees had compelled him to abandon his conveyance and continue his journey afoot.

"But where did you pass the night?" inquired his wife, after he had briefly related his adventure.

"With old Deluse at the 'Isle of Pines,'" [1] was the laughing reply; "and a glum enough time I had of it. He made no objection to my remaining, but not a word could I get out of him."

Fortunately for the interests of truth there was present at this conversation Mr. Robert Mosely Maren, a lawyer and litterateur of Columbus, the same who wrote the delightful "Mellowcraft Papers." Noting, but apparently not sharing, the astonishment caused by Mr. Galbraith's answer this ready-witted person checked by a gesture the exclamations that would naturally have followed, and tranquilly inquired: "How came you to go in there?"

This is Mr. Maren's version of Mr. Galbraith's reply:

"I saw a light moving about the house, and being nearly blinded by the sleet, and half frozen besides, drove in at the gate and put up my horse in the old rail stable, where it is now. I then rapped at the door, and getting no invitation went in without one. The room was dark, but having matches I found a candle and lit it. I tried to enter the adjoining room, but the door was fast, and although I heard the old man's heavy footsteps in there he made no response to my calls. There was no fire on the hearth, so I made one and laying [sic] down before it with my overcoat under my head, prepared myself for sleep. Pretty soon the door that I had tried silently opened and the old man came in, carrying a candle. I spoke to him pleasantly, apologizing for my intrusion, but he took no notice of me. He seemed to be searching for something, though his eyes were unmoved in their sockets. I wonder if he ever walks in his sleep. He took a circuit a part of the way round the room, and went out the same way he had come in. Twice more before I slept he came back into the room, acting precisely the same way, and departing as at first. In the intervals I heard him tramping all over the house, his footsteps distinctly audible in the pauses of the storm. When I woke in the morning he had already gone out."

Mr. Maren attempted some further questioning, but was unable longer to restrain the family's tongues; the story of Deluse's death and burial came out, greatly to the good minister's astonishment.

"The explanation of your adventure is very simple," said Mr. Maren. "I don't believe old Deluse walks in his sleep — not in his present one; but you evidently dream in yours."

And to this view of the matter Mr. Galbraith was compelled reluctantly to assent.

Nevertheless, a late hour of the next night found these two gentlemen, accompanied by a son of the minister, in the road in front of the old Deluse house. There was a light inside; it appeared now at one window and now at another. The three men advanced to the door. Just as they reached it there came from the interior a confusion of the most appalling sounds — the clash of weapons, steel against steel, sharp explosions as of firearms, shrieks of women, groans and the curses of men in combat! The investigators stood a moment, irresolute, frightened. Then Mr. Galbraith tried the door. It was fast. But the minister was a man of courage, a man, moreover, of Herculean strength. He retired a pace or two and rushed against the door, striking it with his right shoulder and bursting it from the frame with a loud crash. In a moment the three were inside. Darkness and silence! The only sound was the beating of their hearts.

Mr. Maren had provided himself with matches and a candle. With some difficulty, begotten of his excitement, he made a light, and they proceeded to explore the place, passing from room to room. Everything was in orderly arrangement, as it had been left by the sheriff; nothing had been disturbed. A light coating of dust was everywhere. A back door was partly open, as if by neglect, and their first thought was that the authors of the awful revelry might have escaped. The door was opened, and the light of the candle shone through upon the ground. The expiring effort of the previous night's storm had been a light fall of snow; there were no footprints; the white surface was unbroken. They closed the door and entered the last room of the four that the house contained — that farthest from the road, in an angle of the building. Here the candle in Mr. Maren's hand was suddenly extinguished as by a draught of air. Almost immediately followed the sound of a heavy fall. When the candle had been hastily relighted young Mr. Galbraith was seen prostrate on the floor at a little distance from the others. He was dead. In one hand the body grasped a heavy sack of coins, which later examination showed to be all of old Spanish mintage. Directly over the body as it lay, a board had been torn from its fastenings in the wall, and from the cavity so disclosed it was evident that the bag had been taken.

Another inquest was held: another post-mortem examination failed to reveal a probable cause of death. Another verdict of “the visitation of God” left all at liberty to form their own conclusions. Mr. Maren contended that the young man died of excitement.

[1] The Isle of Pines was once a famous rendezvous of pirates.

A Fruitless Assignment

Henry Saylor, who was killed in Covington, in a quarrel with Antonio Finch, was a reporter on the Cincinnati Commercial. In the year 1859 a vacant dwelling in Vine street, in Cincinnati, became the center of a local excitement because of the strange sights and sounds said to be observed in it nightly. According to the testimony of many reputable residents of the vicinity these were inconsistent with any other hypothesis than that the house was haunted. Figures with something singularly unfamiliar about them were seen by crowds on the sidewalk to pass in and out. No one could say just where they appeared upon the open lawn on their way to the front door by which they entered, nor at exactly what point they vanished as they came out; or, rather, while each spectator was positive enough about these matters, no two agreed. They were all similarly at variance in their descriptions of the figures themselves. Some of the bolder of the curious throng ventured on several evenings to stand upon the doorsteps to intercept them, or failing in this, get a nearer look at them. These courageous men, it was said, were unable to force the door by their united strength, and always were hurled from the steps by some invisible agency and severely injured; the door immediately afterward opening, apparently of its own volition, to admit or free some ghostly guest. The dwelling was known as the Roscoe house, a family of that name having lived there for some years, and then, one by one, disappeared, the last to leave being an old woman. Stories of foul play and successive murders had always been rife, but never were authenticated.

One day during the prevalence of the excitement Saylor presented himself at the office of the Commercial for orders. He received a note from the city editor which read as follows: “Go and pass the night alone in the haunted house in Vine street and if anything occurs worth while make two columns.” Saylor obeyed his superior; he could not afford to lose his position on the paper.

Apprising the police of his intention, he effected an entrance through a rear window before dark, walked through the deserted rooms, bare of furniture, dusty and desolate, and seating himself at last in the parlor on an old sofa which he had dragged in from another room watched the deepening of the gloom as night came on. Before it was altogether dark the curious crowd had collected in the street, silent, as a rule, and expectant, with here and there a scoffer uttering his incredulity and courage with scornful remarks or ribald cries. None knew of the anxious watcher inside. He feared to make a light; the uncurtained windows would have betrayed his presence, subjecting him to insult, possibly to injury. Moreover, he was too conscientious to do anything to enfeeble his impressions and unwilling to alter any of the customary conditions under which the manifestations were said to occur.

It was now dark outside, but light from the street faintly illuminated the part of the room that he was in. He had set open every door in the whole interior, above and below, but all the outer ones were locked and bolted. Sudden exclamations from the crowd caused him to spring to the window and look out. He saw the figure of a man moving rapidly across the lawn toward the building — saw it ascend the steps; then a projection of the wall concealed it. There was a noise as of the opening and closing of the hall door; he heard quick, heavy footsteps along the passage — heard them ascend the stairs — heard them on the uncarpeted floor of the chamber immediately overhead.

Saylor promptly drew his pistol, and groping his way up the stairs entered the chamber, dimly lighted from the street. No one was there. He heard footsteps in an adjoining room and entered that. It was dark and silent. He struck his foot against some object on the floor, knelt by it, passed his hand over it. It was a human head — that of a woman. Lifting it by the hair this iron-nerved man returned to the half-lighted room below, carried it near the window and attentively examined it. While so engaged he was half conscious of the rapid opening and closing of the outer door, of footfalls sounding all about him. He raised his eyes from the ghastly object of his attention and saw himself the center of a crowd of men and women dimly seen; the room was thronged with them. He thought the people had broken in.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he said, coolly, “you see me under suspicious circumstances, but” — his voice was drowned in peals of laughter — such laughter as is heard in asylums for the insane. The persons about him pointed at the object in his hand and their merriment increased as he dropped it and it went rolling among their feet. They danced about it with gestures grotesque and attitudes obscene and indescribable. They struck it with their feet, urging it about the room from wall to wall; pushed and overthrew one another in their struggles to kick it; cursed and screamed and sang snatches of ribald songs as the battered head bounded about the room as if in terror and trying to escape. At last it shot out of the door into the hall, followed by all, with tumultuous haste. That moment the door closed with a sharp concussion. Saylor was alone, in dead silence.

Carefully putting away his pistol, which all the time he had held in his hand, he went to a window and looked out. The street was deserted and silent; the lamps were extinguished; the roofs and chimneys of the houses were sharply outlined against the dawn-light in the east. He left the house, the door yielding easily to his hand, and walked to the Commercial office. The city editor was still in his office — asleep. Saylor waked him and said: “I have been at the haunted house.”

The editor stared blankly as if not wholly awake. “Good God!” he cried, “are you Saylor?”

“Yes — why not?” The editor made no answer, but continued staring.

“I passed the night there — it seems,” said Saylor.

“They say that things were uncommonly quiet out there,” the editor said, trifling with a paper-weight upon which he had dropped his eyes, “did anything occur?”

“Nothing whatever.”

A Vine on a House

About three miles from the little town of Norton, in Missouri, on the road leading to Maysville, stands an old house that was last occupied by a family named Harding. Since 1886 no one has lived in it, nor is anyone likely to live in it again. Time and the disfavor of persons dwelling thereabout are converting it into a rather picturesque ruin. An observer unacquainted with its history would hardly put it into the category of “haunted houses,” yet in all the region round such is its evil reputation. Its windows are without glass, its doorways without doors; there are wide breaches in the shingle roof, and for lack of paint the weatherboarding is a dun gray. But these unfailing signs of the supernatural are partly concealed and greatly softened by the abundant foliage of a large vine overrunning the entire structure. This vine — of a species which no botanist has ever been able to name — has an important part in the story of the house.

The Harding family consisted of Robert Harding, his wife Matilda, Miss Julia Went, who was her sister, and two young children. Robert Harding was a silent, cold-mannered man who made no friends in the neighborhood and apparently cared to make none. He was about forty years old, frugal and industrious, and made a living from the little farm which is now overgrown with brush and brambles. He and his sister-in-law were rather tabooed by their neighbors, who seemed to think that they were seen too frequently together — not entirely their fault, for at these times they evidently did not challenge observation. The moral code of rural Missouri is stern and exacting.

Mrs. Harding was a gentle, sad-eyed woman, lacking a left foot.

At some time in 1884 it became known that she had gone to visit her mother in Iowa. That was what her husband said in reply to inquiries, and his manner of saying it did not encourage further questioning. She never came back, and two years later, without selling his farm or anything that was his, or appointing an agent to look after his interests, or removing his household goods, Harding, with the rest of the family, left the country. Nobody knew whither he went; nobody at that time cared. Naturally, whatever was movable about the place soon disappeared and the deserted house became “haunted” in the manner of its kind.

One summer evening, four or five years later, the Rev. J. Gruber, of Norton, and a Maysville attorney named Hyatt met on horseback in front of the Harding place. Having business matters to discuss, they hitched their animals and going to the house sat on the porch to talk. Some humorous reference to the somber reputation of the place was made and forgotten as soon as uttered, and they talked of their business affairs until it grew almost dark. The evening was oppressively warm, the air stagnant.

Presently both men started from their seats in surprise: a long vine that covered half the front of the house and dangled its branches from the edge of the porch above them was visibly and audibly agitated, shaking violently in every stem and leaf.

“We shall have a storm,” Hyatt exclaimed.

Gruber said nothing, but silently directed the other’s attention to the foliage of adjacent trees, which showed no movement; even the delicate tips of the boughs silhouetted against the clear sky were motionless. They hastily passed down the steps to what had been a lawn and looked upward at the vine, whose entire length was now visible. It continued in violent agitation, yet they could discern no disturbing cause.

“Let us leave,” said the minister.

And leave they did. Forgetting that they had been traveling in opposite directions, they rode away together. They went to Norton, where they related their strange experience to several discreet friends. The next evening, at about the same hour, accompanied by two others whose names are not recalled, they were again on the porch of the Harding house, and again the mysterious phenomenon occurred: the vine was violently agitated while under the closest scrutiny from root to tip, nor did their combined strength applied to the trunk serve to still it. After an hour’s observation they retreated, no less wise, it is thought, than when they had come.

No great time was required for these singular facts to rouse the curiosity of the entire neighborhood. By day and by night crowds of persons assembled at the Harding house “seeking a sign.” It does not appear that any found it, yet so credible were the witnesses mentioned that none doubted the reality of the “manifestations” to which they testified.

By either a happy inspiration or some destructive design, it was one day proposed — nobody appeared to know from whom the suggestion came~-to dig up the vine, and after a good deal of debate this was done. Nothing was found but the root, yet nothing could have been more strange!

For five or six feet from the trunk, which had at the surface of the ground a diameter of several inches, it ran downward, single and straight, into a loose, friable earth; then it divided and subdivided into rootlets, fibers and filaments, most curiously interwoven. When carefully freed from soil they showed a singular formation. In their ramifications and doublings back upon themselves they made a compact network, having in size and shape an amazing resemblance to the human figure. Head, trunk and limbs were there; even the fingers and toes were distinctly defined; and many professed to see in the distribution and arrangement of the fibers in the globular mass representing the head a grotesque suggestion of a face. The figure was horizontal; the smaller roots had begun to unite at the breast.

In point of resemblance to the human form this image was imperfect. At about ten inches from one of the knees, the cilia forming that leg had abruptly doubled backward and inward upon their course of growth. The figure lacked the left foot.

There was but one inference — the obvious one; but in the ensuing excitement as many courses of action were proposed as there were incapable counselors. The matter was settled by the sheriff of the county, who as the lawful custodian of the abandoned estate ordered the root replaced and the excavation filled with the earth that had been removed.

Later inquiry brought out only one fact of relevancy and significance: Mrs. Harding had never visited her relatives in Iowa, nor did they know that she was supposed to have done so.

Of Robert Harding and the rest of his family nothing is known. The house retains its evil reputation, but the replanted vine is as orderly and well-behaved a vegetable as a nervous person could wish to sit under of a pleasant night, when the katydids grate out their immemorial revelation and the distant whippoorwill signifies his notion of what ought to be done about it.

At Old Man Eckert’s

Philip Eckert lived for many years in an old, weather-stained wooden house about three miles from the little town of Marion, in Vermont. There must be quite a number of persons living who remember him, not unkindly, I trust, and know something of the story that I am about to tell.

“Old Man Eckert,” as he was always called, was not of a sociable disposition and lived alone. As he was never known to speak of his own affairs nobody thereabout knew anything of his past, nor of his relatives if he had any. Without being particularly ungracious or repellent in manner or speech, he managed somehow to be immune to impertinent curiosity, yet exempt from the evil repute with which it commonly revenges itself when baffled; so far as I know, Mr. Eckert’s renown as a reformed assassin or a retired pirate of the Spanish Main had not reached any ear in Marion. He got his living cultivating a small and not very fertile farm.

One day he disappeared and a prolonged search by his neighbors failed to turn him up or throw any light upon his whereabouts or whyabouts. Nothing indicated preparation to leave: all was as he might have left it to go to the spring for a bucket of water. For a few weeks little else was talked of in that region; then “old man Eckert” became a village tale for the ear of the stranger. I do not know what was done regarding his property — the correct legal thing, doubtless. The house was standing, still vacant and conspicuously unfit, when I last heard of it, some twenty years afterward.

Of course it came to be considered “haunted,” and the customary tales were told of moving lights, dolorous sounds and startling apparitions. At one time, about five years after the disappearance, these stories of the supernatural became so rife, or through some attesting circumstances seemed so important, that some of Marion’s most serious citizens deemed it well to investigate, and to that end arranged for a night session on the premises. The parties to this undertaking were John Holcomb, an apothecary; Wilson Merle, a lawyer, and Andrus C. Palmer, the teacher of the public school, all men of consequence and repute. They were to meet at Holcomb’s house at eight o’clock in the evening of the appointed day and go together to the scene of their vigil, where certain arrangements for their comfort, a provision of fuel and the like, for the season was winter, had been already made.

Palmer did not keep the engagement, and after waiting a half-hour for him the others went to the Eckert house without him. They established themselves in the principal room, before a glowing fire, and without other light than it gave, awaited events. It had been agreed to speak as little as possible: they did not even renew the exchange of views regarding the defection of Palmer, which had occupied their minds on the way.

Probably an hour had passed without incident when they heard (not without emotion, doubtless) the sound of an opening door in the rear of the house, followed by footfalls in the room adjoining that in which they sat. The watchers rose to their feet, but stood firm, prepared for whatever might ensue. A long silence followed — how long neither would afterward undertake to say. Then the door between the two rooms opened and a man entered.

It was Palmer. He was pale, as if from excitement — as pale as the others felt themselves to be. His manner, too, was singularly distrait: he neither responded to their salutations nor so much as looked at them, but walked slowly across the room in the light of the failing fire and opening the front door passed out into the darkness.

It seems to have been the first thought of both men that Palmer was suffering from fright — that something seen, heard or imagined in the back room had deprived him of his senses. Acting on the same friendly impulse both ran after him through the open door. But neither they nor anyone ever again saw or heard of Andrus Palmer!

This much was ascertained the next morning. During the session of Messrs. Holcomb and Merle at the “haunted house” a new snow had fallen to a depth of several inches upon the old. In this snow Palmer’s trail from his lodging in the village to the back door of the Eckert house was conspicuous. But there it ended: from the front door nothing led away but the tracks of the two men who swore that he preceded them. Palmer’s disappearance was as complete as that of “old man Eckert” himself — whom, indeed, the editor of the local paper somewhat graphically accused of having “reached out and pulled him in.”

The Spook House

On the road leading north from Manchester, in eastern Kentucky, to Booneville, twenty miles away, stood, in 1862, a wooden plantation house of a somewhat better quality than most of the dwellings in that region. The house was destroyed by fire in the year following~-probably by some stragglers from the retreating column of General George W. Morgan, when he was driven from Cumberland Gap to the Ohio river by General Kirby Smith. At the time of its destruction, it had for four or five years been vacant. The fields about it were overgrown with brambles, the fences gone, even the few negro quarters, and out-houses generally, fallen partly into ruin by neglect and pillage; for the negroes and poor whites of the vicinity found in the building and fences an abundant supply of fuel, of which they availed themselves without hesitation, openly and by daylight. By daylight alone; after nightfall no human being except passing strangers ever went near the place.

It was known as the "Spook House." That it was tenanted by evil spirits, visible, audible and active, no one in all that region doubted any more than he doubted what he was told of Sundays by the traveling preacher. Its owner's opinion of the matter was unknown; he and his family had disappeared one night and no trace of them had ever been found. They left everything — household goods, clothing, provisions, the horses in the stable, the cows in the field, the negroes in the quarters — all as it stood; nothing was missing — except a man, a woman, three girls, a boy and a babe! It was not altogether surprising that a plantation where seven human beings could be simultaneously effaced and nobody the wiser should be under some suspicion.

One night in June, 1859, two citizens of Frankfort, Col. J. C. McArdle, a lawyer, and Judge Myron Veigh, of the State Militia, were driving from Booneville to Manchester. Their business was so important that they decided to push on, despite the darkness and the mutterings of an approaching storm, which eventually broke upon them just as they arrived opposite the "Spook House." The lightning was so incessant that they easily found their way through the gateway and into a shed, where they hitched and unharnessed their team. They then went to the house, through the rain, and knocked at all the doors without getting any response. Attributing this to the continuous uproar of the thunder they pushed at one of the doors, which yielded. They entered without further ceremony and closed the door. That instant they were in darkness and silence.

Not a gleam of the lightning's unceasing blaze penetrated the windows or crevices; not a whisper of the awful tumult without reached them there. It was as if they had suddenly been stricken blind and deaf, and McArdle afterward said that for a moment he believed himself to have been killed by a stroke of lightning as he crossed the threshold. The rest of this adventure can as well be related in his own words, from the Frankfort Advocate of August 6, 1876:

"When I had somewhat recovered from the dazing effect of the transition from uproar to silence, my first impulse was to reopen the door which I had closed, and from the knob of which I was not conscious of having removed my hand; I felt it distinctly, still in the clasp of my fingers. My notion was to ascertain by stepping again into the storm whether I had been deprived of sight and hearing. I turned the doorknob and pulled open the door. It led into another room!

"This apartment was suffused with a faint greenish light, the source of which I could not determine, making everything distinctly visible, though nothing was sharply defined. Everything, I say, but in truth the only objects within the blank stone walls of that room were human corpses. In number they were perhaps eight or ten — it may well be understood that I did not truly count them. They were of different ages, or rather sizes, from infancy up, and of both sexes. All were prostrate on the floor, excepting one, apparently a young woman, who sat up, her back supported by an angle of the wall. A babe was clasped in the arms of another and older woman. A half~grown lad lay face downward across the legs of a full-bearded man. One or two were nearly naked, and the hand of a young girl held the fragment of a gown which she had torn open at the breast. The bodies were in various stages of decay, all greatly shrunken in face and figure. Some were but little more than skeletons.

"While I stood stupefied with horror by this ghastly spectacle and still holding open the door, by some unaccountable perversity my attention was diverted from the shocking scene and concerned itself with trifles and details. Perhaps my mind, with an instinct of self-preservation, sought relief in matters which would relax its dangerous tension. Among other things, I observed that the door that I was holding open was of heavy iron plates, riveted. Equidistant from one another and from the top and bottom, three strong bolts protruded from the beveled edge. I turned the knob and they were retracted flush with the edge; released it, and they shot out. It was a spring lock. On the inside there was no knob, nor any kind of projection — a smooth surface of iron.

"While noting these things with an interest and attention which it now astonishes me to recall I felt myself thrust aside, and Judge Veigh, whom in the intensity and vicissitudes of my feelings I had altogether forgotten, pushed by me into the room. 'For God's sake,' I cried, 'do not go in there! Let us get out of this dreadful place!’

“He gave no heed to my entreaties, but (as fearless a gentleman as lived in all the South) walked quickly to the center of the room, knelt beside one of the bodies for a closer examination and tenderly raised its blackened and shriveled head in his hands. A strong disagreeable odor came through the doorway, completely overpowering me. My senses reeled; I felt myself falling, and in clutching at the edge of the door for support pushed it shut with a sharp click!

“I remember no more: six weeks later I recovered my reason in a hotel at Manchester, whither I had been taken by strangers the next day. For all these weeks I had suffered from a nervous fever, attended with constant delirium. I had been found lying in the road several miles away from the house; but how I had escaped from it to get there I never knew. On recovery, or as soon as my physicians permitted me to talk, I inquired the fate of Judge Veigh, whom (to quiet me, as I now know) they represented as well and at home.

“No one believed a word of my story, and who can wonder? And who can imagine my grief when, arriving at my home in Frankfort two months later, I learned that Judge Veigh had never been heard of since that night? I then regretted bitterly the pride which since the first few days after the recovery of my reason had forbidden me to repeat my discredited story and insist upon its truth.

“With all that afterward occurred — the examination of the house; the failure to find any room corresponding to that which I have described; the attempt to have me adjudged insane, and my triumph over my accusers — the readers of the Advocate are familiar. After all these years I am still confident that excavations which I have neither the legal right to undertake nor the wealth to make would disclose the secret of the disappearance of my unhappy friend, and possibly of the former occupants and owners of the deserted and now destroyed house. I do not despair of yet bringing about such a search, and it is a source of deep grief to me that it has been delayed by the undeserved hostility and unwise incredulity of the family and friends of the late Judge Veigh.”

Colonel McArdle died in Frankfort on the thirteenth day of December, in the year 1879.

The Other Lodgers

"In order to take that train," said Colonel Levering, sitting in the Waldorf–Astoria hotel, "you will have to remain nearly all night in Atlanta. That is a fine city, but I advise you not to put up at the Breathitt House, one of the principal hotels. It is an old wooden building in urgent need of repairs. There are breaches in the walls that you could throw a cat through. The bedrooms have no locks on the doors, no furniture but a single chair in each, and a bedstead without bedding — just a mattress. Even these meager accommodations you cannot be sure that you will have in monopoly; you must take your chance of being stowed in with a lot of others. Sir, it is a most abominable hotel.

"The night that I passed in it was an uncomfortable night. I got in late and was shown to my room on the ground floor by an apologetic night-clerk with a tallow candle, which he considerately left with me. I was worn out by two days and a night of hard railway travel and had not entirely recovered from a gunshot wound in the head, received in an altercation. Rather than look for better quarters I lay down on the mattress without removing my clothing and fell asleep.

"Along toward morning I awoke. The moon had risen and was shining in at the uncurtained window, illuminating the room with a soft, bluish light which seemed, somehow, a bit spooky, though I dare say it had no uncommon quality; all moonlight is that way if you will observe it. Imagine my surprise and indignation when I saw the floor occupied by at least a dozen other lodgers! I sat up, earnestly damning the management of that unthinkable hotel, and was about to spring from the bed to go and make trouble for the night~clerk — him of the apologetic manner and the tallow candle — when something in the situation affected me with a strange indisposition to move. I suppose I was what a story-writer might call 'frozen with terror.' For those men were obviously all dead!

"They lay on their backs, disposed orderly along three sides of the room, their feet to the walls — against the other wall, farthest from the door, stood my bed and the chair. All the faces were covered, but under their white cloths the features of the two bodies that lay in the square patch of moonlight near the window showed in sharp profile as to nose and chin.

"I thought this a bad dream and tried to cry out, as one does in a nightmare, but could make no sound. At last, with a desperate effort I threw my feet to the floor and passing between the two rows of clouted faces and the two bodies that lay nearest the door, I escaped from the infernal place and ran to the office. The night~clerk was there, behind the desk, sitting in the dim light of another tallow candle — just sitting and staring. He did not rise: my abrupt entrance produced no effect upon him, though I must have looked a veritable corpse myself. It occurred to me then that I had not before really observed the fellow. He was a little chap, with a colorless face and the whitest, blankest eyes I ever saw. He had no more expression than the back of my hand. His clothing was a dirty gray.

"'Damn you!' I said; 'what do you mean?'

"Just the same, I was shaking like a leaf in the wind and did not recognize my own voice.

"The night-clerk rose, bowed (apologetically) and — well, he was no longer there, and at that moment I felt a hand laid upon my shoulder from behind. Just fancy that if you can! Unspeakably frightened, I turned and saw a portly, kind-faced gentleman, who asked:

"'What is the matter, my friend?'

"I was not long in telling him, but before I made an end of it he went pale himself. 'See here,' he said, 'are you telling the truth?'

"I had now got myself in hand and terror had given place to indignation. 'If you dare to doubt it,' I said, 'I'll hammer the life out of you!'

"'No,' he replied, 'don't do that; just sit down till I tell you. This is not a hotel. It used to be; afterward it was a hospital. Now it is unoccupied, awaiting a tenant. The room that you mention was the dead-room — there were always plenty of dead. The fellow that you call the night-clerk used to be that, but later he booked the patients as they were brought in. I don't understand his being here. He has been dead a few weeks.'

"'And who are you?' I blurted out.

"'Oh, I look after the premises. I happened to be passing just now, and seeing a light in here came in to investigate. Let us have a look into that room,' he added, lifting the sputtering candle from the desk.

"'I'll see you at the devil first!' said I, bolting out of the door into the street.

"Sir, that Breathitt House, in Atlanta, is a beastly place! Don't you stop there."

"God forbid! Your account of it certainly does not suggest comfort. By the way, Colonel, when did all that occur?"

"In September, 1864 — shortly after the siege."

The Thing at Nolan

To the south of where the road between Leesville and Hardy, in the State of Missouri, crosses the east fork of May Creek stands an abandoned house. Nobody has lived in it since the summer of 1879, and it is fast going to pieces. For some three years before the date mentioned above, it was occupied by the family of Charles May, from one of whose ancestors the creek near which it stands took its name.

Mr. May's family consisted of a wife, an adult son and two young girls. The son's name was John — the names of the daughters are unknown to the writer of this sketch.

John May was of a morose and surly disposition, not easily moved to anger, but having an uncommon gift of sullen, implacable hate. His father was quite otherwise; of a sunny, jovial disposition, but with a quick temper like a sudden flame kindled in a wisp of straw, which consumes it in a flash and is no more. He cherished no resentments, and his anger gone, was quick to make overtures for reconciliation. He had a brother living near by who was unlike him in respect of all this, and it was a current witticism in the neighborhood that John had inherited his disposition from his uncle.

One day a misunderstanding arose between father and son, harsh words ensued, and the father struck the son full in the face with his fist. John quietly wiped away the blood that followed the blow, fixed his eyes upon the already penitent offender and said with cold composure, "You will die for that."

The words were overheard by two brothers named Jackson, who were approaching the men at the moment; but seeing them engaged in a quarrel they retired, apparently unobserved. Charles May afterward related the unfortunate occurrence to his wife and explained that he had apologized to the son for the hasty blow, but without avail; the young man not only rejected his overtures, but refused to withdraw his terrible threat. Nevertheless, there was no open rupture of relations: John continued living with the family, and things went on very much as before.

One Sunday morning in June, 1879, about two weeks after what has been related, May senior left the house immediately after breakfast, taking a spade. He said he was going to make an excavation at a certain spring in a wood about a mile away, so that the cattle could obtain water. John remained in the house for some hours, variously occupied in shaving himself, writing letters and reading a newspaper. His manner was very nearly what it usually was; perhaps he was a trifle more sullen and surly.

At two o'clock he left the house. At five, he returned. For some reason not connected with any interest in his movements, and which is not now recalled, the time of his departure and that of his return were noted by his mother and sisters, as was attested at his trial for murder. It was observed that his clothing was wet in spots, as if (so the prosecution afterward pointed out) he had been removing blood-stains from it. His manner was strange, his look wild. He complained of illness, and going to his room took to his bed.

May senior did not return. Later that evening the nearest neighbors were aroused, and during that night and the following day a search was prosecuted through the wood where the spring was. It resulted in little but the discovery of both men's footprints in the clay about the spring. John May in the meantime had grown rapidly worse with what the local physician called brain fever, and in his delirium raved of murder, but did not say whom he conceived to have been murdered, nor whom he imagined to have done the deed. But his threat was recalled by the brothers Jackson and he was arrested on suspicion and a deputy sheriff put in charge of him at his home. Public opinion ran strongly against him and but for his illness he would probably have been hanged by a mob. As it was, a meeting of the neighbors was held on Tuesday and a committee appointed to watch the case and take such action at any time as circumstances might seem to warrant.

On Wednesday all was changed. From the town of Nolan, eight miles away, came a story which put a quite different light on the matter. Nolan consisted of a school house, a blacksmith's shop, a "store" and a half-dozen dwellings. The store was kept by one Henry Odell, a cousin of the elder May. On the afternoon of the Sunday of May's disappearance Mr. Odell and four of his neighbors, men of credibility, were sitting in the store smoking and talking. It was a warm day; and both the front and the back door were open. At about three o'clock Charles May, who was well known to three of them, entered at the front door and passed out at the rear. He was without hat or coat. He did not look at them, nor return their greeting, a circumstance which did not surprise, for he was evidently seriously hurt. Above the left eyebrow was a wound — a deep gash from which the blood flowed, covering the whole left side of the face and neck and saturating his light-gray shirt. Oddly enough, the thought uppermost in the minds of all was that he had been fighting and was going to the brook directly at the back of the store, to wash himself.

Perhaps there was a feeling of delicacy — a backwoods etiquette which restrained them from following him to offer assistance; the court records, from which, mainly, this narrative is drawn, are silent as to anything but the fact. They waited for him to return, but he did not return.

Bordering the brook behind the store is a forest extending for six miles back to the Medicine Lodge Hills. As soon as it became known in the neighborhood of the missing man's dwelling that he had been seen in Nolan there was a marked alteration in public sentiment and feeling. The vigilance committee went out of existence without the formality of a resolution. Search along the wooded bottom lands of May Creek was stopped and nearly the entire male population of the region took to beating the bush about Nolan and in the Medicine Lodge Hills. But of the missing man no trace was found.

One of the strangest circumstances of this strange case is the formal indictment and trial of a man for murder of one whose body no human being professed to have seen — one not known to be dead. We are all more or less familiar with the vagaries and eccentricities of frontier law, but this instance, it is thought, is unique. However that may be, it is of record that on recovering from his illness John May was indicted for the murder of his missing father. Counsel for the defense appears not to have demurred and the case was tried on its merits. The prosecution was spiritless and perfunctory; the defense easily established — with regard to the deceased — an alibi. If during the time in which John May must have killed Charles May, if he killed him at all, Charles May was miles away from where John May must have been, it is plain that the deceased must have come to his death at the hands of someone else.

John May was acquitted, immediately left the country, and has never been heard of from that day. Shortly afterward his mother and sisters removed to St. Louis. The farm having passed into the possession of a man who owns the land adjoining, and has a dwelling of his own, the May house has ever since been vacant, and has the somber reputation of being haunted.

One day after the May family had left the country, some boys, playing in the woods along May Creek, found concealed under a mass of dead leaves, but partly exposed by the rooting of hogs, a spade, nearly new and bright, except for a spot on one edge, which was rusted and stained with blood. The implement had the initials C. M. cut into the handle.

This discovery renewed, in some degree, the public excitement of a few months before. The earth near the spot where the spade was found was carefully examined, and the result was the finding of the dead body of a man. It had been buried under two or three feet of soil and the spot covered with a layer of dead leaves and twigs. There was but little decomposition, a fact attributed to some preservative property in the mineral-bearing soil.

Above the left eyebrow was a wound — a deep gash from which blood had flowed, covering the whole left side of the face and neck and saturating the light-gray shirt. The skull had been cut through by the blow. The body was that of Charles May.

But what was it that passed through Mr. Odell's store at Nolan?

Mysterious Disappearances

The Difficulty of Crossing a Field

One morning in July, 1854, a planter named Williamson, living six miles from Selma, Alabama, was sitting with his wife and a child on the veranda of his dwelling. Immediately in front of the house was a lawn, perhaps fifty yards in extent between the house and public road, or, as it was called, the "pike." Beyond this road lay a close-cropped pasture of some ten acres, level and without a tree, rock, or any natural or artificial object on its surface. At the time there was not even a domestic animal in the field. In another field, beyond the pasture, a dozen slaves were at work under an overseer.

Throwing away the stump of a cigar, the planter rose, saying: "I forgot to tell Andrew about those horses." Andrew was the overseer.

Williamson strolled leisurely down the gravel walk, plucking a flower as he went, passed across the road and into the pasture, pausing a moment as he closed the gate leading into it, to greet a passing neighbor, Armour Wren, who lived on an adjoining plantation. Mr. Wren was in an open carriage with his son James, a lad of thirteen. When he had driven some two hundred yards from the point of meeting, Mr. Wren said to his son: "I forgot to tell Mr. Williamson about those horses."

Mr. Wren had sold to Mr. Williamson some horses, which were to have been sent for that day, but for some reason not now remembered it would be inconvenient to deliver them until the morrow. The coachman was directed to drive back, and as the vehicle turned Williamson was seen by all three, walking leisurely across the pasture. At that moment one of the coach horses stumbled and came near falling. It had no more than fairly recovered itself when James Wren cried: "Why, father, what has become of Mr. Williamson?"

It is not the purpose of this narrative to answer that question.

Mr. Wren's strange account of the matter, given under oath in the course of legal proceedings relating to the Williamson estate, here follows:

"My son's exclamation caused me to look toward the spot where I had seen the deceased [sic] an instant before, but he was not there, nor was he anywhere visible. I cannot say that at the moment I was greatly startled, or realized the gravity of the occurrence, though I thought it singular. My son, however, was greatly astonished and kept repeating his question in different forms until we arrived at the gate. My black boy Sam was similarly affected, even in a greater degree, but I reckon more by my son's manner than by anything he had himself observed. [This sentence in the testimony was stricken out.] As we got out of the carriage at the gate of the field, and while Sam was hanging [sic] the team to the fence, Mrs. Williamson, with her child in her arms and followed by several servants, came running down the walk in great excitement, crying: 'He is gone, he is gone! O God! what an awful thing!' and many other such exclamations, which I do not distinctly recollect. I got from them the impression that they related to something more — than the mere disappearance of her husband, even if that had occurred before her eyes. Her manner was wild, but not more so, I think, than was natural under the circumstances. I have no reason to think she had at that time lost her mind. I have never since seen nor heard of Mr. Williamson."

This testimony, as might have been expected, was corroborated in almost every particular by the only other eye-witness (if that is a proper term) — the lad James. Mrs. Williamson had lost her reason and the servants were, of course, not competent to testify. The boy James Wren had declared at first that he SAW the disappearance, but there is nothing of this in his testimony given in court. None of the field hands working in the field to which Williamson was going had seen him at all, and the most rigorous search of the entire plantation and adjoining country failed to supply a clew. The most monstrous and grotesque fictions, originating with the blacks, were current in that part of the State for many years, and probably are to this day; but what has been here related is all that is certainly known of the matter. The courts decided that Williamson was dead, and his estate was distributed according to law.

An Unfinished Race

James Burne Worson was a shoemaker who lived in Leamington, Warwickshire, England. He had a little shop in one of the by-ways leading off the road to Warwick. In his humble sphere he was esteemed an honest man, although like many of his class in English towns he was somewhat addicted to drink. When in liquor he would make foolish wagers. On one of these too frequent occasions he was boasting of his prowess as a pedestrian and athlete, and the outcome was a match against nature. For a stake of one sovereign he undertook to run all the way to Coventry and back, a distance of something more than forty miles. This was on the 3d day of September in 1873. He set out at once, the man with whom he had made the bet — whose name is not remembered — accompanied by Barham Wise, a linen draper, and Hamerson Burns, a photographer, I think, following in a light cart or wagon.

For several miles Worson went on very well, at an easy gait, without apparent fatigue, for he had really great powers of endurance and was not sufficiently intoxicated to enfeeble them. The three men in the wagon kept a short distance in the rear, giving him occasional friendly “chaff” or encouragement, as the spirit moved them. Suddenly — in the very middle of the roadway, not a dozen yards from them, and with their eyes full upon him — the man seemed to stumble, pitched headlong forward, uttered a terrible cry and vanished! He did not fall to the earth — he vanished before touching it. No trace of him was ever discovered.

After remaining at and about the spot for some time, with aimless irresolution, the three men returned to Leamington, told their astonishing story and were afterward taken into custody. But they were of good standing, had always been considered truthful, were sober at the time of the occurrence, and nothing ever transpired to discredit their sworn account of their extraordinary adventure, concerning the truth of which, nevertheless, public opinion was divided, throughout the United Kingdom. If they had something to conceal, their choice of means is certainly one of the most amazing ever made by sane human beings.

Charles Ashmore’s Trail

The family of Christian Ashmore consisted of his wife, his mother, two grown daughters, and a son of sixteen years. They lived in Troy, New York, were well-to-do, respectable persons, and had many friends, some of whom, reading these lines, will doubtless learn for the first time the extraordinary fate of the young man. From Troy the Ashmores moved in 1871 or 1872 to Richmond, Indiana, and a year or two later to the vicinity of Quincy, Illinois, where Mr. Ashmore bought a farm and lived on it. At some little distance from the farmhouse was a spring with a constant flow of clear, cold water, whence the family derived its supply for domestic use at all seasons.

On the evening of the 9th of November in 1878, at about nine o’clock, young Charles Ashmore left the family circle about the hearth, took a tin bucket and started toward the spring. As he did not return, the family became uneasy, and going to the door by which he had left the house, his father called without receiving an answer. He then lighted a lantern and with the eldest daughter, Martha, who insisted on accompanying him, went in search. A light snow had fallen, obliterating the path, but making the young man’s trail conspicuous; each footprint was plainly defined. After going a little more than half-way — perhaps seventy-five yards — the father, who was in advance, halted, and elevating his lantern stood peering intently into the darkness ahead.

“What is the matter, father?” the girl asked.

This was the matter: the trail of the young man had abruptly ended, and all beyond was smooth, unbroken snow. The last footprints were as conspicuous as any in the line; the very nail-marks were distinctly visible. Mr. Ashmore looked upward, shading his eyes with his hat held between them and the lantern. The stars were shining; there was not a cloud in the sky; he was denied the explanation which had suggested itself, doubtful as it would have been — a new snowfall with a limit so plainly defined. Taking a wide circuit round the ultimate tracks, so as to leave them undisturbed for further examination, the man proceeded to the spring, the girl following, weak and terrified. Neither had spoken a word of what both had observed. The spring was covered with ice, hours old.

Returning to the house they noted the appearance of the snow on both sides of the trail its entire length. No tracks led away from it.

The morning light showed nothing more. Smooth, spotless, unbroken, the shallow snow lay everywhere.

Four days later the grief-stricken mother herself went to the spring for water. She came back and related that in passing the spot where the footprints had ended she had heard the voice of her son and had been eagerly calling to him, wandering about the place, as she had fancied the voice to be now in one direction, now in another, until she was exhausted with fatigue and emotion.

Questioned as to what the voice had said, she was unable to tell, yet averred that the words were perfectly distinct. In a moment the entire family was at the place, but nothing was heard, and the voice was believed to be an hallucination caused by the mother's great anxiety and her disordered nerves. But for months afterward, at irregular intervals of a few days, the voice was heard by the several members of the family, and by others. All declared it unmistakably the voice of Charles Ashmore; all agreed that it seemed to come from a great distance, faintly, yet with entire distinctness of articulation; yet none could determine its direction, nor repeat its words. The intervals of silence grew longer and longer, the voice fainter and farther, and by midsummer it was heard no more.

If anybody knows the fate of Charles Ashmore it is probably his mother. She is dead.

Science to the Front

In connection with this subject of “mysterious disappearance” — of which every memory is stored with abundant example — it is pertinent to note the belief of Dr. Hem, of Leipsic; not by way of explanation, unless the reader may choose to take it so, but because of its intrinsic interest as a singular speculation. This distinguished scientist has expounded his views in a book entitled “Verschwinden und Seine Theorie,” which has attracted some attention, “particularly,” says one writer, “among the followers of Hegel, and mathematicians who hold to the actual existence of a so~called non-Euclidean space — that is to say, of space which has more dimensions than length, breadth, and thickness — space in which it would be possible to tie a knot in an endless cord and to turn a rubber ball inside out without ‘a solution of its continuity,’ or in other words, without breaking or cracking it.”

Dr. Hem believes that in the visible world there are void places — vacua, and something more — holes, as it were, through which animate and inanimate objects may fall into the invisible world and be seen and heard no more. The theory is something like this: Space is pervaded by luminiferous ether, which is a material thing — as much a substance as air or water, though almost infinitely more attenuated. All force, all forms of energy must be propagated in this; every process must take place in it which takes place at all. But let us suppose that cavities exist in this otherwise universal medium, as caverns exist in the earth, or cells in a Swiss cheese. In such a cavity there would be absolutely nothing. It would be such a vacuum as cannot be artificially produced; for if we pump the air from a receiver there remains the luminiferous ether. Through one of these cavities light could not pass, for there would be nothing to bear it. Sound could not come from it; nothing could be felt in it. It would not have a single one of the conditions necessary to the action of any of our senses. In such a void, in short, nothing whatever could occur. Now, in the words of the writer before quoted — the learned doctor himself nowhere puts it so concisely: “A man inclosed in such a closet could neither see nor be seen; neither hear nor be heard; neither feel nor be felt; neither live nor die, for both life and death are processes which can take place only where there is force, and in empty space no force could exist.” Are these the awful conditions (some will ask) under which the friends of the lost are to think of them as existing, and doomed forever to exist?

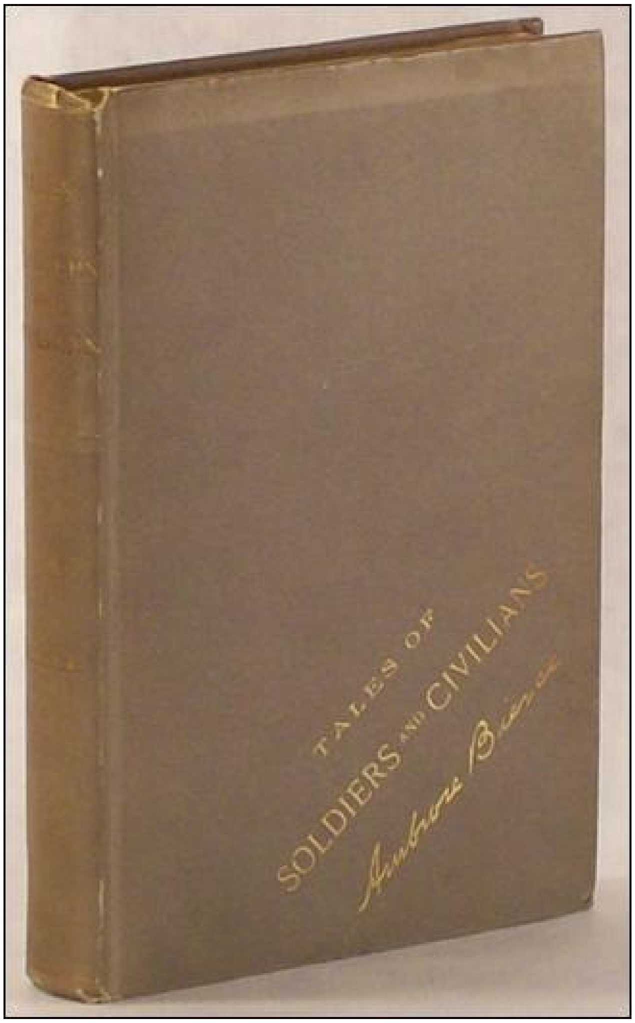
Baldly and imperfectly as here stated, Dr. Hem’s theory, in so far as it professes to be an adequate explanation of “mysterious disappearances,” is open to many obvious objections; to fewer as he states it himself in the “spacious volubility” of his book. But even as expounded by its author it does not explain, and in truth is incompatible with some incidents of, the occurrences related in these memoranda: for example, the sound of Charles Ashmore’s voice. It is not my duty to indue facts and theories with affinity.

A.B.

IN THE MIDST OF LIFE: TALES OF SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS

Several major publishing houses rejected Ambrose Bierce's first collection of short fiction, *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*. In 1891, his friend E.L.G. Steele of San Francisco published the book, which eventually saw republication by G. P. Putnam's Sons in 1898, as *In the Midst of Life*. Most of the stories, which take place during the American Civil War, had originally appeared in the *San Francisco Examiner*. Bierce had served as a lieutenant in the Union Army during the war and his experiences inspired and illuminated his work, which, several critics felt, proved more effective on the subject than Stephen Crane's more celebrated *Red Badge of Courage*.

The collection includes Bierce's most anthologized and best remembered story, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," which features an unusual time sequence and a surprise ending. There are several film adaptations of the story, including *The Spy* (1929), a silent film, and a TV version telecast in 1959 as part of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. A French version won an award for best short subject at the 1962 Cannes Film Festival and appeared as an episode of the American TV series, *The Twilight Zone*, in 1964.


TALES OF
SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS
Ambrose Bierce

First edition, E.L.G. Steele, 1891

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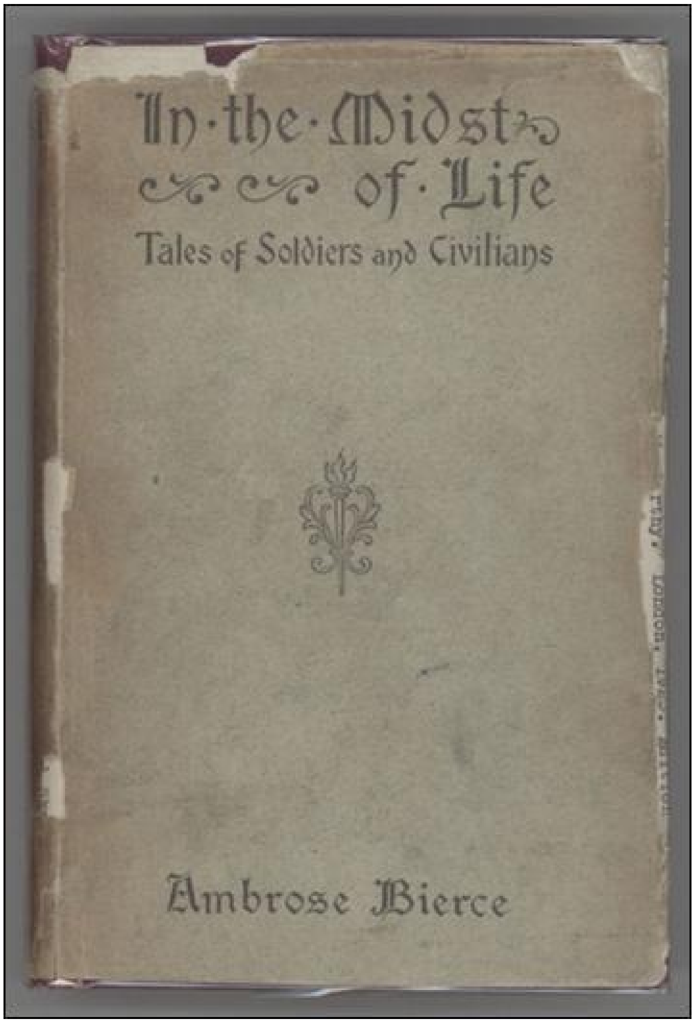
In·the·Midst
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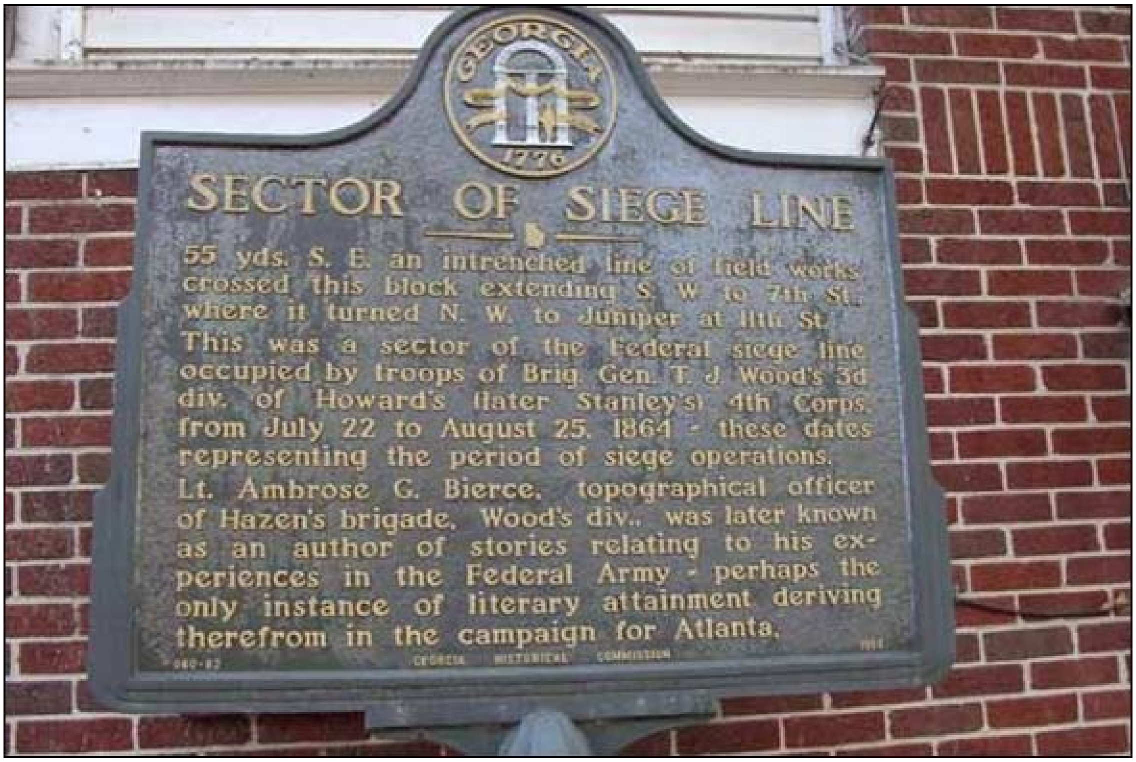
Tales of Soldiers and Civilians
Ambrose Bierce

An 1898 edition published by G. P. Putnam’s Sons

Lieutenant Ambrose G. Bierce at age 21, during the Civil War in 1862



GEORGIA 1776

SECTOR OF SIEGE LINE

55 yds. S. E. an intrenched line of field works crossed this block extending S. W. to 7th St. where it turned N. W. to Juniper at 11th St.

This was a sector of the Federal siege line occupied by troops of Brig. Gen. T. J. Wood's 3d div. of Howard's (later Stanley's) 4th Corps, from July 22 to August 25, 1864 - these dates representing the period of siege operations.

Lt. Ambrose G. Bierce, topographical officer of Hazen's brigade, Wood's div., was later known as an author of stories relating to his experiences in the Federal Army - perhaps the only instance of literary attainment deriving therefrom in the campaign for Atlanta.

060-82 GEORGIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION [illegible]

From a Twilight Zone episode adapted from Bierce's short story, "A Disturbance at Owl Creek Bridge"

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Denied existence by the chief publishing houses of the country, this book owes itself to Mr. E. L. G. Steele, merchant, of this city. In attesting Mr. Steele's faith in his judgment and his friend, it will serve its author's main and best ambition.

A. B.

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 4, 1891.

SOLDIERS

A HORSEMAN IN THE SKY

I

One sunny afternoon in the autumn of the year 1861 a soldier lay in a clump of laurel by the side of a road in western Virginia. He lay at full length upon his stomach, his feet resting upon the toes, his head upon the left forearm. His extended right hand loosely grasped his rifle. But for the somewhat methodical disposition of his limbs and a slight rhythmic movement of the cartridge-box at the back of his belt he might have been thought to be dead. He was asleep at his post of duty. But if detected he would be dead shortly afterward, death being the just and legal penalty of his crime.

The clump of laurel in which the criminal lay was in the angle of a road which after ascending southward a steep acclivity to that point turned sharply to the west, running along the summit for perhaps one hundred yards. There it turned southward again and went zigzagging downward through the forest. At the salient of that second angle was a large flat rock, jutting out northward, overlooking the deep valley from which the road ascended. The rock capped a high cliff; a stone dropped from its outer edge would have fallen sheer downward one thousand feet to the tops of the pines. The angle where the soldier lay was on another spur of the same cliff. Had he been awake he would have commanded a view, not only of the short arm of the road and the jutting rock, but of the entire profile of the cliff below it. It might well have made him giddy to look.

The country was wooded everywhere except at the bottom of the valley to the northward, where there was a small natural meadow, through which flowed a stream scarcely visible from the valley’s rim. This open ground looked hardly larger than an ordinary door-yard, but was really several acres in extent. Its green was more vivid than that of the inclosing forest. Away beyond it rose a line of giant cliffs similar to those upon which we are supposed to stand in our survey of the savage scene, and through which the road had somehow made its climb to the summit. The configuration of the valley, indeed, was such that from this point of observation it seemed entirely shut in, and one could but have wondered how the road which found a way out of it had found a way into it, and whence came and whither went the waters of the stream that parted the meadow more than a thousand feet below.

No country is so wild and difficult but men will make it a theatre of war; concealed in the forest at the bottom of that military rat-trap, in which half a hundred men in possession of the exits might have starved an army to submission, lay five regiments of Federal infantry. They had marched all the previous day and night and were resting. At nightfall they would take to the road again, climb to the place where their unfaithful sentinel now slept, and descending the other slope of the ridge fall upon a camp of the enemy at about midnight. Their hope was to surprise it, for the road led to the rear of it. In case of failure, their position would be perilous in the extreme; and fail they surely would should accident or vigilance apprise the enemy of the movement.

II

The sleeping sentinel in the clump of laurel was a young Virginian named Carter Druse. He was the son of wealthy parents, an only child, and had known such ease and cultivation and high living as wealth and taste were able to command in the mountain country of western Virginia. His home was but a few miles from where he now lay. One morning he had risen from the breakfast-table and said, quietly but gravely: “Father, a Union regiment has arrived at Grafton. I am going to join it.”

The father lifted his leonine head, looked at the son a moment in silence, and replied: “Well, go, sir, and whatever may occur do what you conceive to be your duty. Virginia, to which you are a traitor, must get on without you. Should we both live to the end of the war, we will speak further of the matter. Your mother, as the physician has informed you, is in a most critical condition; at the best she cannot be with us longer than a few weeks, but that time is precious. It would be better not to disturb her.”

So Carter Druse, bowing reverently to his father, who returned the salute with a stately courtesy that masked a breaking heart, left the home of his childhood to go soldiering. By conscience and courage, by deeds of devotion and daring, he soon commended himself to his fellows and his officers; and it was to these qualities and to some knowledge of the coun — try that he owed his selection for his present perilous duty at the extreme outpost. Nevertheless, fatigue had been stronger than resolution and he had fallen asleep. What good or bad angel came in a dream to rouse him from his state of crime, who shall say? Without a movement, without a sound, in the profound silence and the languor of the late afternoon, some invisible messenger of fate touched with unsealing finger the eyes of his consciousness — whispered into the ear of his spirit the mysterious awakening word which no human lips ever have spoken, no human memory ever has recalled. He quietly raised his forehead from his arm and looked between the masking stems of the laurels, instinctively closing his right hand about the stock of his rifle.

His first feeling was a keen artistic delight. On a colossal pedestal, the cliff, — motionless at the extreme edge of the capping rock and sharply outlined against the sky, — was an equestrian statue of impressive dignity. The figure of the man sat the figure of the horse, straight and soldierly, but with the repose of a Grecian god carved in the marble which limits the suggestion of activity. The gray costume harmonized with its aërial background; the metal of accoutrement and caparison was softened and subdued by the shadow; the animal's skin had no points of high light. A carbine strikingly foreshortened lay across the pommel of the saddle, kept in place by the right hand grasping it at the "grip"; the left hand, holding the bridle rein, was invisible. In silhouette against the sky the profile of the horse was cut with the sharpness of a cameo; it looked across the heights of air to the confronting cliffs beyond. The face of the rider, turned slightly away, showed only an outline of temple and beard; he was looking downward to the bottom of the valley. Magnified by its lift against the sky and by the soldier's testifying sense of the formidableness of a near enemy the group appeared of heroic, almost colossal, size.

For an instant Druse had a strange, half-defined feeling that he had slept to the end of the war and was looking upon a noble work of art reared upon that eminence to commemorate the deeds of an heroic past of which he had been an inglorious part. The feeling was dispelled by a slight movement of the group: the horse, without moving its feet, had drawn its body slightly backward from the verge; the man remained immobile as before. Broad awake and keenly alive to the significance of the situation, Druse now brought the butt of his rifle against his cheek by cautiously pushing the barrel forward through the bushes, cocked the piece, and glancing through the sights covered a vital spot of the horseman's breast. A touch upon the trigger and all would have been well with Carter Druse. At that instant the horseman turned his head and looked in the direction of his concealed foeman — seemed to look into his very face, into his eyes, into his brave, compassionate heart.

Is it then so terrible to kill an enemy in war — an enemy who has surprised a secret vital to the safety of one's self and comrades — an enemy more formidable for his knowledge than all his army for its numbers? Carter Druse grew pale; he shook in every limb, turned faint, and saw the statuesque group before him as black figures, rising, falling, moving unsteadily in arcs of circles in a fiery sky. His hand fell away from his weapon, his head slowly dropped until his face rested on the leaves in which he lay. This courageous gentleman and hardy soldier was near swooning from intensity of emotion.

It was not for long; in another moment his face was raised from earth, his hands resumed their places on the rifle, his forefinger sought the trigger; mind, heart, and eyes were clear, conscience and reason sound. He could not hope to capture that enemy; to alarm him would but send him dashing to his camp with his fatal news. The duty of the soldier was plain: the man must be shot dead from ambush — without warning, without a moment's spiritual preparation, with never so much as an unspoken prayer, he must be sent to his account. But no — there is a hope; he may have discovered nothing — perhaps he is but admiring the sublimity of the landscape. If permitted, he may turn and ride carelessly away in the direction whence he came. Surely it will be possible to judge at the instant of his withdrawing whether he knows. It may well be that his fixity of attention — Druse turned his head and looked through the deeps of air downward, as from the surface to the bottom of a translucent sea. He saw creeping across the green meadow a sinuous line of figures of men and horses — some foolish commander was permitting the soldiers of his escort to water their beasts in the open, in plain view from a dozen summits!

Druse withdrew his eyes from the valley and fixed them again upon the group of man and horse in the sky, and again it was through the sights of his rifle. But this time his aim was at the horse. In his memory, as if they were a divine mandate, rang the words of his father at their parting: “Whatever may occur, do what you conceive to be your duty.” He was calm now. His teeth were firmly but not rigidly closed; his nerves were as tranquil as a sleeping babe's — not a tremor affected any muscle of his body; his breathing, until suspended in the act of taking aim, was regular and slow. Duty had conquered; the spirit had said to the body: “Peace, be still.” He fired.

III

An officer of the Federal force, who in a spirit of adventure or in quest of knowledge had left the hidden *bivouac* in the valley, and with aimless feet had made his way to the lower edge of a small open space near the foot of the cliff, was considering what he had to gain by pushing his exploration further. At a distance of a quarter-mile before him, but apparently at a stone's throw, rose from its fringe of pines the gigantic face of rock, towering to so great a height above him that it made him giddy to look up to where its edge cut a sharp, rugged line against the sky. It presented a clean, vertical profile against a background of blue sky to a point half the way down, and of distant hills, hardly less blue, thence to the tops of the trees at its base. Lifting his eyes to the dizzy altitude of its summit the officer saw an astonishing sight — a man on horseback riding down into the valley through the air!

Straight upright sat the rider, in military fashion, with a firm seat in the saddle, a strong clutch upon the rein to hold his charger from too impetuous a plunge. From his bare head his long hair streamed upward, waving like a plume. His hands were concealed in the cloud of the horse's lifted mane. The animal's body was as level as if every hoof-stroke encountered the resistant earth. Its motions were those of a wild gallop, but even as the officer looked they ceased, with all the legs thrown sharply forward as in the act of alighting from a leap. But this was a flight!

Filled with amazement and terror by this apparition of a horseman in the sky — half believing himself the chosen scribe of some new Apocalypse, the officer was overcome by the intensity of his emotions; his legs failed him and he fell. Almost at the same instant he heard a crashing sound in the trees — a sound that died without an echo — and all was still.

The officer rose to his feet, trembling. The familiar sensation of an abraded shin recalled his dazed faculties. Pulling himself together he ran rapidly obliquely away from the cliff to a point distant from its foot; thereabout he expected to find his man; and thereabout he naturally failed. In the fleeting instant of his vision his imagination had been so wrought upon by the apparent grace and ease and intention of the marvelous performance that it did not occur to him that the line of march of aërial cavalry is directly downward, and that he could find the objects of his search at the very foot of the cliff. A half-hour later he returned to camp.

This officer was a wise man; he knew better than to tell an incredible truth. He said nothing of what he had seen. But when the commander asked him if in his scout he had learned anything of advantage to the expedition he answered:

"Yes, sir; there is no road leading down into this valley from the southward."

The commander, knowing better, smiled.

IV

After firing his shot, Private Carter Druse reloaded his rifle and resumed his watch. Ten minutes had hardly passed when a Federal sergeant crept cautiously to him on hands and knees. Druse neither turned his head nor looked at him, but lay without motion or sign of recognition.

"Did you fire?" the sergeant whispered.

"Yes."

"At what?"

"A horse. It was standing on yonder rock — pretty far out. You see it is no longer there. It went over the cliff."

The man's face was white, but he showed no other sign of emotion. Having answered, he turned away his eyes and said no more. The sergeant did not understand.

"See here, Druse," he said, after a moment's silence, "it's no use making a mystery. I order you to report. Was there anybody on the horse?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"My father."

The sergeant rose to his feet and walked away. "Good God!" he said.

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AN OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE

I

A man stood upon a railroad bridge in northern Alabama, looking down into the swift water twenty feet below. The man’s hands were behind his back, the wrists bound with a cord. A rope closely encircled his neck. It was attached to a stout cross-timber above his head and the slack fell to the level of his knees. Some loose boards laid upon the sleepers supporting the metals of the railway supplied a footing for him and his executioners — two private soldiers of the Federal army, directed by a sergeant who in civil life may have been a deputy sheriff. At a short remove upon the same temporary platform was an officer in the uniform of his rank, armed. He was a captain. A sentinel at each end of the bridge stood with his rifle in the position known as “support,” that is to say, vertical in front of the left shoulder, the hammer resting on the forearm thrown straight across the chest — a formal and unnatural position, enforcing an erect carriage of the body. It did not appear to be the duty of these two men to know what was occurring at the centre of the bridge; they merely blockaded the two ends of the foot planking that traversed it.

Beyond one of the sentinels nobody was in sight; the railroad ran straight away into a forest for a hundred yards, then, curving, was lost to view. Doubtless there was an outpost farther along. The other bank of the stream was open ground — a gentle acclivity topped with a stockade of vertical tree trunks, loop-holed for rifles, with a single embrasure through which protruded the muzzle of a brass cannon commanding the bridge. Mid-way of the slope between bridge and fort were the spectators — a single company of infantry in line, at “parade rest,” the butts of the rifles on the ground, the barrels inclining slightly backward against the right shoulder, the hands crossed upon the stock. A lieutenant stood at the right of the line, the point of his sword upon the ground, his left hand resting upon his right. Excepting the group of four at the centre of the bridge, not a man moved. The company faced the bridge, staring stonily, motionless. The sentinels, facing the banks of the stream, might have been statues to adorn the bridge. The captain stood with folded arms, silent, observing the work of his subordinates, but making no sign. Death is a dignitary who when he comes announced is to be received with formal manifestations of respect, even by those most familiar with him. In the code of military etiquette silence and fixity are forms of deference.

The man who was engaged in being hanged was apparently about thirty-five years of age. He was a civilian, if one might judge from his habit, which was that of a planter. His features were good — a straight nose, firm mouth, broad forehead, from which his long, dark hair was combed straight back, falling behind his ears to the collar of his well-fitting frock-coat. He wore a mustache and pointed beard, but no whiskers; his eyes were large and dark gray, and had a kindly expression which one would hardly have expected in one whose neck was in the hemp. Evidently this was no vulgar assassin. The liberal military code makes provision for hanging many kinds of persons, and gentlemen are not excluded.

The preparations being complete, the two private soldiers stepped aside and each drew away the plank upon which he had been standing. The sergeant turned to the captain, saluted and placed himself immediately behind that officer, who in turn moved apart one pace. These movements left the condemned man and the sergeant standing on the two ends of the same plank, which spanned three of the cross-ties of the bridge. The end upon which the civilian stood almost, but not quite, reached a fourth. This plank had been held in place by the weight of the captain; it was now held by that of the sergeant. At a signal from the former the latter would step aside, the plank would tilt and the condemned man go down between two ties. The arrangement commended itself to his judgment as simple and effective. His face had not been covered nor his eyes bandaged. He looked a moment at his “unsteadfast footing,” then let his gaze wander to the swirling water of the stream racing madly beneath his feet. A piece of dancing driftwood caught his attention and his eyes followed it down the current. How slowly it appeared to move! What a sluggish stream!

He closed his eyes in order to fix his last thoughts upon his wife and children. The water, touched to gold by the early sun, the brooding mists under the banks at some distance down the stream, the fort, the soldiers, the piece of drift — all had distracted him. And now he became conscious of a new disturbance. Striking through the thought of his dear ones was a sound which he could neither ignore nor understand, a sharp, distinct, metallic percussion like the stroke of a blacksmith’s hammer upon the anvil; it had the same ringing quality. He wondered what it was, and whether immeasurably distant or near by — it seemed both. Its recurrence was regular, but as slow as the tolling of a death knell. He awaited each stroke with impatience and — he knew not why — apprehension. The intervals of silence grew progressively longer; the delays became maddening. With their greater infrequency the sounds increased in strength and sharpness. They hurt his ear like the thrust of a knife; he feared he would shriek. What he heard was the ticking of his watch.

He unclosed his eyes and saw again the water below him. “If I could free my hands,” he thought, “I might throw off the noose and spring into the stream. By diving I could evade the bullets and, swimming vigorously, reach the bank, take to the woods and get away home. My home, thank God, is as yet outside their lines; my wife and little ones are still beyond the invader’s farthest advance.”

As these thoughts, which have here to be set down in words, were flashed into the doomed man’s brain rather than evolved from it the captain nodded to the sergeant. The sergeant stepped aside.

II

Peyton Farquhar was a well-to-do planter, of an old and highly respected Alabama family. Being a slave owner and like other slave owners a politician he was naturally an original secessionist and ardently devoted to the Southern cause. Circumstances of an imperious nature, which it is unnecessary to relate here, had prevented him from taking service with the gallant army that had fought the disastrous campaigns ending with the fall of Corinth, and he chafed under the inglorious restraint, longing for the release of his energies, the larger life of the soldier, the opportunity for distinction. That opportunity, he felt, would come, as it comes to all in war time. Meanwhile he did what he could. No service was too humble for him to perform in aid of the South, no adventure too perilous for him to undertake if consistent with the character of a civilian who was at heart a soldier, and who in good faith and without too much qualification assented to at least a part of the frankly villainous dictum that all is fair in love and war.

One evening while Farquhar and his wife were sitting on a rustic bench near the entrance to his grounds, a gray-clad soldier rode up to the gate and asked for a drink of water. Mrs. Farquhar was only too happy to serve him with her own white hands. While she was fetching the water her husband approached the dusty horseman and inquired eagerly for news from the front.

“The Yanks are repairing the railroads,” said the man, “and are getting ready for another advance. They have reached the Owl Creek bridge, put it in order and built a stockade on the north bank. The commandant has issued an order, which is posted everywhere, declaring that any civilian caught interfering with the railroad, its bridges, tunnels or trains will be summarily hanged. I saw the order.”

“How far is it to the Owl Creek bridge?” Farquhar asked.

“About thirty miles.”

“Is there no force on this side the creek?”

“Only a picket post half a mile out, on the railroad, and a single sentinel at this end of the bridge.”

“Suppose a man — a civilian and student of hanging — should elude the picket post and perhaps get the better of the sentinel,” said Farquhar, smiling, “what could he accomplish?”

The soldier reflected. “I was there a month ago,” he replied. “I observed that the flood of last winter had lodged a great quantity of driftwood against the wooden pier at this end of the bridge. It is now dry and would burn like tow.”

The lady had now brought the water, which the soldier drank. He thanked her ceremoniously, bowed to her husband and rode away. An hour later, after nightfall, he repassed the plantation, going northward in the direction from which he had come. He was a Federal scout.

III

As Peyton Farquhar fell straight downward through the bridge he lost consciousness and was as one already dead. From this state he was awakened — ages later, it seemed to him — by the pain of a sharp pressure upon his throat, followed by a sense of suffocation. Keen, poignant agonies seemed to shoot from his neck downward through every fibre of his body and limbs. These pains appeared to flash along well-defined lines of ramification and to beat with an inconceivably rapid periodicity. They seemed like streams of pulsating fire heating him to an intolerable temperature. As to his head, he was conscious of nothing but a feeling of fulness — of congestion. These sensations were unaccompanied by thought. The intellectual part of his nature was already effaced; he had power only to feel, and feeling was torment. He was conscious of motion. Encompassed in a luminous cloud, of which he was now merely the fiery heart, without material substance, he swung through unthinkable arcs of oscillation, like a vast pendulum. Then all at once, with terrible suddenness, the light about him shot upward with the noise of a loud plash; a frightful roaring was in his ears, and all was cold and dark. The power of thought was restored; he knew that the rope had broken and he had fallen into the stream. There was no additional strangulation; the noose about his neck was already suffocating him and kept the water from his lungs. To die of hanging at the bottom of a river! — the idea seemed to him ludicrous. He opened his eyes in the darkness and saw above him a gleam of light, but how distant, how inaccessible! He was still sinking, for the light became fainter and fainter until it was a mere glimmer. Then it began to grow and brighten, and he knew that he was rising toward the surface — knew it with reluctance, for he was now very comfortable. “To be hanged and drowned,” he thought, “that is not so bad; but I do not wish to be shot. No; I will not be shot; that is not fair.”

He was not conscious of an effort, but a sharp pain in his wrist apprised him that he was trying to free his hands. He gave the struggle his attention, as an idler might observe the feat of a juggler, without interest in the outcome. What splendid effort! — what magnificent, what superhuman strength! Ah, that was a fine endeavor! Bravo! The cord fell away; his arms parted and floated upward, the hands dimly seen on each side in the growing light. He watched them with a new interest as first one and then the other pounced upon the noose at his neck. They tore it away and thrust it fiercely aside, its undulations resembling those of a water-snake. “Put it back, put it back!” He thought he shouted these words to his hands, for the undoing of the noose had been succeeded by the direst pang that he had yet experienced. His neck ached horribly; his brain was on fire; his heart, which had been fluttering faintly, gave a great leap, trying to force itself out at his mouth. His whole body was racked and wrenched with an insupportable anguish! But his disobedient hands gave no heed to the command. They beat the water vigorously with quick, downward strokes, forcing him to the surface. He felt his head emerge; his eyes were blinded by the sunlight; his chest expanded convulsively, and with a supreme and crowning agony his lungs engulfed a great draught of air, which instantly he expelled in a shriek!

He was now in full possession of his physical senses. They were, indeed, preternaturally keen and alert. Something in the awful disturbance of his organic system had so exalted and refined them that they made record of things never before perceived. He felt the ripples upon his face and heard their separate sounds as they struck. He looked at the forest on the bank of the stream, saw the individual trees, the leaves and the veining of each leaf — saw the very insects upon them: the locusts, the brilliant-bodied flies, the gray spiders stretching their webs from twig to twig. He noted the prismatic colors in all the dewdrops upon a million blades of grass. The humming of the gnats that danced above the eddies of the stream, the beating of the dragon-flies’ wings, the strokes of the water-spiders’ legs, like oars which had lifted their boat — all these made audible music. A fish slid along beneath his eyes and he heard the rush of its body parting the water.

He had come to the surface facing down the stream; in a moment the visible world seemed to wheel slowly round, himself the pivotal point, and he saw the bridge, the fort, the soldiers upon the bridge, the captain, the sergeant, the two privates, his executioners. They were in silhouette against the blue sky. They shouted and gesticulated, pointing at him. The captain had drawn his pistol, but did not fire; the others were unarmed. Their movements were grotesque and horrible, their forms gigantic.

Suddenly he heard a sharp report and something struck the water smartly within a few inches of his head, spattering his face with spray. He heard a second report, and saw one of the sentinels with his rifle at his shoulder, a light cloud of blue smoke rising from the muzzle. The man in the water saw the eye of the man on the bridge gazing into his own through the sights of the rifle. He observed that it was a gray eye and remembered having read that gray eyes were keenest, and that all famous markmen had them. Nevertheless, this one had missed.

A counter-swirl had caught Farquhar and turned him half round; he was again looking into the forest on the bank opposite the fort. The sound of a clear, high voice in a monotonous singsong now rang out behind him and came across the water with a distinctness that pierced and subdued all other sounds, even the beating of the ripples in his ears. Although no soldier, he had frequented camps enough to know the dread significance of that deliberate, drawling, aspirated chant; the lieutenant on shore was taking a part in the morning’s work. How coldly and pitilessly — with what an even, calm intonation, presaging, and enforcing tranquillity in the men — with what accurately measured intervals fell those cruel words:

“Attention, company!... Shoulder arms!... Ready!... Aim!... Fire!”

Farquhar dived — dived as deeply as he could. The water roared in his ears like the voice of Niagara, yet he heard the dulled thunder of the volley and, rising again toward the surface, met shining bits of metal, singularly flattened, oscillating slowly downward. Some of them touched him on the face and hands, then fell away, continuing their descent. One lodged between his collar and neck; it was uncomfortably warm and he snatched it out.

As he rose to the surface, gasping for breath, he saw that he had been a long time under water; he was perceptibly farther down stream — nearer to safety. The soldiers had almost finished reloading; the metal ramrods flashed all at once in the sunshine as they were drawn from the barrels, turned in the air, and thrust into their sockets. The two sentinels fired again, independently and ineffectually.

The hunted man saw all this over his shoulder; he was now swimming vigorously with the current. His brain was as energetic as his arms and legs; he thought with the rapidity of lightning.

“The officer,” he reasoned, “will not make that martinet’s error a second time.

It is as easy to dodge a volley as a single shot. He has probably already given the command to fire at will. God help me, I cannot dodge them all!”

An appalling plash within two yards of him was followed by a loud, rushing sound, *diminuendo*, which seemed to travel back through the air to the fort and died in an explosion which stirred the very river to its deeps! A rising sheet of water curved over him, fell down upon him, blinded him, strangled him! The cannon had taken a hand in the game. As he shook his head free from the commotion of the smitten water he heard the deflected shot humming through the air ahead, and in an instant it was cracking and smashing the branches in the forest beyond.

“They will not do that again,” he thought; “the next time they will use a charge of grape. I must keep my eye upon the gun; the smoke will apprise me — the report arrives too late; it lags behind the missile. That is a good gun.”

Suddenly he felt himself whirled round and round — spinning like a top. The water, the banks, the forests, the now distant bridge, fort and men — all were commingled and blurred. Objects were represented by their colors only; circular horizontal streaks of color — that was all he saw. He had been caught in a vortex and was being whirled on with a velocity of advance and gyration that made him giddy and sick. In a few moments he was flung upon the gravel at the foot of the left bank of the stream — the southern bank — and behind a projecting point which concealed him from his enemies. The sudden arrest of his motion, the abrasion of one of his hands on the gravel, restored him, and he wept with delight. He dug his fingers into the sand, threw it over himself in handfuls and audibly blessed it. It looked like diamonds, rubies, emeralds; he could think of nothing beautiful which it did not resemble. The trees upon the bank were giant garden plants; he noted a definite order in their arrangement, inhaled the fragrance of their blooms. A strange, roseate light shone through the spaces among their trunks and the wind made in their branches the music of æolian harps. He had no wish to perfect his escape — was content to remain in that enchanting spot until retaken.

A whiz and rattle of grapeshot among the branches high above his head roused him from his dream. The baffled cannoneer had fired him a random farewell. He sprang to his feet, rushed up the sloping bank, and plunged into the forest.

All that day he traveled, laying his course by the rounding sun. The forest seemed interminable; nowhere did he discover a break in it, not even a woodman’s road. He had not known that he lived in so wild a region. There was something uncanny in the revelation.

By nightfall he was fatigued, footsore, famishing. The thought of his wife and children urged him on. At last he found a road which led him in what he knew to be the right direction. It was as wide and straight as a city street, yet it seemed untraveled. No fields bordered it, no dwelling anywhere. Not so much as the barking of a dog suggested human habitation. The black bodies of the trees formed a straight wall on both sides, terminating on the horizon in a point, like a diagram in a lesson in perspective. Over-head, as he looked up through this rift in the wood, shone great golden stars looking unfamiliar and grouped in strange constellations. He was sure they were arranged in some order which had a secret and malign significance. The wood on either side was full of singular noises, among which — once, twice, and again — he distinctly heard whispers in an unknown tongue.

His neck was in pain and lifting his hand to it he found it horribly swollen. He knew that it had a circle of black where the rope had bruised it. His eyes felt congested; he could no longer close them. His tongue was swollen with thirst; he relieved its fever by thrusting it forward from between his teeth into the cold air. How softly the turf had carpeted the untraveled avenue — he could no longer feel the roadway beneath his feet!

Doubtless, despite his suffering, he had fallen asleep while walking, for now he sees another scene — perhaps he has merely recovered from a delirium. He stands at the gate of his own home. All is as he left it, and all bright and beautiful in the morning sunshine. He must have traveled the entire night. As he pushes open the gate and passes up the wide white walk, he sees a flutter of female garments; his wife, looking fresh and cool and sweet, steps down from the veranda to meet him. At the bottom of the steps she stands waiting, with a smile of ineffable joy, an attitude of matchless grace and dignity. Ah, how beautiful she is! He springs forward with extended arms. As he is about to clasp her he feels a stunning blow upon the back of the neck; a blinding white light blazes all about him with a sound like the shock of a cannon — then all is darkness and silence!

Peyton Farquhar was dead; his body, with a broken neck, swung gently from side to side beneath the timbers of the Owl Creek bridge.

CHICKAMAUGA

One sunny autumn afternoon a child strayed away from its rude home in a small field and entered a forest unobserved. It was happy in a new sense of freedom from control, happy in the opportunity of exploration and adventure; for this child's spirit, in bodies of its ancestors, had for thousands of years been trained to memorable feats of discovery and conquest — victories in battles whose critical moments were centuries, whose victors' camps were cities of hewn stone. From the cradle of its race it had conquered its way through two continents and passing a great sea had penetrated a third, there to be born to war and dominion as a heritage.

The child was a boy aged about six years, the son of a poor planter. In his younger manhood the father had been a soldier, had fought against naked savages and followed the flag of his country into the capital of a civilized race to the far South. In the peaceful life of a planter the warrior-fire survived; once kindled, it is never extinguished. The man loved military books and pictures and the boy had understood enough to make himself a wooden sword, though even the eye of his father would hardly have known it for what it was. This weapon he now bore bravely, as became the son of an heroic race, and pausing now and again in the sunny space of the forest assumed, with some exaggeration, the postures of aggression and defense that he had been taught by the engraver's art. Made reckless by the ease with which he overcame invisible foes attempting to stay his advance, he committed the common enough military error of pushing the pursuit to a dangerous extreme, until he found himself upon the margin of a wide but shallow brook, whose rapid waters barred his direct advance against the flying foe that had crossed with illogical ease. But the intrepid victor was not to be baffled; the spirit of the race which had passed the great sea burned unconquerable in that small breast and would not be denied. Finding a place where some bowlders in the bed of the stream lay but a step or a leap apart, he made his way across and fell again upon the rear-guard of his imaginary foe, putting all to the sword.

Now that the battle had been won, prudence required that he withdraw to his base of operations. Alas; like many a mightier conqueror, and like one, the mightiest, he could not

curb the lust for war, Nor learn that tempted Fate will leave the loftiest star.

Advancing from the bank of the creek he suddenly found himself confronted with a new and more formidable enemy: in the path that he was following, sat, bolt upright, with ears erect and paws suspended before it, a rabbit! With a startled cry the child turned and fled, he knew not in what direction, calling with inarticulate cries for his mother, weeping, stumbling, his tender skin cruelly torn by brambles, his little heart beating hard with terror — breathless, blind with tears — lost in the forest! Then, for more than an hour, he wandered with erring feet through the tangled undergrowth, till at last, overcome by fatigue, he lay down in a narrow space between two rocks, within a few yards of the stream and still grasping his toy sword, no longer a weapon but a companion, sobbed himself to sleep. The wood birds sang merrily above his head; the squirrels, whisking their bravery of tail, ran barking from tree to tree, unconscious of the pity of it, and somewhere far away was a strange, muffled thunder, as if the partridges were drumming in celebration of nature's victory over the son of her immemorial enslavers. And back at the little plantation, where white men and black were hastily searching the fields and hedges in alarm, a mother's heart was breaking for her missing child.

Hours passed, and then the little sleeper rose to his feet. The chill of the evening was in his limbs, the fear of the gloom in his heart. But he had rested, and he no longer wept. With some blind instinct which impelled to action he struggled through the undergrowth about him and came to a more open ground — on his right the brook, to the left a gentle acclivity studded with infrequent trees; over all, the gathering gloom of twilight. A thin, ghostly mist rose along the water. It frightened and repelled him; instead of recrossing, in the direction whence he had come, he turned his back upon it, and went forward toward the dark inclosing wood. Suddenly he saw before him a strange moving object which he took to be some large animal — a dog, a pig — he could not name it; perhaps it was a bear. He had seen pictures of bears, but knew of nothing to their discredit and had vaguely wished to meet one. But something in form or movement of this object — some — thing in the awkwardness of its approach — told him that it was not a bear, and curiosity was stayed by fear. He stood still and as it came slowly on gained courage every moment, for he saw that at least it had not the long, menacing ears of the rabbit. Possibly his impressionable mind was half conscious of something familiar in its shambling, awkward gait. Before it had approached near enough to resolve his doubts he saw that it was followed by another and another. To right and to left were many more; the whole open space about him was alive with them — all moving toward the brook.

They were men. They crept upon their hands and knees. They used their hands only, dragging their legs. They used their knees only, their arms hanging idle at their sides. They strove to rise to their feet, but fell prone in the attempt. They did nothing naturally, and nothing alike, save only to advance foot by foot in the same direction. Singly, in pairs and in little groups, they came on through the gloom, some halting now and again while others crept slowly past them, then resuming their movement. They came by dozens and by hundreds; as far on either hand as one could see in the deepening gloom they extended and the black wood behind them appeared to be inexhaustible. The very ground seemed in motion toward the creek. Occasionally one who had paused did not again go on, but lay motionless. He was dead. Some, pausing, made strange gestures with their hands, erected their arms and lowered them again, clasped their heads; spread their palms upward, as men are sometimes seen to do in public prayer.

Not all of this did the child note; it is what would have been noted by an elder observer; he saw little but that these were men, yet crept like babes. Being men, they were not terrible, though unfamiliarly clad. He moved among them freely, going from one to another and peering into their faces with childish curiosity. All their faces were singularly white and many were streaked and gouted with red. Something in this — something too, perhaps, in their grotesque attitudes and movements — reminded him of the painted clown whom he had seen last summer in the circus, and he laughed as he watched them. But on and ever on they crept, these maimed and bleeding men, as heedless as he of the dramatic contrast between his laughter and their own ghastly gravity. To him it was a merry spectacle. He had seen his father’s negroes creep upon their hands and knees for his amusement — had ridden them so, “making believe” they were his horses. He now approached one of these crawling figures from behind and with an agile movement mounted it astride. The man sank upon his breast, recovered, flung the small boy fiercely to the ground as an unbroken colt might have done, then turned upon him a face that lacked a lower jaw — from the upper teeth to the throat was a great red gap fringed with hanging shreds of flesh and splinters of bone. The unnatural prominence of nose, the absence of chin, the fierce eyes, gave this man the appearance of a great bird of prey crimsoned in throat and breast by the blood of its quarry. The man rose to his knees, the child to his feet. The man shook his fist at the child; the child, terrified at last, ran to a tree near by, got upon the farther side of it and took a more serious view of the situation. And so the clumsy multitude dragged itself slowly and painfully along in hideous pantomime — moved forward down the slope like a swarm of great black beetles, with never a sound of going — in silence profound, absolute.

Instead of darkening, the haunted landscape began to brighten. Through the belt of trees beyond the brook shone a strange red light, the trunks and branches of the trees making a black lacework against it. It struck the creeping figures and gave them monstrous shadows, which caricatured their movements on the lit grass. It fell upon their faces, touching their whiteness with a ruddy tinge, accentuating the stains with which so many of them were freaked and maculated. It sparkled on buttons and bits of metal in their clothing. Instinctively the child turned toward the growing splendor and moved down the slope with his horrible companions; in a few moments had passed the foremost of the throng — not much of a feat, considering his advantages. He placed himself in the lead, his wooden sword still in hand, and solemnly directed the march, conforming his pace to theirs and occasionally turning as if to see that his forces did not straggle. Surely such a leader never before had such a following.

Scattered about upon the ground now slowly narrowing by the encroachment of this awful march to water, were certain articles to which, in the leader's mind, were coupled no significant associations: an occasional blanket, tightly rolled lengthwise, doubled and the ends bound together with a string; a heavy knapsack here, and there a broken rifle — such things, in short, as are found in the rear of retreating troops, the "spoor" of men flying from their hunters. Everywhere near the creek, which here had a margin of lowland, the earth was trodden into mud by the feet of men and horses. An observer of better experience in the use of his eyes would have noticed that these footprints pointed in both directions; the ground had been twice passed over — in advance and in retreat. A few hours before, these desperate, stricken men, with their more fortunate and now distant comrades, had penetrated the forest in thousands. Their successive battalions, breaking into swarms and re-forming in lines, had passed the child on every side — had almost trodden on him as he slept. The rustle and murmur of their march had not awakened him. Almost within a stone's throw of where he lay they had fought a battle; but all unheard by him were the roar of the musketry, the shock of the cannon, "the thunder of the captains and the shouting." He had slept through it all, grasping his little wooden sword with perhaps a tighter clutch in unconscious sympathy with his martial environment, but as heedless of the grandeur of the struggle as the dead who had died to make the glory.

The fire beyond the belt of woods on the farther side of the creek, reflected to earth from the canopy of its own smoke, was now suffusing the whole landscape. It transformed the sinuous line of mist to the vapor of gold. The water gleamed with dashes of red, and red, too, were many of the stones protruding above the surface. But that was blood; the less desperately wounded had stained them in crossing. On them, too, the child now crossed with eager steps; he was going to the fire. As he stood upon the farther bank he turned about to look at the companions of his march. The advance was arriving at the creek. The stronger had already drawn themselves to the brink and plunged their faces into the flood. Three or four who lay without motion appeared to have no heads. At this the child’s eyes expanded with wonder; even his hospitable understanding could not accept a phenomenon implying such vitality as that. After slaking their thirst these men had not had the strength to back away from the water, nor to keep their heads above it. They were drowned. In rear of these, the open spaces of the forest showed the leader as many formless figures of his grim command as at first; but not nearly so many were in motion. He waved his cap for their encouragement and smilingly pointed with his weapon in the direction of the guiding light — a pillar of fire to this strange exodus.

Confident of the fidelity of his forces, he now entered the belt of woods, passed through it easily in the red illumination, climbed a fence, ran across a field, turning now and again to coquet with his responsive shadow, and so approached the blazing ruin of a dwelling. Desolation everywhere! In all the wide glare not a living thing was visible. He cared nothing for that; the spectacle pleased, and he danced with glee in imitation of the wavering flames. He ran about, collecting fuel, but every object that he found was too heavy for him to cast in from the distance to which the heat limited his approach. In despair he flung in his sword — a surrender to the superior forces of nature. His military career was at an end.

Shifting his position, his eyes fell upon some outbuildings which had an oddly familiar appearance, as if he had dreamed of them. He stood considering them with wonder, when suddenly the entire plantation, with its inclosing forest, seemed to turn as if upon a pivot. His little world swung half around; the points of the compass were reversed. He recognized the blazing building as his own home!

For a moment he stood stupefied by the power of the revelation, then ran with stumbling feet, making a half-circuit of the ruin. There, conspicuous in the light of the conflagration, lay the dead body of a woman — the white face turned upward, the hands thrown out and clutched full of grass, the clothing deranged, the long dark hair in tangles and full of clotted blood. The greater part of the forehead was torn away, and from the jagged hole the brain protruded, overflowing the temple, a frothy mass of gray, crowned with clusters of crimson bubbles — the work of a shell.

The child moved his little hands, making wild, uncertain gestures. He uttered a series of inarticulate and indescribable cries — something between the chattering of an ape and the gobbling of a turkey — a startling, soulless, unholy sound, the language of a devil. The child was a deaf mute.

Then he stood motionless, with quivering lips, looking down upon the wreck.

A SON OF THE GODS

A STUDY IN THE PRESENT TENSE

A breezy day and a sunny landscape. An open country to right and left and forward; behind, a wood. In the edge of this wood, facing the open but not venturing into it, long lines of troops, halted. The wood is alive with them, and full of confused noises — the occasional rattle of wheels as a battery of artillery goes into position to cover the advance; the hum and murmur of the soldiers talking; a sound of innumerable feet in the dry leaves that strew the interspaces among the trees; hoarse commands of officers. Detached groups of horsemen are well in front — not altogether exposed — many of them intently regarding the crest of a hill a mile away in the direction of the interrupted advance. For this powerful army, moving in battle order through a forest, has met with a formidable obstacle — the open country. The crest of that gentle hill a mile away has a sinister look; it says, Beware! Along it runs a stone wall extending to left and right a great distance. Behind the wall is a hedge; behind the hedge are seen the tops of trees in rather straggling order. Among the trees — what? It is necessary to know.

Yesterday, and for many days and nights previously, we were fighting somewhere; always there was cannonading, with occasional keen rattlings of musketry, mingled with cheers, our own or the enemy’s, we seldom knew, attesting some temporary advantage. This morning at daybreak the enemy was gone. We have moved forward across his earthworks, across which we have so often vainly attempted to move before, through the debris of his abandoned camps, among the graves of his fallen, into the woods beyond.

How curiously we had regarded everything! how odd it all had seemed! Nothing had appeared quite familiar; the most commonplace objects — an old saddle, a splintered wheel, a forgotten canteen — everything had related something of the mysterious personality of those strange men who had been killing us. The soldier never becomes wholly familiar with the conception of his foes as men like himself; he cannot divest himself of the feeling that they are another order of beings, differently conditioned, in an environment not altogether of the earth. The smallest vestiges of them rivet his attention and engage his interest. He thinks of them as inaccessible; and, catching an unexpected glimpse of them, they appear farther away, and therefore larger, than they really are — like objects in a fog. He is somewhat in awe of them.

From the edge of the wood leading up the acclivity are the tracks of horses and wheels — the wheels of cannon. The yellow grass is beaten down by the feet of infantry. Clearly they have passed this way in thousands; they have not withdrawn by the country roads. This is significant — it is the difference between retiring and retreating.

That group of horsemen is our commander, his staff and escort. He is facing the distant crest, holding his field-glass against his eyes with both hands, his elbows needlessly elevated. It is a fashion; it seems to dignify the act; we are all addicted to it. Suddenly he lowers the glass and says a few words to those about him. Two or three aides detach themselves from the group and canter away into the woods, along the lines in each direction. We did not hear his words, but we know them: “Tell General X. to send forward the skirmish line.” Those of us who have been out of place resume our positions; the men resting at ease straighten themselves and the ranks are re-formed without a command. Some of us staff officers dismount and look at our saddle girths; those already on the ground remount.

Galloping rapidly along in the edge of the open ground comes a young officer on a snow-white horse. His saddle blanket is scarlet. What a fool! No one who has ever been in action but remembers how naturally every rifle turns toward the man on a white horse; no one but has observed how a bit of red enrages the bull of battle. That such colors are fashionable in military life must be accepted as the most astonishing of all the phenomena of human vanity. They would seem to have been devised to increase the death-rate.

This young officer is in full uniform, as if on parade. He is all agleam with bullion — a blue-and-gold edition of the Poetry of War. A wave of derisive laughter runs abreast of him all along the line. But how handsome he is! — with what careless grace he sits his horse!

He reins up within a respectful distance of the corps commander and salutes. The old soldier nods familiarly; he evidently knows him. A brief colloquy between them is going on; the young man seems to be preferring some request which the elder one is indisposed to grant. Let us ride a little nearer. Ah! too late — it is ended. The young officer salutes again, wheels his horse, and rides straight toward the crest of the hill!

A thin line of skirmishers, the men deployed at six paces or so apart, now pushes from the wood into the open. The commander speaks to his bugler, who claps his instrument to his lips. *Tra-la-la! Tra-la-la!* The skirmishers halt in their tracks.

Meantime the young horseman has advanced a hundred yards. He is riding at a walk, straight up the long slope, with never a turn of the head. How glorious!

Gods! what would we not give to be in his place — with his soul! He does not draw his sabre; his right hand hangs easily at his side. The breeze catches the plume in his hat and flutters it smartly. The sunshine rests upon his shoulder-straps, lovingly, like a visible benediction. Straight on he rides. Ten thousand pairs of eyes are fixed upon him with an intensity that he can hardly fail to feel; ten thousand hearts keep quick time to the inaudible hoof-beats of his snowy steed. He is not alone — he draws all souls after him. But we remember that we laughed! On and on, straight for the hedge-lined wall, he rides. Not a look backward. O, if he would but turn — if he could but see the love, the adoration, the atonement!

Not a word is spoken; the populous depths of the forest still murmur with their unseen and unseeing swarm, but all along the fringe is silence. The burly commander is an equestrian statue of himself. The mounted staff officers, their field glasses up, are motionless all. The line of battle in the edge of the wood stands at a new kind of “attention,” each man in the attitude in which he was caught by the consciousness of what is going on. All these hardened and impenitent man-killers, to whom death in its awfulest forms is a fact familiar to their every-day observation; who sleep on hills trembling with the thunder of great guns, dine in the midst of streaming missiles, and play at cards among the dead faces of their dearest friends — all are watching with suspended breath and beating hearts the outcome of an act involving the life of one man. Such is the magnetism of courage and devotion.

If now you should turn your head you would see a simultaneous movement among the spectators — a start, as if they had received an electric shock — and looking forward again to the now distant horseman you would see that he has in that instant altered his direction and is riding at an angle to his former course. The spectators suppose the sudden deflection to be caused by a shot, perhaps a wound; but take this field-glass and you will observe that he is riding toward a break in the wall and hedge. He means, if not killed, to ride through and overlook the country beyond.

You are not to forget the nature of this man’s act; it is not permitted to you to think of it as an instance of bravado, nor, on the other hand, a needless sacrifice of self. If the enemy has not retreated he is in force on that ridge. The investigator will encounter nothing less than a line-of-battle; there is no need of pickets, videttes, skirmishers, to give warning of our approach; our attacking lines will be visible, conspicuous, exposed to an artillery fire that will shave the ground the moment they break from cover, and for half the distance to a sheet of rifle bullets in which nothing can live. In short, if the enemy is there, it would be madness to attack him in front; he must be manoeuvred out by the immemorial plan of threatening his line of communication, as necessary to his existence as to the diver at the bottom of the sea his air tube. But how ascertain if the enemy is there? There is but one way, — somebody must go and see. The natural and customary thing to do is to send forward a line of skirmishers. But in this case they will answer in the affirmative with all their lives; the enemy, crouching in double ranks behind the stone wall and in cover of the hedge, will wait until it is possible to count each assailant’s teeth. At the first volley a half of the questioning line will fall, the other half before it can accomplish the predestined retreat. What a price to pay for gratified curiosity! At what a dear rate an army must sometimes purchase knowledge! “Let me pay all,” says this gallant man — this military Christ!

There is no hope except the hope against hope that the crest is clear. True, he might prefer capture to death. So long as he advances, the line will not fire — why should it? He can safely ride into the hostile ranks and become a prisoner of war. But this would defeat his object. It would not answer our question; it is necessary either that he return unharmed or be shot to death before our eyes. Only so shall we know how to act. If captured — why, that might have been done by a half-dozen stragglers.

Now begins an extraordinary contest of intellect between a man and an army. Our horseman, now within a quarter of a mile of the crest, suddenly wheels to the left and gallops in a direction parallel to it. He has caught sight of his antagonist; he knows all. Some slight advantage of ground has enabled him to overlook a part of the line. If he were here he could tell us in words. But that is now hopeless; he must make the best use of the few minutes of life remaining to him, by compelling the enemy himself to tell us as much and as plainly as possible — which, naturally, that discreet power is reluctant to do. Not a rifleman in those crouching ranks, not a cannoneer at those masked and shotted guns, but knows the needs of the situation, the imperative duty of forbearance. Besides, there has been time enough to forbid them all to fire. True, a single rifle-shot might drop him and be no great disclosure. But firing is infectious — and see how rapidly he moves, with never a pause except as he whirls his horse about to take a new direction, never directly backward toward us, never directly forward toward his executioners. All this is visible through the glass; it seems occurring within pistol-shot; we see all but the enemy, whose presence, whose thoughts, whose motives we infer. To the unaided eye there is nothing but a black figure on a white horse, tracing slow zigzags against the slope of a distant hill — so slowly they seem almost to creep.

Now — the glass again — he has tired of his failure, or sees his error, or has gone mad; he is dashing directly forward at the wall, as if to take it at a leap, hedge and all! One moment only and he wheels right about and is speeding like the wind straight down the slope — toward his friends, toward his death! Instantly the wall is topped with a fierce roll of smoke for a distance of hundreds of yards to right and left. This is as instantly dissipated by the wind, and before the rattle of the rifles reaches us he is down. No, he recovers his seat; he has but pulled his horse upon its haunches. They are up and away! A tremendous cheer bursts from our ranks, relieving the insupportable tension of our feelings. And the horse and its rider? Yes, they are up and away. Away, indeed — they are making directly to our left, parallel to the now steadily blazing and smoking wall. The rattle of the musketry is continuous, and every bullet's target is that courageous heart.

Suddenly a great bank of white smoke pushes upward from behind the wall. Another and another — a dozen roll up before the thunder of the explosions and the humming of the missiles reach our ears and the missiles themselves come bounding through clouds of dust into our covert, knocking over here and there a man and causing a temporary distraction, a passing thought of self.

The dust drifts away. Incredible! — that enchanted horse and rider have passed a ravine and are climbing another slope to unveil another conspiracy of silence, to thwart the will of another armed host. Another moment and that crest too is in eruption. The horse rears and strikes the air with its forefeet. They are down at last. But look again — the man has detached himself from the dead animal. He stands erect, motionless, holding his sabre in his right hand straight above his head. His face is toward us. Now he lowers his hand to a level with his face and moves it outward, the blade of the sabre describing a downward curve. It is a sign to us, to the world, to posterity. It is a hero's salute to death and history.

Again the spell is broken; our men attempt to cheer; they are choking with emotion; they utter hoarse, discordant cries; they clutch their weapons and press tumultuously forward into the open. The skirmishers, without orders, against orders, are going forward at a keen run, like hounds unleashed. Our cannon speak and the enemy's now open in full chorus; to right and left as far as we can see, the distant crest, seeming now so near, erects its towers of cloud and the great shot pitch roaring down among our moving masses. Flag after flag of ours emerges from the wood, line after line sweeps forth, catching the sunlight on its burnished arms. The rear battalions alone are in obedience; they preserve their proper distance from the insurgent front.

The commander has not moved. He now removes his field-glass from his eyes and glances to the right and left. He sees the human current flowing on either side of him and his huddled escort, like tide waves parted by a rock. Not a sign of feeling in his face; he is thinking. Again he directs his eyes forward; they slowly traverse that malign and awful crest. He addresses a calm word to his bugler. *Tra-la-la! Tra-la-la!* The injunction has an imperiousness which enforces it. It is repeated by all the bugles of all the sub-ordinate commanders; the sharp metallic notes assert themselves above the hum of the advance and penetrate the sound of the cannon. To halt is to withdraw. The colors move slowly back; the lines face about and sullenly follow, bearing their wounded; the skirmishers return, gathering up the dead.

Ah, those many, many needless dead! That great soul whose beautiful body is lying over yonder, so conspicuous against the sere hillside — could it not have been spared the bitter consciousness of a vain devotion? Would one exception have marred too much the pitiless perfection of the divine, eternal plan?

ONE OF THE MISSING

Jerome Searing, a private soldier of General Sherman’s army, then confronting the enemy at and about Kennesaw Mountain, Georgia, turned his back upon a small group of officers with whom he had been talking in low tones, stepped across a light line of earthworks, and disappeared in a forest. None of the men in line behind the works had said a word to him, nor had he so much as nodded to them in passing, but all who saw understood that this brave man had been intrusted with some perilous duty. Jerome Searing, though a private, did not serve in the ranks; he was detailed for service at division headquarters, being borne upon the rolls as an orderly. “Orderly” is a word covering a multitude of duties. An orderly may be a messenger, a clerk, an officer’s servant — anything. He may perform services for which no provision is made in orders and army regulations. Their nature may depend upon his aptitude, upon favor, upon accident. Private Searing, an incomparable marksman, young, hardy, intelligent and insensible to fear, was a scout. The general commanding his division was not content to obey orders blindly without knowing what was in his front, even when his command was not on detached service, but formed a fraction of the line of the army; nor was he satisfied to receive his knowledge of his *vis-à-vis* through the customary channels; he wanted to know more than he was apprised of by the corps commander and the collisions of pickets and skirmishers. Hence Jerome Searing, with his extraordinary daring, his woodcraft, his sharp eyes, and truthful tongue. On this occasion his instructions were simple: to get as near the enemy’s lines as possible and learn all that he could.

In a few moments he had arrived at the picket-line, the men on duty there lying in groups of two and four behind little banks of earth scooped out of the slight depression in which they lay, their rifles protruding from the green boughs with which they had masked their small defenses. The forest extended without a break toward the front, so solemn and silent that only by an effort of the imagination could it be conceived as populous with armed men, alert and vigilant — a forest formidable with possibilities of battle. Pausing a moment in one of these rifle-pits to apprise the men of his intention Searing crept stealthily forward on his hands and knees and was soon lost to view in a dense thicket of underbrush.

“That is the last of him,” said one of the men; “I wish I had his rifle; those fellows will hurt some of us with it.”

Searing crept on, taking advantage of every accident of ground and growth to give himself better cover. His eyes penetrated everywhere, his ears took note of every sound. He stilled his breathing, and at the cracking of a twig beneath his knee stopped his progress and hugged the earth. It was slow work, but not tedious; the danger made it exciting, but by no physical signs was the excitement manifest. His pulse was as regular, his nerves were as steady as if he were trying to trap a sparrow.

“It seems a long time,” he thought, “but I cannot have come very far; I am still alive.”

He smiled at his own method of estimating distance, and crept forward. A moment later he suddenly flattened himself upon the earth and lay motionless, minute after minute. Through a narrow opening in the bushes he had caught sight of a small mound of yellow clay — one of the enemy’s rifle-pits. After some little time he cautiously raised his head, inch by inch, then his body upon his hands, spread out on each side of him, all the while intently regarding the hillock of clay. In another moment he was upon his feet, rifle in hand, striding rapidly forward with little attempt at concealment. He had rightly interpreted the signs, whatever they were; the enemy was gone.

To assure himself beyond a doubt before going back to report upon so important a matter, Searing pushed forward across the line of abandoned pits, running from cover to cover in the more open forest, his eyes vigilant to discover possible stragglers. He came to the edge of a plantation — one of those forlorn, deserted homesteads of the last years of the war, upgrown with brambles, ugly with broken fences and desolate with vacant buildings having blank apertures in place of doors and windows. After a keen reconnoissance from the safe seclusion of a clump of young pines Searing ran lightly across a field and through an orchard to a small structure which stood apart from the other farm buildings, on a slight elevation. This he thought would enable him to overlook a large scope of country in the direction that he supposed the enemy to have taken in withdrawing. This building, which had originally consisted of a single room elevated upon four posts about ten feet high, was now little more than a roof; the floor had fallen away, the joists and planks loosely piled on the ground below or resting on end at various angles, not wholly torn from their fastenings above. The supporting posts were themselves no longer vertical. It looked as if the whole edifice would go down at the touch of a finger.

Concealing himself in the debris of joists and flooring Searing looked across the open ground between his point of view and a spur of Kennesaw Mountain, a half-mile away. A road leading up and across this spur was crowded with troops — the rear-guard of the retiring enemy, their gun-barrels gleaming in the morning sunlight.

Searing had now learned all that he could hope to know. It was his duty to return to his own command with all possible speed and report his discovery. But the gray column of Confederates toiling up the mountain road was singularly tempting. His rifle — an ordinary “Springfield,” but fitted with a globe sight and hair-trigger — would easily send its ounce and a quarter of lead hissing into their midst. That would probably not affect the duration and result of the war, but it is the business of a soldier to kill. It is also his habit if he is a good soldier. Searing cocked his rifle and “set” the trigger.

But it was decreed from the beginning of time that Private Searing was not to murder anybody that bright summer morning, nor was the Confederate retreat to be announced by him. For countless ages events had been so matching themselves together in that wondrous mosaic to some parts of which, dimly discernible, we give the name of history, that the acts which he had in will would have marred the harmony of the pattern. Some twenty-five years previously the Power charged with the execution of the work according to the design had provided against that mischance by causing the birth of a certain male child in a little village at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains, had carefully reared it, supervised its education, directed its desires into a military channel, and in due time made it an officer of artillery. By the concurrence of an infinite number of favoring influences and their preponderance over an infinite number of opposing ones, this officer of artillery had been made to commit a breach of discipline and flee from his native country to avoid punishment. He had been directed to New Orleans (instead of New York), where a recruiting officer awaited him on the wharf. He was enlisted and promoted, and things were so ordered that he now commanded a Confederate battery some two miles along the line from where Jerome Searing, the Federal scout, stood cocking his rifle. Nothing had been neglected — at every step in the progress of both these men’s lives, and in the lives of their contemporaries and ancestors, and in the lives of the contemporaries of their ancestors, the right thing had been done to bring about the desired result. Had anything in all this vast concatenation been overlooked Private Searing might have fired on the retreating Confederates that morning, and would perhaps have missed. As it fell out, a Confederate captain of artillery, having nothing better to do while awaiting his turn to pull out and be off, amused himself by sighting a field-piece obliquely to his right at what he mistook for some Federal officers on the crest of a hill, and discharged it. The shot flew high of its mark.

As Jerome Searing drew back the hammer of his rifle and with his eyes upon the distant Confederates considered where he could plant his shot with the best hope of making a widow or an orphan or a childless mother, — perhaps all three, for Private Searing, although he had repeatedly refused promotion, was not without a certain kind of ambition, — he heard a rushing sound in the air, like that made by the wings of a great bird swooping down upon its prey. More quickly than he could apprehend the gradation, it increased to a hoarse and horrible roar, as the missile that made it sprang at him out of the sky, striking with a deafening impact one of the posts supporting the confusion of timbers above him, smashing it into matchwood, and bringing down the crazy edifice with a loud clatter, in clouds of blinding dust!

When Jerome Searing recovered consciousness he did not at once understand what had occurred. It was, indeed, some time before he opened his eyes. For a while he believed that he had died and been buried, and he tried to recall some portions of the burial service. He thought that his wife was kneeling upon his grave, adding her weight to that of the earth upon his breast. The two of them, widow and earth, had crushed his coffin. Unless the children should persuade her to go home he would not much longer be able to breathe. He felt a sense of wrong. “I cannot speak to her,” he thought; “the dead have no voice; and if I open my eyes I shall get them full of earth.”

He opened his eyes. A great expanse of blue sky, rising from a fringe of the tops of trees. In the foreground, shutting out some of the trees, a high, dun mound, angular in outline and crossed by an intricate, patternless system of straight lines; the whole an immeasurable distance away — a distance so inconceivably great that it fatigued him, and he closed his eyes. The moment that he did so he was conscious of an insufferable light. A sound was in his ears like the low, rhythmic thunder of a distant sea breaking in successive waves upon the beach, and out of this noise, seeming a part of it, or possibly coming from beyond it, and intermingled with its ceaseless undertone, came the articulate words: “Jerome Searing, you are caught like a rat in a trap — in a trap, trap, trap.”

Suddenly there fell a great silence, a black darkness, an infinite tranquillity, and Jerome Searing, perfectly conscious of his rathood, and well assured of the trap that he was in, remembering all and nowise alarmed, again opened his eyes to reconnoitre, to note the strength of his enemy, to plan his defense.

He was caught in a reclining posture, his back firmly supported by a solid beam. Another lay across his breast, but he had been able to shrink a little away from it so that it no longer oppressed him, though it was immovable. A brace joining it at an angle had wedged him against a pile of boards on his left, fastening the arm on that side. His legs, slightly parted and straight along the ground, were covered upward to the knees with a mass of debris which towered above his narrow horizon. His head was as rigidly fixed as in a vise; he could move his eyes, his chin — no more. Only his right arm was partly free. “You must help us out of this,” he said to it. But he could not get it from under the heavy timber athwart his chest, nor move it outward more than six inches at the elbow.

Searing was not seriously injured, nor did he suffer pain. A smart rap on the head from a flying fragment of the splintered post, incurred simultaneously with the frightfully sudden shock to the nervous system, had momentarily dazed him. His term of unconsciousness, including the period of recovery, during which he had had the strange fancies, had probably not exceeded a few seconds, for the dust of the wreck had not wholly cleared away as he began an intelligent survey of the situation.

With his partly free right hand he now tried to get hold of the beam that lay across, but not quite against, his breast. In no way could he do so. He was unable to depress the shoulder so as to push the elbow beyond that edge of the timber which was nearest his knees; failing in that, he could not raise the forearm and hand to grasp the beam. The brace that made an angle with it downward and backward prevented him from doing anything in that direction, and between it and his body the space was not half so wide as the length of his forearm. Obviously he could not get his hand under the beam nor over it; the hand could not, in fact, touch it at all. Having demonstrated his inability, he desisted, and began to think whether he could reach any of the débris piled upon his legs.

In surveying the mass with a view to determining that point, his attention was arrested by what seemed to be a ring of shining metal immediately in front of his eyes. It appeared to him at first to surround some perfectly black substance, and it was somewhat more than a half-inch in diameter. It suddenly occurred to his mind that the blackness was simply shadow and that the ring was in fact the muzzle of his rifle protruding from the pile of débris. He was not long in satisfying himself that this was so — if it was a satisfaction. By closing either eye he could look a little way along the barrel — to the point where it was hidden by the rubbish that held it. He could see the one side, with the corresponding eye, at apparently the same angle as the other side with the other eye. Looking with the right eye, the weapon seemed to be directed at a point to the left of his head, and *vice-versa.* He was unable to see the upper surface of the barrel, but could see the under surface of the stock at a slight angle. The piece was, in fact, aimed at the exact centre of his forehead.

In the perception of this circumstance, in the recollection that just previously to the mischance of which this uncomfortable situation was the result he had cocked the rifle and set the trigger so that a touch would discharge it, Private

Searing was affected with a feeling of uneasiness. But that was as far as possible from fear; he was a brave man, somewhat familiar with the aspect of rifles from that point of view, and of cannon too. And now he recalled, with something like amusement, an incident of his experience at the storming of Missionary Ridge, where, walking up to one of the enemy's embrasures from which he had seen a heavy gun throw charge after charge of grape among the assailants he had thought for a moment that the piece had been withdrawn; he could see nothing in the opening but a brazen circle. What that was he had understood just in time to step aside as it pitched another peck of iron down that swarming slope. To face firearms is one of the commonest incidents in a soldier's life — firearms, too, with malevolent eyes blazing behind them. That is what a soldier is for. Still, Private Searing did not altogether relish the situation, and turned away his eyes.

After groping, aimless, with his right hand for a time he made an ineffectual attempt to release his left. Then he tried to disengage his head, the fixity of which was the more annoying from his ignorance of what held it. Next he tried to free his feet, but while exerting the powerful muscles of his legs for that purpose it occurred to him that a disturbance of the rubbish which held them might discharge the rifle; how it could have endured what had already befallen it he could not understand, although memory assisted him with several instances in point. One in particular he recalled, in which in a moment of mental abstraction he had clubbed his rifle and beaten out another gentleman's brains, observing afterward that the weapon which he had been diligently swinging by the muzzle was loaded, capped, and at full cock — knowledge of which circumstance would doubtless have cheered his antagonist to longer endurance. He had always smiled in recalling that blunder of his "green and salad days" as a soldier, but now he did not smile. He turned his eyes again to the muzzle of the rifle and for a moment fancied that it had moved; it seemed somewhat nearer.

Again he looked away. The tops of the distant trees beyond the bounds of the plantation interested him: he had not before observed how light and feathery they were, nor how darkly blue the sky was, even among their branches, where they somewhat paled it with their green; above him it appeared almost black. "It will be uncomfortably hot here," he thought, "as the day advances. I wonder which way I am looking."

Judging by such shadows as he could see, he decided that his face was due north; he would at least not have the sun in his eyes, and north — well, that was toward his wife and children.

"Bah!" he exclaimed aloud, "what have they to do with it?"

He closed his eyes. "As I can't get out I may as well go to sleep. The rebels are gone and some of our fellows are sure to stray out here foraging. They'll find me.”

But he did not sleep. Gradually he became sensible of a pain in his forehead — a dull ache, hardly perceptible at first, but growing more and more uncomfortable. He opened his eyes and it was gone — closed them and it returned. “The devil!” he said, irrelevantly, and stared again at the sky. He heard the singing of birds, the strange metallic note of the meadow lark, suggesting the clash of vibrant blades. He fell into pleasant memories of his childhood, played again with his brother and sister, raced across the fields, shouting to alarm the sedentary larks, entered the sombre forest beyond and with timid steps followed the faint path to Ghost Rock, standing at last with audible heart-throbs before the Dead Man’s Cave and seeking to penetrate its awful mystery. For the first time he observed that the opening of the haunted cavern was encircled by a ring of metal. Then all else vanished and left him gazing into the barrel of his rifle as before. But whereas before it had seemed nearer, it now seemed an inconceivable distance away, and all the more sinister for that. He cried out and, startled by something in his own voice — the note of fear — lied to himself in denial: “If I don’t sing out I may stay here till I die.”

He now made no further attempt to evade the menacing stare of the gun barrel. If he turned away his eyes an instant it was to look for assistance (although he could not see the ground on either side the ruin), and he permitted them to return, obedient to the imperative fascination. If he closed them it was from weariness, and instantly the poignant pain in his forehead — the prophecy and menace of the bullet — forced him to reopen them.

The tension of nerve and brain was too severe; nature came to his relief with intervals of unconsciousness. Reviving from one of these he became sensible of a sharp, smarting pain in his right hand, and when he worked his fingers together, or rubbed his palm with them, he could feel that they were wet and slippery. He could not see the hand, but he knew the sensation; it was running blood. In his delirium he had beaten it against the jagged fragments of the wreck, had clutched it full of splinters. He resolved that he would meet his fate more manly. He was a plain, common soldier, had no religion and not much philosophy; he could not die like a hero, with great and wise last words, even if there had been some one to hear them, but he could die “game,” and he would. But if he could only know when to expect the shot!

Some rats which had probably inhabited the shed came sneaking and scampering about. One of them mounted the pile of débris that held the rifle; another followed and another. Searing regarded them at first with indifference, then with friendly interest; then, as the thought flashed into his bewildered mind that they might touch the trigger of his rifle, he cursed them and ordered them to go away. “It is no business of yours,” he cried.

The creatures went away; they would return later, attack his face, gnaw away his nose, cut his throat — he knew that, but he hoped by that time to be dead.

Nothing could now unfix his gaze from the little ring of metal with its black interior. The pain in his forehead was fierce and incessant. He felt it gradually penetrating the brain more and more deeply, until at last its progress was arrested by the wood at the back of his head. It grew momentarily more insufferable: he began wantonly beating his lacerated hand against the splinters again to counteract that horrible ache. It seemed to throb with a slow, regular recurrence, each pulsation sharper than the preceding, and sometimes he cried out, thinking he felt the fatal bullet. No thoughts of home, of wife and children, of country, of glory. The whole record of memory was effaced. The world had passed away — not a vestige remained. Here in this confusion of timbers and boards is the sole universe. Here is immortality in time — each pain an everlasting life. The throbs tick off eternities.

Jerome Searing, the man of courage, the formidable enemy, the strong, resolute warrior, was as pale as a ghost. His jaw was fallen; his eyes protruded; he trembled in every fibre; a cold sweat bathed his entire body; he screamed with fear. He was not insane — he was terrified.

In groping about with his torn and bleeding hand he seized at last a strip of board, and, pulling, felt it give way. It lay parallel with his body, and by bending his elbow as much as the contracted space would permit, he could draw it a few inches at a time. Finally it was altogether loosened from the wreckage covering his legs; he could lift it clear of the ground its whole length. A great hope came into his mind: perhaps he could work it upward, that is to say backward, far enough to lift the end and push aside the rifle; or, if that were too tightly wedged, so place the strip of board as to deflect the bullet. With this object he passed it backward inch by inch, hardly daring to breathe lest that act somehow defeat his intent, and more than ever unable to remove his eyes from the rifle, which might perhaps now hasten to improve its waning opportunity. Something at least had been gained: in the occupation of his mind in this attempt at self-defense he was less sensible of the pain in his head and had ceased to wince. But he was still dreadfully frightened and his teeth rattled like castanets.

The strip of board ceased to move to the suasion of his hand. He tugged at it with all his strength, changed the direction of its length all he could, but it had met some extended obstruction behind him and the end in front was still too far away to clear the pile of débris and reach the muzzle of the gun. It extended, indeed, nearly as far as the trigger guard, which, uncovered by the rubbish, he could imperfectly see with his right eye. He tried to break the strip with his hand, but had no leverage. In his defeat, all his terror returned, augmented tenfold. The black aperture of the rifle appeared to threaten a sharper and more imminent death in punishment of his rebellion. The track of the bullet through his head ached with an intenser anguish. He began to tremble again.

Suddenly he became composed. His tremor subsided. He clenched his teeth and drew down his eyebrows. He had not exhausted his means of defense; a new design had shaped itself in his mind — another plan of battle. Raising the front end of the strip of board, he carefully pushed it forward through the wreckage at the side of the rifle until it pressed against the trigger guard. Then he moved the end slowly outward until he could feel that it had cleared it, then, closing his eyes, thrust it against the trigger with all his strength! There was no explosion; the rifle had been discharged as it dropped from his hand when the building fell. But it did its work.

Lieutenant Adrian Searing, in command of the picket-guard on that part of the line through which his brother Jerome had passed on his mission, sat with attentive ears in his breastwork behind the line. Not the faintest sound escaped him; the cry of a bird, the barking of a squirrel, the noise of the wind among the pines — all were anxiously noted by his overstrained sense. Suddenly, directly in front of his line, he heard a faint, confused rumble, like the clatter of a falling building translated by distance. The lieutenant mechanically looked at his watch. Six o’clock and eighteen minutes. At the same moment an officer approached him on foot from the rear and saluted.

“Lieutenant,” said the officer, “the colonel directs you to move forward your line and feel the enemy if you find him. If not, continue the advance until directed to halt. There is reason to think that the enemy has retreated.”

The lieutenant nodded and said nothing; the other officer retired. In a moment the men, apprised of their duty by the non-commissioned officers in low tones, had deployed from their rifle-pits and were moving forward in skirmishing order, with set teeth and beating hearts.

This line of skirmishers sweeps across the plantation toward the mountain. They pass on both sides of the wrecked building, observing nothing. At a short distance in their rear their commander comes. He casts his eyes curiously upon the ruin and sees a dead body half buried in boards and timbers. It is so covered with dust that its clothing is Confederate gray. Its face is yellowish white; the cheeks are fallen in, the temples sunken, too, with sharp ridges about them, making the forehead forbiddingly narrow; the upper lip, slightly lifted, shows the white teeth, rigidly clenched. The hair is heavy with moisture, the face as wet as the dewy grass all about. From his point of view the officer does not observe the rifle; the man was apparently killed by the fall of the building.

“Dead a week,” said the officer curtly, moving on and absently pulling out his watch as if to verify his estimate of time. Six o’clock and forty minutes.

KILLED AT RESACA

The best soldier of our staff was Lieutenant Herman Brayle, one of the two aides-de-camp. I don’t remember where the general picked him up; from some Ohio regiment, I think; none of us had previously known him, and it would have been strange if we had, for no two of us came from the same State, nor even from adjoining States. The general seemed to think that a position on his staff was a distinction that should be so judiciously conferred as not to beget any sectional jealousies and imperil the integrity of that part of the country which was still an integer. He would not even choose officers from his own command, but by some jugglery at department headquarters obtained them from other brigades. Under such circumstances, a man’s services had to be very distinguished indeed to be heard of by his family and the friends of his youth; and “the speaking trump of fame” was a trifle hoarse from loquacity, anyhow.

Lieutenant Brayle was more than six feet in height and of splendid proportions, with the light hair and gray-blue eyes which men so gifted usually find associated with a high order of courage. As he was commonly in full uniform, especially in action, when most officers are content to be less flamboyantly attired, he was a very striking and conspicuous figure. As to the rest, he had a gentleman’s manners, a scholar’s head, and a lion’s heart. His age was about thirty.

We all soon came to like Brayle as much as we admired him, and it was with sincere concern that in the engagement at Stone’s River — our first action after he joined us — we observed that he had one most objectionable and unsoldierly quality: he was vain of his courage. During all the vicissitudes and mutations of that hideous encounter, whether our troops were fighting in the open cotton fields, in the cedar thickets, or behind the railway embankment, he did not once take cover, except when sternly commanded to do so by the general, who usually had other things to think of than the lives of his staff officers — or those of his men, for that matter.

In every later engagement while Brayle was with us it was the same way. He would sit his horse like an equestrian statue, in a storm of bullets and grape, in the most exposed places — wherever, in fact, duty, requiring him to go, permitted him to remain — when, without trouble and with distinct advantage to his reputation for common sense, he might have been in such security as is possible on a battlefield in the brief intervals of personal inaction.

On foot, from necessity or in deference to his dismounted commander or associates, his conduct was the same. He would stand like a rock in the open when officers and men alike had taken to cover; while men older in service and years, higher in rank and of unquestionable intrepidity, were loyally preserving behind the crest of a hill lives infinitely precious to their country, this fellow would stand, equally idle, on the ridge, facing in the direction of the sharpest fire.

When battles are going on in open ground it frequently occurs that the opposing lines, confronting each other within a stone's throw for hours, hug the earth as closely as if they loved it. The line officers in their proper places flatten themselves no less, and the field officers, their horses all killed or sent to the rear, crouch beneath the infernal canopy of hissing lead and screaming iron without a thought of personal dignity.

In such circumstances the life of a staff officer of a brigade is distinctly "not a happy one," mainly because of its precarious tenure and the unnerving alternations of emotion to which he is exposed. From a position of that comparative security from which a civilian would ascribe his escape to a "miracle," he may be despatched with an order to some commander of a prone regiment in the front line — a person for the moment inconspicuous and not always easy to find without a deal of search among men somewhat preoccupied, and in a din in which question and answer alike must be imparted in the sign language. It is customary in such cases to duck the head and scuttle away on a keen run, an object of lively interest to some thousands of admiring marksmen. In returning — well, it is not customary to return.

Brayle's practice was different. He would consign his horse to the care of an orderly, — he loved his horse, — and walk quietly away on his perilous errand with never a stoop of the back, his splendid figure, accentuated by his uniform, holding the eye with a strange fascination. We watched him with suspended breath, our hearts in our mouths. On one occasion of this kind, indeed, one of our number, an impetuous stammerer, was so possessed by his emotion that he shouted at me:

"I'll b-b-bet you t-two d-d-dollars they d-drop him b-b-before he g-gets to that d-d-ditch!"

I did not accept the brutal wager; I thought they would.

Let me do justice to a brave man's memory; in all these needless exposures of life there was no visible bravado nor subsequent narration. In the few instances when some of us had ventured to remonstrate, Brayle had smiled pleasantly and made some light reply, which, however, had not encouraged a further pursuit of the subject. Once he said:

“Captain, if ever I come to grief by forgetting your advice, I hope my last moments will be cheered by the sound of your beloved voice breathing into my ear the blessed words, ‘I told you so.’”

We laughed at the captain — just why we could probably not have explained — and that afternoon when he was shot to rags from an ambuscade Brayle remained by the body for some time, adjusting the limbs with needless care — there in the middle of a road swept by gusts of grape and canister! It is easy to condemn this kind of thing, and not very difficult to refrain from imitation, but it is impossible not to respect, and Brayle was liked none the less for the weakness which had so heroic an expression. We wished he were not a fool, but he went on that way to the end, sometimes hard hit, but always returning to duty about as good as new.

Of course, it came at last; he who ignores the law of probabilities challenges an adversary that is seldom beaten. It was at Resaca, in Georgia, during the movement that resulted in the taking of Atlanta. In front of our brigade the enemy’s line of earthworks ran through open fields along a slight crest. At each end of this open ground we were close up to him in the woods, but the clear ground we could not hope to occupy until night, when darkness would enable us to burrow like moles and throw up earth. At this point our line was a quarter-mile away in the edge of a wood. Roughly, we formed a semicircle, the enemy’s fortified line being the chord of the arc.

“Lieutenant, go tell Colonel Ward to work up as close as he can get cover, and not to waste much ammunition in unnecessary firing. You may leave your horse.”

When the general gave this direction we were in the fringe of the forest, near the right extremity of the arc. Colonel Ward was at the left. The suggestion to leave the horse obviously enough meant that Brayle was to take the longer line, through the woods and among the men. Indeed, the suggestion was needless; to go by the short route meant absolutely certain failure to deliver the message. Before anybody could interpose, Brayle had cantered lightly into the field and the enemy’s works were in crackling conflagration.

“Stop that damned fool!” shouted the general.

A private of the escort, with more ambition than brains, spurred forward to obey, and within ten yards left himself and his horse dead on the field of honor.

Brayle was beyond recall, galloping easily along, parallel to the enemy and less than two hundred yards distant. He was a picture to see! His hat had been blown or shot from his head, and his long, blond hair rose and fell with the motion of his horse. He sat erect in the saddle, holding the reins lightly in his left hand, his right hanging carelessly at his side. An occasional glimpse of his handsome profile as he turned his head one way or the other proved that the interest which he took in what was going on was natural and without affectation.

The picture was intensely dramatic, but in no degree theatrical. Successive scores of rifles spat at him viciously as he came within range, and our own line in the edge of the timber broke out in visible and audible defense. No longer regardful of themselves or their orders, our fellows sprang to their feet, and swarming into the open sent broad sheets of bullets against the blazing crest of the offending works, which poured an answering fire into their unprotected groups with deadly effect. The artillery on both sides joined the battle, punctuating the rattle and roar with deep, earth-shaking explosions and tearing the air with storms of screaming grape, which from the enemy's side splintered the trees and spattered them with blood, and from ours defiled the smoke of his arms with banks and clouds of dust from his parapet.

My attention had been for a moment drawn to the general combat, but now, glancing down the unobscured avenue between these two thunderclouds, I saw Brayle, the cause of the carnage. Invisible now from either side, and equally doomed by friend and foe, he stood in the shot-swept space, motionless, his face toward the enemy. At some little distance lay his horse. I instantly saw what had stopped him.

As topographical engineer I had, early in the day, made a hasty examination of the ground, and now remembered that at that point was a deep and sinuous gully, crossing half the field from the enemy's line, its general course at right angles to it. From where we now were it was invisible, and Brayle had evidently not known about it. Clearly, it was impassable. Its salient angles would have afforded him absolute security if he had chosen to be satisfied with the miracle already wrought in his favor and leapt into it. He could not go forward, he would not turn back; he stood awaiting death. It did not keep him long waiting.

By some mysterious coincidence, almost instantaneously as he fell, the firing ceased, a few desultory shots at long intervals serving rather to accentuate than break the silence. It was as if both sides had suddenly repented of their profitless crime. Four stretcher-bearers of ours, following a sergeant with a white flag, soon afterward moved unmolested into the field, and made straight for Brayle's body. Several Confederate officers and men came out to meet them, and with uncovered heads assisted them to take up their sacred burden. As it was borne toward us we heard beyond the hostile works fifes and a muffled drum — a dirge. A generous enemy honored the fallen brave.

Amongst the dead man's effects was a soiled Russia-leather pocketbook. In the distribution of mementoes of our friend, which the general, as administrator, decreed, this fell to me.

A year after the close of the war, on my way to California, I opened and idly inspected it. Out of an overlooked compartment fell a letter without envelope or address. It was in a woman's handwriting, and began with words of endearment, but no name.

It had the following date line: "San Francisco, Cal., July 9, 1862." The signature was "Darling," in marks of quotation. Incidentally, in the body of the text, the writer's full name was given — Marian Mendenhall.

The letter showed evidence of cultivation and good breeding, but it was an ordinary love letter, if a love letter can be ordinary. There was not much in it, but there was something. It was this:

"Mr. Winters, whom I shall always hate for it, has been telling that at some battle in Virginia, where he got his hurt, you were seen crouching behind a tree. I think he wants to injure you in my regard, which he knows the story would do if I believed it. I could bear to hear of my soldier lover's death, but not of his cowardice."

These were the words which on that sunny afternoon, in a distant region, had slain a hundred men. Is woman weak?

One evening I called on Miss Mendenhall to return the letter to her. I intended, also, to tell her what she had done — but not that she did it. I found her in a handsome dwelling on Rincon Hill. She was beautiful, well bred — in a word, charming.

"You knew Lieutenant Herman Brayle," I said, rather abruptly. "You know, doubtless, that he fell in battle. Among his effects was found this letter from you. My errand here is to place it in your hands."

She mechanically took the letter, glanced through it with deepening color, and then, looking at me with a smile, said:

"It is very good of you, though I am sure it was hardly worth while." She started suddenly and changed color. "This stain," she said, "is it — surely it is not—"

"Madam," I said, "pardon me, but that is the blood of the truest and bravest heart that ever beat."

She hastily flung the letter on the blazing coals. "Uh! I cannot bear the sight of blood!" she said. "How did he die?"

I had involuntarily risen to rescue that scrap of paper, sacred even to me, and now stood partly behind her. As she asked the question she turned her face about and slightly upward. The light of the burning letter was reflected in her eyes and touched her cheek with a tinge of crimson like the stain upon its page. I had never seen anything so beautiful as this detestable creature.

"He was bitten by a snake," I replied.

THE AFFAIR AT COULTER’S NOTCH

“Do you think, Colonel, that your brave Coulter would like to put one of his guns in here?” the general asked.

He was apparently not altogether serious; it certainly did not seem a place where any artillerist, however brave, would like to put a gun. The colonel thought that possibly his division commander meant good-humoredly to intimate that in a recent conversation between them Captain Coulter’s courage had been too highly extolled.

“General,” he replied warmly, “Coulter would like to put a gun anywhere within reach of those people,” with a motion of his hand in the direction of the enemy.

“It is the only place,” said the general. He was serious, then.

The place was a depression, a “notch,” in the sharp crest of a hill. It was a pass, and through it ran a turnpike, which reaching this highest point in its course by a sinuous ascent through a thin forest made a similar, though less steep, descent toward the enemy. For a mile to the left and a mile to the right, the ridge, though occupied by Federal infantry lying close behind the sharp crest and appearing as if held in place by atmospheric pressure, was inaccessible to artillery. There was no place but the bottom of the notch, and that was barely wide enough for the roadbed. From the Confederate side this point was commanded by two batteries posted on a slightly lower elevation beyond a creek, and a half-mile away. All the guns but one were masked by the trees of an orchard; that one — it seemed a bit of impudence — was on an open lawn directly in front of a rather grandiose building, the planter’s dwelling. The gun was safe enough in its exposure — but only because the Federal infantry had been forbidden to fire. Coulter’s Notch — it came to be called so — was not, that pleasant summer afternoon, a place where one would “like to put a gun.”

Three or four dead horses lay there sprawling in the road, three or four dead men in a trim row at one side of it, and a little back, down the hill. All but one were cavalrymen belonging to the Federal advance. One was a quartermaster. The general commanding the division and the colonel commanding the brigade, with their staffs and escorts, had ridden into the notch to have a look at the enemy’s guns — which had straightway obscured themselves in towering clouds of smoke. It was hardly profitable to be curious about guns which had the trick of the cuttle-fish, and the season of observation had been brief. At its conclusion

— a short remove backward from where it began — occurred the conversation already partly reported. “It is the only place,” the general repeated thoughtfully, “to get at them.”

The colonel looked at him gravely. “There is room for only one gun, General — one against twelve.”

“That is true — for only one at a time,” said the commander with something like, yet not altogether like, a smile. “But then, your brave Coulter — a whole battery in himself.”

The tone of irony was now unmistakable. It angered the colonel, but he did not know what to say. The spirit of military subordination is not favorable to retort, nor even to deprecation.

At this moment a young officer of artillery came riding slowly up the road attended by his bugler. It was Captain Coulter. He could not have been more than twenty-three years of age. He was of medium height, but very slender and lithe, and sat his horse with something of the air of a civilian. In face he was of a type singularly unlike the men about him; thin, high-nosed, gray-eyed, with a slight blond mustache, and long, rather straggling hair of the same color. There was an apparent negligence in his attire. His cap was worn with the visor a trifle askew; his coat was buttoned only at the sword-belt, showing a considerable expanse of white shirt, tolerably clean for that stage of the campaign. But the negligence was all in his dress and bearing; in his face was a look of intense interest in his surroundings. His gray eyes, which seemed occasionally to strike right and left across the landscape, like search-lights, were for the most part fixed upon the sky beyond the Notch; until he should arrive at the summit of the road there was nothing else in that direction to see. As he came opposite his division and brigade commanders at the road-side he saluted mechanically and was about to pass on. The colonel signed to him to halt.

“Captain Coulter,” he said, “the enemy has twelve pieces over there on the next ridge. If I rightly understand the general, he directs that you bring up a gun and engage them.”

There was a blank silence; the general looked stolidly at a distant regiment swarming slowly up the hill through rough undergrowth, like a torn and draggled cloud of blue smoke; the captain appeared not to have observed him. Presently the captain spoke, slowly and with apparent effort:

“On the next ridge, did you say, sir? Are the guns near the house?”

“Ah, you have been over this road before. Directly at the house.”

“And it is — necessary — to engage them? The order is imperative?”

His voice was husky and broken. He was visibly paler. The colonel was astonished and mortified. He stole a glance at the commander. In that set, immobile face was no sign; it was as hard as bronze. A moment later the general rode away, followed by his staff and escort. The colonel, humiliated and indignant, was about to order Captain Coulter in arrest, when the latter spoke a few words in a low tone to his bugler, saluted, and rode straight forward into the Notch, where, presently, at the summit of the road, his field-glass at his eyes, he showed against the sky, he and his horse, sharply defined and statuesque. The bugler had dashed down the speed and disappeared behind a wood. Presently his bugle was heard singing in the cedars, and in an incredibly short time a single gun with its caisson, each drawn by six horses and manned by its full complement of gunners, came bounding and banging up the grade in a storm of dust, unlimbered under cover, and was run forward by hand to the fatal crest among the dead horses. A gesture of the captain’s arm, some strangely agile movements of the men in loading, and almost before the troops along the way had ceased to hear the rattle of the wheels, a great white cloud sprang forward down the slope, and with a deafening report the affair at Coulter’s Notch had begun.

It is not intended to relate in detail the progress and incidents of that ghastly contest — a contest without vicissitudes, its alternations only different degrees of despair. Almost at the instant when Captain Coulter’s gun blew its challenging cloud twelve answering clouds rolled upward from among the trees about the plantation house, a deep multiple report roared back like a broken echo, and thenceforth to the end the Federal cannoneers fought their hopeless battle in an atmosphere of living iron whose thoughts were lightnings and whose deeds were death.

Unwilling to see the efforts which he could not aid and the slaughter which he could not stay, the colonel ascended the ridge at a point a quarter of a mile to the left, whence the Notch, itself invisible, but pushing up successive masses of smoke, seemed the crater of a volcano in thundering eruption. With his glass he watched the enemy’s guns, noting as he could the effects of Coulter’s fire — if Coulter still lived to direct it. He saw that the Federal gunners, ignoring those of the enemy’s pieces whose positions could be determined by their smoke only, gave their whole attention to the one that maintained its place in the open — the lawn in front of the house. Over and about that hardy piece the shells exploded at intervals of a few seconds. Some exploded in the house, as could be seen by thin ascensions of smoke from the breached roof. Figures of prostrate men and horses were plainly visible.

“If our fellows are doing so good work with a single gun,” said the colonel to an aide who happened to be nearest, “they must be suffering like the devil from twelve. Go down and present the commander of that piece with my congratulations on the accuracy of his fire."

Turning to his adjutant-general he said, "Did you observe Coulter's damned reluctance to obey orders?"

"Yes, sir, I did."

"Well, say nothing about it, please. I don't think the general will care to make any accusations. He will probably have enough to do in explaining his own connection with this uncommon way of amusing the rear-guard of a retreating enemy."

A young officer approached from below, climbing breathless up the acclivity. Almost before he had saluted, he gasped out:

"Colonel, I am directed by Colonel Harmon to say that the enemy's guns are within easy reach of our rifles, and most of them visible from several points along the ridge."

The brigade commander looked at him without a trace of interest in his expression. "I know it," he said quietly.

The young adjutant was visibly embarrassed. "Colonel Harmon would like to have permission to silence those guns," he stammered.

"So should I," the colonel said in the same tone. "Present my compliments to Colonel Harmon and say to him that the general's orders for the infantry not to fire are still in force."

The adjutant saluted and retired. The colonel ground his heel into the earth and turned to look again at the enemy's guns.

"Colonel," said the adjutant-general, "I don't know that I ought to say anything, but there is something wrong in all this. Do you happen to know that Captain Coulter is from the South?"

"No; *was* he, indeed?"

"I heard that last summer the division which the general then commanded was in the vicinity of Coulter's home — camped there for weeks, and—"

"Listen!" said the colonel, interrupting with an upward gesture. "Do you hear *that*?"

"That" was the silence of the Federal gun. The staff, the orderlies, the lines of infantry behind the crest — all had "heard," and were looking curiously in the direction of the crater, whence no smoke now ascended except desultory cloudlets from the enemy's shells. Then came the blare of a bugle, a faint rattle of wheels; a minute later the sharp reports recommenced with double activity. The demolished gun had been replaced with a sound one.

"Yes," said the adjutant-general, resuming his narrative, "the general made the acquaintance of Coulter's family. There was trouble — I don't know the exact nature of it — something about Coulter's wife. She is a red-hot Secessionist, as they all are, except Coulter himself, but she is a good wife and high-bred lady. There was a complaint to army headquarters. The general was transferred to this division. It is odd that Coulter's battery should afterward have been assigned to it."

The colonel had risen from the rock upon which they had been sitting. His eyes were blazing with a generous indignation.

"See here, Morrison," said he, looking his gossiping staff officer straight in the face, "did you get that story from a gentleman or a liar?"

"I don't want to say how I got it, Colonel, unless it is necessary" — he was blushing a trifle—"but I'll stake my life upon its truth in the main."

The colonel turned toward a small knot of officers some distance away. "Lieutenant Williams!" he shouted.

One of the officers detached himself from the group and coming forward saluted, saying: "Pardon me, Colonel, I thought you had been informed. Williams is dead down there by the gun. What can I do, sir?"

Lieutenant Williams was the aide who had had the pleasure of conveying to the officer in charge of the gun his brigade commander's congratulations.

"Go," said the colonel, "and direct the withdrawal of that gun instantly. No — I'll go myself."

He strode down the declivity toward the rear of the Notch at a break-neck pace, over rocks and through brambles, followed by his little retinue in tumultuous disorder. At the foot of the declivity they mounted their waiting animals and took to the road at a lively trot, round a bend and into the Notch. The spectacle which they encountered there was appalling!

Within that defile, barely broad enough for a single gun, were piled the wrecks of no fewer than four. They had noted the silencing of only the last one disabled — there had been a lack of men to replace it quickly with another. The débris lay on both sides of the road; the men had managed to keep an open way between, through which the fifth piece was now firing. The men? — they looked like demons of the pit! All were hatless, all stripped to the waist, their reeking skins black with blotches of powder and spattered with gouts of blood. They worked like madmen, with rammer and cartridge, lever and lanyard. They set their swollen shoulders and bleeding hands against the wheels at each recoil and heaved the heavy gun back to its place. There were no commands; in that awful environment of whooping shot, exploding shells, shrieking fragments of iron, and flying splinters of wood, none could have been heard. Officers, if officers there were, were indistinguishable; all worked together — each while he lasted — governed by the eye. When the gun was sponged, it was loaded; when loaded, aimed and fired. The colonel observed something new to his military experience

— something horrible and unnatural: the gun was bleeding at the mouth! In temporary default of water, the man sponging had dipped his sponge into a pool of comrade’s blood. In all this work there was no clashing; the duty of the instant was obvious. When one fell, another, looking a trifle cleaner, seemed to rise from the earth in the dead man’s tracks, to fall in his turn.

With the ruined guns lay the ruined men — alongside the wreckage, under it and atop of it; and back down the road — a ghastly procession! — crept on hands and knees such of the wounded as were able to move. The colonel — he had compassionately sent his cavalcade to the right about — had to ride over those who were entirely dead in order not to crush those who were partly alive. Into that hell he tranquilly held his way, rode up alongside the gun, and, in the obscurity of the last discharge, tapped upon the cheek the man holding the rammer — who straightway fell, thinking himself killed. A fiend seven times damned sprang out of the smoke to take his place, but paused and gazed up at the mounted officer with an unearthly regard, his teeth flashing between his black lips, his eyes, fierce and expanded, burning like coals beneath his bloody brow. The colonel made an authoritative gesture and pointed to the rear. The fiend bowed in token of obedience. It was Captain Coulter.

Simultaneously with the colonel’s arresting sign, silence fell upon the whole field of action. The procession of missiles no longer streamed into that defile of death, for the enemy also had ceased firing. His army had been gone for hours, and the commander of his rear-guard, who had held his position perilously long in hope to silence the Federal fire, at that strange moment had silenced his own. “I was not aware of the breadth of my authority,” said the colonel to anybody, riding forward to the crest to see what had really happened.

An hour later his brigade was in bivouac on the enemy’s ground, and its idlers were examining, with something of awe, as the faithful inspect a saint’s relics, a score of straddling dead horses and three disabled guns, all spiked. The fallen men had been carried away; their torn and broken bodies would have given too great satisfaction.

Naturally, the colonel established himself and his military family in the plantation house. It was somewhat shattered, but it was better than the open air. The furniture was greatly deranged and broken. Walls and ceilings were knocked away here and there, and a lingering odor of powder smoke was everywhere. The beds, the closets of women’s clothing, the cupboards were not greatly damaged. The new tenants for a night made themselves comfortable, and the virtual effacement of Coulter’s battery supplied them with an interesting topic.

During supper an orderly of the escort showed himself into the dining-room and asked permission to speak to the colonel.

“What is it, Barbour?” said that officer pleasantly, having overheard the request.

“Colonel, there is something wrong in the cellar; I don’t know what — somebody there. I was down there rummaging about.”

“I will go down and see,” said a staff officer, rising.

“So will I,” the colonel said; “let the others remain. Lead on, orderly.”

They took a candle from the table and descended the cellar stairs, the orderly in visible trepidation. The candle made but a feeble light, but presently, as they advanced, its narrow circle of illumination revealed a human figure seated on the ground against the black stone wall which they were skirting, its knees elevated, its head bowed sharply forward. The face, which should have been seen in profile, was invisible, for the man was bent so far forward that his long hair concealed it; and, strange to relate, the beard, of a much darker hue, fell in a great tangled mass and lay along the ground at his side. They involuntarily paused; then the colonel, taking the candle from the orderly’s shaking hand, approached the man and attentively considered him. The long dark beard was the hair of a woman — dead. The dead woman clasped in her arms a dead babe. Both were clasped in the arms of the man, pressed against his breast, against his lips. There was blood in the hair of the woman; there was blood in the hair of the man. A yard away, near an irregular depression in the beaten earth which formed the cellar’s floor — fresh excavation with a convex bit of iron, having jagged edges, visible in one of the sides — lay an infant’s foot. The colonel held the light as high as he could. The floor of the room above was broken through, the splinters pointing at all angles downward. “This casemate is not bomb-proof,” said the colonel gravely. It did not occur to him that his summing up of the matter had any levity in it.

They stood about the group awhile in silence; the staff officer was thinking of his unfinished supper, the orderly of what might possibly be in one of the casks on the other side of the cellar. Suddenly the man whom they had thought dead raised his head and gazed tranquilly into their faces. His complexion was coal black; the cheeks were apparently tattooed in irregular sinuous lines from the eyes downward. The lips, too, were white, like those of a stage negro. There was blood upon his forehead.

The staff officer drew back a pace, the orderly two paces.

“What are you doing here, my man?” said the colonel, unmoved.

“This house belongs to me, sir,” was the reply, civilly delivered.

“To you? Ah, I see! And these?”

“My wife and child. I am Captain Coulter.”

THE COUP DE GRÂCE

The fighting had been hard and continuous; that was attested by all the senses. The very taste of battle was in the air. All was now over; it remained only to succor the wounded and bury the dead — to "tidy up a bit," as the humorist of a burial squad put it. A good deal of "tidying up" was required. As far as one could see through the forests, among the splintered trees, lay wrecks of men and horses. Among them moved the stretcher-bearers, gathering and carrying away the few who showed signs of life. Most of the wounded had died of neglect while the right to minister to their wants was in dispute. It is an army regulation that the wounded must wait; the best way to care for them is to win the battle. It must be confessed that victory is a distinct advantage to a man requiring attention, but many do not live to avail themselves of it.

The dead were collected in groups of a dozen or a score and laid side by side in rows while the trenches were dug to receive them.

Some, found at too great a distance from these rallying points, were buried where they lay. There was little attempt at identification, though in most cases, the burial parties being detailed to glean the same ground which they had assisted to reap, the names of the victorious dead were known and listed. The enemy's fallen had to be content with counting. But of that they got enough: many of them were counted several times, and the total, as given afterward in the official report of the victorious commander, denoted rather a hope than a result.

At some little distance from the spot where one of the burial parties had established its "bivouac of the dead," a man in the uniform of a Federal officer stood leaning against a tree. From his feet upward to his neck his attitude was that of weariness reposing; but he turned his head uneasily from side to side; his mind was apparently not at rest. He was perhaps uncertain in which direction to go; he was not likely to remain long where he was, for already the level rays of the setting sun straggled redly through the open spaces of the wood and the weary soldiers were quitting their task for the day. He would hardly make a night of it alone there among the dead.

Nine men in ten whom you meet after a battle inquire the way to some fraction of the army — as if any one could know. Doubtless this officer was lost. After resting himself a moment he would presumably follow one of the retiring burial squads.

When all were gone he walked straight away into the forest toward the red west, its light staining his face like blood. The air of confidence with which he now strode along showed that he was on familiar ground; he had recovered his bearings. The dead on his right and on his left were unregarded as he passed. An occasional low moan from some sorely-stricken wretch whom the relief-parties had not reached, and who would have to pass a comfortless night beneath the stars with his thirst to keep him company, was equally unheeded. What, indeed, could the officer have done, being no surgeon and having no water?

At the head of a shallow ravine, a mere depression of the ground, lay a small group of bodies. He saw, and swerving suddenly from his course walked rapidly toward them. Scanning each one sharply as he passed, he stopped at last above one which lay at a slight remove from the others, near a clump of small trees. He looked at it narrowly. It seemed to stir. He stooped and laid his hand upon its face. It screamed.

The officer was Captain Downing Madwell, of a Massachusetts regiment of infantry, a daring and intelligent soldier, an honorable man.

In the regiment were two brothers named Halcrow — Caffal and Creede Halcrow. Caffal Halcrow was a sergeant in Captain Madwell's company, and these two men, the sergeant and the captain, were devoted friends. In so far as disparity of rank, difference in duties and considerations of military discipline would permit they were commonly together. They had, indeed, grown up together from childhood. A habit of the heart is not easily broken off. Caffal Halcrow had nothing military in his taste nor disposition, but the thought of separation from his friend was disagreeable; he enlisted in the company in which Madwell was second-lieutenant. Each had taken two steps upward in rank, but between the highest non-commissioned and the lowest commissioned officer the gulf is deep and wide and the old relation was maintained with difficulty and a difference.

Creede Halcrow, the brother of Caffal, was the major of the regiment — a cynical, saturnine man, between whom and Captain Madwell there was a natural antipathy which circumstances had nourished and strengthened to an active animosity. But for the restraining influence of their mutual relation to Caffal these two patriots would doubtless have endeavored to deprive their country of each other's services.

At the opening of the battle that morning the regiment was performing outpost duty a mile away from the main army. It was attacked and nearly surrounded in the forest, but stubbornly held its ground. During a lull in the fighting, Major Halcrow came to Captain Madwell. The two exchanged formal salutes, and the major said: “Captain, the colonel directs that you push your company to the head of this ravine and hold your place there until recalled. I need hardly apprise you of the dangerous character of the movement, but if you wish, you can, I suppose, turn over the command to your first-lieutenant. I was not, however, directed to authorize the substitution; it is merely a suggestion of my own, unofficially made."

To this deadly insult Captain Madwell coolly replied:

"Sir, I invite you to accompany the movement. A mounted officer would be a conspicuous mark, and I have long held the opinion that it would be better if you were dead."

The art of repartee was cultivated in military circles as early as 1862.

A half-hour later Captain Madwell's company was driven from its position at the head of the ravine, with a loss of one-third its number. Among the fallen was Sergeant Halcrow. The regiment was soon afterward forced back to the main line, and at the close of the battle was miles away. The captain was now standing at the side of his subordinate and friend.

Sergeant Halcrow was mortally hurt. His clothing was deranged; it seemed to have been violently torn apart, exposing the abdomen. Some of the buttons of his jacket had been pulled off and lay on the ground beside him and fragments of his other garments were strewn about. His leather belt was parted and had apparently been dragged from beneath him as he lay. There had been no great effusion of blood. The only visible wound was a wide, ragged opening in the abdomen.

It was defiled with earth and dead leaves. Protruding from it was a loop of small intestine. In all his experience Captain Madwell had not seen a wound like this. He could neither conjecture how it was made nor explain the attendant circumstances — the strangely torn clothing, the parted belt, the besmirching of the white skin. He knelt and made a closer examination. When he rose to his feet, he turned his eyes in different directions as if looking for an enemy. Fifty yards away, on the crest of a low, thinly wooded hill, he saw several dark objects moving about among the fallen men — a herd of swine. One stood with its back to him, its shoulders sharply elevated. Its forefeet were upon a human body, its head was depressed and invisible. The bristly ridge of its chine showed black against the red west. Captain Madwell drew away his eyes and fixed them again upon the thing which had been his friend.

The man who had suffered these monstrous mutilations was alive. At intervals he moved his limbs; he moaned at every breath. He stared blankly into the face of his friend and if touched screamed. In his giant agony he had torn up the ground on which he lay; his clenched hands were full of leaves and twigs and earth. Articulate speech was beyond his power; it was impossible to know if he were sensible to anything but pain. The expression of his face was an appeal; his eyes were full of prayer. For what?

There was no misreading that look; the captain had too frequently seen it in eyes of those whose lips had still the power to formulate it by an entreaty for death. Consciously or unconsciously, this writhing fragment of humanity, this type and example of acute sensation, this handiwork of man and beast, this humble, unheroic Prometheus, was imploring everything, all, the whole non-ego, for the boon of oblivion. To the earth and the sky alike, to the trees, to the man, to whatever took form in sense or consciousness, this incarnate suffering addressed that silent plea.

For what, indeed? For that which we accord to even the meanest creature without sense to demand it, denying it only to the wretched of our own race: for the blessed release, the rite of uttermost compassion, the *coup de grâce*.

Captain Madwell spoke the name of his friend. He repeated it over and over without effect until emotion choked his utterance.

His tears plashed upon the livid face beneath his own and blinded himself. He saw nothing but a blurred and moving object, but the moans were more distinct than ever, interrupted at briefer intervals by sharper shrieks. He turned away, struck his hand upon his forehead, and strode from the spot. The swine, catching sight of him, threw up their crimson muzzles, regarding him suspiciously a second, and then with a gruff, concerted grunt, raced away out of sight. A horse, its foreleg splintered by a cannon-shot, lifted its head sidewise from the ground and neighed piteously. Madwell stepped forward, drew his revolver and shot the poor beast between the eyes, narrowly observing its death-struggle, which, contrary to his expectation, was violent and long; but at last it lay still. The tense muscles of its lips, which had uncovered the teeth in a horrible grin, relaxed; the sharp, clean-cut profile took on a look of profound peace and rest.

Along the distant, thinly wooded crest to westward the fringe of sunset fire had now nearly burned itself out. The light upon the trunks of the trees had faded to a tender gray; shadows were in their tops, like great dark birds aperch. Night was coming and there were miles of haunted forest between Captain Madwell and camp. Yet he stood there at the side of the dead animal, apparently lost to all sense of his surroundings. His eyes were bent upon the earth at his feet; his left hand hung loosely at his side, his right still held the pistol. Presently he lifted his face, turned it toward his dying friend and walked rapidly back to his side. He knelt upon one knee, cocked the weapon, placed the muzzle against the man’s forehead, and turning away his eyes pulled the trigger. There was no report. He had used his last cartridge for the horse.

The sufferer moaned and his lips moved convulsively. The froth that ran from them had a tinge of blood.

Captain Madwell rose to his feet and drew his sword from the scabbard. He passed the fingers of his left hand along the edge from hilt to point. He held it out straight before him, as if to test his nerves. There was no visible tremor of the blade; the ray of bleak skylight that it reflected was steady and true. He stooped and with his left hand tore away the dying man's shirt, rose and placed the point of the sword just over the heart. This time he did not withdraw his eyes. Grasping the hilt with both hands, he thrust downward with all his strength and weight. The blade sank into the man's body — through his body into the earth; Captain Madwell came near falling forward upon his work. The dying man drew up his knees and at the same time threw his right arm across his breast and grasped the steel so tightly that the knuckles of the hand visibly whitened. By a violent but vain effort to withdraw the blade the wound was enlarged; a rill of blood escaped, running sinuously down into the deranged clothing. At that moment three men stepped silently forward from behind the clump of young trees which had concealed their approach. Two were hospital attendants and carried a stretcher.

The third was Major Creede Halcrow.

PARKER ADDERSON, PHILOSOPHER

"Prisoner, what is your name?"

"As I am to lose it at daylight to-morrow morning it is hardly worth while concealing it. Parker Adderson."

"Your rank?"

"A somewhat humble one; commissioned officers are too precious to be risked in the perilous business of a spy. I am a sergeant."

"Of what regiment?"

"You must excuse me; my answer might, for anything I know, give you an idea of whose forces are in your front. Such knowledge as that is what I came into your lines to obtain, not to impart."

"You are not without wit."

"If you have the patience to wait you will find me dull enough to-morrow."

"How do you know that you are to die to-morrow morning?"

"Among spies captured by night that is the custom. It is one of the nice observances of the profession."

The general so far laid aside the dignity appropriate to a Confederate officer of high rank and wide renown as to smile. But no one in his power and out of his favor would have drawn any happy augury from that outward and visible sign of approval. It was neither genial nor infectious; it did not communicate itself to the other persons exposed to it — the caught spy who had provoked it and the armed guard who had brought him into the tent and now stood a little apart, watching his prisoner in the yellow candle-light. It was no part of that warrior's duty to smile; he had been detailed for another purpose. The conversation was resumed; it was in character a trial for a capital offense.

"You admit, then, that you are a spy — that you came into my camp, disguised as you are in the uniform of a Confederate soldier, to obtain information secretly regarding the numbers and disposition of my troops."

"Regarding, particularly, their numbers. Their disposition I already knew. It is morose."

The general brightened again; the guard, with a severer sense of his responsibility, accentuated the austerity of his expression an stood a trifle more erect than before. Twirling his gray slouch hat round and round upon his forefinger, the spy took a leisurely survey of his surroundings. They were simple enough. The tent was a common "wall tent," about eight feet by ten in dimensions, lighted by a single tallow candle stuck into the haft of a bayonet, which was itself stuck into a pine table at which the general sat, now busily writing and apparently forgetful of his unwilling guest. An old rag carpet covered the earthen floor; an older leather trunk, a second chair and a roll of blankets were about all else that the tent contained; in General Clavering's command Confederate simplicity and penury of "pomp and circumstance" had attained their highest development. On a large nail driven into the tent pole at the entrance was suspended a sword-belt supporting a long sabre, a pistol in its holster and, absurdly enough, a bowie-knife. Of that most unmilitary weapon it was the general's habit to explain that it was a souvenir of the peaceful days when he was a civilian.

It was a stormy night. The rain cascaded upon the canvas in torrents, with the dull, drum-like sound familiar to dwellers in tents. As the whooping blasts charged upon it the frail structure shook and swayed and strained at its confining stakes and ropes.

The general finished writing, folded the half-sheet of paper and spoke to the soldier guarding Adderson: "Here, Tassman, take that to the adjutant-general; then return."

"And the prisoner, General?" said the soldier, saluting, with an inquiring glance in the direction of that unfortunate.

"Do as I said," replied the officer, curtly.

The soldier took the note and ducked himself out of the tent. General Clavering turned his handsome face toward the Federal spy, looked him in the eyes, not unkindly, and said: "It is a bad night, my man."

"For me, yes."

"Do you guess what I have written?"

"Something worth reading, I dare say. And — perhaps it is my vanity — I venture to suppose that I am mentioned in it."

"Yes; it is a memorandum for an order to be read to the troops at *reveille* concerning your execution. Also some notes for the guidance of the provost-marshal in arranging the details of that event."

"I hope, General, the spectacle will be intelligently arranged, for I shall attend it myself."

"Have you any arrangements of your own that you wish to make? Do you wish to see a chaplain, for example?"

"I could hardly secure a longer rest for myself by depriving him of some of his."

"Good God, man! do you mean to go to your death with nothing but jokes upon your lips? Do you know that this is a serious matter?"

“How can I know that? I have never been dead in all my life. I have heard that death is a serious matter, but never from any of those who have experienced it.”

The general was silent for a moment; the man interested, perhaps amused him — a type not previously encountered.

“Death,” he said, “is at least a loss — a loss of such happiness as we have, and of opportunities for more.”

“A loss of which we shall never be conscious can be borne with composure and therefore expected without apprehension. You must have observed, General, that of all the dead men with whom it is your soldierly pleasure to strew your path none shows signs of regret.”

“If the being dead is not a regrettable condition, yet the becoming so — the act of dying — appears to be distinctly disagreeable to one who has not lost the power to feel.”

“Pain is disagreeable, no doubt. I never suffer it without more or less discomfort. But he who lives longest is most exposed to it. What you call dying is simply the last pain — there is really no such thing as dying. Suppose, for illustration, that I attempt to escape. You lift the revolver that you are courteously concealing in your lap, and—”

The general blushed like a girl, then laughed softly, disclosing his brilliant teeth, made a slight inclination of his handsome head and said nothing. The spy continued: “You fire, and I have in my stomach what I did not swallow. I fall, but am not dead. After a half-hour of agony I am dead. But at any given instant of that half-hour I was either alive or dead. There is no transition period.

“When I am hanged to-morrow morning it will be quite the same; while conscious I shall be living; when dead, unconscious. Nature appears to have ordered the matter quite in my interest — the way that I should have ordered it myself. It is so simple,” he added with a smile, “that it seems hardly worth while to be hanged at all.”

At the finish of his remarks there was a long silence. The general sat impassive, looking into the man’s face, but apparently not attentive to what had been said. It was as if his eyes had mounted guard over the prisoner while his mind concerned itself with other matters. Presently he drew a long, deep breath, shuddered, as one awakened from a dreadful dream, and exclaimed almost inaudibly: “Death is horrible!” — this man of death.

“It was horrible to our savage ancestors,” said the spy, gravely, “because they had not enough intelligence to dissociate the idea of consciousness from the idea of the physical forms in which it is manifested — as an even lower order of intelligence, that of the monkey, for example, may be unable to imagine a house without inhabitants, and seeing a ruined hut fancies a suffering occupant. To us it is horrible because we have inherited the tendency to think it so, accounting for the notion by wild and fanciful theories of another world — as names of places give rise to legends explaining them and reasonless conduct to philosophies in justification. You can hang me, General, but there your power of evil ends; you cannot condemn me to heaven."

The general appeared not to have heard; the spy's talk had merely turned his thoughts into an unfamiliar channel, but there they pursued their will independently to conclusions of their own. The storm had ceased, and something of the solemn spirit of the night had imparted itself to his reflections, giving them the sombre tinge of a supernatural dread. Perhaps there was an element of prescience in it. "I should not like to die," he said—"not to-night."

He was interrupted — if, indeed, he had intended to speak further — by the entrance of an officer of his staff, Captain Hasterlick, the provost-marshal. This recalled him to himself; the absent look passed away from his face.

"Captain," he said, acknowledging the officer's salute, "this man is a Yankee spy captured inside our lines with incriminating papers on him. He has confessed. How is the weather?"

"The storm is over, sir, and the moon shining."

"Good; take a file of men, conduct him at once to the parade ground, and shoot him."

A sharp cry broke from the spy's lips. He threw himself forward, thrust out his neck, expanded his eyes, clenched his hands.

"Good God!" he cried hoarsely, almost inarticulately; "you do not mean that! You forget — I am not to die until morning."

"I have said nothing of morning," replied the general, coldly; "that was an assumption of your own. You die now."

"But, General, I beg — I implore you to remember; I am to hang! It will take some time to erect the gallows — two hours — an hour. Spies are hanged; I have rights under military law. For Heaven's sake, General, consider how short—"

"Captain, observe my directions."

The officer drew his sword and fixing his eyes upon the prisoner pointed silently to the opening of the tent. The prisoner hesitated; the officer grasped him by the collar and pushed him gently forward. As he approached the tent pole the frantic man sprang to it and with cat-like agility seized the handle of the bowie-knife, plucked the weapon from the scabbard and thrusting the captain aside leaped upon the general with the fury of a madman, hurling him to the ground and falling headlong upon him as he lay. The table was overturned, the candle extinguished and they fought blindly in the darkness. The provost-marshal sprang to the assistance of his Superior officer and was himself prostrated upon the struggling forms. Curses and inarticulate cries of rage and pain came from the welter of limbs and bodies; the tent came down upon them and beneath its hampering and enveloping folds the struggle went on. Private Tassman, returning from his errand and dimly conjecturing the situation, threw down his rifle and laying hold of the flouncing canvas at random vainly tried to drag it off the men under it; and the sentinel who paced up and down in front, not daring to leave his beat though the skies should fall, discharged his rifle. The report alarmed the camp; drums beat the long roll and bugles sounded the assembly, bringing swarms of half-clad men into the moonlight, dressing as they ran, and falling into line at the sharp commands of their officers. This was well; being in line the men were under control; they stood at arms while the general's staff and the men of his escort brought order out of confusion by lifting off the fallen tent and pulling apart the breathless and bleeding actors in that strange contention.

Breathless, indeed, was one: the captain was dead; the handle of the bowie-knife, protruding from his throat, was pressed back beneath his chin until the end had caught in the angle of the jaw and the hand that delivered the blow had been unable to remove the weapon. In the dead man's hand was his sword, clenched with a grip that defied the strength of the living. Its blade was streaked with red to the hilt.

Lifted to his feet, the general sank back to the earth with a moan and fainted. Besides his bruises he had two sword-thrusts — one through the thigh, the other through the shoulder.

The spy had suffered the least damage. Apart from a broken right arm, his wounds were such only as might have been incurred in an ordinary combat with nature's weapons. But he was dazed and seemed hardly to know what had occurred. He shrank away from those attending him, cowered upon the ground and uttered unintelligible remonstrances. His face, swollen by blows and stained with gouts of blood, nevertheless showed white beneath his disheveled hair — as white as that of a corpse.

"The man is not insane," said the surgeon, preparing bandages and replying to a question; "he is suffering from fright. Who and what is he?"

Private Tassman began to explain. It was the opportunity of his life; he omitted nothing that could in any way accentuate the importance of his own relation to the night's events. When he had finished his story and was ready to begin it again nobody gave him any attention.

The general had now recovered consciousness. He raised himself upon his elbow, looked about him, and, seeing the spy crouching by a camp-fire, guarded, said simply:

"Take that man to the parade ground and shoot him."

“The general’s mind wanders,” said an officer standing near.

“His mind does *not* wander,” the adjutant-general said. “I have a memorandum from him about this business; he had given that same order to Hasterlick” — with a motion of the hand toward the dead provost-marshal —”and, by God! it shall be executed.”

Ten minutes later Sergeant Parker Adderson, of the Federal army, philosopher and wit, kneeling in the moonlight and begging incoherently for his life, was shot to death by twenty men. As the volley rang out upon the keen air of the midnight, General Clavering, lying white and still in the red glow of the camp-fire, opened his big blue eyes, looked pleasantly upon those about him and said: “How silent it all is!”

The surgeon looked at the adjutant-general, gravely and significantly. The patient’s eyes slowly closed, and thus he lay for a few moments; then, his face suffused with a smile of ineffable sweetness, he said, faintly: “I suppose this must be death,” and so passed away.

AN AFFAIR OF OUTPOSTS

I

CONCERNING THE WISH TO BE DEAD

Two men sat in conversation. One was the Governor of the State. The year was 1861; the war was on and the Governor already famous for the intelligence and zeal with which he directed all the powers and resources of his State to the service of the Union.

“What! *you*?” the Governor was saying in evident surprise—”you too want a military commission? Really, the fifing and drumming must have effected a profound alteration in your convictions. In my character of recruiting sergeant I suppose I ought not to be fastidious, but” — there was a touch of irony in his manner—”well, have you forgotten that an oath of allegiance is required?”

“I have altered neither my convictions nor my sympathies,” said the other, tranquilly. “While my sympathies are with the South, as you do me the honor to recollect, I have never doubted that the North was in the right. I am a Southerner in fact and in feeling, but it is my habit in matters of importance to act as I think, not as I feel.”

The Governor was absently tapping his desk with a pencil; he did not immediately reply. After a while he said: “I have heard that there are all kinds of men in the world, so I suppose there are some like that, and doubtless you think yourself one. I’ve known you a long time and — pardon me — I don’t think so.”

“Then I am to understand that my application is denied?”

“Unless you can remove my belief that your Southern sympathies are in some degree a disqualification, yes. I do not doubt your good faith, and I know you to be abundantly fitted by intelligence and special training for the duties of an officer. Your convictions, you say, favor the Union cause, but I prefer a man with his heart in it. The heart is what men fight with.”

“Look here, Governor,” said the younger man, with a smile that had more light than warmth: “I have something up my sleeve — a qualification which I had hoped it would not be necessary to mention. A great military authority has given a simple recipe for being a good soldier: ‘Try always to get yourself killed.’ It is with that purpose that I wish to enter the service. I am not, perhaps, much of a patriot, but I wish to be dead.”

The Governor looked at him rather sharply, then a little coldly. “There is a simpler and franker way,” he said.

“In my family, sir,” was the reply, “we do not do that — no Armisted has ever done that.”

A long silence ensued and neither man looked at the other. Presently the Governor lifted his eyes from the pencil, which had resumed its tapping, and said:

“Who is she?”

“My wife.”

The Governor tossed the pencil into the desk, rose and walked two or three times across the room. Then he turned to Armisted, who also had risen, looked at him more coldly than before and said: “But the man — would it not be better that he — could not the country spare him better than it can spare you? Or are the Armisteds opposed to ‘the unwritten law’?”

The Armisteds, apparently, could feel an insult: the face of the younger man flushed, then paled, but he subdued himself to the service of his purpose.

“The man’s identity is unknown to me,” he said, calmly enough.

“Pardon me,” said the Governor, with even less of visible contrition than commonly underlies those words. After a moment’s reflection he added: “I shall send you to-morrow a captain’s commission in the Tenth Infantry, now at Nashville, Tennessee. Good night.”

“Good night, sir. I thank you.”

Left alone, the Governor remained for a time motionless, leaning against his desk. Presently he shrugged his shoulders as if throwing off a burden. “This is a bad business,” he said.

Seating himself at a reading-table before the fire, he took up the book nearest his hand, absently opening it. His eyes fell upon this sentence:

“When God made it necessary for an unfaithful wife to lie about her husband in justification of her own sins He had the tenderness to endow men with the folly to believe her.”

He looked at the title of the book; it was, *His Excellency the Fool*.

He flung the volume into the fire.

II

HOW TO SAY WHAT IS WORTH HEARING

The enemy, defeated in two days of battle at Pittsburg Landing, had sullenly retired to Corinth, whence he had come. For manifest incompetence Grant, whose beaten army had been saved from destruction and capture by Buell's soldierly activity and skill, had been relieved of his command, which nevertheless had not been given to Buell, but to Halleck, a man of unproved powers, a theorist, sluggish, irresolute. Foot by foot his troops, always deployed in line-of-battle to resist the enemy's bickering skirmishers, always entrenching against the columns that never came, advanced across the thirty miles of forest and swamp toward an antagonist prepared to vanish at contact, like a ghost at cock-crow. It was a campaign of "excursions and alarums," of reconnoissances and counter-marches, of cross-purposes and countermanded orders. For weeks the solemn farce held attention, luring distinguished civilians from fields of political ambition to see what they safely could of the horrors of war. Among these was our friend the Governor. At the headquarters of the army and in the camps of the troops from his State he was a familiar figure, attended by the several members of his personal staff, showily horsed, faultlessly betailored and bravely silk-hatted. Things of charm they were, rich in suggestions of peaceful lands beyond a sea of strife. The bedraggled soldier looked up from his trench as they passed, leaned upon his spade and audibly damned them to signify his sense of their ornamental irrelevance to the austerities of his trade.

"I think, Governor," said General Masterson one day, going into informal session atop of his horse and throwing one leg across the pommel of his saddle, his favorite posture—"I think I would not ride any farther in that direction if I were you. We've nothing out there but a line of skirmishers. That, I presume, is why I was directed to put these siege guns here: if the skirmishers are driven in the enemy will die of dejection at being unable to haul them away — they're a trifle heavy."

There is reason to fear that the unstrained quality of this military humor dropped not as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath the civilian's silk hat. Anyhow he abated none of his dignity in recognition.

"I understand," he said, gravely, "that some of my men are out there — a company of the Tenth, commanded by Captain Armisted. I should like to meet him if you do not mind."

"He is worth meeting. But there's a bad bit of jungle out there, and I should advise that you leave your horse and" — with a look at the Governor's retinue —"your other impedimenta."

The Governor went forward alone and on foot. In a half-hour he had pushed through a tangled undergrowth covering a boggy soil and entered upon firm and more open ground. Here he found a half-company of infantry lounging behind a line of stacked rifles. The men wore their accoutrements — their belts, cartridge-boxes, haversacks and canteens. Some lying at full length on the dry leaves were fast asleep: others in small groups gossiped idly of this and that; a few played at cards; none was far from the line of stacked arms. To the civilian’s eye the scene was one of carelessness, confusion, indifference; a soldier would have observed expectancy and readiness.

At a little distance apart an officer in fatigue uniform, armed, sat on a fallen tree noting the approach of the visitor, to whom a sergeant, rising from one of the groups, now came forward.

“I wish to see Captain Armisted,” said the Governor.

The sergeant eyed him narrowly, saying nothing, pointed to the officer, and taking a rifle from one of the stacks, accompanied him.

“This man wants to see you, sir,” said the sergeant, saluting. The officer rose.

It would have been a sharp eye that would have recognized him. His hair, which but a few months before had been brown, was streaked with gray. His face, tanned by exposure, was seamed as with age. A long livid scar across the forehead marked the stroke of a sabre; one cheek was drawn and puckered by the work of a bullet. Only a woman of the loyal North would have thought the man handsome.

“Armisted — Captain,” said the Governor, extending his hand, “do you not know me?”

“I know you, sir, and I salute you — as the Governor of my State.”

Lifting his right hand to the level of his eyes he threw it outward and downward. In the code of military etiquette there is no provision for shaking hands. That of the civilian was withdrawn. If he felt either surprise or chagrin his face did not betray it.

“It is the hand that signed your commission,” he said.

“And it is the hand—”

The sentence remains unfinished. The sharp report of a rifle came from the front, followed by another and another. A bullet hissed through the forest and struck a tree near by. The men sprang from the ground and even before the captain’s high, clear voice was done intoning the command “At-ten-tion!” had fallen into line in rear of the stacked arms. Again — and now through the din of a crackling fusillade — sounded the strong, deliberate sing-song of authority: “Take ... arms!” followed by the rattle of unlocking bayonets.

Bullets from the unseen enemy were now flying thick and fast, though mostly well spent and emitting the humming sound which signified interference by twigs and rotation in the plane of flight. Two or three of the men in the line were already struck and down. A few wounded men came limping awkwardly out of the undergrowth from the skirmish line in front; most of them did not pause, but held their way with white faces and set teeth to the rear.

Suddenly there was a deep, jarring report in front, followed by the startling rush of a shell, which passing overhead exploded in the edge of a thicket, setting afire the fallen leaves. Penetrating the din — seeming to float above it like the melody of a soaring bird — rang the slow, aspirated monotones of the captain's several commands, without emphasis, without accent, musical and restful as an evensong under the harvest moon. Familiar with this tranquilizing chant in moments of imminent peril, these raw soldiers of less than a year's training yielded themselves to the spell, executing its mandates with the composure and precision of veterans. Even the distinguished civilian behind his tree, hesitating between pride and terror, was accessible to its charm and suasion. He was conscious of a fortified resolution and ran away only when the skirmishers, under orders to rally on the reserve, came out of the woods like hunted hares and formed on the left of the stiff little line, breathing hard and thankful for the boon of breath.

III

THE FIGHTING OF ONE WHOSE HEART WAS NOT IN THE QUARREL

Guided in his retreat by that of the fugitive wounded, the Governor struggled bravely to the rear through the "bad bit of jungle." He was well winded and a trifle confused. Excepting a single rifle-shot now and again, there was no sound of strife behind him; the enemy was pulling himself together for a new onset against an antagonist of whose numbers and tactical disposition he was in doubt. The fugitive felt that he would probably be spared to his country, and only commended the arrangements of Providence to that end, but in leaping a small brook in more open ground one of the arrangements incurred the mischance of a disabling sprain at the ankle. He was unable to continue his flight, for he was too fat to hop, and after several vain attempts, causing intolerable pain, seated himself on the earth to nurse his ignoble disability and deprecate the military situation.

A brisk renewal of the firing broke out and stray bullets came flitting and droning by. Then came the crash of two clean, definite volleys, followed by a continuous rattle, through which he heard the yells and cheers of the combatants, punctuated by thunderclaps of cannon. All this told him that Armisted's little command was bitterly beset and fighting at close quarters. The wounded men whom he had distanced began to straggle by on either hand, their numbers visibly augmented by new levies from the line. Singly and by twos and threes, some supporting comrades more desperately hurt than themselves, but all deaf to his appeals for assistance, they sifted through the underbrush and disappeared. The firing was increasingly louder and more distinct, and presently the ailing fugitives were succeeded by men who strode with a firmer tread, occasionally facing about and discharging their pieces, then doggedly resuming their retreat, reloading as they walked. Two or three fell as he looked, and lay motionless. One had enough of life left in him to make a pitiful attempt to drag himself to cover. A passing comrade paused beside him long enough to fire, appraised the poor devil's disability with a look and moved sullenly on, inserting a cartridge in his weapon.

In all this was none of the pomp of war — no hint of glory. Even in his distress and peril the helpless civilian could not forbear to contrast it with the gorgeous parades and reviews held in honor of himself — with the brilliant uniforms, the music, the banners, and the marching. It was an ugly and sickening business: to all that was artistic in his nature, revolting, brutal, in bad taste.

"Ugh!" he grunted, shuddering—"this is beastly! Where is the charm of it all? Where are the elevated sentiments, the devotion, the heroism, the—"

From a point somewhere near, in the direction of the pursuing enemy, rose the clear, deliberate sing-song of Captain Armisted.

"Stead-y, men — stead-y. Halt! Commence fir-ing."

The rattle of fewer than a score of rifles could be distinguished through the general uproar, and again that penetrating falsetto:

"Cease fir-ing. In retreat.... maaarch!"

In a few moments this remnant had drifted slowly past the Governor, all to the right of him as they faced in retiring, the men deployed at intervals of a half-dozen paces. At the extreme left and a few yards behind came the captain. The civilian called out his name, but he did not hear. A swarm of men in gray now broke out of cover in pursuit, making directly for the spot where the Governor lay — some accident of the ground had caused them to converge upon that point: their line had become a crowd. In a last struggle for life and liberty the Governor attempted to rise, and looking back the captain saw him. Promptly, but with the same slow precision as before, he sang his commands:

"Skirmish-ers, halt!" The men stopped and according to rule turned to face the enemy.

"Ral-ly on the right!" — and they came in at a run, fixing bayonets and forming loosely on the man at that end of the line.

"Forward ... to save the Gov-ern-or of your State ... doub-le quick ... maaarch!"

Only one man disobeyed this astonishing command! He was dead. With a cheer they sprang forward over the twenty or thirty paces between them and their task. The captain having a shorter distance to go arrived first — simultaneously with the enemy. A half-dozen hasty shots were fired at him, and the foremost man — a fellow of heroic stature, hatless and bare-breasted — made a vicious sweep at his head with a clubbed rifle. The officer parried the blow at the cost of a broken arm and drove his sword to the hilt into the giant’s breast. As the body fell the weapon was wrenched from his hand and before he could pluck his revolver from the scabbard at his belt another man leaped upon him like a tiger, fastening both hands upon his throat and bearing him backward upon the prostrate Governor, still struggling to rise. This man was promptly spitted upon the bayonet of a Federal sergeant and his death-gripe on the captain’s throat loosened by a kick upon each wrist. When the captain had risen he was at the rear of his men, who had all passed over and around him and were thrusting fiercely at their more numerous but less coherent antagonists. Nearly all the rifles on both sides were empty and in the crush there was neither time nor room to reload. The Confederates were at a disadvantage in that most of them lacked bayonets; they fought by bludgeoning — and a clubbed rifle is a formidable arm. The sound of the conflict was a clatter like that of the interlocking horns of battling bulls — now and then the pash of a crushed skull, an oath, or a grunt caused by the impact of a rifle’s muzzle against the abdomen transfixed by its bayonet. Through an opening made by the fall of one of his men Captain Armisted sprang, with his dangling left arm; in his right hand a full-charged revolver, which he fired with rapidity and terrible effect into the thick of the gray crowd: but across the bodies of the slain the survivors in the front were pushed forward by their comrades in the rear till again they breasted the tireless bayonets. There were fewer bayonets now to breast — a beggarly half-dozen, all told. A few minutes more of this rough work — a little fighting back to back — and all would be over.

Suddenly a lively firing was heard on the right and the left: a fresh line of Federal skirmishers came forward at a run, driving before them those parts of the Confederate line that had been separated by staying the advance of the centre. And behind these new and noisy combatants, at a distance of two or three hundred yards, could be seen, indistinct among the trees a line-of-battle!

Instinctively before retiring, the crowd in gray made a tremendous rush upon its handful of antagonists, overwhelming them by mere momentum and, unable to use weapons in the crush, trampled them, stamped savagely on their limbs, their bodies, their necks, their faces; then retiring with bloody feet across its own dead it joined the general rout and the incident was at an end.

IV

THE GREAT HONOR THE GREAT

The Governor, who had been unconscious, opened his eyes and stared about him, slowly recalling the day's events. A man in the uniform of a major was kneeling beside him; he was a surgeon. Grouped about were the civilian members of the Governor's staff, their faces expressing a natural solicitude regarding their offices. A little apart stood General Masterson addressing another officer and gesticulating with a cigar. He was saying: "It was the beautifulest fight ever made — by God, sir, it was great!"

The beauty and greatness were attested by a row of dead, trimly disposed, and another of wounded, less formally placed, restless, half-naked, but bravely bebandaged.

"How do you feel, sir?" said the surgeon. "I find no wound."

"I think I am all right," the patient replied, sitting up. "It is that ankle."

The surgeon transferred his attention to the ankle, cutting away the boot. All eyes followed the knife.

In moving the leg a folded paper was uncovered. The patient picked it up and carelessly opened it. It was a letter three months old, signed "Julia." Catching sight of his name in it he read it. It was nothing very remarkable — merely a weak woman's confession of unprofitable sin — the penitence of a faithless wife deserted by her betrayer. The letter had fallen from the pocket of Captain Armisted; the reader quietly transferred it to his own.

An aide-de-camp rode up and dismounted. Advancing to the Governor he saluted.

"Sir," he said, "I am sorry to find you wounded — the Commanding General has not been informed. He presents his compliments and I am directed to say that he has ordered for to-morrow a grand review of the reserve corps in your honor. I venture to add that the General's carriage is at your service if you are able to attend."

"Be pleased to say to the Commanding General that I am deeply touched by his kindness. If you have the patience to wait a few moments you shall convey a more definite reply."

He smiled brightly and glancing at the surgeon and his assistants added: "At present — if you will permit an allusion to the horrors of peace — I am 'in the hands of my friends.'"

The humor of the great is infectious; all laughed who heard.

“Where is Captain Armisted?” the Governor asked, not altogether carelessly.

The surgeon looked up from his work, pointing silently to the nearest body in the row of dead, the features discreetly covered with a handkerchief. It was so near that the great man could have laid his hand upon it, but he did not. He may have feared that it would bleed.

THE STORY OF A CONSCIENCE

I

Captain Parrol Hartroy stood at the advanced post of his picket-guard, talking in low tones with the sentinel. This post was on a turnpike which bisected the captain’s camp, a half-mile in rear, though the camp was not in sight from that point. The officer was apparently giving the soldier certain instructions — was perhaps merely inquiring if all were quiet in front. As the two stood talking a man approached them from the direction of the camp, carelessly whistling, and was promptly halted by the soldier. He was evidently a civilian — a tall person, coarsely clad in the home-made stuff of yellow gray, called “butternut,” which was men’s only wear in the latter days of the Confederacy. On his head was a slouch felt hat, once white, from beneath which hung masses of uneven hair, seemingly unacquainted with either scissors or comb. The man’s face was rather striking; a broad forehead, high nose, and thin cheeks, the mouth invisible in the full dark beard, which seemed as neglected as the hair. The eyes were large and had that steadiness and fixity of attention which so frequently mark a considering intelligence and a will not easily turned from its purpose — so say those physiognomists who have that kind of eyes. On the whole, this was a man whom one would be likely to observe and be observed by. He carried a walking-stick freshly cut from the forest and his ailing cowskin boots were white with dust.

“Show your pass,” said the Federal soldier, a trifle more imperiously perhaps than he would have thought necessary if he had not been under the eye of his commander, who with folded arms looked on from the roadside.

“‘Lowed you’d rec’lect me, Gineral,” said the wayfarer tranquilly, while producing the paper from the pocket of his coat. There was something in his tone — perhaps a faint suggestion of irony — which made his elevation of his obstructor to exalted rank less agreeable to that worthy warrior than promotion is commonly found to be. “You-all have to be purty pertickler, I reckon,” he added, in a more conciliatory tone, as if in half-apology for being halted.

Having read the pass, with his rifle resting on the ground, the soldier handed the document back without a word, shouldered his weapon, and returned to his commander. The civilian passed on in the middle of the road, and when he had penetrated the circumjacent Confederacy a few yards resumed his whistling and was soon out of sight beyond an angle in the road, which at that point entered a thin forest. Suddenly the officer undid his arms from his breast, drew a revolver from his belt and sprang forward at a run in the same direction, leaving his sentinel in gaping astonishment at his post. After making to the various visible forms of nature a solemn promise to be damned, that gentleman resumed the air of stolidity which is supposed to be appropriate to a state of alert military attention.

II

Captain Hartroy held an independent command. His force consisted of a company of infantry, a squadron of cavalry, and a section of artillery, detached from the army to which they belonged, to defend an important defile in the Cumberland Mountains in Tennessee. It was a field officer's command held by a line officer promoted from the ranks, where he had quietly served until "discovered." His post was one of exceptional peril; its defense entailed a heavy responsibility and he had wisely been given corresponding discretionary powers, all the more necessary because of his distance from the main army, the precarious nature of his communications and the lawless character of the enemy's irregular troops infesting that region. He had strongly fortified his little camp, which embraced a village of a half-dozen dwellings and a country store, and had collected a considerable quantity of supplies. To a few resident civilians of known loyalty, with whom it was desirable to trade, and of whose services in various ways he sometimes availed himself, he had given written passes admitting them within his lines. It is easy to understand that an abuse of this privilege in the interest of the enemy might entail serious consequences. Captain Hartroy had made an order to the effect that any one so abusing it would be summarily shot.

While the sentinel had been examining the civilian's pass the captain had eyed the latter narrowly. He thought his appearance familiar and had at first no doubt of having given him the pass which had satisfied the sentinel. It was not until the man had got out of sight and hearing that his identity was disclosed by a revealing light from memory. With soldierly promptness of decision the officer had acted on the revelation.

III

To any but a singularly self-possessed man the apparition of an officer of the military forces, formidably clad, bearing in one hand a sheathed sword and in the other a cocked revolver, and rushing in furious pursuit, is no doubt disquieting to a high degree; upon the man to whom the pursuit was in this instance directed it appeared to have no other effect than somewhat to intensify his tranquillity. He might easily enough have escaped into the forest to the right or the left, but chose another course of action — turned and quietly faced the captain, saying as he came up: “I reckon ye must have something to say to me, which ye disremembered. What mout it be, neighbor?”

But the “neighbor” did not answer, being engaged in the unneighborly act of covering him with a cocked pistol.

“Surrender,” said the captain as calmly as a slight breathlessness from exertion would permit, “or you die.”

There was no menace in the manner of this demand; that was all in the matter and in the means of enforcing it. There was, too, something not altogether reassuring in the cold gray eyes that glanced along the barrel of the weapon. For a moment the two men stood looking at each other in silence; then the civilian, with no appearance of fear — with as great apparent unconcern as when complying with the less austere demand of the sentinel — slowly pulled from his pocket the paper which had satisfied that humble functionary and held it out, saying:

“I reckon this ‘ere parss from Mister Hartroy is—”

“The pass is a forgery,” the officer said, interrupting. “I am Captain Hartroy — and you are Dramer Brune.”

It would have required a sharp eye to observe the slight pallor of the civilian’s face at these words, and the only other manifestation attesting their significance was a voluntary relaxation of the thumb and fingers holding the dishonored paper, which, falling to the road, unheeded, was rolled by a gentle wind and then lay still, with a coating of dust, as in humiliation for the lie that it bore. A moment later the civilian, still looking unmoved into the barrel of the pistol, said:

“Yes, I am Dramer Brune, a Confederate spy, and your prisoner. I have on my person, as you will soon discover, a plan of your fort and its armament, a statement of the distribution of your men and their number, a map of the approaches, showing the positions of all your outposts. My life is fairly yours, but if you wish it taken in a more formal way than by your own hand, and if you are willing to spare me the indignity of marching into camp at the muzzle of your pistol, I promise you that I will neither resist, escape, nor remonstrate, but will submit to whatever penalty may be imposed.”

The officer lowered his pistol, uncocked it, and thrust it into its place in his belt. Brune advanced a step, extending his right hand.

“It is the hand of a traitor and a spy,” said the officer coldly, and did not take it. The other bowed.

“Come,” said the captain, “let us go to camp; you shall not die until to-morrow morning.”

He turned his back upon his prisoner, and these two enigmatical men retraced their steps and soon passed the sentinel, who expressed his general sense of things by a needless and exaggerated salute to his commander.

IV

Early on the morning after these events the two men, captor and captive, sat in the tent of the former. A table was between them on which lay, among a number of letters, official and private, which the captain had written during the night, the incriminating papers found upon the spy. That gentleman had slept through the night in an adjoining tent, unguarded. Both, having breakfasted, were now smoking.

“Mr. Brune,” said Captain Hartroy, “you probably do not understand why I recognized you in your disguise, nor how I was aware of your name.”

“I have not sought to learn, Captain,” the prisoner said with quiet dignity.

“Nevertheless I should like you to know — if the story will not offend. You will perceive that my knowledge of you goes back to the autumn of 1861. At that time you were a private in an Ohio regiment — a brave and trusted soldier. To the surprise and grief of your officers and comrades you deserted and went over to the enemy. Soon afterward you were captured in a skirmish, recognized, tried by court-martial and sentenced to be shot. Awaiting the execution of the sentence you were confined, unfettered, in a freight car standing on a side track of a railway.”

“At Grafton, Virginia,” said Brune, pushing the ashes from his cigar with the little finger of the hand holding it, and without looking up.

“At Grafton, Virginia,” the captain repeated. “One dark and stormy night a soldier who had just returned from a long, fatiguing march was put on guard over you. He sat on a cracker box inside the car, near the door, his rifle loaded and the bayonet fixed. You sat in a corner and his orders were to kill you if you attempted to rise.”

“But if I *asked* to rise he might call the corporal of the guard.”

“Yes. As the long silent hours wore away the soldier yielded to the demands of nature: he himself incurred the death penalty by sleeping at his post of duty."

"You did."

"What! you recognize me? you have known me all along?"

The captain had risen and was walking the floor of his tent, visibly excited. His face was flushed, the gray eyes had lost the cold, pitiless look which they had shown when Brune had seen them over the pistol barrel; they had softened wonderfully.

"I knew you," said the spy, with his customary tranquillity, "the moment you faced me, demanding my surrender. In the circumstances it would have been hardly becoming in me to recall these matters. I am perhaps a traitor, certainly a spy; but I should not wish to seem a suppliant."

The captain had paused in his walk and was facing his prisoner. There was a singular huskiness in his voice as he spoke again.

"Mr. Brune, whatever your conscience may permit you to be, you saved my life at what you must have believed the cost of your own. Until I saw you yesterday when halted by my sentinel I believed you dead — thought that you had suffered the fate which through my own crime you might easily have escaped. You had only to step from the car and leave me to take your place before the firing-squad. You had a divine compassion. You pitied my fatigue. You let me sleep, watched over me, and as the time drew near for the relief-guard to come and detect me in my crime, you gently waked me. Ah, Brune, Brune, that was well done — that was great — that—"

The captain's voice failed him; the tears were running down his face and sparkled upon his beard and his breast. Resuming his seat at the table, he buried his face in his arms and sobbed. All else was silence.

Suddenly the clear warble of a bugle was heard sounding the "assembly." The captain started and raised his wet face from his arms; it had turned ghastly pale. Outside, in the sunlight, were heard the stir of the men falling into line; the voices of the sergeants calling the roll; the tapping of the drummers as they braced their drums. The captain spoke again:

"I ought to have confessed my fault in order to relate the story of your magnanimity; it might have procured you a pardon. A hundred times I resolved to do so, but shame prevented. Besides, your sentence was just and righteous. Well, Heaven forgive me! I said nothing, and my regiment was soon afterward ordered to Tennessee and I never heard about you."

"It was all right, sir," said Brune, without visible emotion; "I escaped and returned to my colors — the Confederate colors. I should like to add that before deserting from the Federal service I had earnestly asked a discharge, on the ground of altered convictions. I was answered by punishment."

“Ah, but if I had suffered the penalty of my crime — if you had not generously given me the life that I accepted without gratitude you would not be again in the shadow and imminence of death.”

The prisoner started slightly and a look of anxiety came into his face. One would have said, too, that he was surprised. At that moment a lieutenant, the adjutant, appeared at the opening of the tent and saluted. “Captain,” he said, “the battalion is formed.”

Captain Hartroy had recovered his composure. He turned to the officer and said: “Lieutenant, go to Captain Graham and say that I direct him to assume command of the battalion and parade it outside the parapet. This gentleman is a deserter and a spy; he is to be shot to death in the presence of the troops. He will accompany you, unbound and unguarded.”

While the adjutant waited at the door the two men inside the tent rose and exchanged ceremonious bows, Brune immediately retiring.

Half an hour later an old negro cook, the only person left in camp except the commander, was so startled by the sound of a volley of musketry that he dropped the kettle that he was lifting from a fire. But for his consternation and the hissing which the contents of the kettle made among the embers, he might also have heard, nearer at hand, the single pistol shot with which Captain Hartroy renounced the life which in conscience he could no longer keep.

In compliance with the terms of a note that he left for the officer who succeeded him in command, he was buried, like the deserter and spy, without military honors; and in the solemn shadow of the mountain which knows no more of war the two sleep well in long-forgotten graves.

ONE KIND OF OFFICER

I

OF THE USES OF CIVILITY

“Captain Ransome, it is not permitted to you to know *anything*. It is sufficient that you obey my order — which permit me to repeat. If you perceive any movement of troops in your front you are to open fire, and if attacked hold this position as long as you can. Do I make myself understood, sir?”

“Nothing could be plainer. Lieutenant Price,” — this to an officer of his own battery, who had ridden up in time to hear the order—”the general’s meaning is clear, is it not?”

“Perfectly.”

The lieutenant passed on to his post. For a moment General Cameron and the commander of the battery sat in their saddles, looking at each other in silence. There was no more to say; apparently too much had already been said. Then the superior officer nodded coldly and turned his horse to ride away. The artillerist saluted slowly, gravely, and with extreme formality. One acquainted with the niceties of military etiquette would have said that by his manner he attested a sense of the rebuke that he had incurred. It is one of the important uses of civility to signify resentment.

When the general had joined his staff and escort, awaiting him at a little distance, the whole cavalcade moved off toward the right of the guns and vanished in the fog. Captain Ransome was alone, silent, motionless as an equestrian statue. The gray fog, thickening every moment, closed in about him like a visible doom.

II

UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES MEN DO NOT WISH TO BE SHOT

The fighting of the day before had been desultory and indecisive. At the points of collision the smoke of battle had hung in blue sheets among the branches of the trees till beaten into nothing by the falling rain. In the softened earth the wheels of cannon and ammunition wagons cut deep, ragged furrows, and movements of infantry seemed impeded by the mud that clung to the soldiers' feet as, with soaken garments and rifles imperfectly protected by capes of overcoats they went dragging in sinuous lines hither and thither through dripping forest and flooded field. Mounted officers, their heads protruding from rubber ponchos that glittered like black armor, picked their way, singly and in loose groups, among the men, coming and going with apparent aimlessness and commanding attention from nobody but one another. Here and there a dead man, his clothing defiled with earth, his face covered with a blanket or showing yellow and claylike in the rain, added his dispiriting influence to that of the other dismal features of the scene and augmented the general discomfort with a particular dejection. Very repulsive these wrecks looked — not at all heroic, and nobody was accessible to the infection of their patriotic example. Dead upon the field of honor, yes; but the field of honor was so very wet! It makes a difference.

The general engagement that all expected did not occur, none of the small advantages accruing, now to this side and now to that, in isolated and accidental collisions being followed up. Half-hearted attacks provoked a sullen resistance which was satisfied with mere repulse. Orders were obeyed with mechanical fidelity; no one did any more than his duty.

"The army is cowardly to-day," said General Cameron, the commander of a Federal brigade, to his adjutant-general.

"The army is cold," replied the officer addressed, "and — yes, it doesn't wish to be like that."

He pointed to one of the dead bodies, lying in a thin pool of yellow water, its face and clothing bespattered with mud from hoof and wheel.

The army's weapons seemed to share its military delinquency. The rattle of rifles sounded flat and contemptible. It had no meaning and scarcely roused to attention and expectancy the unengaged parts of the line-of-battle and the waiting reserves. Heard at a little distance, the reports of cannon were feeble in volume and *timbre*: they lacked sting and resonance. The guns seemed to be fired with light charges, unshotted. And so the futile day wore on to its dreary close, and then to a night of discomfort succeeded a day of apprehension.

An army has a personality. Beneath the individual thoughts and emotions of its component parts it thinks and feels as a unit. And in this large, inclusive sense of things lies a wiser wisdom than the mere sum of all that it knows. On that dismal morning this great brute force, groping at the bottom of a white ocean of fog among trees that seemed as sea weeds, had a dumb consciousness that all was not well; that a day's manoeuvring had resulted in a faulty disposition of its parts, a blind diffusion of its strength. The men felt insecure and talked among themselves of such tactical errors as with their meager military vocabulary they were able to name. Field and line officers gathered in groups and spoke more learnedly of what they apprehended with no greater clearness. Commanders of brigades and divisions looked anxiously to their connections on the right and on the left, sent staff officers on errands of inquiry and pushed skirmish lines silently and cautiously forward into the dubious region between the known and the unknown. At some points on the line the troops, apparently of their own volition, constructed such defenses as they could without the silent spade and the noisy ax.

One of these points was held by Captain Ransome's battery of six guns. Provided always with intrenching tools, his men had labored with diligence during the night, and now his guns thrust their black muzzles through the embrasures of a really formidable earthwork. It crowned a slight acclivity devoid of undergrowth and providing an unobstructed fire that would sweep the ground for an unknown distance in front. The position could hardly have been better chosen. It had this peculiarity, which Captain Ransome, who was greatly addicted to the use of the compass, had not failed to observe: it faced northward, whereas he knew that the general line of the army must face eastward. In fact, that part of the line was "refused" — that is to say, bent backward, away from the enemy. This implied that Captain Ransome's battery was somewhere near the left flank of the army; for an army in line of battle retires its flanks if the nature of the ground will permit, they being its vulnerable points. Actually, Captain Ransome appeared to hold the extreme left of the line, no troops being visible in that direction beyond his own. Immediately in rear of his guns occurred that conversation between him and his brigade commander, the concluding and more picturesque part of which is reported above.

III

HOW TO PLAY THE CANNON WITHOUT NOTES

Captain Ransome sat motionless and silent on horseback. A few yards away his men were standing at their guns. Somewhere — everywhere within a few miles — were a hundred thousand men, friends and enemies. Yet he was alone. The mist had isolated him as completely as if he had been in the heart of a desert. His world was a few square yards of wet and trampled earth about the feet of his horse. His comrades in that ghostly domain were invisible and inaudible. These were conditions favorable to thought, and he was thinking. Of the nature of his thoughts his clear-cut handsome features yielded no attesting sign. His face was as inscrutable as that of the sphinx. Why should it have made a record which there was none to observe? At the sound of a footstep he merely turned his eyes in the direction whence it came; one of his sergeants, looking a giant in stature in the false perspective of the fog, approached, and when clearly defined and reduced to his true dimensions by propinquity, saluted and stood at attention.

“Well, Morris,” said the officer, returning his subordinate’s salute.

“Lieutenant Price directed me to tell you, sir, that most of the infantry has been withdrawn. We have not sufficient support.”

“Yes, I know.”

“I am to say that some of our men have been out over the works a hundred yards and report that our front is not picketed.”

“Yes.”

“They were so far forward that they heard the enemy.”

“Yes.”

“They heard the rattle of the wheels of artillery and the commands of officers.”

“Yes.”

“The enemy is moving toward our works.”

Captain Ransome, who had been facing to the rear of his line — toward the point where the brigade commander and his cavalcade had been swallowed up by the fog — reined his horse about and faced the other way. Then he sat motionless as before.

“Who are the men who made that statement?” he inquired, without looking at the sergeant; his eyes were directed straight into the fog over the head of his horse.

“Corporal Hassman and Gunner Manning.”

Captain Ransome was a moment silent. A slight pallor came into his face, a slight compression affected the lines of his lips, but it would have required a closer observer than Sergeant Morris to note the change. There was none in the voice.

“Sergeant, present my compliments to Lieutenant Price and direct him to open fire with all the guns. Grape.”

The sergeant saluted and vanished in the fog.

IV.

TO INTRODUCE GENERAL MASTERSON

Searching for his division commander, General Cameron and his escort had followed the line of battle for nearly a mile to the right of Ransome's battery, and there learned that the division commander had gone in search of the corps commander. It seemed that everybody was looking for his immediate superior — an ominous circumstance. It meant that nobody was quite at ease. So General Cameron rode on for another half-mile, where by good luck he met General Masterson, the division commander, returning.

"Ah, Cameron," said the higher officer, reining up, and throwing his right leg across the pommel of his saddle in a most unmilitary way—"anything up? Found a good position for your battery, I hope — if one place is better than another in a fog."

"Yes, general," said the other, with the greater dignity appropriate to his less exalted rank, "my battery is very well placed. I wish I could say that it is as well commanded."

"Eh, what's that? Ransome? I think him a fine fellow. In the army we should be proud of him."

It was customary for officers of the regular army to speak of it as "the army." As the greatest cities are most provincial, so the self-complacency of aristocracies is most frankly plebeian.

"He is too fond of his opinion. By the way, in order to occupy the hill that he holds I had to extend my line dangerously. The hill is on my left — that is to say the left flank of the army."

"Oh, no, Hart's brigade is beyond. It was ordered up from Drytown during the night and directed to hook on to you. Better go and—"

The sentence was unfinished: a lively cannonade had broken out on the left, and both officers, followed by their retinues of aides and orderlies making a great jingle and clank, rode rapidly toward the spot. But they were soon impeded, for they were compelled by the fog to keep within sight of the line-of-battle, behind which were swarms of men, all in motion across their way. Everywhere the line was assuming a sharper and harder definition, as the men sprang to arms and the officers, with drawn swords, "dressed" the ranks. Color-bearers unfurled the flags, buglers blew the "assembly," hospital attendants appeared with stretchers. Field officers mounted and sent their impedimenta to the rear in care of negro servants. Back in the ghostly spaces of the forest could be heard the rustle and murmur of the reserves, pulling themselves together.

Nor was all this preparation vain, for scarcely five minutes had passed since Captain Ransome's guns had broken the truce of doubt before the whole region was aroar: the enemy had attacked nearly everywhere.

V

HOW SOUNDS CAN FIGHT SHADOWS

Captain Ransome walked up and down behind his guns, which were firing rapidly but with steadiness. The gunners worked alertly, but without haste or apparent excitement. There was really no reason for excitement; it is not much to point a cannon into a fog and fire it. Anybody can do as much as that.

The men smiled at their noisy work, performing it with a lessening alacrity. They cast curious regards upon their captain, who had now mounted the banquette of the fortification and was looking across the parapet as if observing the effect of his fire. But the only visible effect was the substitution of wide, lowlying sheets of smoke for their bulk of fog. Suddenly out of the obscurity burst a great sound of cheering, which filled the intervals between the reports of the guns with startling distinctness! To the few with leisure and opportunity to observe, the sound was inexpressibly strange — so loud, so near, so menacing, yet nothing seen! The men who had smiled at their work smiled no more, but performed it with a serious and feverish activity.

From his station at the parapet Captain Ransome now saw a great multitude of dim gray figures taking shape in the mist below him and swarming up the slope. But the work of the guns was now fast and furious. They swept the populous declivity with gusts of grape and canister, the whirring of which could be heard through the thunder of the explosions. In this awful tempest of iron the assailants struggled forward foot by foot across their dead, firing into the embrasures, reloading, firing again, and at last falling in their turn, a little in advance of those who had fallen before. Soon the smoke was dense enough to cover all. It settled down upon the attack and, drifting back, involved the defense. The gunners could hardly see to serve their pieces, and when occasional figures of the enemy appeared upon the parapet — having had the good luck to get near enough to it, between two embrasures, to be protected from the guns — they looked so unsubstantial that it seemed hardly worth while for the few infantrymen to go to work upon them with the bayonet and tumble them back into the ditch.

As the commander of a battery in action can find something better to do than cracking individual skulls, Captain Ransome had retired from the parapet to his proper post in rear of his guns, where he stood with folded arms, his bugler beside him. Here, during the hottest of the fight, he was approached by Lieutenant Price, who had just sabred a daring assailant inside the work. A spirited colloquy ensued between the two officers — spirited, at least, on the part of the lieutenant, who gesticulated with energy and shouted again and again into his commander’s ear in the attempt to make himself heard above the infernal din of the guns. His gestures, if coolly noted by an actor, would have been pronounced to be those of protestation: one would have said that he was opposed to the proceedings. Did he wish to surrender?

Captain Ransome listened without a change of countenance or attitude, and when the other man had finished his harangue, looked him coldly in the eyes and during a seasonable abatement of the uproar said:

“Lieutenant Price, it is not permitted to you to know *anything*. It is sufficient that you obey my orders.”

The lieutenant went to his post, and the parapet being now apparently clear Captain Ransome returned to it to have a look over. As he mounted the banquette a man sprang upon the crest, waving a great brilliant flag. The captain drew a pistol from his belt and shot him dead. The body, pitching forward, hung over the inner edge of the embankment, the arms straight downward, both hands still grasping the flag. The man’s few followers turned and fled down the slope. Looking over the parapet, the captain saw no living thing. He observed also that no bullets were coming into the work.

He made a sign to the bugler, who sounded the command to cease firing. At all other points the action had already ended with a repulse of the Confederate attack; with the cessation of this cannonade the silence was absolute.

VI

WHY, BEING AFFRONTED BY A, IT IS NOT BEST TO AFFRONT B

General Masterson rode into the redoubt. The men, gathered in groups, were talking loudly and gesticulating. They pointed at the dead, running from one body to another. They neglected their foul and heated guns and forgot to resume their outer clothing. They ran to the parapet and looked over, some of them leaping down into the ditch. A score were gathered about a flag rigidly held by a dead man.

“Well, my men,” said the general cheerily, “you have had a pretty fight of it.”

They stared; nobody replied; the presence of the great man seemed to embarrass and alarm.

Getting no response to his pleasant condescension, the easy-mannered officer whistled a bar or two of a popular air, and riding forward to the parapet, looked over at the dead. In an instant he had whirled his horse about and was spurring along in rear of the guns, his eyes everywhere at once. An officer sat on the trail of one of the guns, smoking a cigar. As the general dashed up he rose and tranquilly saluted.

“Captain Ransome!” — the words fell sharp and harsh, like the clash of steel blades—”you have been fighting our own men — our own men, sir; do you hear? Hart’s brigade!”

“General, I know that.”

“You know it — you know that, and you sit here smoking? Oh, damn it, Hamilton, I’m losing my temper,” — this to his provost-marshal. “Sir — Captain Ransome, be good enough to say — to say why you fought our own men.”

“That I am unable to say. In my orders that information was withheld.”

Apparently the general did not comprehend.

“Who was the aggressor in this affair, you or General Hart?” he asked.

“I was.”

“And could you not have known — could you not see, sir, that you were attacking our own men?”

The reply was astounding!

“I knew that, general. It appeared to be none of my business.”

Then, breaking the dead silence that followed his answer, he said:

“I must refer you to General Cameron.”

“General Cameron is dead, sir — as dead as he can be — as dead as any man in this army. He lies back yonder under a tree. Do you mean to say that he had anything to do with this horrible business?”

Captain Ransome did not reply. Observing the altercation his men had gathered about to watch the outcome. They were greatly excited. The fog, which had been partly dissipated by the firing, had again closed in so darkly about them that they drew more closely together till the judge on horseback and the accused standing calmly before him had but a narrow space free from intrusion. It was the most informal of courts-martial, but all felt that the formal one to follow would but affirm its judgment. It had no jurisdiction, but it had the significance of prophecy.

“Captain Ransome,” the general cried impetuously, but with something in his voice that was almost entreaty, “if you can say anything to put a better light upon your incomprehensible conduct I beg you will do so.”

Having recovered his temper this generous soldier sought for something to justify his naturally sympathetic attitude toward a brave man in the imminence of a dishonorable death.

“Where is Lieutenant Price?” the captain said.

That officer stood forward, his dark saturnine face looking somewhat forbidding under a bloody handkerchief bound about his brow. He understood the summons and needed no invitation to speak. He did not look at the captain, but addressed the general:

“During the engagement I discovered the state of affairs, and apprised the commander of the battery. I ventured to urge that the firing cease. I was insulted and ordered to my post.”

“Do you know anything of the orders under which I was acting?” asked the captain.

“Of any orders under which the commander of the battery was acting,” the lieutenant continued, still addressing the general, “I know nothing.”

Captain Ransome felt his world sink away from his feet. In those cruel words he heard the murmur of the centuries breaking upon the shore of eternity. He heard the voice of doom; it said, in cold, mechanical, and measured tones: “Ready, aim, fire!” and he felt the bullets tear his heart to shreds. He heard the sound of the earth upon his coffin and (if the good God was so merciful) the song of a bird above his forgotten grave. Quietly detaching his sabre from its supports, he handed it up to the provost-marshal.

ONE OFFICER, ONE MAN

Captain Graffenreid stood at the head of his company. The regiment was not engaged. It formed a part of the front line-of-battle, which stretched away to the right with a visible length of nearly two miles through the open ground. The left flank was veiled by woods; to the right also the line was lost to sight, but it extended many miles. A hundred yards in rear was a second line; behind this, the reserve brigades and divisions in column. Batteries of artillery occupied the spaces between and crowned the low hills. Groups of horsemen — generals with their staffs and escorts, and field officers of regiments behind the colors — broke the regularity of the lines and columns. Numbers of these figures of interest had field-glasses at their eyes and sat motionless, stolidly scanning the country in front; others came and went at a slow canter, bearing orders. There were squads of stretcher-bearers, ambulances, wagon-trains with ammunition, and officers' servants in rear of all — of all that was visible — for still in rear of these, along the roads, extended for many miles all that vast multitude of non-combatants who with their various *impedimenta* are assigned to the inglorious but important duty of supplying the fighters' many needs.

An army in line-of-battle awaiting attack, or prepared to deliver it, presents strange contrasts. At the front are precision, formality, fixity, and silence. Toward the rear these characteristics are less and less conspicuous, and finally, in point of space, are lost altogether in confusion, motion and noise. The homogeneous becomes heterogeneous. Definition is lacking; repose is replaced by an apparently purposeless activity; harmony vanishes in hubbub, form in disorder. Commotion everywhere and ceaseless unrest. The men who do not fight are never ready.

From his position at the right of his company in the front rank, Captain Graffenreid had an unobstructed outlook toward the enemy. A half-mile of open and nearly level ground lay before him, and beyond it an irregular wood, covering a slight acclivity; not a human being anywhere visible. He could imagine nothing more peaceful than the appearance of that pleasant landscape with its long stretches of brown fields over which the atmosphere was beginning to quiver in the heat of the morning sun. Not a sound came from forest or field — not even the barking of a dog or the crowing of a cock at the half-seen plantation house on the crest among the trees. Yet every man in those miles of men knew that he and death were face to face.

Captain Graffenreid had never in his life seen an armed enemy, and the war in which his regiment was one of the first to take the field was two years old. He had had the rare advantage of a military education, and when his comrades had marched to the front he had been detached for administrative service at the capital of his State, where it was thought that he could be most useful. Like a bad soldier he protested, and like a good one obeyed. In close official and personal relations with the governor of his State, and enjoying his confidence and favor, he had firmly refused promotion and seen his juniors elevated above him. Death had been busy in his distant regiment; vacancies among the field officers had occurred again and again; but from a chivalrous feeling that war's rewards belonged of right to those who bore the storm and stress of battle he had held his humble rank and generously advanced the fortunes of others. His silent devotion to principle had conquered at last: he had been relieved of his hateful duties and ordered to the front, and now, untried by fire, stood in the van of battle in command of a company of hardy veterans, to whom he had been only a name, and that name a by-word. By none — not even by those of his brother officers in whose favor he had waived his rights — was his devotion to duty understood. They were too busy to be just; he was looked upon as one who had shirked his duty, until forced unwillingly into the field. Too proud to explain, yet not too insensible to feel, he could only endure and hope.

Of all the Federal Army on that summer morning none had accepted battle more joyously than Anderton Graffenreid. His spirit was buoyant, his faculties were riotous. He was in a state of mental exaltation and scarcely could endure the enemy's tardiness in advancing to the attack. To him this was opportunity — for the result he cared nothing. Victory or defeat, as God might will; in one or in the other he should prove himself a soldier and a hero; he should vindicate his right to the respect of his men and the companionship of his brother officers — to the consideration of his superiors. How his heart leaped in his breast as the bugle sounded the stirring notes of the "assembly"! With what a light tread, scarcely conscious of the earth beneath his feet, he strode forward at the head of his company, and how exultingly he noted the tactical dispositions which placed his regiment in the front line! And if perchance some memory came to him of a pair of dark eyes that might take on a tenderer light in reading the account of that day's doings, who shall blame him for the unmartial thought or count it a debasement of soldierly ardor?

Suddenly, from the forest a half-mile in front — apparently from among the upper branches of the trees, but really from the ridge beyond — rose a tall column of white smoke. A moment later came a deep, jarring explosion, followed — almost attended — by a hideous rushing sound that seemed to leap forward across the intervening space with inconceivable rapidity, rising from whisper to roar with too quick a gradation for attention to note the successive stages of its horrible progression! A visible tremor ran along the lines of men; all were startled into motion. Captain Graffenreid dodged and threw up his hands to one side of his head, palms outward.

As he did so he heard a keen, ringing report, and saw on a hillside behind the line a fierce roll of smoke and dust — the shell’s explosion. It had passed a hundred feet to his left! He heard, or fancied he heard, a low, mocking laugh and turning in the direction whence it came saw the eyes of his first lieutenant fixed upon him with an unmistakable look of amusement. He looked along the line of faces in the front ranks. The men were laughing. At him? The thought restored the color to his bloodless face — restored too much of it. His cheeks burned with a fever of shame.

The enemy’s shot was not answered: the officer in command at that exposed part of the line had evidently no desire to provoke a cannonade. For the forbearance Captain Graffenreid was conscious of a sense of gratitude. He had not known that the flight of a projectile was a phenomenon of so appalling character. His conception of war had already undergone a profound change, and he was conscious that his new feeling was manifesting itself in visible perturbation. His blood was boiling in his veins; he had a choking sensation and felt that if he had a command to give it would be inaudible, or at least unintelligible. The hand in which he held his sword trembled; the other moved automatically, clutching at various parts of his clothing. He found a difficulty in standing still and fancied that his men observed it. Was it fear? He feared it was.

From somewhere away to the right came, as the wind served, a low, intermittent murmur like that of ocean in a storm — like that of a distant railway train — like that of wind among the pines — three sounds so nearly alike that the ear, unaided by the judgment, cannot distinguish them one from another. The eyes of the troops were drawn in that direction; the mounted officers turned their field-glasses that way. Mingled with the sound was an irregular throbbing. He thought it, at first, the beating of his fevered blood in his ears; next, the distant tapping of a bass drum.

“The ball is opened on the right flank,” said an officer.

Captain Graffenreid understood: the sounds were musketry and artillery. He nodded and tried to smile. There was apparently nothing infectious in the smile.

Presently a light line of blue smoke-puffs broke out along the edge of the wood in front, succeeded by a crackle of rifles. There were keen, sharp hissings in the air, terminating abruptly with a thump near by. The man at Captain Graffenreid’s side dropped his rifle; his knees gave way and he pitched awkwardly forward, falling upon his face. Somebody shouted “Lie down!” and the dead man was hardly distinguishable from the living. It looked as if those few rifle-shots had slain ten thousand men. Only the field officers remained erect; their concession to the emergency consisted in dismounting and sending their horses to the shelter of the low hills immediately in rear.

Captain Graffenreid lay alongside the dead man, from beneath whose breast flowed a little rill of blood. It had a faint, sweetish odor that sickened him. The face was crushed into the earth and flattened. It looked yellow already, and was repulsive. Nothing suggested the glory of a soldier’s death nor mitigated the loathsomeness of the incident. He could not turn his back upon the body without facing away from his company.

He fixed his eyes upon the forest, where all again was silent. He tried to imagine what was going on there — the lines of troops forming to attack, the guns being pushed forward by hand to the edge of the open. He fancied he could see their black muzzles protruding from the undergrowth, ready to deliver their storm of missiles — such missiles as the one whose shriek had so unsettled his nerves. The distension of his eyes became painful; a mist seemed to gather before them; he could no longer see across the field, yet would not withdraw his gaze lest he see the dead man at his side.

The fire of battle was not now burning very brightly in this warrior’s soul. From inaction had come introspection. He sought rather to analyze his feelings than distinguish himself by courage and devotion. The result was profoundly disappointing. He covered his face with his hands and groaned aloud.

The hoarse murmur of battle grew more and more distinct upon the right; the murmur had, indeed, become a roar, the throbbing, a thunder. The sounds had worked round obliquely to the front; evidently the enemy’s left was being driven back, and the propitious moment to move against the salient angle of his line would soon arrive. The silence and mystery in front were ominous; all felt that they boded evil to the assailants.

Behind the prostrate lines sounded the hoofbeats of galloping horses; the men turned to look. A dozen staff officers were riding to the various brigade and regimental commanders, who had remounted. A moment more and there was a chorus of voices, all uttering out of time the same words—”Attention, battalion!” The men sprang to their feet and were aligned by the company commanders. They awaited the word “forward” — awaited, too, with beating hearts and set teeth the gusts of lead and iron that were to smite them at their first movement in obedience to that word. The word was not given; the tempest did not break out. The delay was hideous, maddening! It unnerved like a respite at the guillotine.

Captain Graffenreid stood at the head of his company, the dead man at his feet. He heard the battle on the right — rattle and crash of musketry, ceaseless thunder of cannon, desultory cheers of invisible combatants. He marked ascending clouds of smoke from distant forests. He noted the sinister silence of the forest in front. These contrasting extremes affected the whole range of his sensibilities. The strain upon his nervous organization was insupportable. He grew hot and cold by turns. He panted like a dog, and then forgot to breathe until reminded by vertigo.

Suddenly he grew calm. Glancing downward, his eyes had fallen upon his naked sword, as he held it, point to earth. Foreshortened to his view, it resembled somewhat, he thought, the short heavy blade of the ancient Roman. The fancy was full of suggestion, malign, fateful, heroic!

The sergeant in the rear rank, immediately behind Captain Graffenreid, now observed a strange sight. His attention drawn by an uncommon movement made by the captain — a sudden reaching forward of the hands and their energetic withdrawal, throwing the elbows out, as in pulling an oar — he saw spring from between the officer’s shoulders a bright point of metal which prolonged itself outward, nearly a half-arm’s length — a blade! It was faintly streaked with crimson, and its point approached so near to the sergeant’s breast, and with so quick a movement, that he shrank backward in alarm. That moment Captain Graffenreid pitched heavily forward upon the dead man and died.

A week later the major-general commanding the left corps of the Federal Army submitted the following official report:

“SIR: I have the honor to report, with regard to the action of the 19th inst, that owing to the enemy’s withdrawal from my front to reinforce his beaten left, my command was not seriously engaged. My loss was as follows: Killed, one officer, one man.”

GEORGE THURSTON

THREE INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF A MAN

George Thurston was a first lieutenant and aide-de-camp on the staff of Colonel Brough, commanding a Federal brigade. Colonel Brough was only temporarily in command, as senior colonel, the brigadier-general having been severely wounded and granted a leave of absence to recover. Lieutenant Thurston was, I believe, of Colonel Brough's regiment, to which, with his chief, he would naturally have been relegated had he lived till our brigade commander's recovery. The aide whose place Thurston took had been killed in battle; Thurston's advent among us was the only change in the *personnel* of our staff consequent upon the change in commanders. We did not like him; he was unsocial. This, however, was more observed by others than by me. Whether in camp or on the march, in barracks, in tents, or *en bivouac*, my duties as topographical engineer kept me working like a beaver — all day in the saddle and half the night at my drawing-table, platting my surveys. It was hazardous work; the nearer to the enemy's lines I could penetrate, the more valuable were my field notes and the resulting maps. It was a business in which the lives of men counted as nothing against the chance of defining a road or sketching a bridge. Whole squadrons of cavalry escort had sometimes to be sent thundering against a powerful infantry outpost in order that the brief time between the charge and the inevitable retreat might be utilized in sounding a ford or determining the point of intersection of two roads.

In some of the dark corners of England and Wales they have an immemorial custom of "beating the bounds" of the parish. On a certain day of the year the whole population turns out and travels in procession from one landmark to another on the boundary line. At the most important points lads are soundly beaten with rods to make them remember the place in after life. They become authorities. Our frequent engagements with the Confederate outposts, patrols, and scouting parties had, incidentally, the same educating value; they fixed in my memory a vivid and apparently imperishable picture of the locality — a picture serving instead of accurate field notes, which, indeed, it was not always convenient to take, with carbines cracking, sabers clashing, and horses plunging all about. These spirited encounters were observations entered in red.

One morning as I set out at the head of my escort on an expedition of more than the usual hazard Lieutenant Thurston rode up alongside and asked if I had any objection to his accompanying me, the colonel commanding having given him permission.

"None whatever," I replied rather gruffly; "but in what capacity will you go? You are not a topographical engineer, and Captain Burling commands my escort."

"I will go as a spectator," he said. Removing his sword-belt and taking the pistols from his holsters he handed them to his servant, who took them back to headquarters. I realized the brutality of my remark, but not clearly seeing my way to an apology, said nothing.

That afternoon we encountered a whole regiment of the enemy's cavalry in line and a field-piece that dominated a straight mile of the turnpike by which we had approached. My escort fought deployed in the woods on both sides, but Thurston remained in the center of the road, which at intervals of a few seconds was swept by gusts of grape and canister that tore the air wide open as they passed. He had dropped the rein on the neck of his horse and sat bolt upright in the saddle, with folded arms. Soon he was down, his horse torn to pieces. From the side of the road, my pencil and field book idle, my duty forgotten, I watched him slowly disengaging himself from the wreck and rising. At that instant, the cannon having ceased firing, a burly Confederate trooper on a spirited horse dashed like a thunderbolt down the road with drawn saber. Thurston saw him coming, drew himself up to his full height, and again folded his arms. He was too brave to retreat before the word, and my uncivil words had disarmed him. He was a spectator. Another moment and he would have been split like a mackerel, but a blessed bullet tumbled his assailant into the dusty road so near that the impetus sent the body rolling to Thurston's feet. That evening, while platting my hasty survey, I found time to frame an apology, which I think took the rude, primitive form of a confession that I had spoken like a malicious idiot.

A few weeks later a part of our army made an assault upon the enemy's left. The attack, which was made upon an unknown position and across unfamiliar ground, was led by our brigade. The ground was so broken and the underbrush so thick that all mounted officers and men were compelled to fight on foot — the brigade commander and his staff included. In the *mêlée* Thurston was parted from the rest of us, and we found him, horribly wounded, only when we had taken the enemy's last defense. He was some months in hospital at Nashville, Tennessee, but finally rejoined us. He said little about his misadventure, except that he had been bewildered and had strayed into the enemy's lines and been shot down; but from one of his captors, whom we in turn had captured, we learned the particulars. "He came walking right upon us as we lay in line," said this man. "A whole company of us instantly sprang up and leveled our rifles at his breast, some of them almost touching him. ‘Throw down that sword and surrender, you damned Yank!’ shouted some one in authority. The fellow ran his eyes along the line of rifle barrels, folded his arms across his breast, his right hand still clutching his sword, and deliberately replied, ‘I will not.’ If we had all fired he would have been torn to shreds. Some of us didn’t. I didn’t, for one; nothing could have induced me.”

When one is tranquilly looking death in the eye and refusing him any concession one naturally has a good opinion of one’s self. I don’t know if it was this feeling that in Thurston found expression in a stiffish attitude and folded arms; at the mess table one day, in his absence, another explanation was suggested by our quartermaster, an irreclaimable stammerer when the wine was in: “It’s h — is w — ay of m-m-mastering a c-c-consti-t-tu-tional t-tendency to r — un aw — ay.”

“What!” I flamed out, indignantly rising; “you intimate that Thurston is a coward — and in his absence?”

“If he w — ere a cow — wow-ard h — e w — wouldn’t t-try to m-m-master it; and if he w — ere p-present I w — wouldn’t d-d-dare to d-d-discuss it,” was the mollifying reply.

This intrepid man, George Thurston, died an ignoble death. The brigade was in camp, with headquarters in a grove of immense trees. To an upper branch of one of these a venturesome climber had attached the two ends of a long rope and made a swing with a length of not less than one hundred feet. Plunging downward from a height of fifty feet, along the arc of a circle with such a radius, soaring to an equal altitude, pausing for one breathless instant, then sweeping dizzily backward — no one who has not tried it can conceive the terrors of such sport to the novice. Thurston came out of his tent one day and asked for instruction in the mystery of propelling the swing — the art of rising and sitting, which every boy has mastered. In a few moments he had acquired the trick and was swinging higher than the most experienced of us had dared. We shuddered to look at his fearful flights.

“St-t-top him,” said the quartermaster, snailing lazily along from the mess-tent, where he had been lunching; “h — e d-doesn’t know that if h — e g-g-goes c-clear over h — e’ll w — ind up the sw — ing.”

With such energy was that strong man cannonading himself through the air that at each extremity of his increasing arc his body, standing in the swing, was almost horizontal. Should he once pass above the level of the rope’s attachment he would be lost; the rope would slacken and he would fall vertically to a point as far below as he had gone above, and then the sudden tension of the rope would wrest it from his hands. All saw the peril — all cried out to him to desist, and gesticulated at him as, indistinct and with a noise like the rush of a cannon shot in flight, he swept past us through the lower reaches of his hideous oscillation. A woman standing at a little distance away fainted and fell unobserved. Men from the camp of a regiment near by ran in crowds to see, all shouting. Suddenly, as Thurston was on his upward curve, the shouts all ceased.

Thurston and the swing had parted — that is all that can be known; both hands at once had released the rope. The impetus of the light swing exhausted, it was falling back; the man's momentum was carrying him, almost erect, upward and forward, no longer in his arc, but with an outward curve. It could have been but an instant, yet it seemed an age. I cried out, or thought I cried out: "My God! will he never stop going up?" He passed close to the branch of a tree. I remember a feeling of delight as I thought he would clutch it and save himself. I speculated on the possibility of it sustaining his weight. He passed above it, and from my point of view was sharply outlined against the blue. At this distance of many years I can distinctly recall that image of a man in the sky, its head erect, its feet close together, its hands — I do not see its hands. All at once, with astonishing suddenness and rapidity, it turns clear over and pitches downward. There is another cry from the crowd, which has rushed instinctively forward. The man has become merely a whirling object, mostly legs. Then there is an indescribable sound — the sound of an impact that shakes the earth, and these men, familiar with death in its most awful aspects, turn sick. Many walk unsteadily away from the spot; others support themselves against the trunks of trees or sit at the roots. Death has taken an unfair advantage; he has struck with an unfamiliar weapon; he has executed a new and disquieting stratagem. We did not know that he had so ghastly resources, possibilities of terror so dismal.

Thurston's body lay on its back. One leg, bent beneath, was broken above the knee and the bone driven into the earth. The abdomen had burst; the bowels protruded. The neck was broken.

The arms were folded tightly across the breast.

THE MOCKING-BIRD

The time, a pleasant Sunday afternoon in the early autumn of 1861. The place, a forest's heart in the mountain region of southwestern Virginia. Private Grayrock of the Federal Army is discovered seated comfortably at the root of a great pine tree, against which he leans, his legs extended straight along the ground, his rifle lying across his thighs, his hands (clasped in order that they may not fall away to his sides) resting upon the barrel of the weapon. The contact of the back of his head with the tree has pushed his cap downward over his eyes, almost concealing them; one seeing him would say that he slept.

Private Grayrock did not sleep; to have done so would have imperiled the interests of the United States, for he was a long way outside the lines and subject to capture or death at the hands of the enemy. Moreover, he was in a frame of mind unfavorable to repose. The cause of his perturbation of spirit was this: during the previous night he had served on the picket-guard, and had been posted as a sentinel in this very forest. The night was clear, though moonless, but in the gloom of the wood the darkness was deep. Grayrock's post was at a considerable distance from those to right and left, for the pickets had been thrown out a needless distance from the camp, making the line too long for the force detailed to occupy it. The war was young, and military camps entertained the error that while sleeping they were better protected by thin lines a long way out toward the enemy than by thicker ones close in. And surely they needed as long notice as possible of an enemy's approach, for they were at that time addicted to the practice of undressing — than which nothing could be more unsoldierly. On the morning of the memorable 6th of April, at Shiloh, many of Grant's men when spitted on Confederate bayonets were as naked as civilians; but it should be allowed that this was not because of any defect in their picket line. Their error was of another sort: they had no pickets. This is perhaps a vain digression. I should not care to undertake to interest the reader in the fate of an army; what we have here to consider is that of Private Grayrock.

For two hours after he had been left at his lonely post that Saturday night he stood stock-still, leaning against the trunk of a large tree, staring into the darkness in his front and trying to recognize known objects; for he had been posted at the same spot during the day. But all was now different; he saw nothing in detail, but only groups of things, whose shapes, not observed when there was something more of them to observe, were now unfamiliar. They seemed not to have been there before. A landscape that is all trees and undergrowth, moreover, lacks definition, is confused and without accentuated points upon which attention can gain a foothold. Add the gloom of a moonless night, and something more than great natural intelligence and a city education is required to preserve one’s knowledge of direction. And that is how it occurred that Private Grayrock, after vigilantly watching the spaces in his front and then imprudently executing a circumspection of his whole dimly visible environment (silently walking around his tree to accomplish it) lost his bearings and seriously impaired his usefulness as a sentinel. Lost at his post — unable to say in which direction to look for an enemy’s approach, and in which lay the sleeping camp for whose security he was accountable with his life — conscious, too, of many another awkward feature of the situation and of considerations affecting his own safety, Private Grayrock was profoundly disquieted. Nor was he given time to recover his tranquillity, for almost at the moment that he realized his awkward predicament he heard a stir of leaves and a snap of fallen twigs, and turning with a stilled heart in the direction whence it came, saw in the gloom the indistinct outlines of a human figure.

“Halt!” shouted Private Grayrock, peremptorily as in duty bound, backing up the command with the sharp metallic snap of his cocking rifle—”who goes there?”

There was no answer; at least there was an instant’s hesitation, and the answer, if it came, was lost in the report of the sentinel’s rifle. In the silence of the night and the forest the sound was deafening, and hardly had it died away when it was repeated by the pieces of the pickets to right and left, a sympathetic fusillade. For two hours every unconverted civilian of them had been evolving enemies from his imagination, and peopling the woods in his front with them, and Grayrock’s shot had started the whole encroaching host into visible existence. Having fired, all retreated, breathless, to the reserves — all but Grayrock, who did not know in what direction to retreat. When, no enemy appearing, the roused camp two miles away had undressed and got itself into bed again, and the picket line was cautiously re-established, he was discovered bravely holding his ground, and was complimented by the officer of the guard as the one soldier of that devoted band who could rightly be considered the moral equivalent of that uncommon unit of value, “a whoop in hell.”

In the mean time, however, Grayrock had made a close but unavailing search for the mortal part of the intruder at whom he had fired, and whom he had a marksman’s intuitive sense of having hit; for he was one of those born experts who shoot without aim by an instinctive sense of direction, and are nearly as dangerous by night as by day. During a full half of his twenty-four years he had been a terror to the targets of all the shooting-galleries in three cities. Unable now to produce his dead game he had the discretion to hold his tongue, and was glad to observe in his officer and comrades the natural assumption that not having run away he had seen nothing hostile. His “honorable mention” had been earned by not running away anyhow.

Nevertheless, Private Grayrock was far from satisfied with the night’s adventure, and when the next day he made some fair enough pretext to apply for a pass to go outside the lines, and the general commanding promptly granted it in recognition of his bravery the night before, he passed out at the point where that had been displayed. Telling the sentinel then on duty there that he had lost something, — which was true enough — he renewed the search for the person whom he supposed himself to have shot, and whom if only wounded he hoped to trail by the blood. He was no more successful by daylight than he had been in the darkness, and after covering a wide area and boldly penetrating a long distance into “the Confederacy” he gave up the search, somewhat fatigued, seated himself at the root of the great pine tree, where we have seen him, and indulged his disappointment.

It is not to be inferred that Grayrock’s was the chagrin of a cruel nature balked of its bloody deed. In the clear large eyes, finely wrought lips, and broad forehead of that young man one could read quite another story, and in point of fact his character was a singularly felicitous compound of boldness and sensibility, courage and conscience.

“I find myself disappointed,” he said to himself, sitting there at the bottom of the golden haze submerging the forest like a subtler sea—”disappointed in failing to discover a fellow-man dead by my hand! Do I then really wish that I had taken life in the performance of a duty as well performed without? What more could I wish? If any danger threatened, my shot averted it; that is what I was there to do. No, I am glad indeed if no human life was needlessly extinguished by me. But I am in a false position. I have suffered myself to be complimented by my officers and envied by my comrades. The camp is ringing with praise of my courage. That is not just; I know myself courageous, but this praise is for specific acts which I did not perform, or performed — otherwise. It is believed that I remained at my post bravely, without firing, whereas it was I who began the fusillade, and I did not retreat in the general alarm because bewildered. What, then, shall I do? Explain that I saw an enemy and fired? They have all said that of themselves, yet none believes it. Shall I tell a truth which, discrediting my courage, will have the effect of a lie? Ugh! it is an ugly business altogether. I wish to God I could find my man!”

And so wishing, Private Grayrock, overcome at last by the languor of the afternoon and lulled by the stilly sounds of insects droning and prosing in certain fragrant shrubs, so far forgot the interests of the United States as to fall asleep and expose himself to capture. And sleeping he dreamed.

He thought himself a boy, living in a far, fair land by the border of a great river upon which the tall steamboats moved grandly up and down beneath their towering evolutions of black smoke, which announced them long before they had rounded the bends and marked their movements when miles out of sight. With him always, at his side as he watched them, was one to whom he gave his heart and soul in love — a twin brother. Together they strolled along the banks of the stream; together explored the fields lying farther away from it, and gathered pungent mints and sticks of fragrant sassafras in the hills overlooking all — beyond which lay the Realm of Conjecture, and from which, looking southward across the great river, they caught glimpses of the Enchanted Land. Hand in hand and heart in heart they two, the only children of a widowed mother, walked in paths of light through valleys of peace, seeing new things under a new sun. And through all the golden days floated one unceasing sound — the rich, thrilling melody of a mocking-bird in a cage by the cottage door. It pervaded and possessed all the spiritual intervals of the dream, like a musical benediction. The joyous bird was always in song; its infinitely various notes seemed to flow from its throat, effortless, in bubbles and rills at each heart-beat, like the waters of a pulsing spring. That fresh, clear melody seemed, indeed, the spirit of the scene, the meaning and interpretation to sense of the mysteries of life and love.

But there came a time when the days of the dream grew dark with sorrow in a rain of tears. The good mother was dead, the meadowside home by the great river was broken up, and the brothers were parted between two of their kinsmen. William (the dreamer) went to live in a populous city in the Realm of Conjecture, and John, crossing the river into the Enchanted Land, was taken to a distant region whose people in their lives and ways were said to be strange and wicked. To him, in the distribution of the dead mother's estate, had fallen all that they deemed of value — the mocking-bird. They could be divided, but it could not, so it was carried away into the strange country, and the world of William knew it no more forever. Yet still through the aftertime of his loneliness its song filled all the dream, and seemed always sounding in his ear and in his heart.

The kinsmen who had adopted the boys were enemies, holding no communication. For a time letters full of boyish bravado and boastful narratives of the new and larger experience — grotesque descriptions of their widening lives and the new worlds they had conquered — passed between them; but these gradually became less frequent, and with William's removal to another and greater city ceased altogether. But ever through it all ran the song of the mocking-bird, and when the dreamer opened his eyes and stared through the vistas of the pine forest the cessation of its music first apprised him that he was awake.

The sun was low and red in the west; the level rays projected from the trunk of each giant pine a wall of shadow traversing the golden haze to eastward until light and shade were blended in undistinguishable blue.

Private Grayrock rose to his feet, looked cautiously about him, shouldered his rifle and set off toward camp. He had gone perhaps a half-mile, and was passing a thicket of laurel, when a bird rose from the midst of it and perching on the branch of a tree above, poured from its joyous breast so inexhaustible floods of song as but one of all God's creatures can utter in His praise. There was little in that — it was only to open the bill and breathe; yet the man stopped as if struck — stopped and let fall his rifle, looked upward at the bird, covered his eyes with his hands and wept like a child! For the moment he was, indeed, a child, in spirit and in memory, dwelling again by the great river, over-against the Enchanted Land! Then with an effort of the will he pulled himself together, picked up his weapon and audibly damning himself for an idiot strode on. Passing an opening that reached into the heart of the little thicket he looked in, and there, supine upon the earth, its arms all abroad, its gray uniform stained with a single spot of blood upon the breast, its white face turned sharply upward and backward, lay the image of himself! — the body of John Grayrock, dead of a gunshot wound, and still warm! He had found his man.

As the unfortunate soldier knelt beside that masterwork of civil war the shrilling bird upon the bough overhead stilled her song and, flushed with sunset's crimson glory, glided silently away through the solemn spaces of the wood. At roll-call that evening in the Federal camp the name William Grayrock brought no response, nor ever again there-after.

CIVILIANS

THE MAN OUT OF THE NOSE

At the intersection of two certain streets in that part of San Francisco known by the rather loosely applied name of North Beach, is a vacant lot, which is rather more nearly level than is usually the case with lots, vacant or otherwise, in that region. Immediately at the back of it, to the south, however, the ground slopes steeply upward, the acclivity broken by three terraces cut into the soft rock. It is a place for goats and poor persons, several families of each class having occupied it jointly and amicably “from the foundation of the city.” One of the humble habitations of the lowest terrace is noticeable for its rude resemblance to the human face, or rather to such a simulacrum of it as a boy might cut out of a hollowed pumpkin, meaning no offense to his race. The eyes are two circular windows, the nose is a door, the mouth an aperture caused by removal of a board below. There are no doorsteps. As a face, this house is too large; as a dwelling, too small. The blank, unmeaning stare of its lidless and browless eyes is uncanny.

Sometimes a man steps out of the nose, turns, passes the place where the right ear should be and making his way through the throng of children and goats obstructing the narrow walk between his neighbors’ doors and the edge of the terrace gains the street by descending a flight of rickety stairs. Here he pauses to consult his watch and the stranger who happens to pass wonders why such a man as that can care what is the hour. Longer observations would show that the time of day is an important element in the man’s movements, for it is at precisely two o’clock in the afternoon that he comes forth 365 times in every year.

Having satisfied himself that he has made no mistake in the hour he replaces the watch and walks rapidly southward up the street two squares, turns to the right and as he approaches the next corner fixes his eyes on an upper window in a three-story building across the way. This is a somewhat dingy structure, originally of red brick and now gray. It shows the touch of age and dust. Built for a dwelling, it is now a factory. I do not know what is made there; the things that are commonly made in a factory, I suppose. I only know that at two o’clock in the afternoon of every day but Sunday it is full of activity and clatter; pulsations of some great engine shake it and there are recurrent screams of wood tormented by the saw. At the window on which the man fixes an intensely expectant gaze nothing ever appears; the glass, in truth, has such a coating of dust that it has long ceased to be transparent. The man looks at it without stopping; he merely keeps turning his head more and more backward as he leaves the building behind. Passing along to the next corner, he turns to the left, goes round the block, and comes back till he reaches the point diagonally across the street from the factory — point on his former course, which he then retraces, looking frequently backward over his right shoulder at the window while it is in sight. For many years he has not been known to vary his route nor to introduce a single innovation into his action. In a quarter of an hour he is again at the mouth of his dwelling, and a woman, who has for some time been standing in the nose, assists him to enter. He is seen no more until two o'clock the next day. The woman is his wife. She supports herself and him by washing for the poor people among whom they live, at rates which destroy Chinese and domestic competition.

This man is about fifty-seven years of age, though he looks greatly older. His hair is dead white. He wears no beard, and is always newly shaven. His hands are clean, his nails well kept. In the matter of dress he is distinctly superior to his position, as indicated by his surroundings and the business of his wife. He is, indeed, very neatly, if not quite fashionably, clad. His silk hat has a date no earlier than the year before the last, and his boots, scrupulously polished, are innocent of patches. I am told that the suit which he wears during his daily excursions of fifteen minutes is not the one that he wears at home. Like everything else that he has, this is provided and kept in repair by the wife, and is renewed as frequently as her scanty means permit.

Thirty years ago John Hardshaw and his wife lived on Rincon Hill in one of the finest residences of that once aristocratic quarter. He had once been a physician, but having inherited a considerable estate from his father concerned himself no more about the ailments of his fellow-creatures and found as much work as he cared for in managing his own affairs. Both he and his wife were highly cultivated persons, and their house was frequented by a small set of such men and women as persons of their tastes would think worth knowing. So far as these knew, Mr. and Mrs. Hardshaw lived happily together; certainly the wife was devoted to her handsome and accomplished husband and exceedingly proud of him.

Among their acquaintances were the Barwells — man, wife and two young children — of Sacramento. Mr. Barwell was a civil and mining engineer, whose duties took him much from home and frequently to San Francisco. On these occasions his wife commonly accompanied him and passed much of her time at the house of her friend, Mrs. Hardshaw, always with her two children, of whom Mrs. Hardshaw, childless herself, grew fond. Unluckily, her husband grew equally fond of their mother — a good deal fonder. Still more unluckily, that attractive lady was less wise than weak.

At about three o'clock one autumn morning Officer No. 13 of the Sacramento police saw a man stealthily leaving the rear entrance of a gentleman's residence and promptly arrested him. The man — who wore a slouch hat and shaggy overcoat — offered the policeman one hundred, then five hundred, then one thousand dollars to be released. As he had less than the first mentioned sum on his person the officer treated his proposal with virtuous contempt. Before reaching the station the prisoner agreed to give him a check for ten thousand dollars and remain ironed in the willows along the river bank until it should be paid. As this only provoked new derision he would say no more, merely giving an obviously fictitious name. When he was searched at the station nothing of value was found on him but a miniature portrait of Mrs. Barwell — the lady of the house at which he was caught. The case was set with costly diamonds; and something in the quality of the man's linen sent a pang of unavailing regret through the severely incorruptible bosom of Officer No. 13. There was nothing about the prisoner's clothing nor person to identify him and he was booked for burglary under the name that he had given, the honorable name of John K. Smith. The K. was an inspiration upon which, doubtless, he greatly prided himself.

In the mean time the mysterious disappearance of John Hardshaw was agitating the gossips of Rincon Hill in San Francisco, and was even mentioned in one of the newspapers. It did not occur to the lady whom that journal considerately described as his "widow," to look for him in the city prison at Sacramento — a town which he was not known ever to have visited. As John K. Smith he was arraigned and, waiving examination, committed for trial.

About two weeks before the trial, Mrs. Hardshaw, accidentally learning that her husband was held in Sacramento under an assumed name on a charge of burglary, hastened to that city without daring to mention the matter to any one and presented herself at the prison, asking for an interview with her husband, John K. Smith. Haggard and ill with anxiety, wearing a plain traveling wrap which covered her from neck to foot, and in which she had passed the night on the steamboat, too anxious to sleep, she hardly showed for what she was, but her manner pleaded for her more strongly than anything that she chose to say in evidence of her right to admittance. She was permitted to see him alone.

What occurred during that distressing interview has never transpired; but later events prove that Hardshaw had found means to subdue her will to his own. She left the prison, a broken-hearted woman, refusing to answer a single question, and returning to her desolate home renewed, in a half-hearted way, her inquiries for her missing husband. A week later she was herself missing: she had "gone back to the States" — nobody knew any more than that.

On his trial the prisoner pleaded guilty—"by advice of his counsel," so his counsel said. Nevertheless, the judge, in whose mind several unusual circumstances had created a doubt, insisted on the district attorney placing Officer No. 13 on the stand, and the deposition of Mrs. Barwell, who was too ill to attend, was read to the jury. It was very brief: she knew nothing of the matter except that the likeness of herself was her property, and had, she thought, been left on the parlor table when she had retired on the night of the arrest. She had intended it as a present to her husband, then and still absent in Europe on business for a mining company.

This witness's manner when making the deposition at her residence was afterward described by the district attorney as most extraordinary. Twice she had refused to testify, and once, when the deposition lacked nothing but her signature, she had caught it from the clerk's hands and torn it in pieces. She had called her children to the bedside and embraced them with streaming eyes, then suddenly sending them from the room, she verified her statement by oath and signature, and fainted—"slick away," said the district attorney. It was at that time that her physician, arriving upon the scene, took in the situation at a glance and grasping the representative of the law by the collar chucked him into the street and kicked his assistant after him. The insulted majesty of the law was not vindicated; the victim of the indignity did not even mention anything of all this in court. He was ambitious to win his case, and the circumstances of the taking of that deposition were not such as would give it weight if related; and after all, the man on trial had committed an offense against the law's majesty only less heinous than that of the irascible physician.

By suggestion of the judge the jury rendered a verdict of guilty; there was nothing else to do, and the prisoner was sentenced to the penitentiary for three years. His counsel, who had objected to nothing and had made no plea for lenity — had, in fact, hardly said a word — wrung his client's hand and left the room. It was obvious to the whole bar that he had been engaged only to prevent the court from appointing counsel who might possibly insist on making a defense.

John Hardshaw served out his term at San Quentin, and when discharged was met at the prison gates by his wife, who had returned from "the States" to receive him. It is thought they went straight to Europe; anyhow, a general power-of-attorney to a lawyer still living among us — from whom I have many of the facts of this simple history — was executed in Paris. This lawyer in a short time sold everything that Hardshaw owned in California, and for years nothing was heard of the unfortunate couple; though many to whose ears had come vague and inaccurate intimations of their strange story, and who had known them, recalled their personality with tenderness and their misfortunes with compassion.

Some years later they returned, both broken in fortune and spirits and he in health. The purpose of their return I have not been able to ascertain. For some time they lived, under the name of Johnson, in a respectable enough quarter south of Market Street, pretty well put, and were never seen away from the vicinity of their dwelling. They must have had a little money left, for it is not known that the man had any occupation, the state of his health probably not permitting. The woman's devotion to her invalid husband was matter of remark among their neighbors; she seemed never absent from his side and always supporting and cheering him. They would sit for hours on one of the benches in a little public park, she reading to him, his hand in hers, her light touch occasionally visiting his pale brow, her still beautiful eyes frequently lifted from the book to look into his as she made some comment on the text, or closed the volume to beguile his mood with talk of — what? Nobody ever overheard a conversation between these two. The reader who has had the patience to follow their history to this point may possibly find a pleasure in conjecture: there was probably something to be avoided. The bearing of the man was one of profound dejection; indeed, the unsympathetic youth of the neighborhood, with that keen sense for visible characteristics which ever distinguishes the young male of our species, sometimes mentioned him among themselves by the name of Spoony Glum.

It occurred one day that John Hardshaw was possessed by the spirit of unrest. God knows what led him whither he went, but he crossed Market Street and held his way northward over the hills, and downward into the region known as North Beach. Turning aimlessly to the left he followed his toes along an unfamiliar street until he was opposite what for that period was a rather grand dwelling, and for this is a rather shabby factory. Casting his eyes casually upward he saw at an open window what it had been better that he had not seen — the face and figure of Elvira Barwell. Their eyes met. With a sharp exclamation, like the cry of a startled bird, the lady sprang to her feet and thrust her body half out of the window, clutching the casing on each side. Arrested by the cry, the people in the street below looked up. Hardshaw stood motionless, speechless, his eyes two flames. "Take care!" shouted some one in the crowd, as the woman strained further and further forward, defying the silent, implacable law of gravitation, as once she had defied that other law which God thundered from Sinai. The suddenness of her movements had tumbled a torrent of dark hair down her shoulders, and now it was blown about her cheeks, almost concealing her face. A moment so, and then — ! A fearful cry rang through the street, as, losing her balance, she pitched headlong from the window, a confused and whirling mass of skirts, limbs, hair, and white face, and struck the pavement with a horrible sound and a force of impact that was felt a hundred feet away. For a moment all eyes refused their office and turned from the sickening spectacle on the sidewalk. Drawn again to that horror, they saw it strangely augmented. A man, hatless, seated flat upon the paving stones, held the broken, bleeding body against his breast, kissing the mangled cheeks and streaming mouth through tangles of wet hair, his own features indistinguishably crimson with the blood that half-strangled him and ran in rills from his soaken beard.

The reporter's task is nearly finished. The Barwells had that very morning returned from a two years' absence in Peru. A week later the widower, now doubly desolate, since there could be no missing the significance of Hardshaw's horrible demonstration, had sailed for I know not what distant port; he has never come back to stay. Hardshaw — as Johnson no longer — passed a year in the Stockton asylum for the insane, where also, through the influence of pitying friends, his wife was admitted to care for him. When he was discharged, not cured but harmless, they returned to the city; it would seem ever to have had some dreadful fascination for them. For a time they lived near the Mission Dolores, in poverty only less abject than that which is their present lot; but it was too far away from the objective point of the man's daily pilgrimage. They could not afford car fare. So that poor devil of an angel from Heaven — wife to this convict and lunatic — obtained, at a fair enough rental, the blank-faced shanty on the lower terrace of Goat Hill. Thence to the structure that was a dwelling and is a factory the distance is not so great; it is, in fact, an agreeable walk, judging from the man's eager and cheerful look as he takes it. The return journey appears to be a trifle wearisome.

AN ADVENTURE AT BROWNVILLE

This story was written in collaboration with Miss Ina Lillian Peterson, to whom is rightly due the credit for whatever merit it may have.

I taught a little country school near Brownville, which, as every one knows who has had the good luck to live there, is the capital of a considerable expanse of the finest scenery in California. The town is somewhat frequented in summer by a class of persons whom it is the habit of the local journal to call “pleasure seekers,” but who by a juster classification would be known as “the sick and those in adversity.” Brownville itself might rightly enough be described, indeed, as a summer place of last resort. It is fairly well endowed with boarding-houses, at the least pernicious of which I performed twice a day (lunching at the schoolhouse) the humble rite of cementing the alliance between soul and body. From this “hostelry” (as the local journal preferred to call it when it did not call it a “caravanserai”) to the schoolhouse the distance by the wagon road was about a mile and a half; but there was a trail, very little used, which led over an intervening range of low, heavily wooded hills, considerably shortening the distance. By this trail I was returning one evening later than usual. It was the last day of the term and I had been detained at the schoolhouse until almost dark, preparing an account of my stewardship for the trustees — two of whom, I proudly reflected, would be able to read it, and the third (an instance of the dominion of mind over matter) would be overruled in his customary antagonism to the schoolmaster of his own creation.

I had gone not more than a quarter of the way when, finding an interest in the antics of a family of lizards which dwelt thereabout and seemed full of reptilian joy for their immunity from the ills incident to life at the Brownville House, I sat upon a fallen tree to observe them. As I leaned wearily against a branch of the gnarled old trunk the twilight deepened in the somber woods and the faint new moon began casting visible shadows and gilding the leaves of the trees with a tender but ghostly light.

I heard the sound of voices — a woman’s, angry, impetuous, rising against deep masculine tones, rich and musical. I strained my eyes, peering through the dusky shadows of the wood, hoping to get a view of the intruders on my solitude, but could see no one. For some yards in each direction I had an uninterrupted view of the trail, and knowing of no other within a half mile thought the persons heard must be approaching from the wood at one side. There was no sound but that of the voices, which were now so distinct that I could catch the words. That of the man gave me an impression of anger, abundantly confirmed by the matter spoken.

"I will have no threats; you are powerless, as you very well know. Let things remain as they are or, by God! you shall both suffer for it."

"What do you mean?" — this was the voice of the woman, a cultivated voice, the voice of a lady. "You would not — murder us."

There was no reply, at least none that was audible to me. During the silence I peered into the wood in hope to get a glimpse of the speakers, for I felt sure that this was an affair of gravity in which ordinary scruples ought not to count. It seemed to me that the woman was in peril; at any rate the man had not disavowed a willingness to murder. When a man is enacting the rôle of potential assassin he has not the right to choose his audience.

After some little time I saw them, indistinct in the moonlight among the trees. The man, tall and slender, seemed clothed in black; the woman wore, as nearly as I could make out, a gown of gray stuff. Evidently they were still unaware of my presence in the shadow, though for some reason when they renewed their conversation they spoke in lower tones and I could no longer understand. As I looked the woman seemed to sink to the ground and raise her hands in supplication, as is frequently done on the stage and never, so far as I knew, anywhere else, and I am now not altogether sure that it was done in this instance. The man fixed his eyes upon her; they seemed to glitter bleakly in the moonlight with an expression that made me apprehensive that he would turn them upon me. I do not know by what impulse I was moved, but I sprang to my feet out of the shadow. At that instant the figures vanished. I peered in vain through the spaces among the trees and clumps of undergrowth. The night wind rustled the leaves; the lizards had retired early, reptiles of exemplary habits. The little moon was already slipping behind a black hill in the west.

I went home, somewhat disturbed in mind, half doubting that I had heard or seen any living thing excepting the lizards. It all seemed a trifle odd and uncanny. It was as if among the several phenomena, objective and subjective, that made the sum total of the incident there had been an uncertain element which had diffused its dubious character over all — had leavened the whole mass with unreality. I did not like it.

At the breakfast table the next morning there was a new face; opposite me sat a young woman at whom I merely glanced as I took my seat. In speaking to the high and mighty female personage who condescended to seem to wait upon us, this girl soon invited my attention by the sound of her voice, which was like, yet not altogether like, the one still murmuring in my memory of the previous evening's adventure. A moment later another girl, a few years older, entered the room and sat at the left of the other, speaking to her a gentle "good morning." By *her* voice I was startled: it was without doubt the one of which the first girl's had reminded me. Here was the lady of the sylvan incident sitting bodily before me, "in her habit as she lived."

Evidently enough the two were sisters.

With a nebulous kind of apprehension that I might be recognized as the mute inglorious hero of an adventure which had in my consciousness and conscience something of the character of eavesdropping, I allowed myself only a hasty cup of the lukewarm coffee thoughtfully provided by the prescient waitress for the emergency, and left the table. As I passed out of the house into the grounds I heard a rich, strong male voice singing an aria from "Rigoletto." I am bound to say that it was exquisitely sung, too, but there was something in the performance that displeased me, I could say neither what nor why, and I walked rapidly away.

Returning later in the day I saw the elder of the two young women standing on the porch and near her a tall man in black clothing — the man whom I had expected to see. All day the desire to know something of these persons had been uppermost in my mind and I now resolved to learn what I could of them in any way that was neither dishonorable nor low.

The man was talking easily and affably to his companion, but at the sound of my footsteps on the gravel walk he ceased, and turning about looked me full in the face. He was apparently of middle age, dark and uncommonly handsome. His attire was faultless, his bearing easy and graceful, the look which he turned upon me open, free, and devoid of any suggestion of rudeness. Nevertheless it affected me with a distinct emotion which on subsequent analysis in memory appeared to be compounded of hatred and dread — I am unwilling to call it fear. A second later the man and woman had disappeared. They seemed to have a trick of disappearing. On entering the house, however, I saw them through the open doorway of the parlor as I passed; they had merely stepped through a window which opened down to the floor.

Cautiously "approached" on the subject of her new guests my landlady proved not ungracious. Restated with, I hope, some small reverence for English grammar the facts were these: the two girls were Pauline and Eva Maynard of San Francisco; the elder was Pauline. The man was Richard Benning, their guardian, who had been the most intimate friend of their father, now deceased. Mr. Benning had brought them to Brownville in the hope that the mountain climate might benefit Eva, who was thought to be in danger of consumption.

Upon these short and simple annals the landlady wrought an embroidery of eulogium which abundantly attested her faith in Mr. Benning's will and ability to pay for the best that her house afforded. That he had a good heart was evident to her from his devotion to his two beautiful wards and his really touching solicitude for their comfort. The evidence impressed me as insufficient and I silently found the Scotch verdict, "Not proven."

Certainly Mr. Benning was most attentive to his wards. In my strolls about the country I frequently encountered them — sometimes in company with other guests of the hotel — exploring the gulches, fishing, rifle shooting, and otherwise wiling away the monotony of country life; and although I watched them as closely as good manners would permit I saw nothing that would in any way explain the strange words that I had overheard in the wood. I had grown tolerably well acquainted with the young ladies and could exchange looks and even greetings with their guardian without actual repugnance.

A month went by and I had almost ceased to interest myself in their affairs when one night our entire little community was thrown into excitement by an event which vividly recalled my experience in the forest.

This was the death of the elder girl, Pauline.

The sisters had occupied the same bedroom on the third floor of the house. Waking in the gray of the morning Eva had found Pauline dead beside her. Later, when the poor girl was weeping beside the body amid a throng of sympathetic if not very considerate persons, Mr. Benning entered the room and appeared to be about to take her hand. She drew away from the side of the dead and moved slowly toward the door.

"It is you," she said—"you who have done this. You — you — you!"

"She is raving," he said in a low voice. He followed her, step by step, as she retreated, his eyes fixed upon hers with a steady gaze in which there was nothing of tenderness nor of compassion. She stopped; the hand that she had raised in accusation fell to her side, her dilated eyes contracted visibly, the lids slowly dropped over them, veiling their strange wild beauty, and she stood motionless and almost as white as the dead girl lying near. The man took her hand and put his arm gently about her shoulders, as if to support her. Suddenly she burst into a passion of tears and clung to him as a child to its mother. He smiled with a smile that affected me most disagreeably — perhaps any kind of smile would have done so — and led her silently out of the room.

There was an inquest — and the customary verdict: the deceased, it appeared, came to her death through "heart disease." It was before the invention of heart *failure*, though the heart of poor Pauline had indubitably failed. The body was embalmed and taken to San Francisco by some one summoned thence for the purpose, neither Eva nor Benning accompanying it. Some of the hotel gossips ventured to think that very strange, and a few hardy spirits went so far as to think it very strange indeed; but the good landlady generously threw herself into the breach, saying it was owing to the precarious nature of the girl’s health. It is not of record that either of the two persons most affected and apparently least concerned made any explanation.

One evening about a week after the death I went out upon the veranda of the hotel to get a book that I had left there. Under some vines shutting out the moonlight from a part of the space I saw Richard Benning, for whose apparition I was prepared by having previously heard the low, sweet voice of Eva Maynard, whom also I now discerned, standing before him with one hand raised to his shoulder and her eyes, as nearly as I could judge, gazing upward into his. He held her disengaged hand and his head was bent with a singular dignity and grace. Their attitude was that of lovers, and as I stood in deep shadow to observe I felt even guiltier than on that memorable night in the wood. I was about to retire, when the girl spoke, and the contrast between her words and her attitude was so surprising that I remained, because I had merely forgotten to go away.

“You will take my life,” she said, “as you did Pauline’s. I know your intention as well as I know your power, and I ask nothing, only that you finish your work without needless delay and let me be at peace.”

He made no reply — merely let go the hand that he was holding, removed the other from his shoulder, and turning away descended the steps leading to the garden and disappeared in the shrubbery. But a moment later I heard, seemingly from a great distance, his fine clear voice in a barbaric chant, which as I listened brought before some inner spiritual sense a consciousness of some far, strange land peopled with beings having forbidden powers. The song held me in a kind of spell, but when it had died away I recovered and instantly perceived what I thought an opportunity. I walked out of my shadow to where the girl stood. She turned and stared at me with something of the look, it seemed to me, of a hunted hare. Possibly my intrusion had frightened her.

“Miss Maynard,” I said, “I beg you to tell me who that man is and the nature of his power over you. Perhaps this is rude in me, but it is not a matter for idle civilities. When a woman is in danger any man has a right to act.”

She listened without visible emotion — almost I thought without interest, and when I had finished she closed her big blue eyes as if unspeakably weary.

“You can do nothing,” she said.

I took hold of her arm, gently shaking her as one shakes a person falling into a dangerous sleep.

“You must rouse yourself,” I said; “something must be done and you must give me leave to act. You have said that that man killed your sister, and I believe it — that he will kill you, and I believe that."

She merely raised her eyes to mine.

"Will you not tell me all?" I added.

"There is nothing to be done, I tell you — nothing. And if I could do anything I would not. It does not matter in the least. We shall be here only two days more; we go away then, oh, so far! If you have observed anything, I beg you to be silent."

"But this is madness, girl." I was trying by rough speech to break the deadly repose of her manner. "You have accused him of murder. Unless you explain these things to me I shall lay the matter before the authorities."

This roused her, but in a way that I did not like. She lifted her head proudly and said: "Do not meddle, sir, in what does not concern you. This is my affair, Mr. Moran, not yours."

"It concerns every person in the country — in the world," I answered, with equal coldness. "If you had no love for your sister I, at least, am concerned for you."

"Listen," she interrupted, leaning toward me. "I loved her, yes, God knows! But more than that — beyond all, beyond expression, I love *him*. You have overheard a secret, but you shall not make use of it to harm him. I shall deny all. Your word against mine — it will be that. Do you think your 'authorities' will believe you?"

She was now smiling like an angel and, God help me! I was heels over head in love with her! Did she, by some of the many methods of divination known to her sex, read my feelings? Her whole manner had altered.

"Come," she said, almost coaxingly, "promise that you will not be impolite again." She took my arm in the most friendly way. "Come, I will walk with you. He will not know — he will remain away all night."

Up and down the veranda we paced in the moonlight, she seemingly forgetting her recent bereavement, cooing and murmuring girl-wise of every kind of nothing in all Brownville; I silent, consciously awkward and with something of the feeling of being concerned in an intrigue. It was a revelation — this most charming and apparently blameless creature coolly and confessedly deceiving the man for whom a moment before she had acknowledged and shown the supreme love which finds even death an acceptable endearment.

"Truly," I thought in my inexperience, "here is something new under the moon."

And the moon must have smiled.

Before we parted I had exacted a promise that she would walk with me the next afternoon — before going away forever — to the Old Mill, one of

Brownville’s revered antiquities, erected in 1860.

“If he is not about,” she added gravely, as I let go the hand she had given me at parting, and of which, may the good saints forgive me, I strove vainly to repossess myself when she had said it — so charming, as the wise Frenchman has pointed out, do we find woman’s infidelity when we are its objects, not its victims. In apportioning his benefactions that night the Angel of Sleep overlooked me.

The Brownville House dined early, and after dinner the next day Miss Maynard, who had not been at table, came to me on the veranda, attired in the demurest of walking costumes, saying not a word. “He” was evidently “not about.” We went slowly up the road that led to the Old Mill. She was apparently not strong and at times took my arm, relinquishing it and taking it again rather capriciously, I thought. Her mood, or rather her succession of moods, was as mutable as skylight in a rippling sea. She jested as if she had never heard of such a thing as death, and laughed on the lightest incitement, and directly afterward would sing a few bars of some grave melody with such tenderness of expression that I had to turn away my eyes lest she should see the evidence of her success in art, if art it was, not artlessness, as then I was compelled to think it. And she said the oddest things in the most unconventional way, skirting sometimes unfathomable abysms of thought, where I had hardly the courage to set foot. In short, she was fascinating in a thousand and fifty different ways, and at every step I executed a new and profounder emotional folly, a hardier spiritual indiscretion, incurring fresh liability to arrest by the constabulary of conscience for infractions of my own peace.

Arriving at the mill, she made no pretense of stopping, but turned into a trail leading through a field of stubble toward a creek. Crossing by a rustic bridge we continued on the trail, which now led uphill to one of the most picturesque spots in the country. The Eagle’s Nest, it was called — the summit of a cliff that rose sheer into the air to a height of hundreds of feet above the forest at its base. From this elevated point we had a noble view of another valley and of the opposite hills flushed with the last rays of the setting sun.

As we watched the light escaping to higher and higher planes from the encroaching flood of shadow filling the valley we heard footsteps, and in another moment were joined by Richard Benning.

“I saw you from the road,” he said carelessly; “so I came up.”

Being a fool, I neglected to take him by the throat and pitch him into the treetops below, but muttered some polite lie instead. On the girl the effect of his coming was immediate and unmistakable. Her face was suffused with the glory of love’s transfiguration: the red light of the sunset had not been more obvious in her eyes than was now the lovelight that replaced it.

"I am so glad you came!" she said, giving him both her hands; and, God help me! it was manifestly true.

Seating himself upon the ground he began a lively dissertation upon the wild flowers of the region, a number of which he had with him. In the middle of a facetious sentence he suddenly ceased speaking and fixed his eyes upon Eva, who leaned against the stump of a tree, absently plaiting grasses. She lifted her eyes in a startled way to his, as if she had *felt* his look. She then rose, cast away her grasses, and moved slowly away from him. He also rose, continuing to look at her. He had still in his hand the bunch of flowers. The girl turned, as if to speak, but said nothing. I recall clearly now something of which I was but half-conscious then — the dreadful contrast between the smile upon her lips and the terrified expression in her eyes as she met his steady and imperative gaze. I know nothing of how it happened, nor how it was that I did not sooner understand; I only know that with the smile of an angel upon her lips and that look of terror in her beautiful eyes Eva Maynard sprang from the cliff and shot crashing into the tops of the pines below!

How and how long afterward I reached the place I cannot say, but Richard Benning was already there, kneeling beside the dreadful thing that had been a woman.

"She is dead — quite dead," he said coldly. "I will go to town for assistance. Please do me the favor to remain."

He rose to his feet and moved away, but in a moment had stopped and turned about.

"You have doubtless observed, my friend," he said, "that this was entirely her own act. I did not rise in time to prevent it, and you, not knowing her mental condition — you could not, of course, have suspected."

His manner maddened me.

"You are as much her assassin," I said, "as if your damnable hands had cut her throat."

He shrugged his shoulders without reply and, turning, walked away. A moment later I heard, through the deepening shadows of the wood into which he had disappeared, a rich, strong, baritone voice singing "*La donna e mobile*," from "Rigoletto."

THE FAMOUS GILSON BEQUEST

It was rough on Gilson. Such was the terse, cold, but not altogether unsympathetic judgment of the better public opinion at Mammon Hill — the dictum of respectability. The verdict of the opposite, or rather the opposing, element — the element that lurked red-eyed and restless about Moll Gurney's "deadfall," while respectability took it with sugar at Mr. Jo. Bentley's gorgeous "saloon" — was to pretty much the same general effect, though somewhat more ornately expressed by the use of picturesque expletives, which it is needless to quote. Virtually, Mammon Hill was a unit on the Gilson question. And it must be confessed that in a merely temporal sense all was not well with Mr. Gilson. He had that morning been led into town by Mr. Brentshaw and publicly charged with horse stealing; the sheriff meantime busying himself about The Tree with a new manila rope and Carpenter Pete being actively employed between drinks upon a pine box about the length and breadth of Mr. Gilson. Society having rendered its verdict, there remained between Gilson and eternity only the decent formality of a trial.

These are the short and simple annals of the prisoner: He had recently been a resident of New Jerusalem, on the north fork of the Little Stony, but had come to the newly discovered placers of Mammon Hill immediately before the "rush" by which the former place was depopulated. The discovery of the new diggings had occurred opportunely for Mr. Gilson, for it had only just before been intimated to him by a New Jerusalem vigilance committee that it would better his prospects in, and for, life to go somewhere; and the list of places to which he could safely go did not include any of the older camps; so he naturally established himself at Mammon Hill. Being eventually followed thither by all his judges, he ordered his conduct with considerable circumspection, but as he had never been known to do an honest day's work at any industry sanctioned by the stern local code of morality except draw poker he was still an object of suspicion. Indeed, it was conjectured that he was the author of the many daring depredations that had recently been committed with pan and brush on the sluice boxes.

Prominent among those in whom this suspicion had ripened into a steadfast conviction was Mr. Brentshaw. At all seasonable and unseasonable times Mr. Brentshaw avowed his belief in Mr. Gilson's connection with these unholy midnight enterprises, and his own willingness to prepare a way for the solar beams through the body of any one who might think it expedient to utter a different opinion — which, in his presence, no one was more careful not to do than the peace-loving person most concerned. Whatever may have been the truth of the matter, it is certain that Gilson frequently lost more “clean dust” at Jo. Bentley’s faro table than it was recorded in local history that he had ever honestly earned at draw poker in all the days of the camp’s existence. But at last Mr. Bentley — fearing, it may be, to lose the more profitable patronage of Mr. Brentshaw — peremptorily refused to let Gilson copper the queen, intimating at the same time, in his frank, forthright way, that the privilege of losing money at “this bank” was a blessing appertaining to, proceeding logically from, and coterminous with, a condition of notorious commercial righteousness and social good repute.

The Hill thought it high time to look after a person whom its most honored citizen had felt it his duty to rebuke at a considerable personal sacrifice. The New Jerusalem contingent, particularly, began to abate something of the toleration begotten of amusement at their own blunder in exiling an objectionable neighbor from the place which they had left to the place whither they had come. Mammon Hill was at last of one mind. Not much was said, but that Gilson must hang was “in the air.” But at this critical juncture in his affairs he showed signs of an altered life if not a changed heart. Perhaps it was only that “the bank” being closed against him he had no further use for gold dust. Anyhow the sluice boxes were molested no more forever. But it was impossible to repress the abounding energies of such a nature as his, and he continued, possibly from habit, the tortuous courses which he had pursued for profit of Mr. Bentley. After a few tentative and resultless undertakings in the way of highway robbery — if one may venture to designate road-agency by so harsh a name — he made one or two modest essays in horse-herding, and it was in the midst of a promising enterprise of this character, and just as he had taken the tide in his affairs at its flood, that he made shipwreck. For on a misty, moonlight night Mr. Brentshaw rode up alongside a person who was evidently leaving that part of the country, laid a hand upon the halter connecting Mr. Gilson’s wrist with Mr. Harper’s bay mare, tapped him familiarly on the cheek with the barrel of a navy revolver and requested the pleasure of his company in a direction opposite to that in which he was traveling.

It was indeed rough on Gilson.

On the morning after his arrest he was tried, convicted, and sentenced. It only remains, so far as concerns his earthly career, to hang him, reserving for more particular mention his last will and testament, which, with great labor, he contrived in prison, and in which, probably from some confused and imperfect notion of the rights of captors, he bequeathed everything he owned to his “lawfle execketer,” Mr. Brentshaw. The bequest, however, was made conditional on the legatee taking the testator’s body from The Tree and “planting it white.”

So Mr. Gilson was — I was about to say “swung off,” but I fear there has been already something too much of slang in this straightforward statement of facts; besides, the manner in which the law took its course is more accurately described in the terms employed by the judge in passing sentence: Mr. Gilson was “strung up.”

In due season Mr. Brentshaw, somewhat touched, it may well be, by the empty compliment of the bequest, repaired to The Tree to pluck the fruit thereof. When taken down the body was found to have in its waistcoat pocket a duly attested codicil to the will already noted. The nature of its provisions accounted for the manner in which it had been withheld, for had Mr. Brentshaw previously been made aware of the conditions under which he was to succeed to the Gilson estate he would indubitably have declined the responsibility. Briefly stated, the purport of the codicil was as follows:

Whereas, at divers times and in sundry places, certain persons had asserted that during his life the testator had robbed their sluice boxes; therefore, if during the five years next succeeding the date of this instrument any one should make proof of such assertion before a court of law, such person was to receive as reparation the entire personal and real estate of which the testator died seized and possessed, minus the expenses of court and a stated compensation to the executor, Henry Clay Brentshaw; provided, that if more than one person made such proof the estate was to be equally divided between or among them. But in case none should succeed in so establishing the testator’s guilt, then the whole property, minus court expenses, as aforesaid, should go to the said Henry Clay Brentshaw for his own use, as stated in the will.

The syntax of this remarkable document was perhaps open to critical objection, but that was clearly enough the meaning of it. The orthography conformed to no recognized system, but being mainly phonetic it was not ambiguous. As the probate judge remarked, it would take five aces to beat it. Mr. Brentshaw smiled good-humoredly, and after performing the last sad rites with amusing ostentation, had himself duly sworn as executor and conditional legatee under the provisions of a law hastily passed (at the instance of the member from the Mammon Hill district) by a facetious legislature; which law was afterward discovered to have created also three or four lucrative offices and authorized the expenditure of a considerable sum of public money for the construction of a certain railway bridge that with greater advantage might perhaps have been erected on the line of some actual railway.

Of course Mr. Brentshaw expected neither profit from the will nor litigation in consequence of its unusual provisions; Gilson, although frequently “flush,” had been a man whom assessors and tax collectors were well satisfied to lose no money by. But a careless and merely formal search among his papers revealed title deeds to valuable estates in the East and certificates of deposit for incredible sums in banks less severely scrupulous than that of Mr. Jo. Bentley.

The astounding news got abroad directly, throwing the Hill into a fever of excitement. The Mammon Hill *Patriot*, whose editor had been a leading spirit in the proceedings that resulted in Gilson’s departure from New Jerusalem, published a most complimentary obituary notice of the deceased, and was good enough to call attention to the fact that his degraded contemporary, the Squaw Gulch *Clarion*, was bringing virtue into contempt by beslavering with flattery the memory of one who in life had spurned the vile sheet as a nuisance from his door. Undeterred by the press, however, claimants under the will were not slow in presenting themselves with their evidence; and great as was the Gilson estate it appeared conspicuously paltry considering the vast number of sluice boxes from which it was averred to have been obtained. The country rose as one man!

Mr. Brentshaw was equal to the emergency. With a shrewd application of humble auxiliary devices, he at once erected above the bones of his benefactor a costly monument, overtopping every rough headboard in the cemetery, and on this he judiciously caused to be inscribed an epitaph of his own composing, eulogizing the honesty, public spirit and cognate virtues of him who slept beneath, “a victim to the unjust aspersions of Slander’s viper brood.”

Moreover, he employed the best legal talent in the Territory to defend the memory of his departed friend, and for five long years the Territorial courts were occupied with litigation growing out of the Gilson bequest. To fine forensic abilities Mr. Brentshaw opposed abilities more finely forensic; in bidding for purchasable favors he offered prices which utterly deranged the market; the judges found at his hospitable board entertainment for man and beast, the like of which had never been spread in the Territory; with mendacious witnesses he confronted witnesses of superior mendacity.

Nor was the battle confined to the temple of the blind goddess — it invaded the press, the pulpit, the drawing-room. It raged in the mart, the exchange, the school; in the gulches, and on the street corners. And upon the last day of the memorable period to which legal action under the Gilson will was limited, the sun went down upon a region in which the moral sense was dead, the social conscience callous, the intellectual capacity dwarfed, enfeebled, and confused! But Mr. Brentshaw was victorious all along the line.

On that night it so happened that the cemetery in one corner of which lay the now honored ashes of the late Milton Gilson, Esq., was partly under water. Swollen by incessant rains, Cat Creek had spilled over its banks an angry flood which, after scooping out unsightly hollows wherever the soil had been disturbed, had partly subsided, as if ashamed of the sacrilege, leaving exposed much that had been piously concealed. Even the famous Gilson monument, the pride and glory of Mammon Hill, was no longer a standing rebuke to the “viper brood”; succumbing to the sapping current it had toppled prone to earth. The ghoulish flood had exhumed the poor, decayed pine coffin, which now lay half-exposed, in pitiful contrast to the pompous monolith which, like a giant note of admiration, emphasized the disclosure.

To this depressing spot, drawn by some subtle influence he had sought neither to resist nor analyze, came Mr. Brentshaw. An altered man was Mr. Brentshaw. Five years of toil, anxiety, and wakefulness had dashed his black locks with streaks and patches of gray, bowed his fine figure, drawn sharp and angular his face, and debased his walk to a doddering shuffle. Nor had this lustrum of fierce contention wrought less upon his heart and intellect. The careless good humor that had prompted him to accept the trust of the dead man had given place to a fixed habit of melancholy. The firm, vigorous intellect had overripened into the mental mellowness of second childhood. His broad understanding had narrowed to the accommodation of a single idea; and in place of the quiet, cynical incredulity of former days, there was in him a haunting faith in the supernatural, that flitted and fluttered about his soul, shadowy, batlike, ominous of insanity. Unsettled in all else, his understanding clung to one conviction with the tenacity of a wrecked intellect. That was an unshaken belief in the entire blamelessness of the dead Gilson. He had so often sworn to this in court and asserted it in private conversation — had so frequently and so triumphantly established it by testimony that had come expensive to him (for that very day he had paid the last dollar of the Gilson estate to Mr. Jo. Bentley, the last witness to the Gilson good character) — that it had become to him a sort of religious faith. It seemed to him the one great central and basic truth of life — the sole serene verity in a world of lies.

On that night, as he seated himself pensively upon the prostrate monument, trying by the uncertain moonlight to spell out the epitaph which five years before he had composed with a chuckle that memory had not recorded, tears of remorse came into his eyes as he remembered that he had been mainly instrumental in compassing by a false accusation this good man’s death; for during some of the legal proceedings, Mr. Harper, for a consideration (forgotten) had come forward and sworn that in the little transaction with his bay mare the deceased had acted in strict accordance with the Harperian wishes, confidentially communicated to the deceased and by him faithfully concealed at the cost of his life. All that Mr. Brentshaw had since done for the dead man's memory seemed pitifully inadequate — most mean, paltry, and debased with selfishness!

As he sat there, torturing himself with futile regrets, a faint shadow fell across his eyes. Looking toward the moon, hanging low in the west, he saw what seemed a vague, watery cloud obscuring her; but as it moved so that her beams lit up one side of it he perceived the clear, sharp outline of a human figure. The apparition became momentarily more distinct, and grew, visibly; it was drawing near. Dazed as were his senses, half locked up with terror and confounded with dreadful imaginings, Mr. Brentshaw yet could but perceive, or think he perceived, in this unearthly shape a strange similitude to the mortal part of the late Milton Gilson, as that person had looked when taken from The Tree five years before. The likeness was indeed complete, even to the full, stony eyes, and a certain shadowy circle about the neck. It was without coat or hat, precisely as Gilson had been when laid in his poor, cheap casket by the not ungentle hands of Carpenter Pete — for whom some one had long since performed the same neighborly office. The spectre, if such it was, seemed to bear something in its hands which Mr. Brentshaw could not clearly make out. It drew nearer, and paused at last beside the coffin containing the ashes of the late Mr. Gilson, the lid of which was awry, half disclosing the uncertain interior. Bending over this, the phantom seemed to shake into it from a basin some dark substance of dubious consistency, then glided stealthily back to the lowest part of the cemetery. Here the retiring flood had stranded a number of open coffins, about and among which it gurgled with low sobbings and stilly whispers. Stooping over one of these, the apparition carefully brushed its contents into the basin, then returning to its own casket, emptied the vessel into that, as before. This mysterious operation was repeated at every exposed coffin, the ghost sometimes dipping its laden basin into the running water, and gently agitating it to free it of the baser clay, always hoarding the residuum in its own private box. In short, the immortal part of the late Milton Gilson was cleaning up the dust of its neighbors and providently adding the same to its own.

Perhaps it was a phantasm of a disordered mind in a fevered body. Perhaps it was a solemn farce enacted by pranking existences that throng the shadows lying along the border of another world. God knows; to us is permitted only the knowledge that when the sun of another day touched with a grace of gold the ruined cemetery of Mammon Hill his kindliest beam fell upon the white, still face of Henry Brentshaw, dead among the dead.

THE APPLICANT

Pushing his adventurous shins through the deep snow that had fallen overnight, and encouraged by the glee of his little sister, following in the open way that he made, a sturdy small boy, the son of Grayville's most distinguished citizen, struck his foot against something of which there was no visible sign on the surface of the snow. It is the purpose of this narrative to explain how it came to be there.

No one who has had the advantage of passing through Grayville by day can have failed to observe the large stone building crowning the low hill to the north of the railway station — that is to say, to the right in going toward Great Mowbray. It is a somewhat dull-looking edifice, of the Early Comatose order, and appears to have been designed by an architect who shrank from publicity, and although unable to conceal his work — even compelled, in this instance, to set it on an eminence in the sight of men — did what he honestly could to insure it against a second look. So far as concerns its outer and visible aspect, the Abersush Home for Old Men is unquestionably inhospitable to human attention. But it is a building of great magnitude, and cost its benevolent founder the profit of many a cargo of the teas and silks and spices that his ships brought up from the under-world when he was in trade in Boston; though the main expense was its endowment. Altogether, this reckless person had robbed his heirs-at-law of no less a sum than half a million dollars and flung it away in riotous giving. Possibly it was with a view to get out of sight of the silent big witness to his extravagance that he shortly afterward disposed of all his Grayville property that remained to him, turned his back upon the scene of his prodigality and went off across the sea in one of his own ships. But the gossips who got their inspiration most directly from Heaven declared that he went in search of a wife — a theory not easily reconciled with that of the village humorist, who solemnly averred that the bachelor philanthropist had departed this life (left Grayville, to wit) because the marriageable maidens had made it too hot to hold him. However this may have been, he had not returned, and although at long intervals there had come to Grayville, in a desultory way, vague rumors of his wanderings in strange lands, no one seemed certainly to know about him, and to the new generation he was no more than a name. But from above the portal of the Home for Old Men the name shouted in stone.

Despite its unpromising exterior, the Home is a fairly commodious place of retreat from the ills that its inmates have incurred by being poor and old and men. At the time embraced in this brief chronicle they were in number about a score, but in acerbity, querulousness, and general ingratitude they could hardly be reckoned at fewer than a hundred; at least that was the estimate of the superintendent, Mr. Silas Tilbody. It was Mr. Tilbody's steadfast conviction that always, in admitting new old men to replace those who had gone to another and a better Home, the trustees had distinctly in will the infraction of his peace, and the trial of his patience. In truth, the longer the institution was connected with him, the stronger was his feeling that the founder's scheme of benevolence was sadly impaired by providing any inmates at all. He had not much imagination, but with what he had he was addicted to the reconstruction of the Home for Old Men into a kind of "castle in Spain," with himself as castellan, hospitably entertaining about a score of sleek and prosperous middle-aged gentlemen, consummately good-humored and civilly willing to pay for their board and lodging. In this revised project of philanthropy the trustees, to whom he was indebted for his office and responsible for his conduct, had not the happiness to appear. As to them, it was held by the village humorist aforementioned that in their management of the great charity Providence had thoughtfully supplied an incentive to thrift. With the inference which he expected to be drawn from that view we have nothing to do; it had neither support nor denial from the inmates, who certainly were most concerned. They lived out their little remnant of life, crept into graves neatly numbered, and were succeeded by other old men as like them as could be desired by the Adversary of Peace. If the Home was a place of punishment for the sin of unthrift the veteran offenders sought justice with a persistence that attested the sincerity of their penitence. It is to one of these that the reader's attention is now invited.

In the matter of attire this person was not altogether engaging. But for this season, which was midwinter, a careless observer might have looked upon him as a clever device of the husbandman indisposed to share the fruits of his toil with the crows that toil not, neither spin — an error that might not have been dispelled without longer and closer observation than he seemed to court; for his progress up Abersush Street, toward the Home in the gloom of the winter evening, was not visibly faster than what might have been expected of a scarecrow blessed with youth, health, and discontent. The man was indisputably ill-clad, yet not without a certain fitness and good taste, withal; for he was obviously an applicant for admittance to the Home, where poverty was a qualification. In the army of indigence the uniform is rags; they serve to distinguish the rank and file from the recruiting officers.

As the old man, entering the gate of the grounds, shuffled up the broad walk, already white with the fast-falling snow, which from time to time he feebly shook from its various coigns of vantage on his person, he came under inspection of the large globe lamp that burned always by night over the great door of the building. As if unwilling to incur its revealing beams, he turned to the left and, passing a considerable distance along the face of the building, rang at a smaller door emitting a dimmer ray that came from within, through the fanlight, and expended itself incuriously overhead. The door was opened by no less a personage than the great Mr. Tilbody himself. Observing his visitor, who at once uncovered, and somewhat shortened the radius of the permanent curvature of his back, the great man gave visible token of neither surprise nor displeasure. Mr. Tilbody was, indeed, in an uncommonly good humor, a phenomenon ascribable doubtless to the cheerful influence of the season; for this was Christmas Eve, and the morrow would be that blessed 365th part of the year that all Christian souls set apart for mighty feats of goodness and joy. Mr. Tilbody was so full of the spirit of the season that his fat face and pale blue eyes, whose ineffectual fire served to distinguish it from an untimely summer squash, effused so genial a glow that it seemed a pity that he could not have lain down in it, basking in the consciousness of his own identity. He was hatted, booted, overcoated, and umbrellaed, as became a person who was about to expose himself to the night and the storm on an errand of charity; for Mr. Tilbody had just parted from his wife and children to go "down town" and purchase the wherewithal to confirm the annual falsehood about the hunch-bellied saint who frequents the chimneys to reward little boys and girls who are good, and especially truthful. So he did not invite the old man in, but saluted him cheerily:

"Hello! just in time; a moment later and you would have missed me. Come, I have no time to waste; we'll walk a little way together."

"Thank you," said the old man, upon whose thin and white but not ignoble face the light from the open door showed an expression that was perhaps disappointment; "but if the trustees — if my application—"

"The trustees," Mr. Tilbody said, closing more doors than one, and cutting off two kinds of light, "have agreed that your application disagrees with them."

Certain sentiments are inappropriate to Christmastide, but Humor, like Death, has all seasons for his own.

"Oh, my God!" cried the old man, in so thin and husky a tone that the invocation was anything but impressive, and to at least one of his two auditors sounded, indeed, somewhat ludicrous. To the Other — but that is a matter which laymen are devoid of the light to expound.

"Yes," continued Mr. Tilbody, accommodating his gait to that of his companion, who was mechanically, and not very successfully, retracing the track that he had made through the snow; “they have decided that, under the circumstances — under the very peculiar circumstances, you understand — it would be inexpedient to admit you. As superintendent and *ex officio* secretary of the honorable board” — as Mr. Tilbody “read his title clear” the magnitude of the big building, seen through its veil of falling snow, appeared to suffer somewhat in comparison—”it is my duty to inform you that, in the words of Deacon Byram, the chairman, your presence in the Home would — under the circumstances — be peculiarly embarrassing. I felt it my duty to submit to the honorable board the statement that you made to me yesterday of your needs, your physical condition, and the trials which it has pleased Providence to send upon you in your very proper effort to present your claims in person; but, after careful, and I may say prayerful, consideration of your case — with something too, I trust, of the large charitableness appropriate to the season — it was decided that we would not be justified in doing anything likely to impair the usefulness of the institution intrusted (under Providence) to our care.”

They had now passed out of the grounds; the street lamp opposite the gate was dimly visible through the snow. Already the old man’s former track was obliterated, and he seemed uncertain as to which way he should go. Mr. Tilbody had drawn a little away from him, but paused and turned half toward him, apparently reluctant to forego the continuing opportunity.

“Under the circumstances,” he resumed, “the decision—”

But the old man was inaccessible to the suasion of his verbosity; he had crossed the street into a vacant lot and was going forward, rather deviously toward nowhere in particular — which, he having nowhere in particular to go to, was not so reasonless a proceeding as it looked.

And that is how it happened that the next morning, when the church bells of all Grayville were ringing with an added unction appropriate to the day, the sturdy little son of Deacon Byram, breaking a way through the snow to the place of worship, struck his foot against the body of Amasa Abersush, philanthropist.

A WATCHER BY THE DEAD

I

In an upper room of an unoccupied dwelling in the part of San Francisco known as North Beach lay the body of a man, under a sheet. The hour was near nine in the evening; the room was dimly lighted by a single candle. Although the weather was warm, the two windows, contrary to the custom which gives the dead plenty of air, were closed and the blinds drawn down. The furniture of the room consisted of but three pieces — an arm-chair, a small reading-stand supporting the candle, and a long kitchen table, supporting the body of the man. All these, as also the corpse, seemed to have been recently brought in, for an observer, had there been one, would have seen that all were free from dust, whereas everything else in the room was pretty thickly coated with it, and there were cobwebs in the angles of the walls.

Under the sheet the outlines of the body could be traced, even the features, these having that unnaturally sharp definition which seems to belong to faces of the dead, but is really characteristic of those only that have been wasted by disease. From the silence of the room one would rightly have inferred that it was not in the front of the house, facing a street. It really faced nothing but a high breast of rock, the rear of the building being set into a hill.

As a neighboring church clock was striking nine with an indolence which seemed to imply such an indifference to the flight of time that one could hardly help wondering why it took the trouble to strike at all, the single door of the room was opened and a man entered, advancing toward the body. As he did so the door closed, apparently of its own volition; there was a grating, as of a key turned with difficulty, and the snap of the lock bolt as it shot into its socket. A sound of retiring footsteps in the passage outside ensued, and the man was to all appearance a prisoner. Advancing to the table, he stood a moment looking down at the body; then with a slight shrug of the shoulders walked over to one of the windows and hoisted the blind. The darkness outside was absolute, the panes were covered with dust, but by wiping this away he could see that the window was fortified with strong iron bars crossing it within a few inches of the glass and imbedded in the masonry on each side. He examined the other window. It was the same. He manifested no great curiosity in the matter, did not even so much as raise the sash. If he was a prisoner he was apparently a tractable one. Having completed his examination of the room, he seated himself in the armchair, took a book from his pocket, drew the stand with its candle alongside and began to read.

The man was young — not more than thirty — dark in complexion, smooth-shaven, with brown hair. His face was thin and high-nosed, with a broad forehead and a “firmness” of the chin and jaw which is said by those having it to denote resolution. The eyes were gray and steadfast, not moving except with definitive purpose. They were now for the greater part of the time fixed upon his book, but he occasionally withdrew them and turned them to the body on the table, not, apparently, from any dismal fascination which under such circumstances it might be supposed to exercise upon even a courageous person, nor with a conscious rebellion against the contrary influence which might dominate a timid one. He looked at it as if in his reading he had come upon something recalling him to a sense of his surroundings. Clearly this watcher by the dead was discharging his trust with intelligence and composure, as became him.

After reading for perhaps a half-hour he seemed to come to the end of a chapter and quietly laid away the book. He then rose and taking the reading-stand from the floor carried it into a corner of the room near one of the windows, lifted the candle from it and returned to the empty fireplace before which he had been sitting.

A moment later he walked over to the body on the table, lifted the sheet and turned it back from the head, exposing a mass of dark hair and a thin face-cloth, beneath which the features showed with even sharper definition than before. Shading his eyes by interposing his free hand between them and the candle, he stood looking at his motionless companion with a serious and tranquil regard. Satisfied with his inspection, he pulled the sheet over the face again and returning to the chair, took some matches off the candlestick, put them in the side pocket of his sack-coat and sat down. He then lifted the candle from its socket and looked at it critically, as if calculating how long it would last. It was barely two inches long; in another hour he would be in darkness. He replaced it in the candlestick and blew it out.

II

In a physician’s office in Kearny Street three men sat about a table, drinking punch and smoking. It was late in the evening, almost midnight, indeed, and there had been no lack of punch. The gravest of the three, Dr. Helberson, was the host — it was in his rooms they sat. He was about thirty years of age; the others were even younger; all were physicians.

"The superstitious awe with which the living regard the dead," said Dr. Helberson, "is hereditary and incurable. One needs no more be ashamed of it than of the fact that he inherits, for example, an incapacity for mathematics, or a tendency to lie."

The others laughed. "Oughtn't a man to be ashamed to lie?" asked the youngest of the three, who was in fact a medical student not yet graduated.

"My dear Harper, I said nothing about that. The tendency to lie is one thing; lying is another."

"But do you think," said the third man, "that this superstitious feeling, this fear of the dead, reasonless as we know it to be, is universal? I am myself not conscious of it."

"Oh, but it is 'in your system' for all that," replied Helberson; "it needs only the right conditions — what Shakespeare calls the 'confederate season' — to manifest itself in some very disagreeable way that will open your eyes. Physicians and soldiers are of course more nearly free from it than others."

"Physicians and soldiers! — why don't you add hangmen and headsmen? Let us have in all the assassin classes."

"No, my dear Mancher; the juries will not let the public executioners acquire sufficient familiarity with death to be altogether unmoved by it."

Young Harper, who had been helping himself to a fresh cigar at the sideboard, resumed his seat. "What would you consider conditions under which any man of woman born would become insupportably conscious of his share of our common weakness in this regard?" he asked, rather verbosely.

"Well, I should say that if a man were locked up all night with a corpse — alone — in a dark room — of a vacant house — with no bed covers to pull over his head — and lived through it without going altogether mad, he might justly boast himself not of woman born, nor yet, like Macduff, a product of Cæsarean section."

"I thought you never would finish piling up conditions," said Harper, "but I know a man who is neither a physician nor a soldier who will accept them all, for any stake you like to name."

"Who is he?"

"His name is Jarette — a stranger here; comes from my town in New York. I have no money to back him, but he will back himself with loads of it."

"How do you know that?"

"He would rather bet than eat. As for fear — I dare say he thinks it some cutaneous disorder, or possibly a particular kind of religious heresy.”

“What does he look like?” Helberson was evidently becoming interested.

“Like Mancher, here — might be his twin brother.”

“I accept the challenge,” said Helberson, promptly.

“Awfully obliged to you for the compliment, I’m sure,” drawled Mancher, who was growing sleepy. “Can’t I get into this?”

“Not against me,” Helberson said. “I don’t want *your* money.”

“All right,” said Mancher; “I’ll be the corpse.”

The others laughed.

The outcome of this crazy conversation we have seen.

III

In extinguishing his meagre allowance of candle Mr. Jarette’s object was to preserve it against some unforeseen need. He may have thought, too, or half thought, that the darkness would be no worse at one time than another, and if the situation became insupportable it would be better to have a means of relief, or even release. At any rate it was wise to have a little reserve of light, even if only to enable him to look at his watch.

No sooner had he blown out the candle and set it on the floor at his side than he settled himself comfortably in the arm-chair, leaned back and closed his eyes, hoping and expecting to sleep. In this he was disappointed; he had never in his life felt less sleepy, and in a few minutes he gave up the attempt. But what could he do? He could not go groping about in absolute darkness at the risk of bruising himself — at the risk, too, of blundering against the table and rudely disturbing the dead. We all recognize their right to lie at rest, with immunity from all that is harsh and violent. Jarette almost succeeded in making himself believe that considerations of this kind restrained him from risking the collision and fixed him to the chair.

While thinking of this matter he fancied that he heard a faint sound in the direction of the table — what kind of sound he could hardly have explained. He did not turn his head. Why should he — in the darkness? But he listened — why should he not? And listening he grew giddy and grasped the arms of the chair for support. There was a strange ringing in his ears; his head seemed bursting; his chest was oppressed by the constriction of his clothing. He wondered why it was so, and whether these were symptoms of fear. Then, with a long and strong expiration, his chest appeared to collapse, and with the great gasp with which he refilled his exhausted lungs the vertigo left him and he knew that so intently had he listened that he had held his breath almost to suffocation. The revelation was vexatious; he arose, pushed away the chair with his foot and strode to the centre of the room. But one does not stride far in darkness; he began to grope, and finding the wall followed it to an angle, turned, followed it past the two windows and there in another corner came into violent contact with the reading-stand, overturning it. It made a clatter that startled him. He was annoyed. “How the devil could I have forgotten where it was?” he muttered, and groped his way along the third wall to the fireplace. “I must put things to rights,” said he, feeling the floor for the candle.

Having recovered that, he lighted it and instantly turned his eyes to the table, where, naturally, nothing had undergone any change. The reading-stand lay unobserved upon the floor: he had forgotten to “put it to rights.” He looked all about the room, dispersing the deeper shadows by movements of the candle in his hand, and crossing over to the door tested it by turning and pulling the knob with all his strength. It did not yield and this seemed to afford him a certain satisfaction; indeed, he secured it more firmly by a bolt which he had not before observed. Returning to his chair, he looked at his watch; it was half-past nine. With a start of surprise he held the watch at his ear. It had not stopped. The candle was now visibly shorter. He again extinguished it, placing it on the floor at his side as before.

Mr. Jarette was not at his ease; he was distinctly dissatisfied with his surroundings, and with himself for being so. “What have I to fear?” he thought. “This is ridiculous and disgraceful; I will not be so great a fool.” But courage does not come of saying, “I will be courageous,” nor of recognizing its appropriateness to the occasion. The more Jarette condemned himself, the more reason he gave himself for condemnation; the greater the number of variations which he played upon the simple theme of the harmlessness of the dead, the more insupportable grew the discord of his emotions. “What!” he cried aloud in the anguish of his spirit, “what! shall I, who have not a shade of superstition in my nature — I, who have no belief in immortality — I, who know (and never more clearly than now) that the after-life is the dream of a desire — shall I lose at once my bet, my honor and my self-respect, perhaps my reason, because certain savage ancestors dwelling in caves and burrows conceived the monstrous notion that the dead walk by night? — that—” Distinctly, unmistakably, Mr. Jarette heard behind him a light, soft sound of footfalls, deliberate, regular, successively nearer!

IV

Just before daybreak the next morning Dr. Helberson and his young friend Harper were driving slowly through the streets of North Beach in the doctor’s coupé.

“Have you still the confidence of youth in the courage or stolidity of your friend?” said the elder man. “Do you believe that I have lost this wager?”

“I *know* you have,” replied the other, with enfeebling emphasis.

“Well, upon my soul, I hope so.”

It was spoken earnestly, almost solemnly. There was a silence for a few moments.

“Harper,” the doctor resumed, looking very serious in the shifting half-lights that entered the carriage as they passed the street lamps, “I don’t feel altogether comfortable about this business. If your friend had not irritated me by the contemptuous manner in which he treated my doubt of his endurance — a purely physical quality — and by the cool incivility of his suggestion that the corpse be that of a physician, I should not have gone on with it. If anything should happen we are ruined, as I fear we deserve to be.”

“What can happen? Even if the matter should be taking a serious turn, of which I am not at all afraid, Mancher has only to ‘resurrect’ himself and explain matters. With a genuine ‘subject’ from the dissecting-room, or one of your late patients, it might be different.”

Dr. Mancher, then, had been as good as his promise; he was the “corpse.”

Dr. Helberson was silent for a long time, as the carriage, at a snail’s pace, crept along the same street it had traveled two or three times already. Presently he spoke: “Well, let us hope that Mancher, if he has had to rise from the dead, has been discreet about it. A mistake in that might make matters worse instead of better.”

“Yes,” said Harper, “Jarette would kill him. But, Doctor” — looking at his watch as the carriage passed a gas lamp—”it is nearly four o’clock at last.”

A moment later the two had quitted the vehicle and were walking briskly toward the long-unoccupied house belonging to the doctor in which they had immured Mr. Jarette in accordance with the terms of the mad wager. As they neared it they met a man running. “Can you tell me,” he cried, suddenly checking his speed, “where I can find a doctor?”

“What’s the matter?” Helberson asked, non-committal.

“Go and see for yourself,” said the man, resuming his running.

They hastened on. Arrived at the house, they saw several persons entering in haste and excitement. In some of the dwellings near by and across the way the chamber windows were thrown up, showing a protrusion of heads. All heads were asking questions, none heeding the questions of the others. A few of the windows with closed blinds were illuminated; the inmates of those rooms were dressing to come down. Exactly opposite the door of the house that they sought a street lamp threw a yellow, insufficient light upon the scene, seeming to say that it could disclose a good deal more if it wished. Harper paused at the door and laid a hand upon his companion’s arm. “It is all up with us, Doctor,” he said in extreme agitation, which contrasted strangely with his free-and-easy words; “the game has gone against us all. Let’s not go in there; I’m for lying low.”

“I’m a physician,” said Dr. Helberson, calmly; “there may be need of one.”

They mounted the doorsteps and were about to enter. The door was open; the street lamp opposite lighted the passage into which it opened. It was full of men. Some had ascended the stairs at the farther end, and, denied admittance above, waited for better fortune. All were talking, none listening. Suddenly, on the upper landing there was a great commotion; a man had sprung out of a door and was breaking away from those endeavoring to detain him. Down through the mass of affrighted idlers he came, pushing them aside, flattening them against the wall on one side, or compelling them to cling to the rail on the other, clutching them by the throat, striking them savagely, thrusting them back down the stairs and walking over the fallen. His clothing was in disorder, he was without a hat. His eyes, wild and restless, had in them something more terrifying than his apparently superhuman strength. His face, smooth-shaven, was bloodless, his hair frost-white.

As the crowd at the foot of the stairs, having more freedom, fell away to let him pass Harper sprang forward. “Jarette! Jarette!” he cried.

Dr. Helberson seized Harper by the collar and dragged him back. The man looked into their faces without seeming to see them and sprang through the door, down the steps, into the street, and away. A stout policeman, who had had inferior success in conquering his way down the stairway, followed a moment later and started in pursuit, all the heads in the windows — those of women and children now — screaming in guidance.

The stairway being now partly cleared, most of the crowd having rushed down to the street to observe the flight and pursuit, Dr. Helberson mounted to the landing, followed by Harper. At a door in the upper passage an officer denied them admittance. “We are physicians,” said the doctor, and they passed in. The room was full of men, dimly seen, crowded about a table. The newcomers edged their way forward and looked over the shoulders of those in the front rank. Upon the table, the lower limbs covered with a sheet, lay the body of a man, brilliantly illuminated by the beam of a bull’s-eye lantern held by a policeman standing at the feet. The others, excepting those near the head — the officer himself — all were in darkness. The face of the body showed yellow, repulsive, horrible! The eyes were partly open and upturned and the jaw fallen; traces of froth defiled the lips, the chin, the cheeks. A tall man, evidently a doctor, bent over the body with his hand thrust under the shirt front. He withdrew it and placed two fingers in the open mouth. “This man has been about six hours dead,” said he. “It is a case for the coroner.”

He drew a card from his pocket, handed it to the officer and made his way toward the door.

“Clear the room — out, all!” said the officer, sharply, and the body disappeared as if it had been snatched away, as shifting the lantern he flashed its beam of light here and there against the faces of the crowd. The effect was amazing! The men, blinded, confused, almost terrified, made a tumultuous rush for the door, pushing, crowding, and tumbling over one another as they fled, like the hosts of Night before the shafts of Apollo. Upon the struggling, trampling mass the officer poured his light without pity and without cessation. Caught in the current, Helberson and Harper were swept out of the room and cascaded down the stairs into the street.

“Good God, Doctor! did I not tell you that Jarette would kill him?” said Harper, as soon as they were clear of the crowd.

“I believe you did,” replied the other, without apparent emotion.

They walked on in silence, block after block. Against the graying east the dwellings of the hill tribes showed in silhouette. The familiar milk wagon was already astir in the streets; the baker’s man would soon come upon the scene; the newspaper carrier was abroad in the land.

“It strikes me, youngster,” said Helberson, “that you and I have been having too much of the morning air lately. It is unwholesome; we need a change. What do you say to a tour in Europe?”

“When?”

“I’m not particular. I should suppose that four o’clock this afternoon would be early enough.”

“I’ll meet you at the boat,” said Harper.

Seven years afterward these two men sat upon a bench in Madison Square, New York, in familiar conversation. Another man, who had been observing them for some time, himself unobserved, approached and, courteously lifting his hat from locks as white as frost, said: “I beg your pardon, gentlemen, but when you have killed a man by coming to life, it is best to change clothes with him, and at the first opportunity make a break for liberty.”

Helberson and Harper exchanged significant glances. They were obviously amused. The former then looked the stranger kindly in the eye and replied:

“That has always been my plan. I entirely agree with you as to its advant—”

He stopped suddenly, rose and went white. He stared at the man, open-mouthed; he trembled visibly.

"Ah!" said the stranger, "I see that you are indisposed, Doctor. If you cannot treat yourself Dr. Harper can do something for you, I am sure."

"Who the devil are you?" said Harper, bluntly.

The stranger came nearer and, bending toward them, said in a whisper: "I call myself Jarette sometimes, but I don't mind telling you, for old friendship, that I am Dr. William Mancher."

The revelation brought Harper to his feet. "Mancher!" he cried; and Helberson added: "It is true, by God!"

"Yes," said the stranger, smiling vaguely, "it is true enough, no doubt."

He hesitated and seemed to be trying to recall something, then began humming a popular air. He had apparently forgotten their presence.

"Look here, Mancher," said the elder of the two, "tell us just what occurred that night — to Jarette, you know."

"Oh, yes, about Jarette," said the other. "It's odd I should have neglected to tell you — I tell it so often. You see I knew, by over-hearing him talking to himself, that he was pretty badly frightened. So I couldn't resist the temptation to come to life and have a bit of fun out of him — I couldn't really. That was all right, though certainly I did not think he would take it so seriously; I did not, truly. And afterward — well, it was a tough job changing places with him, and then — damn you! you didn't let me out!"

Nothing could exceed the ferocity with which these last words were delivered. Both men stepped back in alarm.

"We? — why — why," Helberson stammered, losing his self-possession utterly, "we had nothing to do with it."

"Didn't I say you were Drs. Hell-born and Sharper?" inquired the man, laughing.

"My name is Helberson, yes; and this gentleman is Mr. Harper," replied the former, reassured by the laugh. "But we are not physicians now; we are — well, hang it, old man, we are gamblers."

And that was the truth.

"A very good profession — very good, indeed; and, by the way, I hope Sharper here paid over Jarette's money like an honest stakeholder. A very good and honorable profession," he repeated, thoughtfully, moving carelessly away; "but I stick to the old one. I am High Supreme Medical Officer of the Bloomingdale Asylum; it is my duty to cure the superintendent."

THE MAN AND THE SNAKE

It is of veritabyll report, and attested of so many that there be nowe of wyse and learned none to gaynsaye it, that y’e serpente hys eye hath a magnetick propertie that whosoe falleth into its svasion is drawn forwards in despyte of his wille, and perisheth miserabyll by y’e creature hys byte.

Stretched at ease upon a sofa, in gown and slippers, Harker Brayton smiled as he read the foregoing sentence in old Morryster’s *Marvells of Science.* “The only marvel in the matter,” he said to himself, “is that the wise and learned in Morryster’s day should have believed such nonsense as is rejected by most of even the ignorant in ours.”

A train of reflection followed — for Brayton was a man of thought — and he unconsciously lowered his book without altering the direction of his eyes. As soon as the volume had gone below the line of sight, something in an obscure corner of the room recalled his attention to his surroundings. What he saw, in the shadow under his bed, was two small points of light, apparently about an inch apart. They might have been reflections of the gas jet above him, in metal nail heads; he gave them but little thought and resumed his reading. A moment later something — some impulse which it did not occur to him to analyze — impelled him to lower the book again and seek for what he saw before. The points of light were still there. They seemed to have become brighter than before, shining with a greenish lustre that he had not at first observed. He thought, too, that they might have moved a trifle — were somewhat nearer. They were still too much in shadow, however, to reveal their nature and origin to an indolent attention, and again he resumed his reading. Suddenly something in the text suggested a thought that made him start and drop the book for the third time to the side of the sofa, whence, escaping from his hand, it fell sprawling to the floor, back upward. Brayton, half-risen, was staring intently into the obscurity beneath the bed, where the points of light shone with, it seemed to him, an added fire. His attention was now fully aroused, his gaze eager and imperative. It disclosed, almost directly under the foot-rail of the bed, the coils of a large serpent — the points of light were its eyes! Its horrible head, thrust flatly forth from the innermost coil and resting upon the outermost, was directed straight toward him, the definition of the wide, brutal jaw and the idiot-like forehead serving to show the direction of its malevolent gaze. The eyes were no longer merely luminous points; they looked into his own with a meaning, a malign significance.

II

A snake in a bedroom of a modern city dwelling of the better sort is, happily, not so common a phenomenon as to make explanation altogether needless. Harker Brayton, a bachelor of thirty-five, a scholar, idler and something of an athlete, rich, popular and of sound health, had returned to San Francisco from all manner of remote and unfamiliar countries. His tastes, always a trifle luxurious, had taken on an added exuberance from long privation; and the resources of even the Castle Hotel being inadequate to their perfect gratification, he had gladly accepted the hospitality of his friend, Dr. Druring, the distinguished scientist. Dr. Druring's house, a large, old-fashioned one in what is now an obscure quarter of the city, had an outer and visible aspect of proud reserve. It plainly would not associate with the contiguous elements of its altered environment, and appeared to have developed some of the eccentricities which come of isolation. One of these was a "wing," conspicuously irrelevant in point of architecture, and no less rebellious in matter of purpose; for it was a combination of laboratory, menagerie and museum. It was here that the doctor indulged the scientific side of his nature in the study of such forms of animal life as engaged his interest and comforted his taste — which, it must be confessed, ran rather to the lower types. For one of the higher nimbly and sweetly to recommend itself unto his gentle senses it had at least to retain certain rudimentary characteristics allying it to such "dragons of the prime" as toads and snakes. His scientific sympathies were distinctly reptilian; he loved nature's vulgarians and described himself as the Zola of zoölogy. His wife and daughters not having the advantage to share his enlightened curiosity regarding the works and ways of our ill-starred fellow-creatures, were with needless austerity excluded from what he called the Snakery and doomed to companionship with their own kind, though to soften the rigors of their lot he had permitted them out of his great wealth to outdo the reptiles in the gorgeousness of their surroundings and to shine with a superior splendor.

Architecturally and in point of "furnishing" the Snakery had a severe simplicity befitting the humble circumstances of its occupants, many of whom, indeed, could not safely have been intrusted with the liberty that is necessary to the full enjoyment of luxury, for they had the troublesome peculiarity of being alive. In their own apartments, however, they were under as little personal restraint as was compatible with their protection from the baneful habit of swallowing one another; and, as Brayton had thoughtfully been apprised, it was more than a tradition that some of them had at divers times been found in parts of the premises where it would have embarrassed them to explain their presence.

Despite the Snakery and its uncanny associations — to which, indeed, he gave little attention — Brayton found life at the Druring mansion very much to his mind.

III

Beyond a smart shock of surprise and a shudder of mere loathing Mr. Brayton was not greatly affected. His first thought was to ring the call bell and bring a servant; but although the bell cord dangled within easy reach he made no movement toward it; it had occurred to his mind that the act might subject him to the suspicion of fear, which he certainly did not feel. He was more keenly conscious of the incongruous nature of the situation than affected by its perils; it was revolting, but absurd.

The reptile was of a species with which Brayton was unfamiliar. Its length he could only conjecture; the body at the largest visible part seemed about as thick as his forearm. In what way was it dangerous, if in any way? Was it venomous? Was it a constrictor? His knowledge of nature's danger signals did not enable him to say; he had never deciphered the code.

If not dangerous the creature was at least offensive. It was *de trop*—"matter out of place" — an impertinence. The gem was unworthy of the setting. Even the barbarous taste of our time and country, which had loaded the walls of the room with pictures, the floor with furniture and the furniture with bric-a-brac, had not quite fitted the place for this bit of the savage life of the jungle. Besides — insupportable thought! — the exhalations of its breath mingled with the atmosphere which he himself was breathing.

These thoughts shaped themselves with greater or less definition in Brayton's mind and begot action. The process is what we call consideration and decision. It is thus that we are wise and unwise. It is thus that the withered leaf in an autumn breeze shows greater or less intelligence than its fellows, falling upon the land or upon the lake. The secret of human action is an open one: something contracts our muscles. Does it matter if we give to the preparatory molecular changes the name of will?

Brayton rose to his feet and prepared to back softly away from the snake, without disturbing it if possible, and through the door. Men retire so from the presence of the great, for greatness is power and power is a menace. He knew that he could walk backward without error. Should the monster follow, the taste which had plastered the walls with paintings had consistently supplied a rack of murderous Oriental weapons from which he could snatch one to suit the occasion. In the mean time the snake’s eyes burned with a more pitiless malevolence than before.

Brayton lifted his right foot free of the floor to step backward. That moment he felt a strong aversion to doing so.

“I am accounted brave,” he thought; “is bravery, then, no more than pride? Because there are none to witness the shame shall I retreat?”

He was steadying himself with his right hand upon the back of a chair, his foot suspended.

“Nonsense!” he said aloud; “I am not so great a coward as to fear to seem to myself afraid.”

He lifted the foot a little higher by slightly bending the knee and thrust it sharply to the floor — an inch in front of the other! He could not think how that occurred. A trial with the left foot had the same result; it was again in advance of the right. The hand upon the chair back was grasping it; the arm was straight, reaching somewhat backward. One might have said that he was reluctant to lose his hold. The snake’s malignant head was still thrust forth from the inner coil as before, the neck level. It had not moved, but its eyes were now electric sparks, radiating an infinity of luminous needles.

The man had an ashy pallor. Again he took a step forward, and another, partly dragging the chair, which when finally released fell upon the floor with a crash. The man groaned; the snake made neither sound nor motion, but its eyes were two dazzling suns. The reptile itself was wholly concealed by them. They gave off enlarging rings of rich and vivid colors, which at their greatest expansion successively vanished like soap-bubbles; they seemed to approach his very face, and anon were an immeasurable distance away. He heard, somewhere, the continuous throbbing of a great drum, with desultory bursts of far music, inconceivably sweet, like the tones of an æolian harp. He knew it for the sunrise melody of Memnon’s statue, and thought he stood in the Nileside reeds hearing with exalted sense that immortal anthem through the silence of the centuries.

The music ceased; rather, it became by insensible degrees the distant roll of a retreating thunder-storm. A landscape, glittering with sun and rain, stretched before him, arched with a vivid rainbow framing in its giant curve a hundred visible cities. In the middle distance a vast serpent, wearing a crown, reared its head out of its voluminous convolutions and looked at him with his dead mother’s eyes. Suddenly this enchanting landscape seemed to rise swiftly upward like the drop scene at a theatre, and vanished in a blank. Something struck him a hard blow upon the face and breast. He had fallen to the floor; the blood ran from his broken nose and his bruised lips. For a time he was dazed and stunned, and lay with closed eyes, his face against the floor. In a few moments he had recovered, and then knew that this fall, by withdrawing his eyes, had broken the spell that held him. He felt that now, by keeping his gaze averted, he would be able to retreat. But the thought of the serpent within a few feet of his head, yet unseen — perhaps in the very act of springing upon him and throwing its coils about his throat — was too horrible! He lifted his head, stared again into those baleful eyes and was again in bondage.

The snake had not moved and appeared somewhat to have lost its power upon the imagination; the gorgeous illusions of a few moments before were not repeated. Beneath that flat and brainless brow its black, beady eyes simply glittered as at first with an expression unspeakably malignant. It was as if the creature, assured of its triumph, had determined to practise no more alluring wiles.

Now ensued a fearful scene. The man, prone upon the floor, within a yard of his enemy, raised the upper part of his body upon his elbows, his head thrown back, his legs extended to their full length. His face was white between its stains of blood; his eyes were strained open to their uttermost expansion. There was froth upon his lips; it dropped off in flakes. Strong convulsions ran through his body, making almost serpentile undulations. He bent himself at the waist, shifting his legs from side to side. And every movement left him a little nearer to the snake. He thrust his hands forward to brace himself back, yet constantly advanced upon his elbows.

IV

Dr. Druring and his wife sat in the library. The scientist was in rare good humor.

“I have just obtained by exchange with another collector,” he said, “a splendid specimen of the *ophiophagus*.”

“And what may that be?” the lady inquired with a somewhat languid interest.

“Why, bless my soul, what profound ignorance! My dear, a man who ascertains after marriage that his wife does not know Greek is entitled to a divorce. The *ophiophagus* is a snake that eats other snakes.”

“I hope it will eat all yours,” she said, absently shifting the lamp. “But how does it get the other snakes? By charming them, I suppose.”

“That is just like you, dear,” said the doctor, with an affectation of petulance. “You know how irritating to me is any allusion to that vulgar superstition about a snake’s power of fascination.”

The conversation was interrupted by a mighty cry, which rang through the silent house like the voice of a demon shouting in a tomb! Again and yet again it sounded, with terrible distinctness. They sprang to their feet, the man confused, the lady pale and speechless with fright. Almost before the echoes of the last cry had died away the doctor was out of the room, springing up the stairs two steps at a time. In the corridor in front of Brayton's chamber he met some servants who had come from the upper floor. Together they rushed at the door without knocking. It was unfastened and gave way. Brayton lay upon his stomach on the floor, dead. His head and arms were partly concealed under the foot rail of the bed. They pulled the body away, turning it upon the back. The face was daubed with blood and froth, the eyes were wide open, staring — a dreadful sight!

"Died in a fit," said the scientist, bending his knee and placing his hand upon the heart. While in that position, he chanced to look under the bed. "Good God!" he added, "how did this thing get in here?"

He reached under the bed, pulled out the snake and flung it, still coiled, to the center of the room, whence with a harsh, shuffling sound it slid across the polished floor till stopped by the wall, where it lay without motion. It was a stuffed snake; its eyes were two shoe buttons.

A HOLY TERROR

I

There was an entire lack of interest in the latest arrival at Hurdy-Gurdy. He was not even christened with the picturesquely descriptive nick-name which is so frequently a mining camp's word of welcome to the newcomer. In almost any other camp thereabout this circumstance would of itself have secured him some such appellation as "The White-headed Conundrum," or "No Sarvey" — an expression naively supposed to suggest to quick intelligences the Spanish *quien sabe*. He came without provoking a ripple of concern upon the social surface of Hurdy-Gurdy — a place which to the general Californian contempt of men's personal history superadded a local indifference of its own. The time was long past when it was of any importance who came there, or if anybody came. No one was living at Hurdy-Gurdy.

Two years before, the camp had boasted a stirring population of two or three thousand males and not fewer than a dozen females. A majority of the former had done a few weeks' earnest work in demonstrating, to the disgust of the latter, the singularly mendacious character of the person whose ingenious tales of rich gold deposits had lured them thither — work, by the way, in which there was as little mental satisfaction as pecuniary profit; for a bullet from the pistol of a public-spirited citizen had put that imaginative gentleman beyond the reach of aspersion on the third day of the camp's existence. Still, his fiction had a certain foundation in fact, and many had lingered a considerable time in and about Hurdy-Gurdy, though now all had been long gone.

But they had left ample evidence of their sojourn. From the point where Injun Creek falls into the Rio San Juan Smith, up along both banks of the former into the cañon whence it emerges, extended a double row of forlorn shanties that seemed about to fall upon one another's neck to bewail their desolation; while about an equal number appeared to have straggled up the slope on either hand and perched themselves upon commanding eminences, whence they craned forward to get a good view of the affecting scene. Most of these habitations were emaciated as by famine to the condition of mere skeletons, about which clung unlovely tatters of what might have been skin, but was really canvas. The little valley itself, torn and gashed by pick and shovel, was unhandsome with long, bending lines of decaying flume resting here and there upon the summits of sharp ridges, and stilting awkwardly across the intervals upon unhewn poles. The whole place presented that raw and forbidding aspect of arrested development which is a new country's substitute for the solemn grace of ruin wrought by time. Wherever there remained a patch of the original soil a rank overgrowth of weeds and brambles had spread upon the scene, and from its dank, unwholesome shades the visitor curious in such matters might have obtained numberless souvenirs of the camp's former glory — fellowless boots mantled with green mould and plethoric of rotting leaves; an occasional old felt hat; desultory remnants of a flannel shirt; sardine boxes inhumanly mutilated and a surprising profusion of black bottles distributed with a truly catholic impartiality, everywhere.

II

The man who had now rediscovered Hurdy-Gurdy was evidently not curious as to its archæology. Nor, as he looked about him upon the dismal evidences of wasted work and broken hopes, their dispiriting significance accentuated by the ironical pomp of a cheap gilding by the rising sun, did he supplement his sigh of weariness by one of sensibility. He simply removed from the back of his tired burro a miner's outfit a trifle larger than the animal itself, picketed that creature and selecting a hatchet from his kit moved off at once across the dry bed of Injun Creek to the top of a low, gravelly hill beyond.

Stepping across a prostrate fence of brush and boards he picked up one of the latter, split it into five parts and sharpened them at one end. He then began a kind of search, occasionally stooping to examine something with close attention. At last his patient scrutiny appeared to be rewarded with success, for he suddenly erected his figure to its full height, made a gesture of satisfaction, pronounced the word "Scarry" and at once strode away with long, equal steps, which he counted. Then he stopped and drove one of his stakes into the earth. He then looked carefully about him, measured off a number of paces over a singularly uneven ground and hammered in another. Pacing off twice the distance at a right angle to his former course he drove down a third, and repeating the process sank home the fourth, and then a fifth. This he split at the top and in the cleft inserted an old letter envelope covered with an intricate system of pencil tracks. In short, he staked off a hill claim in strict accordance with the local mining laws of Hurdy-Gurdy and put up the customary notice.

It is necessary to explain that one of the adjuncts to Hurdy-Gurdy — one to which that metropolis became afterward itself an adjunct — was a cemetery. In the first week of the camp's existence this had been thoughtfully laid out by a committee of citizens. The day after had been signalized by a debate between two members of the committee, with reference to a more eligible site, and on the third day the necropolis was inaugurated by a double funeral. As the camp had waned the cemetery had waxed; and long before the ultimate inhabitant, victorious alike over the insidious malaria and the forthright revolver, had turned the tail of his pack-ass upon Injun Creek the outlying settlement had become a populous if not popular suburb. And now, when the town was fallen into the sere and yellow leaf of an unlovely senility, the graveyard — though somewhat marred by time and circumstance, and not altogether exempt from innovations in grammar and experiments in orthography, to say nothing of the devastating coyote — answered the humble needs of its denizens with reasonable completeness. It comprised a generous two acres of ground, which with commendable thrift but needless care had been selected for its mineral unworth, contained two or three skeleton trees (one of which had a stout lateral branch from which a weather-wasted rope still significantly dangled), half a hundred gravelly mounds, a score of rude headboards displaying the literary peculiarities above mentioned and a struggling colony of prickly pears. Altogether, God's Location, as with characteristic reverence it had been called, could justly boast of an indubitably superior quality of desolation. It was in the most thickly settled part of this interesting demesne that Mr. Jefferson Doman staked off his claim. If in the prosecution of his design he should deem it expedient to remove any of the dead they would have the right to be suitably reinterred.

III

This Mr. Jefferson Doman was from Elizabethtown, New Jersey, where six years before he had left his heart in the keeping of a golden-haired, demure-mannered young woman named Mary Matthews, as collateral security for his return to claim her hand.

"I just *know* you'll never get back alive — you never do succeed in anything," was the remark which illustrated Miss Matthews's notion of what constituted success and, inferentially, her view of the nature of encouragement. She added: "If you don't I'll go to California too. I can put the coins in little bags as you dig them out."

This characteristically feminine theory of auriferous deposits did not commend itself to the masculine intelligence: it was Mr. Doman's belief that gold was found in a liquid state. He deprecated her intent with considerable enthusiasm, suppressed her sobs with a light hand upon her mouth, laughed in her eyes as he kissed away her tears, and with a cheerful “Ta-ta” went to California to labor for her through the long, loveless years, with a strong heart, an alert hope and a steadfast fidelity that never for a moment forgot what it was about. In the mean time, Miss Matthews had granted a monopoly of her humble talent for sacking up coins to Mr. Jo. Seeman, of New York, gambler, by whom it was better appreciated than her commanding genius for unsacking and bestowing them upon his local rivals. Of this latter aptitude, indeed, he manifested his disapproval by an act which secured him the position of clerk of the laundry in the State prison, and for her the *sobriquet* of “Split-faced Moll.” At about this time she wrote to Mr. Doman a touching letter of renunciation, inclosing her photograph to prove that she had no longer had a right to indulge the dream of becoming Mrs. Doman, and recounting so graphically her fall from a horse that the staid “plug” upon which Mr. Doman had ridden into Red Dog to get the letter made vicarious atonement under the spur all the way back to camp. The letter failed in a signal way to accomplish its object; the fidelity which had before been to Mr. Doman a matter of love and duty was thenceforth a matter of honor also; and the photograph, showing the once pretty face sadly disfigured as by the slash of a knife, was duly instated in his affections and its more comely predecessor treated with contumelious neglect. On being informed of this, Miss Matthews, it is only fair to say, appeared less surprised than from the apparently low estimate of Mr. Doman’s generosity which the tone of her former letter attested one would naturally have expected her to be. Soon after, however, her letters grew infrequent, and then ceased altogether.

But Mr. Doman had another correspondent, Mr. Barney Bree, of Hurdy-Gurdy, formerly of Red Dog. This gentleman, although a notable figure among miners, was not a miner. His knowledge of mining consisted mainly in a marvelous command of its slang, to which he made copious contributions, enriching its vocabulary with a wealth of uncommon phrases more remarkable for their aptness than their refinement, and which impressed the unlearned “tenderfoot” with a lively sense of the profundity of their inventor’s acquirements. When not entertaining a circle of admiring auditors from San Francisco or the East he could commonly be found pursuing the comparatively obscure industry of sweeping out the various dance houses and purifying the cuspidors.

Barney had apparently but two passions in life — love of Jefferson Doman, who had once been of some service to him, and love of whisky, which certainly had not. He had been among the first in the rush to Hurdy-Gurdy, but had not prospered, and had sunk by degrees to the position of grave digger. This was not a vocation, but Barney in a desultory way turned his trembling hand to it whenever some local misunderstanding at the card table and his own partial recovery from a prolonged debauch occurred coincidently in point of time. One day Mr. Doman received, at Red Dog, a letter with the simple postmark, “Hurdy, Cal.,” and being occupied with another matter, carelessly thrust it into a chink of his cabin for future perusal. Some two years later it was accidentally dislodged and he read it. It ran as follows: —

HURDY, June 6.

FRIEND JEFF: I’ve hit her hard in the boneyard. She’s blind and lousy. I’m on the divvy — that’s me, and mum’s my lay till you toot. Yours,

BARNEY.

P.S. — I’ve clayed her with Scarry.

With some knowledge of the general mining camp *argot* and of Mr. Bree’s private system for the communication of ideas Mr. Doman had no difficulty in understanding by this uncommon epistle that Barney while performing his duty as grave digger had uncovered a quartz ledge with no outcroppings; that it was visibly rich in free gold; that, moved by considerations of friendship, he was willing to accept Mr. Doman as a partner and awaiting that gentleman’s declaration of his will in the matter would discreetly keep the discovery a secret. From the postscript it was plainly inferable that in order to conceal the treasure he had buried above it the mortal part of a person named Scarry.

From subsequent events, as related to Mr. Doman at Red Dog, it would appear that before taking this precaution Mr. Bree must have had the thrift to remove a modest competency of the gold; at any rate, it was at about that time that he entered upon that memorable series of potations and treatings which is still one of the cherished traditions of the San Juan Smith country, and is spoken of with respect as far away as Ghost Rock and Lone Hand. At its conclusion some former citizens of Hurdy-Gurdy, for whom he had performed the last kindly office at the cemetery, made room for him among them, and he rested well.

IV

Having finished staking off his claim Mr. Doman walked back to the centre of it and stood again at the spot where his search among the graves had expired in the exclamation, “Scarry.” He bent again over the headboard that bore that name and as if to reinforce the senses of sight and hearing ran his forefinger along the rudely carved letters. Re-erecting himself he appended orally to the simple inscription the shockingly forthright epitaph, “She was a holy terror!”

Had Mr. Doman been required to make these words good with proof — as, considering their somewhat censorious character, he doubtless should have been — he would have found himself embarrassed by the absence of reputable witnesses, and hearsay evidence would have been the best he could command. At the time when Scarry had been prevalent in the mining camps thereabout — when, as the editor of the *Hurdy Herald* would have phrased it, she was “in the plenitude of her power” — Mr. Doman’s fortunes had been at a low ebb, and he had led the vagrantly laborious life of a prospector. His time had been mostly spent in the mountains, now with one companion, now with another. It was from the admiring recitals of these casual partners, fresh from the various camps, that his judgment of Scarry had been made up; he himself had never had the doubtful advantage of her acquaintance and the precarious distinction of her favor. And when, finally, on the termination of her perverse career at Hurdy-Gurdy he had read in a chance copy of the *Herald* her column-long obituary (written by the local humorist of that lively sheet in the highest style of his art) Doman had paid to her memory and to her historiographer’s genius the tribute of a smile and chivalrously forgotten her. Standing now at the grave-side of this mountain Messalina he recalled the leading events of her turbulent career, as he had heard them celebrated at his several campfires, and perhaps with an unconscious attempt at self-justification repeated that she was a holy terror, and sank his pick into her grave up to the handle. At that moment a raven, which had silently settled upon a branch of the blasted tree above his head, solemnly snapped its beak and uttered its mind about the matter with an approving croak.

Pursuing his discovery of free gold with great zeal, which he probably credited to his conscience as a grave digger, Mr. Barney Bree had made an unusually deep sepulcher, and it was near sunset before Mr. Doman, laboring with the leisurely deliberation of one who has “a dead sure thing” and no fear of an adverse claimant’s enforcement of a prior right, reached the coffin and uncovered it. When he had done so he was confronted by a difficulty for which he had made no provision; the coffin — a mere flat shell of not very well-preserved redwood boards, apparently — had no handles, and it filled the entire bottom of the excavation. The best he could do without violating the decent sanctities of the situation was to make the excavation sufficiently longer to enable him to stand at the head of the casket and getting his powerful hands underneath erect it upon its narrower end; and this he proceeded to do. The approach of night quickened his efforts. He had no thought of abandoning his task at this stage to resume it on the morrow under more advantageous conditions. The feverish stimulation of cupidity and the fascination of terror held him to his dismal work with an iron authority. He no longer idled, but wrought with a terrible zeal. His head uncovered, his outer garments discarded, his shirt opened at the neck and thrown back from his breast, down which ran sinuous rills of perspiration, this hardy and impenitent gold-getter and grave-robber toiled with a giant energy that almost dignified the character of his horrible purpose; and when the sun fringes had burned themselves out along the crest line of the western hills, and the full moon had climbed out of the shadows that lay along the purple plain, he had erected the coffin upon its foot, where it stood propped against the end of the open grave. Then, standing up to his neck in the earth at the opposite extreme of the excavation, as he looked at the coffin upon which the moonlight now fell with a full illumination he was thrilled with a sudden terror to observe upon it the startling apparition of a dark human head — the shadow of his own. For a moment this simple and natural circumstance unnerved him. The noise of his labored breathing frightened him, and he tried to still it, but his bursting lungs would not be denied. Then, laughing half-audibly and wholly without spirit, he began making movements of his head from side to side, in order to compel the apparition to repeat them. He found a comforting reassurance in asserting his command over his own shadow. He was temporizing, making, with unconscious prudence, a dilatory opposition to an impending catastrophe. He felt that invisible forces of evil were closing in upon him, and he parleyed for time with the Inevitable.

He now observed in succession several unusual circumstances. The surface of the coffin upon which his eyes were fastened was not flat; it presented two distinct ridges, one longitudinal and the other transverse. Where these intersected at the widest part there was a corroded metallic plate that reflected the moonlight with a dismal lustre. Along the outer edges of the coffin, at long intervals, were rust-eaten heads of nails. This frail product of the carpenter’s art had been put into the grave the wrong side up!

Perhaps it was one of the humors of the camp — a practical manifestation of the facetious spirit that had found literary expression in the topsy-turvy obituary notice from the pen of Hurdy-Gurdy’s great humorist. Perhaps it had some occult personal signification impenetrable to understandings uninstructed in local traditions. A more charitable hypothesis is that it was owing to a misadventure on the part of Mr. Barney Bree, who, making the interment unassisted (either by choice for the conservation of his golden secret, or through public apathy), had committed a blunder which he was afterward unable or unconcerned to rectify. However it had come about, poor Scarry had indubitably been put into the earth face downward.

When terror and absurdity make alliance, the effect is frightful. This strong-hearted and daring man, this hardy night worker among the dead, this defiant antagonist of darkness and desolation, succumbed to a ridiculous surprise. He was smitten with a thrilling chill — shivered, and shook his massive shoulders as if to throw off an icy hand. He no longer breathed, and the blood in his veins, unable to abate its impetus, surged hotly beneath his cold skin. Unleavened with oxygen, it mounted to his head and congested his brain. His physical functions had gone over to the enemy; his very heart was arrayed against him. He did not move; he could not have cried out. He needed but a coffin to be dead — as dead as the death that confronted him with only the length of an open grave and the thickness of a rotting plank between.

Then, one by one, his senses returned; the tide of terror that had overwhelmed his faculties began to recede. But with the return of his senses he became singularly unconscious of the object of his fear. He saw the moonlight gilding the coffin, but no longer the coffin that it gilded. Raising his eyes and turning his head, he noted, curiously and with surprise, the black branches of the dead tree, and tried to estimate the length of the weather-worn rope that dangled from its ghostly hand. The monotonous barking of distant coyotes affected him as something he had heard years ago in a dream. An owl flapped awkwardly above him on noiseless wings, and he tried to forecast the direction of its flight when it should encounter the cliff that reared its illuminated front a mile away. His hearing took account of a gopher’s stealthy tread in the shadow of the cactus. He was intensely observant; his senses were all alert; but he saw not the coffin. As one can gaze at the sun until it looks black and then vanishes, so his mind, having exhausted its capacities of dread, was no longer conscious of the separate existence of anything dreadful. The Assassin was cloaking the sword.

It was during this lull in the battle that he became sensible of a faint, sickening odor. At first he thought it was that of a rattle-snake, and involuntarily tried to look about his feet. They were nearly invisible in the gloom of the grave. A hoarse, gurgling sound, like the death-rattle in a human throat, seemed to come out of the sky, and a moment later a great, black, angular shadow, like the same sound made visible, dropped curving from the topmost branch of the spectral tree, fluttered for an instant before his face and sailed fiercely away into the mist along the creek.

It was the raven. The incident recalled him to a sense of the situation, and again his eyes sought the upright coffin, now illuminated by the moon for half its length. He saw the gleam of the metallic plate and tried without moving to decipher the inscription. Then he fell to speculating upon what was behind it. His creative imagination presented him a vivid picture. The planks no longer seemed an obstacle to his vision and he saw the livid corpse of the dead woman, standing in grave-clothes, and staring vacantly at him, with lidless, shrunken eyes. The lower jaw was fallen, the upper lip drawn away from the uncovered teeth. He could make out a mottled pattern on the hollow cheeks — the maculations of decay. By some mysterious process his mind reverted for the first time that day to the photograph of Mary Matthews. He contrasted its blonde beauty with the forbidding aspect of this dead face — the most beloved object that he knew with the most hideous that he could conceive.

The Assassin now advanced and displaying the blade laid it against the victim's throat. That is to say, the man became at first dimly, then definitely, aware of an impressive coincidence — a relation — a parallel between the face on the card and the name on the headboard. The one was disfigured, the other described a disfiguration. The thought took hold of him and shook him. It transformed the face that his imagination had created behind the coffin lid; the contrast became a resemblance; the resemblance grew to identity. Remembering the many descriptions of Scarry's personal appearance that he had heard from the gossips of his campfire he tried with imperfect success to recall the exact nature of the disfiguration that had given the woman her ugly name; and what was lacking in his memory fancy supplied, stamping it with the validity of conviction. In the maddening attempt to recall such scraps of the woman's history as he had heard, the muscles of his arms and hands were strained to a painful tension, as by an effort to lift a great weight. His body writhed and twisted with the exertion. The tendons of his neck stood out as tense as whip-cords, and his breath came in short, sharp gasps. The catastrophe could not be much longer delayed, or the agony of anticipation would leave nothing to be done by the *coup de grâce* of verification. The scarred face behind the lid would slay him through the wood.

A movement of the coffin diverted his thought. It came forward to within a foot of his face, growing visibly larger as it approached. The rusted metallic plate, with an inscription illegible in the moonlight, looked him steadily in the eye. Determined not to shrink, he tried to brace his shoulders more firmly against the end of the excavation, and nearly fell backward in the attempt. There was nothing to support him; he had unconsciously moved upon his enemy, clutching the heavy knife that he had drawn from his belt. The coffin had not advanced and he smiled to think it could not retreat. Lifting his knife he struck the heavy hilt against the metal plate with all his power. There was a sharp, ringing percussion, and with a dull clatter the whole decayed coffin lid broke in pieces and came away, falling about his feet. The quick and the dead were face to face — the frenzied, shrieking man — the woman standing tranquil in her silences. She was a holy terror!

V

Some months later a party of men and women belonging to the highest social circles of San Francisco passed through Hurdy-Gurdy on their way to the Yosemite Valley by a new trail. They halted for dinner and during its preparation explored the desolate camp. One of the party had been at Hurdy-Gurdy in the days of its glory. He had, indeed, been one of its prominent citizens; and it used to be said that more money passed over his faro table in any one night than over those of all his competitors in a week; but being now a millionaire engaged in greater enterprises, he did not deem these early successes of sufficient importance to merit the distinction of remark. His invalid wife, a lady famous in San Francisco for the costly nature of her entertainments and her exacting rigor with regard to the social position and "antecedents" of those who attended them, accompanied the expedition. During a stroll among the shanties of the abandoned camp Mr. Porfer directed the attention of his wife and friends to a dead tree on a low hill beyond Injun Creek.

"As I told you," he said, "I passed through this camp in 1852, and was told that no fewer than five men had been hanged here by vigilantes at different times, and all on that tree. If I am not mistaken, a rope is dangling from it yet. Let us go over and see the place."

Mr. Porfer did not add that the rope in question was perhaps the very one from whose fatal embrace his own neck had once had an escape so narrow that an hour's delay in taking himself out of that region would have spanned it.

Proceeding leisurely down the creek to a convenient crossing, the party came upon the cleanly picked skeleton of an animal which Mr. Porfer after due examination pronounced to be that of an ass. The distinguishing ears were gone, but much of the inedible head had been spared by the beasts and birds, and the stout bridle of horsehair was intact, as was the riata, of similar material, connecting it with a picket pin still firmly sunken in the earth. The wooden and metallic elements of a miner's kit lay near by. The customary remarks were made, cynical on the part of the men, sentimental and refined by the lady. A little later they stood by the tree in the cemetery and Mr. Porfer sufficiently unbent from his dignity to place himself beneath the rotten rope and confidently lay a coil of it about his neck, somewhat, it appeared, to his own satisfaction, but greatly to the horror of his wife, to whose sensibilities the performance gave a smart shock.

An exclamation from one of the party gathered them all about an open grave, at the bottom of which they saw a confused mass of human bones and the broken remnants of a coffin. Coyotes and buzzards had performed the last sad rites for pretty much all else. Two skulls were visible and in order to investigate this somewhat unusual redundancy one of the younger men had the hardihood to spring into the grave and hand them up to another before Mrs. Porfer could indicate her marked disapproval of so shocking an act, which, nevertheless, she did with considerable feeling and in very choice words. Pursuing his search among the dismal debris at the bottom of the grave the young man next handed up a rusted coffin plate, with a rudely cut inscription, which with difficulty Mr. Porfer deciphered and read aloud with an earnest and not altogether unsuccessful attempt at the dramatic effect which he deemed befitting to the occasion and his rhetorical abilities:

MANUELITA MURPHY. Born at the Mission San Pedro — Died in Hurdy-Gurdy, Aged 47. Hell's full of such.

In deference to the piety of the reader and the nerves of Mrs. Porfer's fastidious sisterhood of both sexes let us not touch upon the painful impression produced by this uncommon inscription, further than to say that the elocutionary powers of Mr. Porfer had never before met with so spontaneous and overwhelming recognition.

The next morsel that rewarded the ghoul in the grave was a long tangle of black hair defiled with clay: but this was such an anti-climax that it received little attention. Suddenly, with a short exclamation and a gesture of excitement, the young man unearthed a fragment of grayish rock, and after a hurried inspection handed it up to Mr. Porfer. As the sunlight fell upon it it glittered with a yellow luster — it was thickly studded with gleaming points. Mr. Porfer snatched it, bent his head over it a moment and threw it lightly away with the simple remark:

"Iron pyrites — fool's gold."

The young man in the discovery shaft was a trifle disconcerted, apparently.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Porfer, unable longer to endure the disagreeable business, had walked back to the tree and seated herself at its root. While rearranging a tress of golden hair which had slipped from its confinement she was attracted by what appeared to be and really was the fragment of an old coat. Looking about to assure herself that so unladylike an act was not observed, she thrust her jeweled hand into the exposed breast pocket and drew out a mouldy pocket-book. Its contents were as follows:

One bundle of letters, postmarked "Elizabethtown, New Jersey."

One circle of blonde hair tied with a ribbon.

One photograph of a beautiful girl.

One ditto of same, singularly disfigured.

One name on back of photograph—”Jefferson Doman.”

A few moments later a group of anxious gentlemen surrounded Mrs. Porfer as she sat motionless at the foot of the tree, her head dropped forward, her fingers clutching a crushed photograph. Her husband raised her head, exposing a face ghastly white, except the long, deforming cicatrice, familiar to all her friends, which no art could ever hide, and which now traversed the pallor of her countenance like a visible curse.

Mary Matthews Porfer had the bad luck to be dead.

THE SUITABLE SURROUNDINGS

THE NIGHT

One midsummer night a farmer’s boy living about ten miles from the city of Cincinnati was following a bridle path through a dense and dark forest. He had lost himself while searching for some missing cows, and near midnight was a long way from home, in a part of the country with which he was unfamiliar. But he was a stout-hearted lad, and knowing his general direction from his home, he plunged into the forest without hesitation, guided by the stars. Coming into the bridle path, and observing that it ran in the right direction, he followed it.

The night was clear, but in the woods it was exceedingly dark. It was more by the sense of touch than by that of sight that the lad kept the path. He could not, indeed, very easily go astray; the undergrowth on both sides was so thick as to be almost impenetrable. He had gone into the forest a mile or more when he was surprised to see a feeble gleam of light shining through the foliage skirting the path on his left. The sight of it startled him and set his heart beating audibly.

“The old Breede house is somewhere about here,” he said to himself. “This must be the other end of the path which we reach it by from our side. Ugh! what should a light be doing there?”

Nevertheless, he pushed on. A moment later he had emerged from the forest into a small, open space, mostly upgrown to brambles. There were remnants of a rotting fence. A few yards from the trail, in the middle of the “clearing,” was the house from which the light came, through an unglazed window. The window had once contained glass, but that and its supporting frame had long ago yielded to missiles flung by hands of venturesome boys to attest alike their courage and their hostility to the supernatural; for the Breede house bore the evil reputation of being haunted. Possibly it was not, but even the hardiest sceptic could not deny that it was deserted — which in rural regions is much the same thing.

Looking at the mysterious dim light shining from the ruined window the boy remembered with apprehension that his own hand had assisted at the destruction. His penitence was of course poignant in proportion to its tardiness and inefficacy. He half expected to be set upon by all the unworldly and bodiless malevolences whom he had outraged by assisting to break alike their windows and their peace. Yet this stubborn lad, shaking in every limb, would not retreat. The blood in his veins was strong and rich with the iron of the frontiersman. He was but two removes from the generation that had subdued the Indian. He started to pass the house.

As he was going by he looked in at the blank window space and saw a strange and terrifying sight, — the figure of a man seated in the centre of the room, at a table upon which lay some loose sheets of paper. The elbows rested on the table, the hands supporting the head, which was uncovered. On each side the fingers were pushed into the hair. The face showed dead-yellow in the light of a single candle a little to one side. The flame illuminated that side of the face, the other was in deep shadow. The man's eyes were fixed upon the blank window space with a stare in which an older and cooler observer might have discerned something of apprehension, but which seemed to the lad altogether soulless. He believed the man to be dead.

The situation was horrible, but not with out its fascination. The boy stopped to note it all. He was weak, faint and trembling; he could feel the blood forsaking his face. Nevertheless, he set his teeth and resolutely advanced to the house. He had no conscious intention — it was the mere courage of terror. He thrust his white face forward into the illuminated opening. At that instant a strange, harsh cry, a shriek, broke upon the silence of the night — the note of a screech-owl. The man sprang to his feet, overturning the table and extinguishing the candle. The boy took to his heels.

THE DAY BEFORE

"Good-morning, Colston. I am in luck, it seems. You have often said that my commendation of your literary work was mere civility, and here you find me absorbed — actually merged — in your latest story in the *Messenger*. Nothing less shocking than your touch upon my shoulder would have roused me to consciousness."

"The proof is stronger than you seem to know," replied the man addressed: "so keen is your eagerness to read my story that you are willing to renounce selfish considerations and forego all the pleasure that you could get from it."

"I don't understand you," said the other, folding the newspaper that he held and putting it into his pocket. "You writers are a queer lot, anyhow. Come, tell me what I have done or omitted in this matter. In what way does the pleasure that I get, or might get, from your work depend on me?"

"In many ways. Let me ask you how you would enjoy your breakfast if you took it in this street car. Suppose the phonograph so perfected as to be able to give you an entire opera, — singing, orchestration, and all; do you think you would get much pleasure out of it if you turned it on at your office during business hours? Do you really care for a serenade by Schubert when you hear it fiddled by an untimely Italian on a morning ferryboat? Are you always cocked and primed for enjoyment? Do you keep every mood on tap, ready to any demand? Let me remind you, sir, that the story which you have done me the honor to begin as a means of becoming oblivious to the discomfort of this car is a ghost story!"

"Well?"

"Well! Has the reader no duties corresponding to his privileges? You have paid five cents for that newspaper. It is yours. You have the right to read it when and where you will. Much of what is in it is neither helped nor harmed by time and place and mood; some of it actually requires to be read at once — while it is fizzing. But my story is not of that character. It is not 'the very latest advices' from Ghostland. You are not expected to keep yourself *au courant* with what is going on in the realm of spooks. The stuff will keep until you have leisure to put yourself into the frame of mind appropriate to the sentiment of the piece — which I respectfully submit that you cannot do in a street car, even if you are the only passenger. The solitude is not of the right sort. An author has rights which the reader is bound to respect."

"For specific example?"

"The right to the reader's undivided attention. To deny him this is immoral. To make him share your attention with the rattle of a street car, the moving panorama of the crowds on the sidewalks, and the buildings beyond — with any of the thousands of distractions which make our customary environment — is to treat him with gross injustice. By God, it is infamous!"

The speaker had risen to his feet and was steadying himself by one of the straps hanging from the roof of the car. The other man looked up at him in sudden astonishment, wondering how so trivial a grievance could seem to justify so strong language. He saw that his friend's face was uncommonly pale and that his eyes glowed like living coals.

"You know what I mean," continued the writer, impetuously crowding his words—"you know what I mean, Marsh. My stuff in this morning's *Messenger* is plainly sub-headed 'A Ghost Story.' That is ample notice to all. Every honorable reader will understand it as prescribing by implication the conditions under which the work is to be read."

The man addressed as Marsh winced a trifle, then asked with a smile: “What conditions? You know that I am only a plain business man who cannot be supposed to understand such things. How, when, where should I read your ghost story?”

“In solitude — at night — by the light of a candle. There are certain emotions which a writer can easily enough excite — such as compassion or merriment. I can move you to tears or laughter under almost any circumstances. But for my ghost story to be effective you must be made to feel fear — at least a strong sense of the supernatural — and that is a difficult matter. I have a right to expect that if you read me at all you will give me a chance; that you will make yourself accessible to the emotion that I try to inspire.”

The car had now arrived at its terminus and stopped. The trip just completed was its first for the day and the conversation of the two early passengers had not been interrupted. The streets were yet silent and desolate; the house tops were just touched by the rising sun. As they stepped from the car and walked away together Marsh narrowly eyed his companion, who was reported, like most men of uncommon literary ability, to be addicted to various destructive vices. That is the revenge which dull minds take upon bright ones in resentment of their superiority. Mr. Colston was known as a man of genius. There are honest souls who believe that genius is a mode of excess. It was known that Colston did not drink liquor, but many said that he ate opium. Something in his appearance that morning — a certain wildness of the eyes, an unusual pallor, a thickness and rapidity of speech — were taken by Mr. Marsh to confirm the report. Nevertheless, he had not the self-denial to abandon a subject which he found interesting, however it might excite his friend.

“Do you mean to say,” he began, “that if I take the trouble to observe your directions — place myself in the conditions that you demand: solitude, night and a tallow candle — you can with your ghostly work give me an uncomfortable sense of the supernatural, as you call it? Can you accelerate my pulse, make me start at sudden noises, send a nervous chill along my spine and cause my hair to rise?”

Colston turned suddenly and looked him squarely in the eyes as they walked. “You would not dare — you have not the courage,” he said. He emphasized the words with a contemptuous gesture. “You are brave enough to read me in a street car, but — in a deserted house — alone — in the forest — at night! Bah! I have a manuscript in my pocket that would kill you.”

Marsh was angry. He knew himself courageous, and the words stung him. “If you know such a place,” he said, “take me there to-night and leave me your story and a candle. Call for me when I’ve had time enough to read it and I’ll tell you the entire plot and — kick you out of the place.”

That is how it occurred that the farmer’s boy, looking in at an unglazed window of the Breede house, saw a man sitting in the light of a candle.

THE DAY AFTER

Late in the afternoon of the next day three men and a boy approached the Breede house from that point of the compass toward which the boy had fled the preceding night. The men were in high spirits; they talked very loudly and laughed. They made facetious and good-humored ironical remarks to the boy about his adventure, which evidently they did not believe in. The boy accepted their raillery with seriousness, making no reply. He had a sense of the fitness of things and knew that one who professes to have seen a dead man rise from his seat and blow out a candle is not a credible witness.

Arriving at the house and finding the door unlocked, the party of investigators entered without ceremony. Leading out of the passage into which this door opened was another on the right and one on the left. They entered the room on the left — the one which had the blank front window. Here was the dead body of a man.

It lay partly on one side, with the forearm beneath it, the cheek on the floor. The eyes were wide open; the stare was not an agreeable thing to encounter. The lower jaw had fallen; a little pool of saliva had collected beneath the mouth. An overthrown table, a partly burned candle, a chair and some paper with writing on it were all else that the room contained. The men looked at the body, touching the face in turn. The boy gravely stood at the head, assuming a look of ownership. It was the proudest moment of his life. One of the men said to him, “You’re a good ‘un” — a remark which was received by the two others with nods of acquiescence. It was Scepticism apologizing to Truth. Then one of the men took from the floor the sheet of manuscript and stepped to the window, for already the evening shadows were glooming the forest. The song of the whip-poor-will was heard in the distance and a monstrous beetle sped by the window on roaring wings and thundered away out of hearing. The man read:

THE MANUSCRIPT

“Before committing the act which, rightly or wrongly, I have resolved on and appearing before my Maker for judgment, I, James R. Colston, deem it my duty as a journalist to make a statement to the public. My name is, I believe, tolerably well known to the people as a writer of tragic tales, but the somberest imagination never conceived anything so tragic as my own life and history. Not in incident: my life has been destitute of adventure and action. But my mental career has been lurid with experiences such as kill and damn. I shall not recount them here — some of them are written and ready for publication elsewhere. The object of these lines is to explain to whomsoever may be interested that my death is voluntary — my own act. I shall die at twelve o'clock on the night of the 15th of July — a significant anniversary to me, for it was on that day, and at that hour, that my friend in time and eternity, Charles Breede, performed his vow to me by the same act which his fidelity to our pledge now entails upon me. He took his life in his little house in the Copeton woods. There was the customary verdict of 'temporary insanity.' Had I testified at that inquest — had I told all I knew, they would have called *me* mad!"

Here followed an evidently long passage which the man reading read to himself only. The rest he read aloud.

"I have still a week of life in which to arrange my worldly affairs and prepare for the great change. It is enough, for I have but few affairs and it is now four years since death became an imperative obligation.

"I shall bear this writing on my body; the finder will please hand it to the coroner.

"JAMES R. COLSTON.

"P.S. — Willard Marsh, on this the fatal fifteenth day of July I hand you this manuscript, to be opened and read under the conditions agreed upon, and at the place which I designated. I forego my intention to keep it on my body to explain the manner of my death, which is not important. It will serve to explain the manner of yours. I am to call for you during the night to receive assurance that you have read the manuscript. You know me well enough to expect me. But, my friend, it *will be after twelve o'clock.* May God have mercy on our souls!

"J.R.C."

Before the man who was reading this manuscript had finished, the candle had been picked up and lighted. When the reader had done, he quietly thrust the paper against the flame and despite the protestations of the others held it until it was burnt to ashes. The man who did this, and who afterward placidly endured a severe reprimand from the coroner, was a son-in-law of the late Charles Breede. At the inquest nothing could elicit an intelligent account of what the paper had contained.

FROM "THE TIMES"

"Yesterday the Commissioners of Lunacy committed to the asylum Mr. James R. Colston, a writer of some local reputation, connected with the *Messenger*. It will be remembered that on the evening of the 15th inst. Mr. Colston was given into custody by one of his fellow-lodgers in the Baine House, who had observed him acting very suspiciously, baring his throat and whetting a razor — occasionally trying its edge by actually cutting through the skin of his arm, *etc.* On being handed over to the police, the unfortunate man made a desperate resistance, and has ever since been so violent that it has been necessary to keep him in a strait-jacket. Most of our esteemed contemporary's other writers are still at large."

THE BOARDED WINDOW

In 1830, only a few miles away from what is now the great city of Cincinnati, lay an immense and almost unbroken forest. The whole region was sparsely settled by people of the frontier — restless souls who no sooner had hewn fairly habitable homes out of the wilderness and attained to that degree of prosperity which to-day we should call indigence than impelled by some mysterious impulse of their nature they abandoned all and pushed farther westward, to encounter new perils and privations in the effort to regain the meagre comforts which they had voluntarily renounced. Many of them had already forsaken that region for the remoter settlements, but among those remaining was one who had been of those first arriving. He lived alone in a house of logs surrounded on all sides by the great forest, of whose gloom and silence he seemed a part, for no one had ever known him to smile nor speak a needless word. His simple wants were supplied by the sale or barter of skins of wild animals in the river town, for not a thing did he grow upon the land which, if needful, he might have claimed by right of undisturbed possession. There were evidences of “improvement” — a few acres of ground immediately about the house had once been cleared of its trees, the decayed stumps of which were half concealed by the new growth that had been suffered to repair the ravage wrought by the ax. Apparently the man’s zeal for agriculture had burned with a failing flame, expiring in penitential ashes.

The little log house, with its chimney of sticks, its roof of warping clapboards weighted with traversing poles and its “chinking” of clay, had a single door and, directly opposite, a window. The latter, however, was boarded up — nobody could remember a time when it was not. And none knew why it was so closed; certainly not because of the occupant’s dislike of light and air, for on those rare occasions when a hunter had passed that lonely spot the recluse had commonly been seen sunning himself on his doorstep if heaven had provided sunshine for his need. I fancy there are few persons living to-day who ever knew the secret of that window, but I am one, as you shall see.

The man’s name was said to be Murlock. He was apparently seventy years old, actually about fifty. Something besides years had had a hand in his aging. His hair and long, full beard were white, his gray, lustreless eyes sunken, his face singularly seamed with wrinkles which appeared to belong to two intersecting systems. In figure he was tall and spare, with a stoop of the shoulders — a burden bearer. I never saw him; these particulars I learned from my grandfather, from whom also I got the man’s story when I was a lad. He had known him when living near by in that early day.

One day Murlock was found in his cabin, dead. It was not a time and place for coroners and newspapers, and I suppose it was agreed that he had died from natural causes or I should have been told, and should remember. I know only that with what was probably a sense of the fitness of things the body was buried near the cabin, alongside the grave of his wife, who had preceded him by so many years that local tradition had retained hardly a hint of her existence. That closes the final chapter of this true story — excepting, indeed, the circumstance that many years afterward, in company with an equally intrepid spirit, I penetrated to the place and ventured near enough to the ruined cabin to throw a stone against it, and ran away to avoid the ghost which every well-informed boy thereabout knew haunted the spot. But there is an earlier chapter — that supplied by my grandfather.

When Murlock built his cabin and began laying sturdily about with his ax to hew out a farm — the rifle, meanwhile, his means of support — he was young, strong and full of hope. In that eastern country whence he came he had married, as was the fashion, a young woman in all ways worthy of his honest devotion, who shared the dangers and privations of his lot with a willing spirit and light heart. There is no known record of her name; of her charms of mind and person tradition is silent and the doubter is at liberty to entertain his doubt; but God forbid that I should share it! Of their affection and happiness there is abundant assurance in every added day of the man’s widowed life; for what but the magnetism of a blessed memory could have chained that venturesome spirit to a lot like that?

One day Murlock returned from gunning in a distant part of the forest to find his wife prostrate with fever, and delirious. There was no physician within miles, no neighbor; nor was she in a condition to be left, to summon help. So he set about the task of nursing her back to health, but at the end of the third day she fell into unconsciousness and so passed away, apparently, with never a gleam of returning reason.

From what we know of a nature like his we may venture to sketch in some of the details of the outline picture drawn by my grandfather. When convinced that she was dead, Murlock had sense enough to remember that the dead must be prepared for burial. In performance of this sacred duty he blundered now and again, did certain things incorrectly, and others which he did correctly were done over and over. His occasional failures to accomplish some simple and ordinary act filled him with astonishment, like that of a drunken man who wonders at the suspension of familiar natural laws. He was surprised, too, that he did not weep

— surprised and a little ashamed; surely it is unkind not to weep for the dead. “To-morrow,” he said aloud, “I shall have to make the coffin and dig the grave; and then I shall miss her, when she is no longer in sight; but now — she is dead, of course, but it is all right — it *must* be all right, somehow. Things cannot be so bad as they seem.”

He stood over the body in the fading light, adjusting the hair and putting the finishing touches to the simple toilet, doing all mechanically, with soulless care. And still through his consciousness ran an undersense of conviction that all was right — that he should have her again as before, and everything explained. He had had no experience in grief; his capacity had not been enlarged by use. His heart could not contain it all, nor his imagination rightly conceive it. He did not know he was so hard struck; *that* knowledge would come later, and never go. Grief is an artist of powers as various as the instruments upon which he plays his dirges for the dead, evoking from some the sharpest, shrillest notes, from others the low, grave chords that throb recurrent like the slow beating of a distant drum. Some natures it startles; some it stupefies. To one it comes like the stroke of an arrow, stinging all the sensibilities to a keener life; to another as the blow of a bludgeon, which in crushing benumbs. We may conceive Murlock to have been that way affected, for (and here we are upon surer ground than that of conjecture) no sooner had he finished his pious work than, sinking into a chair by the side of the table upon which the body lay, and noting how white the profile showed in the deepening gloom, he laid his arms upon the table’s edge, and dropped his face into them, tearless yet and unutterably weary. At that moment came in through the open window a long, wailing sound like the cry of a lost child in the far deeps of the darkening wood! But the man did not move. Again, and nearer than before, sounded that unearthly cry upon his failing sense. Perhaps it was a wild beast; perhaps it was a dream. For Murlock was asleep.

Some hours later, as it afterward appeared, this unfaithful watcher awoke and lifting his head from his arms intently listened — he knew not why. There in the black darkness by the side of the dead, recalling all without a shock, he strained his eyes to see — he knew not what. His senses were all alert, his breath was suspended, his blood had stilled its tides as if to assist the silence. Who — what had waked him, and where was it?

Suddenly the table shook beneath his arms, and at the same moment he heard, or fancied that he heard, a light, soft step — another — sounds as of bare feet upon the floor!

He was terrified beyond the power to cry out or move. Perforce he waited — waited there in the darkness through seeming centuries of such dread as one may know, yet live to tell. He tried vainly to speak the dead woman’s name, vainly to stretch forth his hand across the table to learn if she were there. His throat was powerless, his arms and hands were like lead. Then occurred something most frightful. Some heavy body seemed hurled against the table with an impetus that pushed it against his breast so sharply as nearly to overthrow him, and at the same instant he heard and felt the fall of something upon the floor with so violent a thump that the whole house was shaken by the impact. A scuffling ensued, and a confusion of sounds impossible to describe. Murlock had risen to his feet. Fear had by excess forfeited control of his faculties. He flung his hands upon the table. Nothing was there!

There is a point at which terror may turn to madness; and madness incites to action. With no definite intent, from no motive but the wayward impulse of a madman, Murlock sprang to the wall, with a little groping seized his loaded rifle, and without aim discharged it. By the flash which lit up the room with a vivid illumination, he saw an enormous panther dragging the dead woman toward the window, its teeth fixed in her throat! Then there were darkness blacker than before, and silence; and when he returned to consciousness the sun was high and the wood vocal with songs of birds.

The body lay near the window, where the beast had left it when frightened away by the flash and report of the rifle. The clothing was deranged, the long hair in disorder, the limbs lay anyhow. From the throat, dreadfully lacerated, had issued a pool of blood not yet entirely coagulated. The ribbon with which he had bound the wrists was broken; the hands were tightly clenched. Between the teeth was a fragment of the animal’s ear.

A LADY FROM REDHORSE

CORONADO, JUNE 20.

I find myself more and more interested in him. It is not, I am sure, his — do you know any good noun corresponding to the adjective “handsome”? One does not like to say “beauty” when speaking of a man. He is beautiful enough, Heaven knows; I should not even care to trust you with him — faithfulest of all possible wives that you are — when he looks his best, as he always does. Nor do I think the fascination of his manner has much to do with it. You recollect that the charm of art inheres in that which is undefinable, and to you and me, my dear Irene, I fancy there is rather less of that in the branch of art under consideration than to girls in their first season. I fancy I know how my fine gentleman produces many of his effects and could perhaps give him a pointer on heightening them. Nevertheless, his manner is something truly delightful. I suppose what interests me chiefly is the man’s brains. His conversation is the best I have ever heard and altogether unlike any one else’s. He seems to know everything, as indeed he ought, for he has been everywhere, read everything, seen all there is to see — sometimes I think rather more than is good for him — and had acquaintance with the *queerest* people. And then his voice — Irene, when I hear it I actually feel as if I ought to have paid at the door, though of course it is my own door.

JULY 3.

I fear my remarks about Dr. Barritz must have been, being thoughtless, very silly, or you would not have written of him with such levity, not to say disrespect. Believe me, dearest, he has more dignity and seriousness (of the kind, I mean, which is not inconsistent with a manner sometimes playful and always charming) than any of the men that you and I ever met. And young Raynor — you knew Raynor at Monterey — tells me that the men all like him and that he is treated with something like deference everywhere. There is a mystery, too — something about his connection with the Blavatsky people in Northern India. Raynor either would not or could not tell me the particulars. I infer that Dr. Barritz is thought — don’t you dare to laugh! — a magician. Could anything be finer than that?

An ordinary mystery is not, of course, so good as a scandal, but when it relates to dark and dreadful practices — to the exercise of unearthly powers — could anything be more piquant? It explains, too, the singular influence the man has upon me. It is the undefinable in his art — black art. Seriously, dear, I quite tremble when he looks me full in the eyes with those unfathomable orbs of his, which I have already vainly attempted to describe to you. How dreadful if he has the power to make one fall in love! Do you know if the Blavatsky crowd have that power — outside of Sepoy?

JULY 16.

The strangest thing! Last evening while Auntie was attending one of the hotel hops (I hate them) Dr. Barritz called. It was scandalously late — I actually believe that he had talked with Auntie in the ballroom and learned from her that I was alone. I had been all the evening contriving how to worm out of him the truth about his connection with the Thugs in Sepoy, and all of that black business, but the moment he fixed his eyes on me (for I admitted him, I'm ashamed to say) I was helpless. I trembled, I blushed, I — O Irene, Irene, I love the man beyond expression and you know how it is yourself.

Fancy! I, an ugly duckling from Redhorse — daughter (they say) of old Calamity Jim — certainly his heiress, with no living relation but an absurd old aunt who spoils me a thousand and fifty ways — absolutely destitute of everything but a million dollars and a hope in Paris, — I daring to love a god like him! My dear, if I had you here I could tear your hair out with mortification.

I am convinced that he is aware of my feeling, for he stayed but a few moments, said nothing but what another man might have said half as well, and pretending that he had an engagement went away. I learned to-day (a little bird told me — the bell-bird) that he went straight to bed. How does that strike you as evidence of exemplary habits?

JULY 17.

That little wretch, Raynor, called yesterday and his babble set me almost wild. He never runs down — that is to say, when he exterminates a score of reputations, more or less, he does not pause between one reputation and the next. (By the way, he inquired about you, and his manifestations of interest in you had, I confess, a good deal of *vraisemblance.*.) Mr. Raynor observes no game laws; like Death (which he would inflict if slander were fatal) he has all seasons for his own. But I like him, for we knew each other at Redhorse when we were young. He was known in those days as “Giggles,” and I — O Irene, can you ever forgive me? — I was called “Gunny.” God knows why; perhaps in allusion to the material of my pinafores; perhaps because the name is in alliteration with “Giggles,” for Gig and I were inseparable playmates, and the miners may have thought it a delicate civility to recognize some kind of relationship between us.

Later, we took in a third — another of Adversity's brood, who, like Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy, had a chronic inability to adjudicate the rival claims of Frost and Famine. Between him and misery there was seldom anything more than a single suspender and the hope of a meal which would at the same time support life and make it insupportable. He literally picked up a precarious living for himself and an aged mother by “chloriding the dumps,” that is to say, the miners permitted him to search the heaps of waste rock for such pieces of “pay ore” as had been overlooked; and these he sacked up and sold at the Syndicate Mill. He became a member of our firm—”Gunny, Giggles, and Dumps” thenceforth — through my favor; for I could not then, nor can I now, be indifferent to his courage and prowess in defending against Giggles the immemorial right of his sex to insult a strange and unprotected female — myself. After old Jim struck it in the Calamity and I began to wear shoes and go to school, and in emulation Giggles took to washing his face and became Jack Raynor, of Wells, Fargo & Co., and old Mrs. Barts was herself chlorided to her fathers, Dumps drifted over to San Juan Smith and turned stage driver, and was killed by road agents, and so forth.

Why do I tell you all this, dear? Because it is heavy on my heart. Because I walk the Valley of Humility. Because I am subduing myself to permanent consciousness of my unworthiness to unloose the latchet of Dr. Barritz’s shoe. Because, oh dear, oh dear, there’s a cousin of Dumps at this hotel! I haven’t spoken to him. I never had much acquaintance with him, — but do you suppose he has recognized me? Do, please give me in your next your candid, sure-enough opinion about it, and say you don’t think so. Do you suppose He knows about me already, and that that is why He left me last evening when He saw that I blushed and trembled like a fool under His eyes? You know I can’t bribe *all* the newspapers, and I can’t go back on anybody who was civil to Gunny at Redhorse — not if I’m pitched out of society into the sea. So the skeleton sometimes rattles behind the door. I never cared much before, as you know, but now — *now* it is not the same. Jack Raynor I am sure of — he will not tell Him. He seems, indeed, to hold Him in such respect as hardly to dare speak to Him at all, and I’m a good deal that way myself. Dear, dear! I wish I had something besides a million dollars! If Jack were three inches taller I’d marry him alive and go back to Redhorse and wear sackcloth again to the end of my miserable days.

JULY 25.

We had a perfectly splendid sunset last evening and I must tell you all about it. I ran away from Auntie and everybody and was walking alone on the beach. I expect you to believe, you infidel! that I had not looked out of my window on the seaward side of the hotel and seen Him walking alone on the beach. If you are not lost to every feeling of womanly delicacy you will accept my statement without question. I soon established myself under my sunshade and had for some time been gazing out dreamily over the sea, when he approached, walking close to the edge of the water — it was ebb tide. I assure you the wet sand actually brightened about his feet! As he approached me he lifted his hat, saying, “Miss Dement, may I sit with you? — or will you walk with me?”

The possibility that neither might be agreeable seems not to have occurred to him. Did you ever know such assurance? Assurance? My dear, it was gall, downright *gall!* Well, I didn’t find it wormwood, and replied, with my untutored Redhorse heart in my throat, “I — I shall be pleased to do *anything*.” Could words have been more stupid? There are depths of fatuity in me, friend o’ my soul, that are simply bottomless!

He extended his hand, smiling, and I delivered mine into it without a moment’s hesitation, and when his fingers closed about it to assist me to my feet the consciousness that it trembled made me blush worse than the red west. I got up, however, and after a while, observing that he had not let go my hand I pulled on it a little, but unsuccessfully. He simply held on, saying nothing, but looking down into my face with some kind of smile — I didn’t know — how could I? — whether it was affectionate, derisive, or what, for I did not look at him. How beautiful he was! — with the red fires of the sunset burning in the depths of his eyes. Do you know, dear, if the Thugs and Experts of the Blavatsky region have any special kind of eyes? Ah, you should have seen his superb attitude, the god-like inclination of his head as he stood over me after I had got upon my feet! It was a noble picture, but I soon destroyed it, for I began at once to sink again to the earth. There was only one thing for him to do, and he did it; he supported me with an arm about my waist.

“Miss Dement, are you ill?” he said.

It was not an exclamation; there was neither alarm nor solicitude in it. If he had added: “I suppose that is about what I am expected to say,” he would hardly have expressed his sense of the situation more clearly. His manner filled me with shame and indignation, for I was suffering acutely. I wrenched my hand out of his, grasped the arm supporting me and pushing myself free, fell plump into the sand and sat helpless. My hat had fallen off in the struggle and my hair tumbled about my face and shoulders in the most mortifying way.

“Go away from me,” I cried, half choking. “O *please* go away, you — you Thug! How dare you think *that* when my leg is asleep?”

I actually said those identical words! And then I broke down and sobbed. Irene, I *blubbered*!

His manner altered in an instant — I could see that much through my fingers and hair. He dropped on one knee beside me, parted the tangle of hair and said in the tenderest way: “My poor girl, God knows I have not intended to pain you.

How should I? — I who love you — I who have loved you for — for years and years!"

He had pulled my wet hands away from my face and was covering them with kisses. My cheeks were like two coals, my whole face was flaming and, I think, steaming. What could I do? I hid it on his shoulder — there was no other place. And, O my dear friend, how my leg tingled and thrilled, and how I wanted to kick!

We sat so for a long time. He had released one of my hands to pass his arm about me again and I possessed myself of my handkerchief and was drying my eyes and my nose. I would not look up until that was done; he tried in vain to push me a little away and gaze into my face. Presently, when all was right, and it had grown a bit dark, I lifted my head, looked him straight in the eyes and smiled my best — my level best, dear.

"What do you mean," I said, "by 'years and years'?"

"Dearest," he replied, very gravely, very earnestly, "in the absence of the sunken cheeks, the hollow eyes, the lank hair, the slouching gait, the rags, dirt, and youth, can you not — will you not understand? Gunny, I'm Dumps!"

In a moment I was upon my feet and he upon his. I seized him by the lapels of his coat and peered into his handsome face in the deepening darkness. I was breathless with excitement.

"And you are not dead?" I asked, hardly knowing what I said.

"Only dead in love, dear. I recovered from the road agent's bullet, but this, I fear, is fatal."

"But about Jack — Mr. Raynor? Don't you know—"

"I am ashamed to say, darling, that it was through that unworthy person's suggestion that I came here from Vienna."

Irene, they have roped in your affectionate friend,

MARY JANE DEMENT.

P.S. — The worst of it is that there is no mystery; that was the invention of Jack Raynor, to arouse my curiosity. James is not a Thug. He solemnly assures me that in all his wanderings he has never set foot in Sepoy.

THE EYES OF THE PANTHER

I

ONE DOES NOT ALWAYS MARRY WHEN INSANE

A man and a woman — nature had done the grouping — sat on a rustic seat, in the late afternoon. The man was middle-aged, slender, swarthy, with the expression of a poet and the complexion of a pirate — a man at whom one would look again. The woman was young, blonde, graceful, with something in her figure and movements suggesting the word "lithe." She was habited in a gray gown with odd brown markings in the texture. She may have been beautiful; one could not readily say, for her eyes denied attention to all else. They were gray-green, long and narrow, with an expression defying analysis. One could only know that they were disquieting. Cleopatra may have had such eyes.

The man and the woman talked.

"Yes," said the woman, "I love you, God knows! But marry you, no. I cannot, will not."

"Irene, you have said that many times, yet always have denied me a reason. I've a right to know, to understand, to feel and prove my fortitude if I have it. Give me a reason."

"For loving you?"

The woman was smiling through her tears and her pallor. That did not stir any sense of humor in the man.

"No; there is no reason for that. A reason for not marrying me. I've a right to know. I must know. I will know!"

He had risen and was standing before her with clenched hands, on his face a frown — it might have been called a scowl. He looked as if he might attempt to learn by strangling her. She smiled no more — merely sat looking up into his face with a fixed, set regard that was utterly without emotion or sentiment. Yet it had something in it that tamed his resentment and made him shiver.

"You are determined to have my reason?" she asked in a tone that was entirely mechanical — a tone that might have been her look made audible.

"If you please — if I'm not asking too much."

Apparently this lord of creation was yielding some part of his dominion over his co-creature.

“Very well, you shall know: I am insane.”

The man started, then looked incredulous and was conscious that he ought to be amused. But, again, the sense of humor failed him in his need and despite his disbelief he was profoundly disturbed by that which he did not believe. Between our convictions and our feelings there is no good understanding.

“That is what the physicians would say,” the woman continued—”if they knew. I might myself prefer to call it a case of ‘possession.’ Sit down and hear what I have to say.”

The man silently resumed his seat beside her on the rustic bench by the wayside. Over-against them on the eastern side of the valley the hills were already sunset-flushed and the stillness all about was of that peculiar quality that foretells the twilight. Something of its mysterious and significant solemnity had imparted itself to the man’s mood. In the spiritual, as in the material world, are signs and presages of night. Rarely meeting her look, and whenever he did so conscious of the indefinable dread with which, despite their feline beauty, her eyes always affected him, Jenner Brading listened in silence to the story told by Irene Marlowe. In deference to the reader’s possible prejudice against the artless method of an unpractised historian the author ventures to substitute his own version for hers.

II

A ROOM MAY BE TOO NARROW FOR THREE, THOUGH ONE IS OUTSIDE

In a little log house containing a single room sparely and rudely furnished, crouching on the floor against one of the walls, was a woman, clasping to her breast a child. Outside, a dense unbroken forest extended for many miles in every direction. This was at night and the room was black dark: no human eye could have discerned the woman and the child. Yet they were observed, narrowly, vigilantly, with never even a momentary slackening of attention; and that is the pivotal fact upon which this narrative turns.

Charles Marlowe was of the class, now extinct in this country, of woodmen pioneers — men who found their most acceptable surroundings in sylvan solitudes that stretched along the eastern slope of the Mississippi Valley, from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. For more than a hundred years these men pushed ever westward, generation after generation, with rifle and ax, reclaiming from Nature and her savage children here and there an isolated acreage for the plow, no sooner reclaimed than surrendered to their less venturesome but more thrifty successors. At last they burst through the edge of the forest into the open country and vanished as if they had fallen over a cliff. The woodman pioneer is no more; the pioneer of the plains — he whose easy task it was to subdue for occupancy two-thirds of the country in a single generation — is another and inferior creation. With Charles Marlowe in the wilderness, sharing the dangers, hardships and privations of that strange, unprofitable life, were his wife and child, to whom, in the manner of his class, in which the domestic virtues were a religion, he was passionately attached. The woman was still young enough to be comely, new enough to the awful isolation of her lot to be cheerful. By withholding the large capacity for happiness which the simple satisfactions of the forest life could not have filled, Heaven had dealt honorably with her. In her light household tasks, her child, her husband and her few foolish books, she found abundant provision for her needs.

One morning in midsummer Marlowe took down his rifle from the wooden hooks on the wall and signified his intention of getting game.

“We’ve meat enough,” said the wife; “please don’t go out to-day. I dreamed last night, O, such a dreadful thing! I cannot recollect it, but I’m almost sure that it will come to pass if you go out.”

It is painful to confess that Marlowe received this solemn statement with less of gravity than was due to the mysterious nature of the calamity foreshadowed. In truth, he laughed.

“Try to remember,” he said. “Maybe you dreamed that Baby had lost the power of speech.”

The conjecture was obviously suggested by the fact that Baby, clinging to the fringe of his hunting-coat with all her ten pudgy thumbs was at that moment uttering her sense of the situation in a series of exultant goo-goos inspired by sight of her father’s raccoon-skin cap.

The woman yielded: lacking the gift of humor she could not hold out against his kindly badinage. So, with a kiss for the mother and a kiss for the child, he left the house and closed the door upon his happiness forever.

At nightfall he had not returned. The woman prepared supper and waited. Then she put Baby to bed and sang softly to her until she slept. By this time the fire on the hearth, at which she had cooked supper, had burned out and the room was lighted by a single candle. This she afterward placed in the open window as a sign and welcome to the hunter if he should approach from that side. She had thoughtfully closed and barred the door against such wild animals as might prefer it to an open window — of the habits of beasts of prey in entering a house uninvited she was not advised, though with true female prevision she may have considered the possibility of their entrance by way of the chimney. As the night wore on she became not less anxious, but more drowsy, and at last rested her arms upon the bed by the child and her head upon the arms. The candle in the window burned down to the socket, sputtered and flared a moment and went out unobserved; for the woman slept and dreamed.

In her dreams she sat beside the cradle of a second child. The first one was dead. The father was dead. The home in the forest was lost and the dwelling in which she lived was unfamiliar. There were heavy oaken doors, always closed, and outside the windows, fastened into the thick stone walls, were iron bars, obviously (so she thought) a provision against Indians. All this she noted with an infinite self-pity, but without surprise — an emotion unknown in dreams. The child in the cradle was invisible under its coverlet which something impelled her to remove. She did so, disclosing the face of a wild animal! In the shock of this dreadful revelation the dreamer awoke, trembling in the darkness of her cabin in the wood.

As a sense of her actual surroundings came slowly back to her she felt for the child that was not a dream, and assured herself by its breathing that all was well with it; nor could she forbear to pass a hand lightly across its face. Then, moved by some impulse for which she probably could not have accounted, she rose and took the sleeping babe in her arms, holding it close against her breast. The head of the child's cot was against the wall to which the woman now turned her back as she stood. Lifting her eyes she saw two bright objects starring the darkness with a reddish-green glow. She took them to be two coals on the hearth, but with her returning sense of direction came the disquieting consciousness that they were not in that quarter of the room, moreover were too high, being nearly at the level of the eyes — of her own eyes. For these were the eyes of a panther.

The beast was at the open window directly opposite and not five paces away. Nothing but those terrible eyes was visible, but in the dreadful tumult of her feelings as the situation disclosed itself to her understanding she somehow knew that the animal was standing on its hinder feet, supporting itself with its paws on the window-ledge. That signified a malign interest — not the mere gratification of an indolent curiosity. The consciousness of the attitude was an added horror, accentuating the menace of those awful eyes, in whose steadfast fire her strength and courage were alike consumed. Under their silent questioning she shuddered and turned sick. Her knees failed her, and by degrees, instinctively striving to avoid a sudden movement that might bring the beast upon her, she sank to the floor, crouched against the wall and tried to shield the babe with her trembling body without withdrawing her gaze from the luminous orbs that were killing her. No thought of her husband came to her in her agony — no hope nor suggestion of rescue or escape. Her capacity for thought and feeling had narrowed to the dimensions of a single emotion — fear of the animal’s spring, of the impact of its body, the buffeting of its great arms, the feel of its teeth in her throat, the mangling of her babe. Motionless now and in absolute silence, she awaited her doom, the moments growing to hours, to years, to ages; and still those devilish eyes maintained their watch.

Returning to his cabin late at night with a deer on his shoulders Charles Marlowe tried the door. It did not yield. He knocked; there was no answer. He laid down his deer and went round to the window. As he turned the angle of the building he fancied he heard a sound as of stealthy footfalls and a rustling in the undergrowth of the forest, but they were too slight for certainty, even to his practised ear. Approaching the window, and to his surprise finding it open, he threw his leg over the sill and entered. All was darkness and silence. He groped his way to the fire-place, struck a match and lit a candle.

Then he looked about. Cowering on the floor against a wall was his wife, clasping his child. As he sprang toward her she rose and broke into laughter, long, loud, and mechanical, devoid of gladness and devoid of sense — the laughter that is not out of keeping with the clanking of a chain. Hardly knowing what he did he extended his arms. She laid the babe in them. It was dead — pressed to death in its mother’s embrace.

III

THE THEORY OF THE DEFENSE

That is what occurred during a night in a forest, but not all of it did Irene Marlowe relate to Jenner Brading; not all of it was known to her. When she had concluded the sun was below the horizon and the long summer twilight had begun to deepen in the hollows of the land. For some moments Brading was silent, expecting the narrative to be carried forward to some definite connection with the conversation introducing it; but the narrator was as silent as he, her face averted, her hands clasping and unclasping themselves as they lay in her lap, with a singular suggestion of an activity independent of her will.

“It is a sad, a terrible story,” said Brading at last, “but I do not understand. You call Charles Marlowe father; that I know. That he is old before his time, broken by some great sorrow, I have seen, or thought I saw. But, pardon me, you said that you — that you—”

“That I am insane,” said the girl, without a movement of head or body.

“But, Irene, you say — please, dear, do not look away from me — you say that the child was dead, not demented.”

“Yes, that one — I am the second. I was born three months after that night, my mother being mercifully permitted to lay down her life in giving me mine.”

Brading was again silent; he was a trifle dazed and could not at once think of the right thing to say. Her face was still turned away. In his embarrassment he reached impulsively toward the hands that lay closing and unclosing in her lap, but something — he could not have said what — restrained him. He then remembered, vaguely, that he had never altogether cared to take her hand.

“Is it likely,” she resumed, “that a person born under such circumstances is like others — is what you call sane?”

Brading did not reply; he was preoccupied with a new thought that was taking shape in his mind — what a scientist would have called an hypothesis; a detective, a theory. It might throw an added light, albeit a lurid one, upon such doubt of her sanity as her own assertion had not dispelled.

The country was still new and, outside the villages, sparsely populated. The professional hunter was still a familiar figure, and among his trophies were heads and pelts of the larger kinds of game. Tales variously credible of nocturnal meetings with savage animals in lonely roads were sometimes current, passed through the customary stages of growth and decay, and were forgotten. A recent addition to these popular apocrypha, originating, apparently, by spontaneous generation in several households, was of a panther which had frightened some of their members by looking in at windows by night. The yarn had caused its little ripple of excitement — had even attained to the distinction of a place in the local newspaper; but Brading had given it no attention. Its likeness to the story to which he had just listened now impressed him as perhaps more than accidental. Was it not possible that the one story had suggested the other — that finding congenial conditions in a morbid mind and a fertile fancy, it had grown to the tragic tale that he had heard?

Brading recalled certain circumstances of the girl’s history and disposition, of which, with love’s incuriosity, he had hitherto been heedless — such as her solitary life with her father, at whose house no one, apparently, was an acceptable visitor and her strange fear of the night, by which those who knew her best accounted for her never being seen after dark. Surely in such a mind imagination once kindled might burn with a lawless flame, penetrating and enveloping the entire structure. That she was mad, though the conviction gave him the acutest pain, he could no longer doubt; she had only mistaken an effect of her mental disorder for its cause, bringing into imaginary relation with her own personality the vagaries of the local myth-makers. With some vague intention of testing his new “theory,” and no very definite notion of how to set about it he said, gravely, but with hesitation:

“Irene, dear, tell me — I beg you will not take offence, but tell me—”

“I have told you,” she interrupted, speaking with a passionate earnestness that he had not known her to show—”I have already told you that we cannot marry; is anything else worth saying?”

Before he could stop her she had sprung from her seat and without another word or look was gliding away among the trees toward her father’s house. Brading had risen to detain her; he stood watching her in silence until she had vanished in the gloom. Suddenly he started as if he had been shot; his face took on an expression of amazement and alarm: in one of the black shadows into which she had disappeared he had caught a quick, brief glimpse of shining eyes! For an instant he was dazed and irresolute; then he dashed into the wood after her, shouting: “Irene, Irene, look out! The panther! The panther!”

In a moment he had passed through the fringe of forest into open ground and saw the girl’s gray skirt vanishing into her father’s door. No panther was visible.

IV

AN APPEAL TO THE CONSCIENCE OF GOD

Jenner Brading, attorney-at-law, lived in a cottage at the edge of the town. Directly behind the dwelling was the forest. Being a bachelor, and therefore, by the Draconian moral code of the time and place denied the services of the only species of domestic servant known thereabout, the “hired girl,” he boarded at the village hotel, where also was his office. The woodside cottage was merely a lodging maintained — at no great cost, to be sure — as an evidence of prosperity and respectability. It would hardly do for one to whom the local newspaper had pointed with pride as “the foremost jurist of his time” to be “homeless,” albeit he may sometimes have suspected that the words “home” and “house” were not strictly synonymous. Indeed, his consciousness of the disparity and his will to harmonize it were matters of logical inference, for it was generally reported that soon after the cottage was built its owner had made a futile venture in the direction of marriage — had, in truth, gone so far as to be rejected by the beautiful but eccentric daughter of Old Man Marlowe, the recluse. This was publicly believed because he had told it himself and she had not — a reversal of the usual order of things which could hardly fail to carry conviction.

Brading’s bedroom was at the rear of the house, with a single window facing the forest.

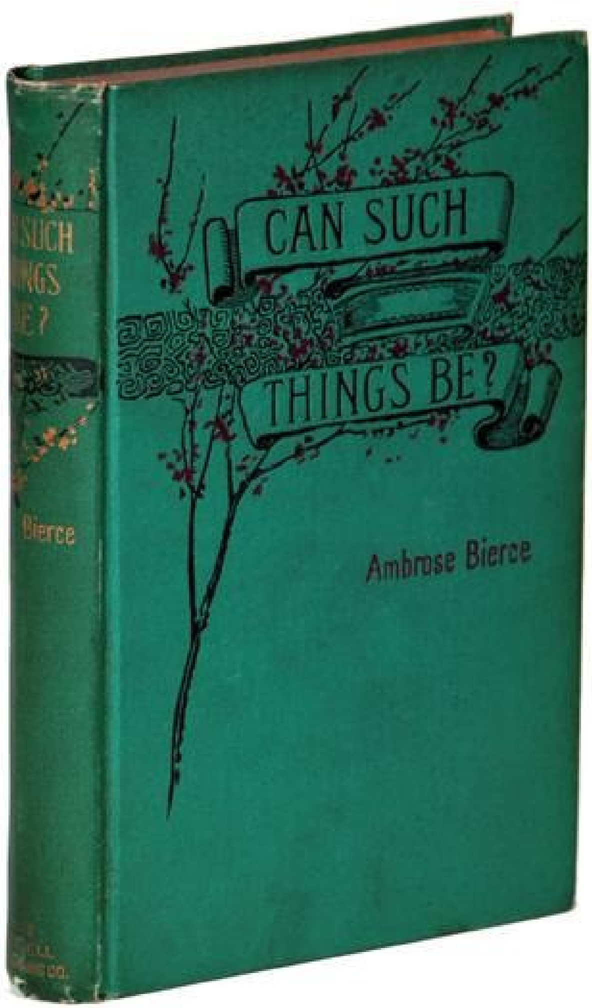
One night he was awakened by a noise at that window; he could hardly have said what it was like. With a little thrill of the nerves he sat up in bed and laid hold of the revolver which, with a forethought most commendable in one addicted to the habit of sleeping on the ground floor with an open window, he had put under his pillow. The room was in absolute darkness, but being unterrified he knew where to direct his eyes, and there he held them, awaiting in silence what further might occur. He could now dimly discern the aperture — a square of lighter black. Presently there appeared at its lower edge two gleaming eyes that burned with a malignant lustre inexpressibly terrible! Brading's heart gave a great jump, then seemed to stand still. A chill passed along his spine and through his hair; he felt the blood forsake his cheeks. He could not have cried out — not to save his life; but being a man of courage he would not, to save his life, have done so if he had been able. Some trepidation his coward body might feel, but his spirit was of sterner stuff. Slowly the shining eyes rose with a steady motion that seemed an approach, and slowly rose Brading's right hand, holding the pistol. He fired!

Blinded by the flash and stunned by the report, Brading nevertheless heard, or fancied that he heard, the wild, high scream of the panther, so human in sound, so devilish in suggestion. Leaping from the bed he hastily clothed himself and, pistol in hand, sprang from the door, meeting two or three men who came running up from the road. A brief explanation was followed by a cautious search of the house. The grass was wet with dew; beneath the window it had been trodden and partly leveled for a wide space, from which a devious trail, visible in the light of a lantern, led away into the bushes. One of the men stumbled and fell upon his hands, which as he rose and rubbed them together were slippery. On examination they were seen to be red with blood.

An encounter, unarmed, with a wounded panther was not agreeable to their taste; all but Brading turned back. He, with lantern and pistol, pushed courageously forward into the wood. Passing through a difficult undergrowth he came into a small opening, and there his courage had its reward, for there he found the body of his victim. But it was no panther. What it was is told, even to this day, upon a weather-worn headstone in the village churchyard, and for many years was attested daily at the graveside by the bent figure and sorrow-seamed face of Old Man Marlowe, to whose soul, and to the soul of his strange, unhappy child, peace. Peace and reparation.

CAN SUCH THINGS BE?

The New York publisher, Cassell, issued Bierce’s short story collection, *Can Such Things Be*, in 1893. Bierce continued to develop a fascination with the macabre and supernatural in these often chilling stories. The *Transvaal Weekly Illustrated* of South Africa had this to say about Bierce’s often shocking, thrilling effect on readers: “It may take you half an hour to read one of his stories, but if you have read it carefully and aright, you are months older when you finish it.” Brander Mathews of the *Cosmopolitan* stated that “Mr. Bierce has an astonishing faculty for the selection of the dramatic situation plucked at the very climax and catastrophe of the drama; and presented briefly and boldly and left to speak for itself.” In the July 1911 issue of *The Bookman*, critic Frederic Tabor Cooper wrote an extensive appraisal of Bierce’s work. Of Bierce’s stories featured in this collection, Cooper wrote, “It is in his supernatural stories that Mr. Bierce shows even more forcefully his wizardry of word and phrase, his almost magnetic power to make the absurd, the grotesque, the impossible, carry an overwhelming conviction.”


CAN SUCH
THINGS BE?
Ambrose Bierce
SUCH
NGS
BE?
Bierce

A first edition copy published by Cassell in 1893

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The Death of Halpin Frayser

i

For by death is wrought greater change than hath been shown. Whereas in general the spirit that removed cometh back upon occasion, and is sometimes seen of those in flesh (appearing in the form of the body it bore) yet it hath happened that the veritable body without the spirit hath walked. And it is attested of those encountering who have lived to speak thereon that a lich so raised up hath no natural affection, nor remembrance thereof, but only hate. Also, it is known that some spirits which in life were benign become by death evil altogether. — Hali.

One dark night in midsummer a man waking from a dreamless sleep in a forest lifted his head from the earth, and staring a few moments into the blackness, said: “Catherine Larue.” He said nothing more; no reason was known to him why he should have said so much.

The man was Halpin Frayser. He lived in St. Helena, but where he lives now is uncertain, for he is dead. One who practices sleeping in the woods with nothing under him but the dry leaves and the damp earth, and nothing over him but the branches from which the leaves have fallen and the sky from which the earth has fallen, cannot hope for great longevity, and Frayser had already attained the age of thirty-two. There are persons in this world, millions of persons, and far and away the best persons, who regard that as a very advanced age. They are the children. To those who view the voyage of life from the port of departure the bark that has accomplished any considerable distance appears already in close approach to the farther shore. However, it is not certain that Halpin Frayser came to his death by exposure.

He had been all day in the hills west of the Napa Valley, looking for doves and such small game as was in season. Late in the afternoon it had come on to be cloudy, and he had lost his bearings; and although he had only to go always downhill — everywhere the way to safety when one is lost — the absence of trails had so impeded him that he was overtaken by night while still in the forest. Unable in the darkness to penetrate the thickets of manzanita and other undergrowth, utterly bewildered and overcome with fatigue, he had lain down near the root of a large madrono and fallen into a dreamless sleep. It was hours later, in the very middle of the night, that one of God’s mysterious messengers, gliding ahead of the incalculable host of his companions sweeping westward with the dawn line, pronounced the awakening word in the ear of the sleeper, who sat upright and spoke, he knew not why, a name, he knew not whose.

Halpin Frayser was not much of a philosopher, nor a scientist. The circumstance that, waking from a deep sleep at night in the midst of a forest, he had spoken aloud a name that he had not in memory and hardly had in mind did not arouse an enlightened curiosity to investigate the phenomenon. He thought it odd, and with a little perfunctory shiver, as if in deference to a seasonal presumption that the night was chill, he lay down again and went to sleep. But his sleep was no longer dreamless.

He thought he was walking along a dusty road that showed white in the gathering darkness of a summer night. Whence and whither it led, and why he traveled it, he did not know, though all seemed simple and natural, as is the way in dreams; for in the Land Beyond the Bed surprises cease from troubling and the judgment is at rest. Soon he came to a parting of the ways; leading from the highway was a road less traveled, having the appearance, indeed, of having been long abandoned, because, he thought, it led to something evil; yet he turned into it without hesitation, impelled by some imperious necessity.

As he pressed forward he became conscious that his way was haunted by invisible existences whom he could not definitely figure to his mind. From among the trees on either side he caught broken and incoherent whispers in a strange tongue which yet he partly understood. They seemed to him fragmentary utterances of a monstrous conspiracy against his body and soul.

It was now long after nightfall, yet the interminable forest through which he journeyed was lit with a wan glimmer having no point of diffusion, for in its mysterious lumination nothing cast a shadow. A shallow pool in the guttered depression of an old wheel rut, as from a recent rain, met his eye with a crimson gleam. He stooped and plunged his hand into it. It stained his fingers; it was blood! Blood, he then observed, was about him everywhere. The weeds growing rankly by the roadside showed it in blots and splashes on their big, broad leaves. Patches of dry dust between the wheelways were pitted and spattered as with a red rain. Defiling the trunks of the trees were broad maculations of crimson, and blood dripped like dew from their foliage.

All this he observed with a terror which seemed not incompatible with the fulfillment of a natural expectation. It seemed to him that it was all in expiation of some crime which, though conscious of his guilt, he could not rightly remember. To the menaces and mysteries of his surroundings the consciousness was an added horror. Vainly he sought by tracing life backward in memory, to reproduce the moment of his sin; scenes and incidents came crowding tumultuously into his mind, one picture effacing another, or commingling with it in confusion and obscurity, but nowhere could he catch a glimpse of what he sought. The failure augmented his terror; he felt as one who has murdered in the dark, not knowing whom nor why. So frightful was the situation — the mysterious light burned with so silent and awful a menace; the noxious plants, the trees that by common consent are invested with a melancholy or baleful character, so openly in his sight conspired against his peace; from overhead and all about came so audible and startling whispers and the sighs of creatures so obviously not of earth — that he could endure it no longer, and with a great effort to break some malign spell that bound his faculties to silence and inaction, he shouted with the full strength of his lungs! His voice broken, it seemed, into an infinite multitude of unfamiliar sounds, went babbling and stammering away into the distant reaches of the forest, died into silence, and all was as before. But he had made a beginning at resistance and was encouraged. He said:

"I will not submit unheard. There may be powers that are not malignant traveling this accursed road. I shall leave them a record and an appeal. I shall relate my wrongs, the persecutions that I endure — I, a helpless mortal, a penitent, an unoffending poet!" Halpin Frayser was a poet only as he was a penitent: in his dream.

Taking from his clothing a small red-leather pocketbook, one-half of which was leaved for memoranda, he discovered that he was without a pencil. He broke a twig from a bush, dipped it into a pool of blood and wrote rapidly. He had hardly touched the paper with the point of his twig when a low, wild peal of laughter broke out at a measureless distance away, and growing ever louder, seemed approaching ever nearer; a soulless, heartless, and unjoyous laugh, like that of the loon, solitary by the lakeside at midnight; a laugh which culminated in an unearthly shout close at hand, then died away by slow gradations, as if the accursed being that uttered it had withdrawn over the verge of the world whence it had come. But the man felt that this was not so — that it was near by and had not moved.

A strange sensation began slowly to take possession of his body and his mind. He could not have said which, if any, of his senses was affected; he felt it rather as a consciousness — a mysterious mental assurance of some overpowering presence — some supernatural malevolence different in kind from the invisible existences that swarmed about him, and superior to them in power. He knew that it had uttered that hideous laugh. And now it seemed to be approaching him; from what direction he did not know — dared not conjecture. All his former fears were forgotten or merged in the gigantic terror that now held him in thrall. Apart from that, he had but one thought: to complete his written appeal to the benign powers who, traversing the haunted wood, might some time rescue him if he should be denied the blessing of annihilation. He wrote with terrible rapidity, the twig in his fingers rilling blood without renewal; but in the middle of a sentence his hands denied their service to his will, his arms fell to his sides, the book to the earth; and powerless to move or cry out, he found himself staring into the sharply drawn face and blank, dead eyes of his own mother, standing white and silent in the garments of the grave!

ii

In his youth Halpin Frayser had lived with his parents in Nashville, Tennessee. The Fraysers were well-to-do, having a good position in such society as had survived the wreck wrought by civil war. Their children had the social and educational opportunities of their time and place, and had responded to good associations and instruction with agreeable manners and cultivated minds. Halpin being the youngest and not over robust was perhaps a trifle “spoiled.” He had the double disadvantage of a mother’s assiduity and a father’s neglect. Frayser pere was what no Southern man of means is not — a politician. His country, or rather his section and State, made demands upon his time and attention so exacting that to those of his family he was compelled to turn an ear partly deafened by the thunder of the political captains and the shouting, his own included.

Young Halpin was of a dreamy, indolent and rather romantic turn, somewhat more addicted to literature than law, the profession to which he was bred. Among those of his relations who professed the modern faith of heredity it was well understood that in him the character of the late Myron Bayne, a maternal great-grandfather, had revisited the glimpses of the moon — by which orb Bayne had in his lifetime been sufficiently affected to be a poet of no small Colonial distinction. If not specially observed, it was observable that while a Frayser who was not the proud possessor of a sumptuous copy of the ancestral “poetical works” (printed at the family expense, and long ago withdrawn from an inhospitable market) was a rare Frayser indeed, there was an illogical indisposition to honor the great deceased in the person of his spiritual successor. Halpin was pretty generally deprecated as an intellectual black sheep who was likely at any moment to disgrace the flock by bleating in meter. The Tennessee Fraysers were a practical folk — not practical in the popular sense of devotion to sordid pursuits, but having a robust contempt for any qualities unfitting a man for the wholesome vocation of politics.

In justice to young Halpin it should be said that while in him were pretty faithfully reproduced most of the mental and moral characteristics ascribed by history and family tradition to the famous Colonial bard, his succession to the gift and faculty divine was purely inferential. Not only had he never been known to court the muse, but in truth he could not have written correctly a line of verse to save himself from the Killer of the Wise. Still, there was no knowing when the dormant faculty might wake and smite the lyre.

In the meantime the young man was rather a loose fish, anyhow. Between him and his mother was the most perfect sympathy, for secretly the lady was herself a devout disciple of the late and great Myron Bayne, though with the tact so generally and justly admired in her sex (despite the hardy calumniators who insist that it is essentially the same thing as cunning) she had always taken care to conceal her weakness from all eyes but those of him who shared it. Their common guilt in respect of that was an added tie between them. If in Halpin's youth his mother had "spoiled" him, he had assuredly done his part toward being spoiled. As he grew to such manhood as is attainable by a Southerner who does not care which way elections go the attachment between him and his beautiful mother — whom from early childhood he had called Katy — became yearly stronger and more tender. In these two romantic natures was manifest in a signal way that neglected phenomenon, the dominance of the sexual element in all the relations of life, strengthening, softening, and beautifying even those of consanguinity. The two were nearly inseparable, and by strangers observing their manner were not infrequently mistaken for lovers.

Entering his mother's boudoir one day Halpin Frayser kissed her upon the forehead, toyed for a moment with a lock of her dark hair which had escaped from its confining pins, and said, with an obvious effort at calmness:

"Would you greatly mind, Katy, if I were called away to California for a few weeks?"

It was hardly needful for Katy to answer with her lips a question to which her telltale cheeks had made instant reply. Evidently she would greatly mind; and the tears, too, sprang into her large brown eyes as corroborative testimony.

"Ah, my son," she said, looking up into his face with infinite tenderness, "I should have known that this was coming. Did I not lie awake a half of the night weeping because, during the other half, Grandfather Bayne had come to me in a dream, and standing by his portrait — young, too, and handsome as that — pointed to yours on the same wall? And when I looked it seemed that I could not see the features; you had been painted with a face cloth, such as we put upon the dead. Your father has laughed at me, but you and I, dear, know that such things are not for nothing. And I saw below the edge of the cloth the marks of hands on your throat — forgive me, but we have not been used to keep such things from each other. Perhaps you have another interpretation. Perhaps it does not mean that you will go to California. Or maybe you will take me with you?"

It must be confessed that this ingenious interpretation of the dream in the light of newly discovered evidence did not wholly commend itself to the son's more logical mind; he had, for the moment at least, a conviction that it foreshadowed a more simple and immediate, if less tragic, disaster than a visit to the Pacific Coast. It was Halpin Frayser's impression that he was to be garroted on his native heath.

"Are there not medicinal springs in California?" Mrs. Frayser resumed before he had time to give her the true reading of the dream—"places where one recovers from rheumatism and neuralgia? Look — my fingers feel so stiff; and I am almost sure they have been giving me great pain while I slept."

She held out her hands for his inspection. What diagnosis of her case the young man may have thought it best to conceal with a smile the historian is unable to state, but for himself he feels bound to say that fingers looking less stiff, and showing fewer evidences of even insensible pain, have seldom been submitted for medical inspection by even the fairest patient desiring a prescription of unfamiliar scenes.

The outcome of it was that of these two odd persons having equally odd notions of duty, the one went to California, as the interest of his client required, and the other remained at home in compliance with a wish that her husband was scarcely conscious of entertaining.

While in San Francisco Halpin Frayser was walking one dark night along the water front of the city, when, with a suddenness that surprised and disconcerted him, he became a sailor. He was in fact "shanghaied" aboard a gallant, gallant ship, and sailed for a far countree. Nor did his misfortunes end with the voyage; for the ship was cast ashore on an island of the South Pacific, and it was six years afterward when the survivors were taken off by a venturesome trading schooner and brought back to San Francisco.

Though poor in purse, Frayser was no less proud in spirit than he had been in the years that seemed ages and ages ago. He would accept no assistance from strangers, and it was while living with a fellow survivor near the town of St. Helena, awaiting news and remittances from home, that he had gone gunning and dreaming.

iii

The apparition confronting the dreamer in the haunted wood — the thing so like, yet so unlike his mother — was horrible! It stirred no love nor longing in his heart; it came unattended with pleasant memories of a golden past — inspired no sentiment of any kind; all the finer emotions were swallowed up in fear. He tried to turn and run from before it, but his legs were as lead; he was unable to lift his feet from the ground. His arms hung helpless at his sides; of his eyes only he retained control, and these he dared not remove from the lusterless orbs of the apparition, which he knew was not a soul without a body, but that most dreadful of all existences infesting that haunted wood — a body without a soul! In its blank stare was neither love, nor pity, nor intelligence — nothing to which to address an appeal for mercy. “An appeal will not lie,” he thought, with an absurd reversion to professional slang, making the situation more horrible, as the fire of a cigar might light up a tomb.

For a time, which seemed so long that the world grew gray with age and sin, and the haunted forest, having fulfilled its purpose in this monstrous culmination of its terrors, vanished out of his consciousness with all its sights and sounds, the apparition stood within a pace, regarding him with the mindless malevolence of a wild brute; then thrust its hands forward and sprang upon him with appalling ferocity! The act released his physical energies without unfettering his will; his mind was still spellbound, but his powerful body and agile limbs, endowed with a blind, insensate life of their own, resisted stoutly and well. For an instant he seemed to see this unnatural contest between a dead intelligence and a breathing mechanism only as a spectator — such fancies are in dreams; then he regained his identity almost as if by a leap forward into his body, and the straining automaton had a directing will as alert and fierce as that of its hideous antagonist.

But what mortal can cope with a creature of his dream? The imagination creating the enemy is already vanquished; the combat’s result is the combat’s cause. Despite his struggles — despite his strength and activity, which seemed wasted in a void, he felt the cold fingers close upon his throat. Borne backward to the earth, he saw above him the dead and drawn face within a hand’s breadth of his own, and then all was black. A sound as of the beating of distant drums — a murmur of swarming voices, a sharp, far cry signing all to silence, and Halpin Frayser dreamed that he was dead.

iv

A warm, clear night had been followed by a morning of drenching fog. At about the middle of the afternoon of the preceding day a little whiff of light vapor — a mere thickening of the atmosphere, the ghost of a cloud — had been observed clinging to the western side of Mount St. Helena, away up along the barren altitudes near the summit. It was so thin, so diaphanous, so like a fancy made visible, that one would have said: “Look quickly! in a moment it will be gone.”

In a moment it was visibly larger and denser. While with one edge it clung to the mountain, with the other it reached farther and farther out into the air above the lower slopes. At the same time it extended itself to north and south, joining small patches of mist that appeared to come out of the mountainside on exactly the same level, with an intelligent design to be absorbed. And so it grew and grew until the summit was shut out of view from the valley, and over the valley itself was an ever-extending canopy, opaque and gray. At Calistoga, which lies near the head of the valley and the foot of the mountain, there were a starless night and a sunless morning. The fog, sinking into the valley, had reached southward, swallowing up ranch after ranch, until it had blotted out the town of St. Helena, nine miles away. The dust in the road was laid; trees were adrip with moisture; birds sat silent in their coverts; the morning light was wan and ghastly, with neither color nor fire.

Two men left the town of St. Helena at the first glimmer of dawn, and walked along the road northward up the valley toward Calistoga. They carried guns on their shoulders, yet no one having knowledge of such matters could have mistaken them for hunters of bird or beast. They were a deputy sheriff from Napa and a detective from San Francisco — Holker and Jaralson, respectively. Their business was man-hunting.

“How far is it?” inquired Holker, as they strode along, their feet stirring white the dust beneath the damp surface of the road.

“The White Church? Only a half mile farther,” the other answered. “By the way,” he added, “it is neither white nor a church; it is an abandoned schoolhouse, gray with age and neglect. Religious services were once held in it — when it was white, and there is a graveyard that would delight a poet. Can you guess why I sent for you, and told you to come heeled?”

“Oh, I never have bothered you about things of that kind. I’ve always found you communicative when the time came. But if I may hazard a guess, you want me to help you arrest one of the corpses in the graveyard.”

“You remember Branscom?” said Jaralson, treating his companion’s wit with the inattention that it deserved.

“The chap who cut his wife’s throat? I ought; I wasted a week’s work on him and had my expenses for my trouble. There is a reward of five hundred dollars, but none of us ever got a sight of him. You don’t mean to say—”

“Yes, I do. He has been under the noses of you fellows all the time. He comes by night to the old graveyard at the White Church.”

“The devil! That’s where they buried his wife.”

“Well, you fellows might have had sense enough to suspect that he would return to her grave some time.”

“The very last place that anyone would have expected him to return to.”

“But you had exhausted all the other places. Learning your failure at them, I ‘laid for him’ there.”

“And you found him?”

“Damn it! he found ME. The rascal got the drop on me — regularly held me up and made me travel. It’s God’s mercy that he didn’t go through me. Oh, he’s a good one, and I fancy the half of that reward is enough for me if you’re needy.”

Holker laughed good humoredly, and explained that his creditors were never more importunate.

“I wanted merely to show you the ground, and arrange a plan with you,” the detective explained. “I thought it as well for us to be heeled, even in daylight.”

“The man must be insane,” said the deputy sheriff. “The reward is for his capture and conviction. If he’s mad he won’t be convicted.”

Mr. Holker was so profoundly affected by that possible failure of justice that he involuntarily stopped in the middle of the road, then resumed his walk with abated zeal.

“Well, he looks it,” assented Jaralson. “I’m bound to admit that a more unshaven, unshorn, unkempt, and uneverything wretch I never saw outside the ancient and honorable order of tramps. But I’ve gone in for him, and can’t make up my mind to let go. There’s glory in it for us, anyhow. Not another soul knows that he is this side of the Mountains of the Moon.”

“All right,” Holker said; “we will go and view the ground,” and he added, in the words of a once favorite inscription for tombstones: “‘where you must shortly lie’ — I mean, if old Branscom ever gets tired of you and your impertinent intrusion. By the way, I heard the other day that ‘Branscom’ was not his real name.”

“What is?”

“I can’t recall it. I had lost all interest in the wretch, and it did not fix itself in my memory — something like Pardee. The woman whose throat he had the bad taste to cut was a widow when he met her. She had come to California to look up some relatives — there are persons who will do that sometimes. But you know all that.”

“Naturally.”

“But not knowing the right name, by what happy inspiration did you find the right grave? The man who told me what the name was said it had been cut on the headboard.”

“I don’t know the right grave.” Jaralson was apparently a trifle reluctant to admit his ignorance of so important a point of his plan. “I have been watching about the place generally. A part of our work this morning will be to identify that grave. Here is the White Church.”

For a long distance the road had been bordered by fields on both sides, but now on the left there was a forest of oaks, madronos, and gigantic spruces whose lower parts only could be seen, dim and ghostly in the fog. The undergrowth was, in places, thick, but nowhere impenetrable. For some moments Holker saw nothing of the building, but as they turned into the woods it revealed itself in faint gray outline through the fog, looking huge and far away. A few steps more, and it was within an arm’s length, distinct, dark with moisture, and insignificant in size. It had the usual country-schoolhouse form — belonged to the packing-box order of architecture; had an underpinning of stones, a moss-grown roof, and blank window spaces, whence both glass and sash had long departed. It was ruined, but not a ruin — a typical Californian substitute for what are known to guide-bookers abroad as “monuments of the past.” With scarcely a glance at this uninteresting structure Jaralson moved on into the dripping undergrowth beyond.

“I will show you where he held me up,” he said. “This is the graveyard.”

Here and there among the bushes were small inclosures containing graves, sometimes no more than one. They were recognized as graves by the discolored stones or rotting boards at head and foot, leaning at all angles, some prostrate; by the ruined picket fences surrounding them; or, infrequently, by the mound itself showing its gravel through the fallen leaves. In many instances nothing marked the spot where lay the vestiges of some poor mortal — who, leaving “a large circle of sorrowing friends,” had been left by them in turn — except a depression in the earth, more lasting than that in the spirits of the mourners. The paths, if any paths had been, were long obliterated; trees of a considerable size had been permitted to grow up from the graves and thrust aside with root or branch the inclosing fences. Over all was that air of abandonment and decay which seems nowhere so fit and significant as in a village of the forgotten dead.

As the two men, Jaralson leading, pushed their way through the growth of young trees, that enterprising man suddenly stopped and brought up his shotgun to the height of his breast, uttered a low note of warning, and stood motionless, his eyes fixed upon something ahead. As well as he could, obstructed by brush, his companion, though seeing nothing, imitated the posture and so stood, prepared for what might ensue. A moment later Jaralson moved cautiously forward, the other following.

Under the branches of an enormous spruce lay the dead body of a man. Standing silent above it they noted such particulars as first strike the attention —

the face, the attitude, the clothing; whatever most promptly and plainly answers the unspoken question of a sympathetic curiosity.

The body lay upon its back, the legs wide apart. One arm was thrust upward, the other outward; but the latter was bent acutely, and the hand was near the throat. Both hands were tightly clenched. The whole attitude was that of desperate but ineffectual resistance to — what?

Near by lay a shotgun and a game bag through the meshes of which was seen the plumage of shot birds. All about were evidences of a furious struggle; small sprouts of poison-oak were bent and denuded of leaf and bark; dead and rotting leaves had been pushed into heaps and ridges on both sides of the legs by the action of other feet than theirs; alongside the hips were unmistakable impressions of human knees.

The nature of the struggle was made clear by a glance at the dead man’s throat and face. While breast and hands were white, those were purple — almost black. The shoulders lay upon a low mound, and the head was turned back at an angle otherwise impossible, the expanded eyes staring blankly backward in a direction opposite to that of the feet. From the froth filling the open mouth the tongue protruded, black and swollen. The throat showed horrible contusions; not mere finger-marks, but bruises and lacerations wrought by two strong hands that must have buried themselves in the yielding flesh, maintaining their terrible grasp until long after death. Breast, throat, face, were wet; the clothing was saturated; drops of water, condensed from the fog, studded the hair and mustache.

All this the two men observed without speaking — almost at a glance. Then Holker said:

“Poor devil! he had a rough deal.”

Jaralson was making a vigilant circumspection of the forest, his shotgun held in both hands and at full cock, his finger upon the trigger.

“The work of a maniac,” he said, without withdrawing his eyes from the inclosing wood. “It was done by Branscom — Pardee.”

Something half hidden by the disturbed leaves on the earth caught Holker’s attention. It was a red-leather pocketbook. He picked it up and opened it. It contained leaves of white paper for memoranda, and upon the first leaf was the name “Halpin Frayser.” Written in red on several succeeding leaves — scrawled as if in haste and barely legible — were the following lines, which Holker read aloud, while his companion continued scanning the dim gray confines of their narrow world and hearing matter of apprehension in the drip of water from every burdened branch:

“Enthralled by some mysterious spell, I stood
In the lit gloom of an enchanted wood.

The cypress there and myrtle twined their boughs,
Significant, in baleful brotherhood.
“The brooding willow whispered to the yew;
Beneath, the deadly nightshade and the rue,
With immortelles self-woven into strange
Funereal shapes, and horrid nettles grew.
“No song of bird nor any drone of bees,
Nor light leaf lifted by the wholesome breeze:
The air was stagnant all, and Silence was
A living thing that breathed among the trees.
“Conspiring spirits whispered in the gloom,
Half-heard, the stilly secrets of the tomb.
With blood the trees were all adrip; the leaves
Shone in the witch-light with a ruddy bloom.
“I cried aloud! — the spell, unbroken still,
Rested upon my spirit and my will.
Unsouled, unhearted, hopeless and forlorn,
I strove with monstrous presages of ill!
“At last the viewless—”

Holker ceased reading; there was no more to read. The manuscript broke off in the middle of a line.

“That sounds like Bayne,” said Jaralson, who was something of a scholar in his way. He had abated his vigilance and stood looking down at the body.

“Who’s Bayne?” Holker asked rather incuriously.

“Myron Bayne, a chap who flourished in the early years of the nation — more than a century ago. Wrote mighty dismal stuff; I have his collected works. That poem is not among them, but it must have been omitted by mistake.”

“It is cold,” said Holker; “let us leave here; we must have up the coroner from Napa.”

Jaralson said nothing, but made a movement in compliance. Passing the end of the slight elevation of earth upon which the dead man’s head and shoulders lay, his foot struck some hard substance under the rotting forest leaves, and he took the trouble to kick it into view. It was a fallen headboard, and painted on it were the hardly decipherable words, “Catharine Larue.”

“Larue, Larue!” exclaimed Holker, with sudden animation. “Why, that is the real name of Branscom — not Pardee. And — bless my soul! how it all comes to me — the murdered woman’s name had been Frayser!”

“There is some rascally mystery here,” said Detective Jaralson. “I hate anything of that kind.”

There came to them out of the fog — seemingly from a great distance — the sound of a laugh, a low, deliberate, soulless laugh, which had no more of joy than that of a hyena night-prowling in the desert; a laugh that rose by slow gradation, louder and louder, clearer, more distinct and terrible, until it seemed barely outside the narrow circle of their vision; a laugh so unnatural, so unhuman, so devilish, that it filled those hardy man-hunters with a sense of dread unspeakable! They did not move their weapons nor think of them; the menace of that horrible sound was not of the kind to be met with arms. As it had grown out of silence, so now it died away; from a culminating shout which had seemed almost in their ears, it drew itself away into the distance, until its failing notes, joyless and mechanical to the last, sank to silence at a measureless remove.

The Secret of Macarger’s Gulch

North Westwardly from Indian Hill, about nine miles as the crow flies, is Macarger’s Gulch. It is not much of a gulch — a mere depression between two wooded ridges of inconsiderable height. From its mouth up to its head — for gulches, like rivers, have an anatomy of their own — the distance does not exceed two miles, and the width at bottom is at only one place more than a dozen yards; for most of the distance on either side of the little brook which drains it in winter, and goes dry in the early spring, there is no level ground at all; the steep slopes of the hills, covered with an almost impenetrable growth of manzanita and chemisal, are parted by nothing but the width of the water course. No one but an occasional enterprising hunter of the vicinity ever goes into Macarger’s Gulch, and five miles away it is unknown, even by name. Within that distance in any direction are far more conspicuous topographical features without names, and one might try in vain to ascertain by local inquiry the origin of the name of this one.

About midway between the head and the mouth of Macarger’s Gulch, the hill on the right as you ascend is cloven by another gulch, a short dry one, and at the junction of the two is a level space of two or three acres, and there a few years ago stood an old board house containing one small room. How the component parts of the house, few and simple as they were, had been assembled at that almost inaccessible point is a problem in the solution of which there would be greater satisfaction than advantage. Possibly the creek bed is a reformed road. It is certain that the gulch was at one time pretty thoroughly prospected by miners, who must have had some means of getting in with at least pack animals carrying tools and supplies; their profits, apparently, were not such as would have justified any considerable outlay to connect Macarger’s Gulch with any center of civilization enjoying the distinction of a sawmill. The house, however, was there, most of it. It lacked a door and a window frame, and the chimney of mud and stones had fallen into an unlovely heap, overgrown with rank weeds. Such humble furniture as there may once have been and much of the lower weatherboarding, had served as fuel in the camp fires of hunters; as had also, probably, the curbing of an old well, which at the time I write of existed in the form of a rather wide but not very deep depression near by.

One afternoon in the summer of 1874, I passed up Macarger’s Gulch from the narrow valley into which it opens, by following the dry bed of the brook. I was quail-shooting and had made a bag of about a dozen birds by the time I had reached the house described, of whose existence I was until then unaware. After rather carelessly inspecting the ruin I resumed my sport, and having fairly good success prolonged it until near sunset, when it occurred to me that I was a long way from any human habitation — too far to reach one by nightfall. But in my game bag was food, and the old house would afford shelter, if shelter were needed on a warm and dewless night in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, where one may sleep in comfort on the pine needles, without covering. I am fond of solitude and love the night, so my resolution to “camp out” was soon taken, and by the time that it was dark I had made my bed of boughs and grasses in a corner of the room and was roasting a quail at a fire that I had kindled on the hearth. The smoke escaped out of the ruined chimney, the light illuminated the room with a kindly glow, and as I ate my simple meal of plain bird and drank the remains of a bottle of red wine which had served me all the afternoon in place of the water, which the region did not supply, I experienced a sense of comfort which better fare and accommodations do not always give.

Nevertheless, there was something lacking. I had a sense of comfort, but not of security. I detected myself staring more frequently at the open doorway and blank window than I could find warrant for doing. Outside these apertures all was black, and I was unable to repress a certain feeling of apprehension as my fancy pictured the outer world and filled it with unfriendly entities, natural and supernatural — chief among which, in their respective classes, were the grizzly bear, which I knew was occasionally still seen in that region, and the ghost, which I had reason to think was not. Unfortunately, our feelings do not always respect the law of probabilities, and to me that evening, the possible and the impossible were equally disquieting.

Everyone who has had experience in the matter must have observed that one confronts the actual and imaginary perils of the night with far less apprehension in the open air than in a house with an open doorway. I felt this now as I lay on my leafy couch in a corner of the room next to the chimney and permitted my fire to die out. So strong became my sense of the presence of something malign and menacing in the place, that I found myself almost unable to withdraw my eyes from the opening, as in the deepening darkness it became more and more indistinct. And when the last little flame flickered and went out I grasped the shotgun which I had laid at my side and actually turned the muzzle in the direction of the now invisible entrance, my thumb on one of the hammers, ready to cock the piece, my breath suspended, my muscles rigid and tense. But later I laid down the weapon with a sense of shame and mortification. What did I fear, and why? — I, to whom the night had been

a more familiar face
Than that of man —

I, in whom that element of hereditary superstition from which none of us is altogether free had given to solitude and darkness and silence only a more alluring interest and charm! I was unable to comprehend my folly, and losing in the conjecture the thing conjectured of, I fell asleep. And then I dreamed.

I was in a great city in a foreign land — a city whose people were of my own race, with minor differences of speech and costume; yet precisely what these were I could not say; my sense of them was indistinct. The city was dominated by a great castle upon an overlooking height whose name I knew, but could not speak. I walked through many streets, some broad and straight with high, modern buildings, some narrow, gloomy, and tortuous, between the gables of quaint old houses whose overhanging stories, elaborately ornamented with carvings in wood and stone, almost met above my head.

I sought someone whom I had never seen, yet knew that I should recognize when found. My quest was not aimless and fortuitous; it had a definite method. I turned from one street into another without hesitation and threaded a maze of intricate passages, devoid of the fear of losing my way.

Presently I stopped before a low door in a plain stone house which might have been the dwelling of an artisan of the better sort, and without announcing myself, entered. The room, rather sparely furnished, and lighted by a single window with small diamond-shaped panes, had but two occupants; a man and a woman. They took no notice of my intrusion, a circumstance which, in the manner of dreams, appeared entirely natural. They were not conversing; they sat apart, unoccupied and sullen.

The woman was young and rather stout, with fine large eyes and a certain grave beauty; my memory of her expression is exceedingly vivid, but in dreams one does not observe the details of faces. About her shoulders was a plaid shawl. The man was older, dark, with an evil face made more forbidding by a long scar extending from near the left temple diagonally downward into the black mustache; though in my dreams it seemed rather to haunt the face as a thing apart — I can express it no otherwise — than to belong to it. The moment that I found the man and woman I knew them to be husband and wife.

What followed, I remember indistinctly; all was confused and inconsistent — made so, I think, by gleams of consciousness. It was as if two pictures, the scene of my dream, and my actual surroundings, had been blended, one overlying the other, until the former, gradually fading, disappeared, and I was broad awake in the deserted cabin, entirely and tranquilly conscious of my situation.

My foolish fear was gone, and opening my eyes I saw that my fire, not altogether burned out, had revived by the falling of a stick and was again lighting the room. I had probably slept only a few minutes, but my commonplace dream had somehow so strongly impressed me that I was no longer drowsy; and after a little while I rose, pushed the embers of my fire together, and lighting my pipe proceeded in a rather ludicrously methodical way to meditate upon my vision.

It would have puzzled me then to say in what respect it was worth attention. In the first moment of serious thought that I gave to the matter I recognized the city of my dream as Edinburgh, where I had never been; so if the dream was a memory it was a memory of pictures and description. The recognition somehow deeply impressed me; it was as if something in my mind insisted rebelliously against will and reason on the importance of all this. And that faculty, whatever it was, asserted also a control of my speech. “Surely,” I said aloud, quite involuntarily, “the MacGregors must have come here from Edinburgh.”

At the moment, neither the substance of this remark nor the fact of my making it, surprised me in the least; it seemed entirely natural that I should know the name of my dreamfolk and something of their history. But the absurdity of it all soon dawned upon me: I laughed aloud, knocked the ashes from my pipe and again stretched myself upon my bed of boughs and grass, where I lay staring absently into my failing fire, with no further thought of either my dream or my surroundings. Suddenly the single remaining flame crouched for a moment, then, springing upward, lifted itself clear of its embers and expired in air. The darkness was absolute.

At that instant — almost, it seemed, before the gleam of the blaze had faded from my eyes — there was a dull, dead sound, as of some heavy body falling upon the floor, which shook beneath me as I lay. I sprang to a sitting posture and groped at my side for my gun; my notion was that some wild beast had leaped in through the open window. While the flimsy structure was still shaking from the impact I heard the sound of blows, the scuffling of feet upon the floor, and then — it seemed to come from almost within reach of my hand, the sharp shrieking of a woman in mortal agony. So horrible a cry I had never heard nor conceived; it utterly unnerved me; I was conscious for a moment of nothing but my own terror! Fortunately my hand now found the weapon of which it was in search, and the familiar touch somewhat restored me. I leaped to my feet, straining my eyes to pierce the darkness. The violent sounds had ceased, but more terrible than these, I heard, at what seemed long intervals, the faint intermittent gasping of some living, dying thing!

As my eyes grew accustomed to the dim light of the coals in the fireplace, I saw first the shapes of the door and window, looking blacker than the black of the walls. Next, the distinction between wall and floor became discernible, and at last I was sensible to the form and full expanse of the floor from end to end and side to side. Nothing was visible and the silence was unbroken.

With a hand that shook a little, the other still grasping my gun, I restored my fire and made a critical examination of the place. There was nowhere any sign that the cabin had been entered. My own tracks were visible in the dust covering the floor, but there were no others. I relit my pipe, provided fresh fuel by ripping a thin board or two from the inside of the house — I did not care to go into the darkness out of doors — and passed the rest of the night smoking and thinking, and feeding my fire; not for added years of life would I have permitted that little flame to expire again.

Some years afterward I met in Sacramento a man named Morgan, to whom I had a note of introduction from a friend in San Francisco. Dining with him one evening at his home I observed various "trophies" upon the wall, indicating that he was fond of shooting. It turned out that he was, and in relating some of his feats he mentioned having been in the region of my adventure.

"Mr. Morgan," I asked abruptly, "do you know a place up there called Macarger's Gulch?"

"I have good reason to," he replied; "it was I who gave to the newspapers, last year, the accounts of the finding of the skeleton there."

I had not heard of it; the accounts had been published, it appeared, while I was absent in the East.

"By the way," said Morgan, "the name of the gulch is a corruption; it should have been called 'MacGregor's.' My dear," he added, speaking to his wife, "Mr. Elderson has upset his wine."

That was hardly accurate — I had simply dropped it, glass and all.

"There was an old shanty once in the gulch," Morgan resumed when the ruin wrought by my awkwardness had been repaired, "but just previously to my visit it had been blown down, or rather blown away, for its debris was scattered all about, the very floor being parted, plank from plank. Between two of the sleepers still in position I and my companion observed the remnant of a plaid shawl, and examining it found that it was wrapped about the shoulders of the body of a woman, of which but little remained besides the bones, partly covered with fragments of clothing, and brown dry skin. But we will spare Mrs. Morgan," he added with a smile. The lady had indeed exhibited signs of disgust rather than sympathy.

"It is necessary to say, however," he went on, "that the skull was fractured in several places, as by blows of some blunt instrument; and that instrument itself — a pick-handle, still stained with blood — lay under the boards near by."

Mr. Morgan turned to his wife. “Pardon me, my dear,” he said with affected solemnity, “for mentioning these disagreeable particulars, the natural though regrettable incidents of a conjugal quarrel — resulting, doubtless, from the luckless wife’s insubordination.”

“I ought to be able to overlook it,” the lady replied with composure; “you have so many times asked me to in those very words.”

I thought he seemed rather glad to go on with his story.

“From these and other circumstances,” he said, “the coroner’s jury found that the deceased, Janet MacGregor, came to her death from blows inflicted by some person to the jury unknown; but it was added that the evidence pointed strongly to her husband, Thomas MacGregor, as the guilty person. But Thomas MacGregor has never been found nor heard of. It was learned that the couple came from Edinburgh, but not — my dear, do you not observe that Mr. Elderson’s boneplate has water in it?”

I had deposited a chicken bone in my finger bowl.

“In a little cupboard I found a photograph of MacGregor, but it did not lead to his capture.”

“Will you let me see it?” I said.

The picture showed a dark man with an evil face made more forbidding by a long scar extending from near the temple diagonally downward into the black mustache.

“By the way, Mr. Elderson,” said my affable host, “may I know why you asked about ‘Macarger’s Gulch’?”

“I lost a mule near there once,” I replied, “and the mischance has — has quite — upset me.”

“My dear,” said Mr. Morgan, with the mechanical intonation of an interpreter translating, “the loss of Mr. Elderson’s mule has peppered his coffee.”

One Summer Night

The fact that Henry Armstrong was buried did not seem to him to prove that he was dead: he had always been a hard man to convince. That he really was buried, the testimony of his senses compelled him to admit. His posture — flat upon his back, with his hands crossed upon his stomach and tied with something that he easily broke without profitably altering the situation — the strict confinement of his entire person, the black darkness and profound silence, made a body of evidence impossible to controvert and he accepted it without cavil.

But dead — no; he was only very, very ill. He had, withal, the invalid's apathy and did not greatly concern himself about the uncommon fate that had been allotted to him. No philosopher was he — just a plain, commonplace person gifted, for the time being, with a pathological indifference: the organ that he feared consequences with was torpid. So, with no particular apprehension for his immediate future, he fell asleep and all was peace with Henry Armstrong.

But something was going on overhead. It was a dark summer night, shot through with infrequent shimmers of lightning silently firing a cloud lying low in the west and portending a storm. These brief, stammering illuminations brought out with ghastly distinctness the monuments and headstones of the cemetery and seemed to set them dancing. It was not a night in which any credible witness was likely to be straying about a cemetery, so the three men who were there, digging into the grave of Henry Armstrong, felt reasonably secure.

Two of them were young students from a medical college a few miles away; the third was a gigantic negro known as Jess. For many years Jess had been employed about the cemetery as a man-of-all-work and it was his favorite pleasantry that he knew "every soul in the place." From the nature of what he was now doing it was inferable that the place was not so populous as its register may have shown it to be.

Outside the wall, at the part of the grounds farthest from the public road, were a horse and a light wagon, waiting.

The work of excavation was not difficult: the earth with which the grave had been loosely filled a few hours before offered little resistance and was soon thrown out. Removal of the casket from its box was less easy, but it was taken out, for it was a perquisite of Jess, who carefully unscrewed the cover and laid it aside, exposing the body in black trousers and white shirt. At that instant the air sprang to flame, a cracking shock of thunder shook the stunned world and Henry

Armstrong tranquilly sat up. With inarticulate cries the men fled in terror, each in a different direction. For nothing on earth could two of them have been persuaded to return. But Jess was of another breed.

In the gray of the morning the two students, pallid and haggard from anxiety and with the terror of their adventure still beating tumultuously in their blood, met at the medical college.

“You saw it?” cried one.

“God! yes — what are we to do?”

They went around to the rear of the building, where they saw a horse, attached to a light wagon, hitched to a gatepost near the door of the dissecting-room. Mechanically they entered the room. On a bench in the obscurity sat the negro Jess. He rose, grinning, all eyes and teeth.

“I’m waiting for my pay,” he said.

Stretched naked on a long table lay the body of Henry Armstrong, the head defiled with blood and clay from a blow with a spade.

The Moonlit Road

i — Statement of Joel Hetman, Jr.

I am the most unfortunate of men. Rich, respected, fairly well educated and of sound health — with many other advantages usually valued by those having them and coveted by those who have them not — I sometimes think that I should be less unhappy if they had been denied me, for then the contrast between my outer and my inner life would not be continually demanding a painful attention. In the stress of privation and the need of effort I might sometimes forget the somber secret ever baffling the conjecture that it compels.

I am the only child of Joel and Julia Hetman. The one was a well-to-do country gentleman, the other a beautiful and accomplished woman to whom he was passionately attached with what I now know to have been a jealous and exacting devotion. The family home was a few miles from Nashville, Tennessee, a large, irregularly built dwelling of no particular order of architecture, a little way off the road, in a park of trees and shrubbery.

At the time of which I write I was nineteen years old, a student at Yale. One day I received a telegram from my father of such urgency that in compliance with its unexplained demand I left at once for home. At the railway station in Nashville a distant relative awaited me to apprise me of the reason for my recall: my mother had been barbarously murdered — why and by whom none could conjecture, but the circumstances were these: My father had gone to Nashville, intending to return the next afternoon. Something prevented his accomplishing the business in hand, so he returned on the same night, arriving just before the dawn. In his testimony before the coroner he explained that having no latchkey and not caring to disturb the sleeping servants, he had, with no clearly defined intention, gone round to the rear of the house. As he turned an angle of the building, he heard a sound as of a door gently closed, and saw in the darkness, indistinctly, the figure of a man, which instantly disappeared among the trees of the lawn. A hasty pursuit and brief search of the grounds in the belief that the trespasser was some one secretly visiting a servant proving fruitless, he entered at the unlocked door and mounted the stairs to my mother’s chamber. Its door was open, and stepping into black darkness he fell headlong over some heavy object on the floor. I may spare myself the details; it was my poor mother, dead of strangulation by human hands!

Nothing had been taken from the house, the servants had heard no sound, and excepting those terrible finger-marks upon the dead woman’s throat — dear God! that I might forget them! — no trace of the assassin was ever found.

I gave up my studies and remained with my father, who, naturally, was greatly changed. Always of a sedate, taciturn disposition, he now fell into so deep a dejection that nothing could hold his attention, yet anything — a footfall, the sudden closing of a door — aroused in him a fitful interest; one might have called it an apprehension. At any small surprise of the senses he would start visibly and sometimes turn pale, then relapse into a melancholy apathy deeper than before. I suppose he was what is called a “nervous wreck.” As to me, I was younger then than now — there is much in that. Youth is Gilead, in which is balm for every wound. Ah, that I might again dwell in that enchanted land! Unacquainted with grief, I knew not how to appraise my bereavement; I could not rightly estimate the strength of the stroke.

One night, a few months after the dreadful event, my father and I walked home from the city. The full moon was about three hours above the eastern horizon; the entire countryside had the solemn stillness of a summer night; our footfalls and the ceaseless song of the katydids were the only sound aloof. Black shadows of bordering trees lay athwart the road, which, in the short reaches between, gleamed a ghostly white. As we approached the gate to our dwelling, whose front was in shadow, and in which no light shone, my father suddenly stopped and clutched my arm, saying, hardly above his breath:

“God! God! what is that?”

“I hear nothing,” I replied.

“But see — see!” he said, pointing along the road, directly ahead.

I said: “Nothing is there. Come, father, let us go in — you are ill.”

He had released my arm and was standing rigid and motionless in the center of the illuminated roadway, staring like one bereft of sense. His face in the moonlight showed a pallor and fixity inexpressibly distressing. I pulled gently at his sleeve, but he had forgotten my existence. Presently he began to retire backward, step by step, never for an instant removing his eyes from what he saw, or thought he saw. I turned half round to follow, but stood irresolute. I do not recall any feeling of fear, unless a sudden chill was its physical manifestation. It seemed as if an icy wind had touched my face and enfolded my body from head to foot; I could feel the stir of it in my hair.

At that moment my attention was drawn to a light that suddenly streamed from an upper window of the house: one of the servants, awakened by what mysterious premonition of evil who can say, and in obedience to an impulse that she was never able to name, had lit a lamp. When I turned to look for my father he was gone, and in all the years that have passed no whisper of his fate has come across the borderland of conjecture from the realm of the unknown.

ii — Statement of Caspar Grattan

To-day I am said to live; to-morrow, here in this room, will lie a senseless shape of clay that all too long was I. If anyone lift the cloth from the face of that unpleasant thing it will be in gratification of a mere morbid curiosity. Some, doubtless, will go further and inquire, “Who was he?” In this writing I supply the only answer that I am able to make — Caspar Grattan. Surely, that should be enough. The name has served my small need for more than twenty years of a life of unknown length. True, I gave it to myself, but lacking another I had the right. In this world one must have a name; it prevents confusion, even when it does not establish identity. Some, though, are known by numbers, which also seem inadequate distinctions.

One day, for illustration, I was passing along a street of a city, far from here, when I met two men in uniform, one of whom, half pausing and looking curiously into my face, said to his companion, “That man looks like 767.” Something in the number seemed familiar and horrible. Moved by an uncontrollable impulse, I sprang into a side street and ran until I fell exhausted in a country lane.

I have never forgotten that number, and always it comes to memory attended by gibbering obscenity, peals of joyless laughter, the clang of iron doors. So I say a name, even if self-bestowed, is better than a number. In the register of the potter’s field I shall soon have both. What wealth!

Of him who shall find this paper I must beg a little consideration. It is not the history of my life; the knowledge to write that is denied me. This is only a record of broken and apparently unrelated memories, some of them as distinct and sequent as brilliant beads upon a thread, others remote and strange, having the character of crimson dreams with interspaces blank and black — witch-fires glowing still and red in a great desolation.

Standing upon the shore of eternity, I turn for a last look landward over the course by which I came. There are twenty years of footprints fairly distinct, the impressions of bleeding feet. They lead through poverty and pain, devious and unsure, as of one staggering beneath a burden —

Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow.

Ah, the poet’s prophecy of Me — how admirable, how dreadfully admirable!

Backward beyond the beginning of this via dolorosa — this epic of suffering with episodes of sin — I see nothing clearly; it comes out of a cloud. I know that it spans only twenty years, yet I am an old man.

One does not remember one’s birth — one has to be told. But with me it was different; life came to me full-handed and dowered me with all my faculties and powers. Of a previous existence I know no more than others, for all have stammering intimations that may be memories and may be dreams. I know only that my first consciousness was of maturity in body and mind — a consciousness accepted without surprise or conjecture. I merely found myself walking in a forest, half-clad, footsore, unutterably weary and hungry. Seeing a farmhouse, I approached and asked for food, which was given me by one who inquired my name. I did not know, yet knew that all had names. Greatly embarrassed, I retreated, and night coming on, lay down in the forest and slept.

The next day I entered a large town which I shall not name. Nor shall I recount further incidents of the life that is now to end — a life of wandering, always and everywhere haunted by an overmastering sense of crime in punishment of wrong and of terror in punishment of crime. Let me see if I can reduce it to narrative.

I seem once to have lived near a great city, a prosperous planter, married to a woman whom I loved and distrusted. We had, it sometimes seems, one child, a youth of brilliant parts and promise. He is at all times a vague figure, never clearly drawn, frequently altogether out of the picture.

One luckless evening it occurred to me to test my wife’s fidelity in a vulgar, commonplace way familiar to everyone who has acquaintance with the literature of fact and fiction. I went to the city, telling my wife that I should be absent until the following afternoon. But I returned before daybreak and went to the rear of the house, purposing to enter by a door with which I had secretly so tampered that it would seem to lock, yet not actually fasten. As I approached it, I heard it gently open and close, and saw a man steal away into the darkness. With murder in my heart, I sprang after him, but he had vanished without even the bad luck of identification. Sometimes now I cannot even persuade myself that it was a human being.

Crazed with jealousy and rage, blind and bestial with all the elemental passions of insulted manhood, I entered the house and sprang up the stairs to the door of my wife’s chamber. It was closed, but having tampered with its lock also, I easily entered and despite the black darkness soon stood by the side of her bed. My groping hands told me that although disarranged it was unoccupied.

“She is below,” I thought, “and terrified by my entrance has evaded me in the darkness of the hall.”

With the purpose of seeking her I turned to leave the room, but took a wrong direction — the right one! My foot struck her, cowering in a corner of the room. Instantly my hands were at her throat, stifling a shriek, my knees were upon her struggling body; and there in the darkness, without a word of accusation or reproach, I strangled her till she died!

There ends the dream. I have related it in the past tense, but the present would be the fitter form, for again and again the somber tragedy reenacts itself in my consciousness — over and over I lay the plan, I suffer the confirmation, I redress the wrong. Then all is blank; and afterward the rains beat against the grimy window-panes, or the snows fall upon my scant attire, the wheels rattle in the squalid streets where my life lies in poverty and mean employment. If there is ever sunshine I do not recall it; if there are birds they do not sing.

There is another dream, another vision of the night. I stand among the shadows in a moonlit road. I am aware of another presence, but whose I cannot rightly determine. In the shadow of a great dwelling I catch the gleam of white garments; then the figure of a woman confronts me in the road — my murdered wife! There is death in the face; there are marks upon the throat. The eyes are fixed on mine with an infinite gravity which is not reproach, nor hate, nor menace, nor anything less terrible than recognition. Before this awful apparition I retreat in terror — a terror that is upon me as I write. I can no longer rightly shape the words. See! they —

Now I am calm, but truly there is no more to tell: the incident ends where it began — in darkness and in doubt.

Yes, I am again in control of myself: “the captain of my soul.” But that is not respite; it is another stage and phase of expiation. My penance, constant in degree, is mutable in kind: one of its variants is tranquillity. After all, it is only a life-sentence. “To Hell for life” — that is a foolish penalty: the culprit chooses the duration of his punishment. To-day my term expires.

To each and all, the peace that was not mine.

iii — Statement of the Late Julia Hetman, Through the Medium Bayrolles

I had retired early and fallen almost immediately into a peaceful sleep, from which I awoke with that indefinable sense of peril which is, I think, a common experience in that other, earlier life. Of its unmeaning character, too, I was entirely persuaded, yet that did not banish it. My husband, Joel Hetman, was away from home; the servants slept in another part of the house. But these were familiar conditions; they had never before distressed me. Nevertheless, the strange terror grew so insupportable that conquering my reluctance to move I sat up and lit the lamp at my bedside. Contrary to my expectation this gave me no relief; the light seemed rather an added danger, for I reflected that it would shine out under the door, disclosing my presence to whatever evil thing might lurk outside. You that are still in the flesh, subject to horrors of the imagination, think what a monstrous fear that must be which seeks in darkness security from malevolent existences of the night. That is to spring to close quarters with an unseen enemy — the strategy of despair!

Extinguishing the lamp I pulled the bed-clothing about my head and lay trembling and silent, unable to shriek, forgetful to pray. In this pitiable state I must have lain for what you call hours — with us there are no hours, there is no time.

At last it came — a soft, irregular sound of footfalls on the stairs! They were slow, hesitant, uncertain, as of something that did not see its way; to my disordered reason all the more terrifying for that, as the approach of some blind and mindless malevolence to which is no appeal. I even thought that I must have left the hall lamp burning and the groping of this creature proved it a monster of the night. This was foolish and inconsistent with my previous dread of the light, but what would you have? Fear has no brains; it is an idiot. The dismal witness that it bears and the cowardly counsel that it whispers are unrelated. We know this well, we who have passed into the Realm of Terror, who skulk in eternal dusk among the scenes of our former lives, invisible even to ourselves and one another, yet hiding forlorn in lonely places; yearning for speech with our loved ones, yet dumb, and as fearful of them as they of us. Sometimes the disability is removed, the law suspended: by the deathless power of love or hate we break the spell — we are seen by those whom we would warn, console, or punish. What form we seem to them to bear we know not; we know only that we terrify even those whom we most wish to comfort, and from whom we most crave tenderness and sympathy.

Forgive, I pray you, this inconsequent digression by what was once a woman. You who consult us in this imperfect way — you do not understand. You ask foolish questions about things unknown and things forbidden. Much that we know and could impart in our speech is meaningless in yours. We must communicate with you through a stammering intelligence in that small fraction of our language that you yourselves can speak. You think that we are of another world. No, we have knowledge of no world but yours, though for us it holds no sunlight, no warmth, no music, no laughter, no song of birds, nor any companionship. O God! what a thing it is to be a ghost, cowering and shivering in an altered world, a prey to apprehension and despair!

No, I did not die of fright: the Thing turned and went away. I heard it go down the stairs, hurriedly, I thought, as if itself in sudden fear. Then I rose to call for help. Hardly had my shaking hand found the doorknob when — merciful heaven! — I heard it returning. Its footfalls as it remounted the stairs were rapid, heavy and loud; they shook the house. I fled to an angle of the wall and crouched upon the floor. I tried to pray. I tried to call the name of my dear husband. Then I heard the door thrown open. There was an interval of unconsciousness, and when I revived I felt a strangling clutch upon my throat — felt my arms feebly beating against something that bore me backward — felt my tongue thrusting itself from between my teeth! And then I passed into this life.

No, I have no knowledge of what it was. The sum of what we knew at death is the measure of what we know afterward of all that went before. Of this existence we know many things, but no new light falls upon any page of that; in memory is written all of it that we can read. Here are no heights of truth overlooking the confused landscape of that dubitable domain. We still dwell in the Valley of the Shadow, lurk in its desolate places, peering from brambles and thickets at its mad, malign inhabitants. How should we have new knowledge of that fading past?

What I am about to relate happened on a night. We know when it is night, for then you retire to your houses and we can venture from our places of concealment to move unafraid about our old homes, to look in at the windows, even to enter and gaze upon your faces as you sleep. I had lingered long near the dwelling where I had been so cruelly changed to what I am, as we do while any that we love or hate remain. Vainly I had sought some method of manifestation, some way to make my continued existence and my great love and poignant pity understood by my husband and son. Always if they slept they would wake, or if in my desperation I dared approach them when they were awake, would turn toward me the terrible eyes of the living, frightening me by the glances that I sought from the purpose that I held.

On this night I had searched for them without success, fearing to find them; they were nowhere in the house, nor about the moonlit lawn. For, although the sun is lost to us forever, the moon, full-orbed or slender, remains to us. Sometimes it shines by night, sometimes by day, but always it rises and sets, as in that other life.

I left the lawn and moved in the white light and silence along the road, aimless and sorrowing. Suddenly I heard the voice of my poor husband in exclamations of astonishment, with that of my son in reassurance and dissuasion; and there by the shadow of a group of trees they stood — near, so near! Their faces were toward me, the eyes of the elder man fixed upon mine. He saw me — at last, at last, he saw me! In the consciousness of that, my terror fled as a cruel dream. The death-spell was broken: Love had conquered Law! Mad with exultation I shouted — I MUST have shouted, “He sees, he sees: he will understand!” Then, controlling myself, I moved forward, smiling and consciously beautiful, to offer myself to his arms, to comfort him with endearments, and, with my son’s hand in mine, to speak words that should restore the broken bonds between the living and the dead.

Alas! alas! his face went white with fear, his eyes were as those of a hunted animal. He backed away from me, as I advanced, and at last turned and fled into the wood — whither, it is not given to me to know.

To my poor boy, left doubly desolate, I have never been able to impart a sense of my presence. Soon he, too, must pass to this Life Invisible and be lost to me forever.

A Diagnosis of Death

"I am not so superstitious as some of your physicians — men of science, as you are pleased to be called," said Hawver, replying to an accusation that had not been made. "Some of you — only a few, I confess — believe in the immortality of the soul, and in apparitions which you have not the honesty to call ghosts. I go no further than a conviction that the living are sometimes seen where they are not, but have been — where they have lived so long, perhaps so intensely, as to have left their impress on everything about them. I know, indeed, that one's environment may be so affected by one's personality as to yield, long afterward, an image of one's self to the eyes of another. Doubtless the impressing personality has to be the right kind of personality as the perceiving eyes have to be the right kind of eyes — mine, for example."

"Yes, the right kind of eyes, conveying sensations to the wrong kind of brain," said Dr. Frayley, smiling.

"Thank you; one likes to have an expectation gratified; that is about the reply that I supposed you would have the civility to make."

"Pardon me. But you say that you know. That is a good deal to say, don't you think? Perhaps you will not mind the trouble of saying how you learned."

"You will call it an hallucination," Hawver said, "but that does not matter." And he told the story.

"Last summer I went, as you know, to pass the hot weather term in the town of Meridian. The relative at whose house I had intended to stay was ill, so I sought other quarters. After some difficulty I succeeded in renting a vacant dwelling that had been occupied by an eccentric doctor of the name of Mannering, who had gone away years before, no one knew where, not even his agent. He had built the house himself and had lived in it with an old servant for about ten years. His practice, never very extensive, had after a few years been given up entirely. Not only so, but he had withdrawn himself almost altogether from social life and become a recluse. I was told by the village doctor, about the only person with whom he held any relations, that during his retirement he had devoted himself to a single line of study, the result of which he had expounded in a book that did not commend itself to the approval of his professional brethren, who, indeed, considered him not entirely sane. I have not seen the book and cannot now recall the title of it, but I am told that it expounded a rather startling theory. He held that it was possible in the case of many a person in good health to forecast his death with precision, several months in advance of the event. The limit, I think, was eighteen months. There were local tales of his having exerted his powers of prognosis, or perhaps you would say diagnosis; and it was said that in every instance the person whose friends he had warned had died suddenly at the appointed time, and from no assignable cause. All this, however, has nothing to do with what I have to tell; I thought it might amuse a physician.

"The house was furnished, just as he had lived in it. It was a rather gloomy dwelling for one who was neither a recluse nor a student, and I think it gave something of its character to me — perhaps some of its former occupant's character; for always I felt in it a certain melancholy that was not in my natural disposition, nor, I think, due to loneliness. I had no servants that slept in the house, but I have always been, as you know, rather fond of my own society, being much addicted to reading, though little to study. Whatever was the cause, the effect was dejection and a sense of impending evil; this was especially so in Dr. Mannering's study, although that room was the lightest and most airy in the house. The doctor's life-size portrait in oil hung in that room, and seemed completely to dominate it. There was nothing unusual in the picture; the man was evidently rather good looking, about fifty years old, with iron-gray hair, a smooth-shaven face and dark, serious eyes. Something in the picture always drew and held my attention. The man's appearance became familiar to me, and rather 'haunted' me.

"One evening I was passing through this room to my bedroom, with a lamp — there is no gas in Meridian. I stopped as usual before the portrait, which seemed in the lamplight to have a new expression, not easily named, but distinctly uncanny. It interested but did not disturb me. I moved the lamp from one side to the other and observed the effects of the altered light. While so engaged I felt an impulse to turn round. As I did so I saw a man moving across the room directly toward me! As soon as he came near enough for the lamplight to illuminate the face I saw that it was Dr. Mannering himself; it was as if the portrait were walking!

"'I beg your pardon,' I said, somewhat coldly, 'but if you knocked I did not hear.'

"He passed me, within an arm's length, lifted his right forefinger, as in warning, and without a word went on out of the room, though I observed his exit no more than I had observed his entrance.

"Of course, I need not tell you that this was what you will call an hallucination and I call an apparition. That room had only two doors, of which one was locked; the other led into a bedroom, from which there was no exit. My feeling on realizing this is not an important part of the incident.

"Doubtless this seems to you a very commonplace 'ghost story' — one constructed on the regular lines laid down by the old masters of the art. If that were so I should not have related it, even if it were true. The man was not dead; I met him to-day in Union street. He passed me in a crowd."

Hawver had finished his story and both men were silent. Dr. Frayley absently drummed on the table with his fingers.

"Did he say anything to-day?" he asked—"anything from which you inferred that he was not dead?"

Hawver stared and did not reply.

"Perhaps," continued Frayley, "he made a sign, a gesture — lifted a finger, as in warning. It's a trick he had — a habit when saying something serious — announcing the result of a diagnosis, for example."

"Yes, he did — just as his apparition had done. But, good God! did you ever know him?"

Hawver was apparently growing nervous.

"I knew him. I have read his book, as will every physician some day. It is one of the most striking and important of the century's contributions to medical science. Yes, I knew him; I attended him in an illness three years ago. He died."

Hawver sprang from his chair, manifestly disturbed. He strode forward and back across the room; then approached his friend, and in a voice not altogether steady, said: "Doctor, have you anything to say to me — as a physician?"

"No, Hawver; you are the healthiest man I ever knew. As a friend I advise you to go to your room. You play the violin like an angel. Play it; play something light and lively. Get this cursed bad business off your mind."

The next day Hawver was found dead in his room, the violin at his neck, the bow upon the strings, his music open before him at Chopin's funeral march.

Moxon’s Master

“Are you serious? — do you really believe that a machine thinks?”

I got no immediate reply; Moxon was apparently intent upon the coals in the grate, touching them deftly here and there with the fire-poker till they signified a sense of his attention by a brighter glow. For several weeks I had been observing in him a growing habit of delay in answering even the most trivial of commonplace questions. His air, however, was that of preoccupation rather than deliberation: one might have said that he had “something on his mind.”

Presently he said:

“What is a ‘machine’? The word has been variously defined. Here is one definition from a popular dictionary: ‘Any instrument or organization by which power is applied and made effective, or a desired effect produced.’ Well, then, is not a man a machine? And you will admit that he thinks — or thinks he thinks.”

“If you do not wish to answer my question,” I said, rather testily, “why not say so? — all that you say is mere evasion. You know well enough that when I say ‘machine’ I do not mean a man, but something that man has made and controls.”

“When it does not control him,” he said, rising abruptly and looking out of a window, whence nothing was visible in the blackness of a stormy night. A moment later he turned about and with a smile said: “I beg your pardon; I had no thought of evasion. I considered the dictionary man’s unconscious testimony suggestive and worth something in the discussion. I can give your question a direct answer easily enough: I do believe that a machine thinks about the work that it is doing.”

That was direct enough, certainly. It was not altogether pleasing, for it tended to confirm a sad suspicion that Moxon’s devotion to study and work in his machine-shop had not been good for him. I knew, for one thing, that he suffered from insomnia, and that is no light affliction. Had it affected his mind? His reply to my question seemed to me then evidence that it had; perhaps I should think differently about it now. I was younger then, and among the blessings that are not denied to youth is ignorance. Incited by that great stimulant to controversy, I said:

“And what, pray, does it think with — in the absence of a brain?”

The reply, coming with less than his customary delay, took his favorite form of counter-interrogation:

“With what does a plant think — in the absence of a brain?”

“Ah, plants also belong to the philosopher class! I should be pleased to know some of their conclusions; you may omit the premises.”

“Perhaps,” he replied, apparently unaffected by my foolish irony, “you may be able to infer their convictions from their acts. I will spare you the familiar examples of the sensitive mimosa, the several insectivorous flowers and those whose stamens bend down and shake their pollen upon the entering bee in order that he may fertilize their distant mates. But observe this. In an open spot in my garden I planted a climbing vine. When it was barely above the surface I set a stake into the soil a yard away. The vine at once made for it, but as it was about to reach it after several days I removed it a few feet. The vine at once altered its course, making an acute angle, and again made for the stake. This manoeuvre was repeated several times, but finally, as if discouraged, the vine abandoned the pursuit and ignoring further attempts to divert it traveled to a small tree, further away, which it climbed.

“Roots of the eucalyptus will prolong themselves incredibly in search of moisture. A well-known horticulturist relates that one entered an old drain pipe and followed it until it came to a break, where a section of the pipe had been removed to make way for a stone wall that had been built across its course. The root left the drain and followed the wall until it found an opening where a stone had fallen out. It crept through and following the other side of the wall back to the drain, entered the unexplored part and resumed its journey.”

“And all this?”

“Can you miss the significance of it? It shows the consciousness of plants. It proves that they think.”

“Even if it did — what then? We were speaking, not of plants, but of machines. They may be composed partly of wood — wood that has no longer vitality — or wholly of metal. Is thought an attribute also of the mineral kingdom?”

“How else do you explain the phenomena, for example, of crystallization?”

“I do not explain them.”

“Because you cannot without affirming what you wish to deny, namely, intelligent cooperation among the constituent elements of the crystals. When soldiers form lines, or hollow squares, you call it reason. When wild geese in flight take the form of a letter V you say instinct. When the homogeneous atoms of a mineral, moving freely in solution, arrange themselves into shapes mathematically perfect, or particles of frozen moisture into the symmetrical and beautiful forms of snowflakes, you have nothing to say. You have not even invented a name to conceal your heroic unreason.”

Moxon was speaking with unusual animation and earnestness. As he paused I heard in an adjoining room known to me as his “machine-shop,” which no one but himself was permitted to enter, a singular thumping sound, as of some one pounding upon a table with an open hand. Moxon heard it at the same moment and, visibly agitated, rose and hurriedly passed into the room whence it came. I thought it odd that any one else should be in there, and my interest in my friend — with doubtless a touch of unwarrantable curiosity — led me to listen intently, though, I am happy to say, not at the keyhole. There were confused sounds, as of a struggle or scuffle; the floor shook. I distinctly heard hard breathing and a hoarse whisper which said “Damn you!” Then all was silent, and presently Moxon reappeared and said, with a rather sorry smile:

“Pardon me for leaving you so abruptly. I have a machine in there that lost its temper and cut up rough.”

Fixing my eyes steadily upon his left cheek, which was traversed by four parallel excoriations showing blood, I said:

“How would it do to trim its nails?”

I could have spared myself the jest; he gave it no attention, but seated himself in the chair that he had left and resumed the interrupted monologue as if nothing had occurred:

“Doubtless you do not hold with those (I need not name them to a man of your reading) who have taught that all matter is sentient, that every atom is a living, feeling, conscious being. *I* do. There is no such thing as dead, inert matter: it is all alive; all instinct with force, actual and potential; all sensitive to the same forces in its environment and susceptible to the contagion of higher and subtler ones residing in such superior organisms as it may be brought into relation with, as those of man when he is fashioning it into an instrument of his will. It absorbs something of his intelligence and purpose — more of them in proportion to the complexity of the resulting machine and that of its work.

“Do you happen to recall Herbert Spencer’s definition of ‘Life’? I read it thirty years ago. He may have altered it afterward, for anything I know, but in all that time I have been unable to think of a single word that could profitably be changed or added or removed. It seems to me not only the best definition, but the only possible one.

“‘Life,’ he says, ‘is a definite combination of heterogeneous changes, both simultaneous and successive, in correspondence with external coexistences and sequences.’”

“That defines the phenomenon,” I said, “but gives no hint of its cause.”

“That,” he replied, “is all that any definition can do. As Mill points out, we know nothing of cause except as an antecedent — nothing of effect except as a consequent. Of certain phenomena, one never occurs without another, which is dissimilar: the first in point of time we call cause, the second, effect. One who had many times seen a rabbit pursued by a dog, and had never seen rabbits and dogs otherwise, would think the rabbit the cause of the dog.

"But I fear," he added, laughing naturally enough, "that my rabbit is leading me a long way from the track of my legitimate quarry: I'm indulging in the pleasure of the chase for its own sake. What I want you to observe is that in Herbert Spencer's definition of 'life' the activity of a machine is included — there is nothing in the definition that is not applicable to it. According to this sharpest of observers and deepest of thinkers, if a man during his period of activity is alive, so is a machine when in operation. As an inventor and constructor of machines I know that to be true."

Moxon was silent for a long time, gazing absently into the fire. It was growing late and I thought it time to be going, but somehow I did not like the notion of leaving him in that isolated house, all alone except for the presence of some person of whose nature my conjectures could go no further than that it was unfriendly, perhaps malign. Leaning toward him and looking earnestly into his eyes while making a motion with my hand through the door of his workshop, I said:

"Moxon, whom have you in there?"

Somewhat to my surprise he laughed lightly and answered without hesitation:

"Nobody; the incident that you have in mind was caused by my folly in leaving a machine in action with nothing to act upon, while I undertook the interminable task of enlightening your understanding. Do you happen to know that Consciousness is the creature of Rhythm?"

"O bother them both!" I replied, rising and laying hold of my overcoat. "I'm going to wish you good night; and I'll add the hope that the machine which you inadvertently left in action will have her gloves on the next time you think it needful to stop her."

Without waiting to observe the effect of my shot I left the house.

Rain was falling, and the darkness was intense. In the sky beyond the crest of a hill toward which I groped my way along precarious plank sidewalks and across miry, unpaved streets I could see the faint glow of the city's lights, but behind me nothing was visible but a single window of Moxon's house. It glowed with what seemed to me a mysterious and fateful meaning. I knew it was an uncurtained aperture in my friend's "machine-shop," and I had little doubt that he had resumed the studies interrupted by his duties as my instructor in mechanical consciousness and the fatherhood of Rhythm. Odd, and in some degree humorous, as his convictions seemed to me at that time, I could not wholly divest myself of the feeling that they had some tragic relation to his life and character — perhaps to his destiny — although I no longer entertained the notion that they were the vagaries of a disordered mind. Whatever might be thought of his views, his exposition of them was too logical for that. Over and over, his last words came back to me: “Consciousness is the creature of Rhythm.” Bald and terse as the statement was, I now found it infinitely alluring. At each recurrence it broadened in meaning and deepened in suggestion. Why, here, (I thought) is something upon which to found a philosophy. If consciousness is the product of rhythm all things ARE conscious, for all have motion, and all motion is rhythmic. I wondered if Moxon knew the significance and breadth of his thought — the scope of this momentous generalization; or had he arrived at his philosophic faith by the tortuous and uncertain road of observation?

That faith was then new to me, and all Moxon’s expounding had failed to make me a convert; but now it seemed as if a great light shone about me, like that which fell upon Saul of Tarsus; and out there in the storm and darkness and solitude I experienced what Lewes calls “The endless variety and excitement of philosophic thought.” I exulted in a new sense of knowledge, a new pride of reason. My feet seemed hardly to touch the earth; it was as if I were uplifted and borne through the air by invisible wings.

Yielding to an impulse to seek further light from him whom I now recognized as my master and guide, I had unconsciously turned about, and almost before I was aware of having done so found myself again at Moxon’s door. I was drenched with rain, but felt no discomfort. Unable in my excitement to find the doorbell I instinctively tried the knob. It turned and, entering, I mounted the stairs to the room that I had so recently left. All was dark and silent; Moxon, as I had supposed, was in the adjoining room — the “machine-shop.” Groping along the wall until I found the communicating door I knocked loudly several times, but got no response, which I attributed to the uproar outside, for the wind was blowing a gale and dashing the rain against the thin walls in sheets. The drumming upon the shingle roof spanning the unceiled room was loud and incessant.

I had never been invited into the machine-shop — had, indeed, been denied admittance, as had all others, with one exception, a skilled metal worker, of whom no one knew anything except that his name was Haley and his habit silence. But in my spiritual exaltation, discretion and civility were alike forgotten and I opened the door. What I saw took all philosophical speculation out of me in short order.

Moxon sat facing me at the farther side of a small table upon which a single candle made all the light that was in the room. Opposite him, his back toward me, sat another person. On the table between the two was a chessboard; the men were playing. I knew little of chess, but as only a few pieces were on the board it was obvious that the game was near its close. Moxon was intensely interested — not so much, it seemed to me, in the game as in his antagonist, upon whom he had fixed so intent a look that, standing though I did directly in the line of his vision, I was altogether unobserved. His face was ghastly white, and his eyes glittered like diamonds. Of his antagonist I had only a back view, but that was sufficient; I should not have cared to see his face.

He was apparently not more than five feet in height, with proportions suggesting those of a gorilla — a tremendous breadth of shoulders, thick, short neck and broad, squat head, which had a tangled growth of black hair and was topped with a crimson fez. A tunic of the same color, belted tightly to the waist, reached the seat — apparently a box — upon which he sat; his legs and feet were not seen. His left forearm appeared to rest in his lap; he moved his pieces with his right hand, which seemed disproportionately long.

I had shrunk back and now stood a little to one side of the doorway and in shadow. If Moxon had looked farther than the face of his opponent he could have observed nothing now, except that the door was open. Something forbade me either to enter or to retire, a feeling — I know not how it came — that I was in the presence of an imminent tragedy and might serve my friend by remaining. With a scarcely conscious rebellion against the indelicacy of the act I remained.

The play was rapid. Moxon hardly glanced at the board before making his moves, and to my unskilled eye seemed to move the piece most convenient to his hand, his motions in doing so being quick, nervous and lacking in precision. The response of his antagonist, while equally prompt in the inception, was made with a slow, uniform, mechanical and, I thought, somewhat theatrical movement of the arm, that was a sore trial to my patience. There was something unearthly about it all, and I caught myself shuddering. But I was wet and cold.

Two or three times after moving a piece the stranger slightly inclined his head, and each time I observed that Moxon shifted his king. All at once the thought came to me that the man was dumb. And then that he was a machine — an automaton chess-player! Then I remembered that Moxon had once spoken to me of having invented such a piece of mechanism, though I did not understand that it had actually been constructed. Was all his talk about the consciousness and intelligence of machines merely a prelude to eventual exhibition of this device — only a trick to intensify the effect of its mechanical action upon me in my ignorance of its secret?

A fine end, this, of all my intellectual transports — my “endless variety and excitement of philosophic thought!” I was about to retire in disgust when something occurred to hold my curiosity. I observed a shrug of the thing's great shoulders, as if it were irritated: and so natural was this — so entirely human — that in my new view of the matter it startled me. Nor was that all, for a moment later it struck the table sharply with its clenched hand. At that gesture Moxon seemed even more startled than I: he pushed his chair a little backward, as in alarm.

Presently Moxon, whose play it was, raised his hand high above the board, pounced upon one of his pieces like a sparrow-hawk and with the exclamation "checkmate!" rose quickly to his feet and stepped behind his chair. The automaton sat motionless.

The wind had now gone down, but I heard, at lessening intervals and progressively louder, the rumble and roll of thunder. In the pauses between I now became conscious of a low humming or buzzing which, like the thunder, grew momentarily louder and more distinct. It seemed to come from the body of the automaton, and was unmistakably a whirring of wheels. It gave me the impression of a disordered mechanism which had escaped the repressive and regulating action of some controlling part — an effect such as might be expected if a pawl should be jostled from the teeth of a ratchet-wheel. But before I had time for much conjecture as to its nature my attention was taken by the strange motions of the automaton itself. A slight but continuous convulsion appeared to have possession of it. In body and head it shook like a man with palsy or an ague chill, and the motion augmented every moment until the entire figure was in violent agitation. Suddenly it sprang to its feet and with a movement almost too quick for the eye to follow shot forward across table and chair, with both arms thrust forth to their full length — the posture and lunge of a diver. Moxon tried to throw himself backward out of reach, but he was too late: I saw the horrible thing's hands close upon his throat, his own clutch its wrists. Then the table was overturned, the candle thrown to the floor and extinguished, and all was black dark. But the noise of the struggle was dreadfully distinct, and most terrible of all were the raucous, squawking sounds made by the strangled man's efforts to breathe. Guided by the infernal hubbub, I sprang to the rescue of my friend, but had hardly taken a stride in the darkness when the whole room blazed with a blinding white light that burned into my brain and heart and memory a vivid picture of the combatants on the floor, Moxon underneath, his throat still in the clutch of those iron hands, his head forced backward, his eyes protruding, his mouth wide open and his tongue thrust out; and — horrible contrast! — upon the painted face of his assassin an expression of tranquil and profound thought, as in the solution of a problem in chess! This I observed, then all was blackness and silence.

Three days later I recovered consciousness in a hospital. As the memory of that tragic night slowly evolved in my ailing brain recognized in my attendant Moxon's confidential workman, Haley. Responding to a look he approached, smiling.

"Tell me about it," I managed to say, faintly—"all about it."

"Certainly," he said; "you were carried unconscious from a burning house — Moxon's. Nobody knows how you came to be there. You may have to do a little explaining. The origin of the fire is a bit mysterious, too. My own notion is that the house was struck by lightning."

"And Moxon?"

"Buried yesterday — what was left of him."

Apparently this reticent person could unfold himself on occasion. When imparting shocking intelligence to the sick he was affable enough. After some moments of the keenest mental suffering I ventured to ask another question:

"Who rescued me?"

"Well, if that interests you — I did."

"Thank you, Mr. Haley, and may God bless you for it. Did you rescue, also, that charming product of your skill, the automaton chess-player that murdered its inventor?"

The man was silent a long time, looking away from me. Presently he turned and gravely said:

"Do you know that?"

"I do," I replied; "I saw it done."

That was many years ago. If asked to-day I should answer less confidently.

A Tough Tussle

One night in the autumn of 1861 a man sat alone in the heart of a forest in western Virginia. The region was one of the wildest on the continent — the Cheat Mountain country. There was no lack of people close at hand, however; within a mile of where the man sat was the now silent camp of a whole Federal brigade. Somewhere about — it might be still nearer — was a force of the enemy, the numbers unknown. It was this uncertainty as to its numbers and position that accounted for the man's presence in that lonely spot; he was a young officer of a Federal infantry regiment and his business there was to guard his sleeping comrades in the camp against a surprise. He was in command of a detachment of men constituting a picket-guard. These men he had stationed just at nightfall in an irregular line, determined by the nature of the ground, several hundred yards in front of where he now sat. The line ran through the forest, among the rocks and laurel thickets, the men fifteen or twenty paces apart, all in concealment and under injunction of strict silence and unremitting vigilance. In four hours, if nothing occurred, they would be relieved by a fresh detachment from the reserve now resting in care of its captain some distance away to the left and rear. Before stationing his men the young officer of whom we are writing had pointed out to his two sergeants the spot at which he would be found if it should be necessary to consult him, or if his presence at the front line should be required.

It was a quiet enough spot — the fork of an old wood-road, on the two branches of which, prolonging themselves deviously forward in the dim moonlight, the sergeants were themselves stationed, a few paces in rear of the line. If driven sharply back by a sudden onset of the enemy — and pickets are not expected to make a stand after firing — the men would come into the converging roads and naturally following them to their point of intersection could be rallied and "formed." In his small way the author of these dispositions was something of a strategist; if Napoleon had planned as intelligently at Waterloo he would have won that memorable battle and been overthrown later.

Second–Lieutenant Brainerd Byring was a brave and efficient officer, young and comparatively inexperienced as he was in the business of killing his fellow-men. He had enlisted in the very first days of the war as a private, with no military knowledge whatever, had been made first-sergeant of his company on account of his education and engaging manner, and had been lucky enough to lose his captain by a Confederate bullet; in the resulting promotions he had gained a commission. He had been in several engagements, such as they were — at Philippi, Rich Mountain, Carrick's Ford and Greenbrier — and had borne himself with such gallantry as not to attract the attention of his superior officers. The exhilaration of battle was agreeable to him, but the sight of the dead, with their clay faces, blank eyes and stiff bodies, which when not unnaturally shrunken were unnaturally swollen, had always intolerably affected him. He felt toward them a kind of reasonless antipathy that was something more than the physical and spiritual repugnance common to us all. Doubtless this feeling was due to his unusually acute sensibilities — his keen sense of the beautiful, which these hideous things outraged. Whatever may have been the cause, he could not look upon a dead body without a loathing which had in it an element of resentment. What others have respected as the dignity of death had to him no existence — was altogether unthinkable. Death was a thing to be hated. It was not picturesque, it had no tender and solemn side — a dismal thing, hideous in all its manifestations and suggestions. Lieutenant Byring was a braver man than anybody knew, for nobody knew his horror of that which he was ever ready to incur.

Having posted his men, instructed his sergeants and retired to his station, he seated himself on a log, and with senses all alert began his vigil. For greater ease he loosened his sword-belt and taking his heavy revolver from his holster laid it on the log beside him. He felt very comfortable, though he hardly gave the fact a thought, so intently did he listen for any sound from the front which might have a menacing significance — a shout, a shot, or the footfall of one of his sergeants coming to apprise him of something worth knowing. From the vast, invisible ocean of moonlight overhead fell, here and there, a slender, broken stream that seemed to plash against the intercepting branches and trickle to earth, forming small white pools among the clumps of laurel. But these leaks were few and served only to accentuate the blackness of his environment, which his imagination found it easy to people with all manner of unfamiliar shapes, menacing, uncanny, or merely grotesque.

He to whom the portentous conspiracy of night and solitude and silence in the heart of a great forest is not an unknown experience needs not to be told what another world it all is — how even the most commonplace and familiar objects take on another character. The trees group themselves differently; they draw closer together, as if in fear. The very silence has another quality than the silence of the day. And it is full of half-heard whispers — whispers that startle — ghosts of sounds long dead. There are living sounds, too, such as are never heard under other conditions: notes of strange night-birds, the cries of small animals in sudden encounters with stealthy foes or in their dreams, a rustling in the dead leaves — it may be the leap of a wood-rat, it may be the footfall of a panther. What caused the breaking of that twig? — what the low, alarmed twittering in that bushful of birds? There are sounds without a name, forms without substance, translations in space of objects which have not been seen to move, movements wherein nothing is observed to change its place. Ah, children of the sunlight and the gaslight, how little you know of the world in which you live!

Surrounded at a little distance by armed and watchful friends, Byring felt utterly alone. Yielding himself to the solemn and mysterious spirit of the time and place, he had forgotten the nature of his connection with the visible and audible aspects and phases of the night. The forest was boundless; men and the habitations of men did not exist. The universe was one primeval mystery of darkness, without form and void, himself the sole, dumb questioner of its eternal secret. Absorbed in thoughts born of this mood, he suffered the time to slip away unnoted. Meantime the infrequent patches of white light lying amongst the tree-trunks had undergone changes of size, form and place. In one of them near by, just at the roadside, his eye fell upon an object that he had not previously observed. It was almost before his face as he sat; he could have sworn that it had not before been there. It was partly covered in shadow, but he could see that it was a human figure. Instinctively he adjusted the clasp of his sword-belt and laid hold of his pistol — again he was in a world of war, by occupation an assassin.

The figure did not move. Rising, pistol in hand, he approached. The figure lay upon its back, its upper part in shadow, but standing above it and looking down upon the face, he saw that it was a dead body. He shuddered and turned from it with a feeling of sickness and disgust, resumed his seat upon the log, and forgetting military prudence struck a match and lit a cigar. In the sudden blackness that followed the extinction of the flame he felt a sense of relief; he could no longer see the object of his aversion. Nevertheless, he kept his eyes set in that direction until it appeared again with growing distinctness. It seemed to have moved a trifle nearer.

“Damn the thing!” he muttered. “What does it want?”

It did not appear to be in need of anything but a soul.

Byring turned away his eyes and began humming a tune, but he broke off in the middle of a bar and looked at the dead body. Its presence annoyed him, though he could hardly have had a quieter neighbor. He was conscious, too, of a vague, indefinable feeling that was new to him. It was not fear, but rather a sense of the supernatural — in which he did not at all believe.

“I have inherited it,” he said to himself. “I suppose it will require a thousand ages — perhaps ten thousand — for humanity to outgrow this feeling. Where and when did it originate? Away back, probably, in what is called the cradle of the human race — the plains of Central Asia. What we inherit as a superstition our barbarous ancestors must have held as a reasonable conviction. Doubtless they believed themselves justified by facts whose nature we cannot even conjecture in thinking a dead body a malign thing endowed with some strange power of mischief, with perhaps a will and a purpose to exert it. Possibly they had some awful form of religion of which that was one of the chief doctrines, sedulously taught by their priesthood, as ours teach the immortality of the soul. As the Aryans moved slowly on, to and through the Caucasus passes, and spread over Europe, new conditions of life must have resulted in the formulation of new religions. The old belief in the malevolence of the dead body was lost from the creeds and even perished from tradition, but it left its heritage of terror, which is transmitted from generation to generation — is as much a part of us as are our blood and bones."

In following out his thought he had forgotten that which suggested it; but now his eye fell again upon the corpse. The shadow had now altogether uncovered it. He saw the sharp profile, the chin in the air, the whole face, ghastly white in the moonlight. The clothing was gray, the uniform of a Confederate soldier. The coat and waistcoat, unbuttoned, had fallen away on each side, exposing the white shirt. The chest seemed unnaturally prominent, but the abdomen had sunk in, leaving a sharp projection at the line of the lower ribs. The arms were extended, the left knee was thrust upward. The whole posture impressed Byring as having been studied with a view to the horrible.

"Bah!" he exclaimed; "he was an actor — he knows how to be dead."

He drew away his eyes, directing them resolutely along one of the roads leading to the front, and resumed his philosophizing where he had left off.

"It may be that our Central Asian ancestors had not the custom of burial. In that case it is easy to understand their fear of the dead, who really were a menace and an evil. They bred pestilences. Children were taught to avoid the places where they lay, and to run away if by inadvertence they came near a corpse. I think, indeed, I'd better go away from this chap."

He half rose to do so, then remembered that he had told his men in front and the officer in the rear who was to relieve him that he could at any time be found at that spot. It was a matter of pride, too. If he abandoned his post he feared they would think he feared the corpse. He was no coward and he was unwilling to incur anybody's ridicule. So he again seated himself, and to prove his courage looked boldly at the body. The right arm — the one farthest from him — was now in shadow. He could barely see the hand which, he had before observed, lay at the root of a clump of laurel. There had been no change, a fact which gave him a certain comfort, he could not have said why. He did not at once remove his eyes; that which we do not wish to see has a strange fascination, sometimes irresistible. Of the woman who covers her eyes with her hands and looks between the fingers let it be said that the wits have dealt with her not altogether justly.

Byring suddenly became conscious of a pain in his right hand. He withdrew his eyes from his enemy and looked at it. He was grasping the hilt of his drawn sword so tightly that it hurt him. He observed, too, that he was leaning forward in a strained attitude — crouching like a gladiator ready to spring at the throat of an antagonist. His teeth were clenched and he was breathing hard. This matter was soon set right, and as his muscles relaxed and he drew a long breath he felt keenly enough the ludicrousness of the incident. It affected him to laughter. Heavens! what sound was that? what mindless devil was uttering an unholy glee in mockery of human merriment? He sprang to his feet and looked about him, not recognizing his own laugh.

He could no longer conceal from himself the horrible fact of his cowardice; he was thoroughly frightened! He would have run from the spot, but his legs refused their office; they gave way beneath him and he sat again upon the log, violently trembling. His face was wet, his whole body bathed in a chill perspiration. He could not even cry out. Distinctly he heard behind him a stealthy tread, as of some wild animal, and dared not look over his shoulder. Had the soulless living joined forces with the soulless dead? — was it an animal? Ah, if he could but be assured of that! But by no effort of will could he now unfix his gaze from the face of the dead man.

I repeat that Lieutenant Byring was a brave and intelligent man. But what would you have? Shall a man cope, single-handed, with so monstrous an alliance as that of night and solitude and silence and the dead — while an incalculable host of his own ancestors shriek into the ear of his spirit their coward counsel, sing their doleful death-songs in his heart, and disarm his very blood of all its iron? The odds are too great — courage was not made for so rough use as that.

One sole conviction now had the man in possession: that the body had moved. It lay nearer to the edge of its plot of light — there could be no doubt of it. It had also moved its arms, for, look, they are both in the shadow! A breath of cold air struck Byring full in the face; the boughs of trees above him stirred and moaned. A strongly defined shadow passed across the face of the dead, left it luminous, passed back upon it and left it half obscured. The horrible thing was visibly moving! At that moment a single shot rang out upon the picket-line — a lonelier and louder, though more distant, shot than ever had been heard by mortal ear! It broke the spell of that enchanted man; it slew the silence and the solitude, dispersed the hindering host from Central Asia and released his modern manhood. With a cry like that of some great bird pouncing upon its prey he sprang forward, hot-hearted for action!

Shot after shot now came from the front. There were shoutings and confusion, hoof-beats and desultory cheers. Away to the rear, in the sleeping camp, were a singing of bugles and grumble of drums. Pushing through the thickets on either side the roads came the Federal pickets, in full retreat, firing backward at random as they ran. A straggling group that had followed back one of the roads, as instructed, suddenly sprang away into the bushes as half a hundred horsemen thundered by them, striking wildly with their sabres as they passed. At headlong speed these mounted madmen shot past the spot where Byring had sat, and vanished round an angle of the road, shouting and firing their pistols. A moment later there was a roar of musketry, followed by dropping shots — they had encountered the reserve-guard in line; and back they came in dire confusion, with here and there an empty saddle and many a maddened horse, bullet-stung, snorting and plunging with pain. It was all over—”an affair of outposts.”

The line was reestablished with fresh men, the roll called, the stragglers were reformed. The Federal commander with a part of his staff, imperfectly clad, appeared upon the scene, asked a few questions, looked exceedingly wise and retired. After standing at arms for an hour the brigade in camp “swore a prayer or two” and went to bed.

Early the next morning a fatigue-party, commanded by a captain and accompanied by a surgeon, searched the ground for dead and wounded. At the fork of the road, a little to one side, they found two bodies lying close together — that of a Federal officer and that of a Confederate private. The officer had died of a sword-thrust through the heart, but not, apparently, until he had inflicted upon his enemy no fewer than five dreadful wounds. The dead officer lay on his face in a pool of blood, the weapon still in his breast. They turned him on his back and the surgeon removed it.

“Gad!” said the captain—”It is Byring!” — adding, with a glance at the other, “They had a tough tussle.”

The surgeon was examining the sword. It was that of a line officer of Federal infantry — exactly like the one worn by the captain. It was, in fact, Byring’s own. The only other weapon discovered was an undischarged revolver in the dead officer’s belt.

The surgeon laid down the sword and approached the other body. It was frightfully gashed and stabbed, but there was no blood. He took hold of the left foot and tried to straighten the leg. In the effort the body was displaced. The dead do not wish to be moved — it protested with a faint, sickening odor. Where it had lain were a few maggots, manifesting an imbecile activity.

The surgeon looked at the captain. The captain looked at the surgeon.

One of Twins

A letter found among the papers of the late Mortimer Barr

You ask me if in my experience as one of a pair of twins I ever observed anything unaccountable by the natural laws with which we have acquaintance. As to that you shall judge; perhaps we have not all acquaintance with the same natural laws. You may know some that I do not, and what is to me unaccountable may be very clear to you.

You knew my brother John — that is, you knew him when you knew that I was not present; but neither you nor, I believe, any human being could distinguish between him and me if we chose to seem alike. Our parents could not; ours is the only instance of which I have any knowledge of so close resemblance as that. I speak of my brother John, but I am not at all sure that his name was not Henry and mine John. We were regularly christened, but afterward, in the very act of tattooing us with small distinguishing marks, the operator lost his reckoning; and although I bear upon my forearm a small "H" and he bore a "J," it is by no means certain that the letters ought not to have been transposed. During our boyhood our parents tried to distinguish us more obviously by our clothing and other simple devices, but we would so frequently exchange suits and otherwise circumvent the enemy that they abandoned all such ineffectual attempts, and during all the years that we lived together at home everybody recognized the difficulty of the situation and made the best of it by calling us both "Jehnry." I have often wondered at my father's forbearance in not branding us conspicuously upon our unworthy brows, but as we were tolerably good boys and used our power of embarrassment and annoyance with commendable moderation, we escaped the iron. My father was, in fact, a singularly good-natured man, and I think quietly enjoyed nature's practical joke.

Soon after we had come to California, and settled at San Jose (where the only good fortune that awaited us was our meeting with so kind a friend as you) the family, as you know, was broken up by the death of both my parents in the same week. My father died insolvent and the homestead was sacrificed to pay his debts. My sisters returned to relatives in the East, but owing to your kindness John and I, then twenty-two years of age, obtained employment in San Francisco, in different quarters of the town. Circumstances did not permit us to live together, and we saw each other infrequently, sometimes not oftener than once a week. As we had few acquaintances in common, the fact of our extraordinary likeness was little known. I come now to the matter of your inquiry.

One day soon after we had come to this city I was walking down Market street late in the afternoon, when I was accosted by a well-dressed man of middle age, who after greeting me cordially said: “Stevens, I know, of course, that you do not go out much, but I have told my wife about you, and she would be glad to see you at the house. I have a notion, too, that my girls are worth knowing. Suppose you come out to-morrow at six and dine with us, en famille; and then if the ladies can’t amuse you afterward I’ll stand in with a few games of billiards.”

This was said with so bright a smile and so engaging a manner that I had not the heart to refuse, and although I had never seen the man in my life I promptly replied: “You are very good, sir, and it will give me great pleasure to accept the invitation. Please present my compliments to Mrs. Margovan and ask her to expect me.”

With a shake of the hand and a pleasant parting word the man passed on. That he had mistaken me for my brother was plain enough. That was an error to which I was accustomed and which it was not my habit to rectify unless the matter seemed important. But how had I known that this man’s name was Margovan? It certainly is not a name that one would apply to a man at random, with a probability that it would be right. In point of fact, the name was as strange to me as the man.

The next morning I hastened to where my brother was employed and met him coming out of the office with a number of bills that he was to collect. I told him how I had “committed” him and added that if he didn’t care to keep the engagement I should be delighted to continue the impersonation.

“That’s queer,” he said thoughtfully. “Margovan is the only man in the office here whom I know well and like. When he came in this morning and we had passed the usual greetings some singular impulse prompted me to say: ‘Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Margovan, but I neglected to ask your address.’ I got the address, but what under the sun I was to do with it, I did not know until now. It’s good of you to offer to take the consequence of your impudence, but I’ll eat that dinner myself, if you please.”

He ate a number of dinners at the same place — more than were good for him, I may add without disparaging their quality; for he fell in love with Miss Margovan, proposed marriage to her and was heartlessly accepted.

Several weeks after I had been informed of the engagement, but before it had been convenient for me to make the acquaintance of the young woman and her family, I met one day on Kearney street a handsome but somewhat dissipated-looking man whom something prompted me to follow and watch, which I did without any scruple whatever. He turned up Geary street and followed it until he came to Union square. There he looked at his watch, then entered the square. He loitered about the paths for some time, evidently waiting for someone. Presently he was joined by a fashionably dressed and beautiful young woman and the two walked away up Stockton street, I following. I now felt the necessity of extreme caution, for although the girl was a stranger it seemed to me that she would recognize me at a glance. They made several turns from one street to another and finally, after both had taken a hasty look all about — which I narrowly evaded by stepping into a doorway — they entered a house of which I do not care to state the location. Its location was better than its character.

I protest that my action in playing the spy upon these two strangers was without assignable motive. It was one of which I might or might not be ashamed, according to my estimate of the character of the person finding it out. As an essential part of a narrative educed by your question it is related here without hesitancy or shame.

A week later John took me to the house of his prospective father-inlaw, and in Miss Margovan, as you have already surmised, but to my profound astonishment, I recognized the heroine of that discreditable adventure. A gloriously beautiful heroine of a discreditable adventure I must in justice admit that she was; but that fact has only this importance: her beauty was such a surprise to me that it cast a doubt upon her identity with the young woman I had seen before; how could the marvelous fascination of her face have failed to strike me at that time? But no — there was no possibility of error; the difference was due to costume, light and general surroundings.

John and I passed the evening at the house, enduring, with the fortitude of long experience, such delicate enough banter as our likeness naturally suggested. When the young lady and I were left alone for a few minutes I looked her squarely in the face and said with sudden gravity:

“You, too, Miss Margovan, have a double: I saw her last Tuesday afternoon in Union square.”

She trained her great gray eyes upon me for a moment, but her glance was a trifle less steady than my own and she withdrew it, fixing it on the tip of her shoe.

“Was she very like me?” she asked, with an indifference which I thought a little overdone.

“So like,” said I, “that I greatly admired her, and being unwilling to lose sight of her I confess that I followed her until — Miss Margovan, are you sure that you understand?”

She was now pale, but entirely calm. She again raised her eyes to mine, with a look that did not falter.

"What do you wish me to do?" she asked. "You need not fear to name your terms. I accept them."

It was plain, even in the brief time given me for reflection, that in dealing with this girl ordinary methods would not do, and ordinary exactions were needless.

"Miss Margovan," I said, doubtless with something of the compassion in my voice that I had in my heart, "it is impossible not to think you the victim of some horrible compulsion. Rather than impose new embarrassments upon you I would prefer to aid you to regain your freedom."

She shook her head, sadly and hopelessly, and I continued, with agitation:

"Your beauty unnerves me. I am disarmed by your frankness and your distress. If you are free to act upon conscience you will, I believe, do what you conceive to be best; if you are not — well, Heaven help us all! You have nothing to fear from me but such opposition to this marriage as I can try to justify on — on other grounds."

These were not my exact words, but that was the sense of them, as nearly as my sudden and conflicting emotions permitted me to express it. I rose and left her without another look at her, met the others as they reentered the room and said, as calmly as I could: "I have been bidding Miss Margovan good evening; it is later than I thought."

John decided to go with me. In the street he asked if I had observed anything singular in Julia's manner.

"I thought her ill," I replied; "that is why I left." Nothing more was said.

The next evening I came late to my lodgings. The events of the previous evening had made me nervous and ill; I had tried to cure myself and attain to clear thinking by walking in the open air, but I was oppressed with a horrible presentiment of evil — a presentiment which I could not formulate. It was a chill, foggy night; my clothing and hair were damp and I shook with cold. In my dressing-gown and slippers before a blazing grate of coals I was even more uncomfortable. I no longer shivered but shuddered — there is a difference. The dread of some impending calamity was so strong and dispiriting that I tried to drive it away by inviting a real sorrow — tried to dispel the conception of a terrible future by substituting the memory of a painful past. I recalled the death of my parents and endeavored to fix my mind upon the last sad scenes at their bedsides and their graves. It all seemed vague and unreal, as having occurred ages ago and to another person. Suddenly, striking through my thought and parting it as a tense cord is parted by the stroke of steel — I can think of no other comparison — I heard a sharp cry as of one in mortal agony! The voice was that of my brother and seemed to come from the street outside my window. I sprang to the window and threw it open. A street lamp directly opposite threw a wan and ghastly light upon the wet pavement and the fronts of the houses. A single policeman, with upturned collar, was leaning against a gatepost, quietly smoking a cigar. No one else was in sight. I closed the window and pulled down the shade, seated myself before the fire and tried to fix my mind upon my surroundings. By way of assisting, by performance of some familiar act, I looked at my watch; it marked half-past eleven. Again I heard that awful cry! It seemed in the room — at my side. I was frightened and for some moments had not the power to move. A few minutes later — I have no recollection of the intermediate time — I found myself hurrying along an unfamiliar street as fast as I could walk. I did not know where I was, nor whither I was going, but presently sprang up the steps of a house before which were two or three carriages and in which were moving lights and a subdued confusion of voices. It was the house of Mr. Margovan.

You know, good friend, what had occurred there. In one chamber lay Julia Margovan, hours dead by poison; in another John Stevens, bleeding from a pistol wound in the chest, inflicted by his own hand. As I burst into the room, pushed aside the physicians and laid my hand upon his forehead he unclosed his eyes, stared blankly, closed them slowly and died without a sign.

I knew no more until six weeks afterward, when I had been nursed back to life by your own saintly wife in your own beautiful home. All of that you know, but what you do not know is this — which, however, has no bearing upon the subject of your psychological researches — at least not upon that branch of them in which, with a delicacy and consideration all your own, you have asked for less assistance than I think I have given you:

One moonlight night several years afterward I was passing through Union square. The hour was late and the square deserted. Certain memories of the past naturally came into my mind as I came to the spot where I had once witnessed that fateful assignation, and with that unaccountable perversity which prompts us to dwell upon thoughts of the most painful character I seated myself upon one of the benches to indulge them. A man entered the square and came along the walk toward me. His hands were clasped behind him, his head was bowed; he seemed to observe nothing. As he approached the shadow in which I sat I recognized him as the man whom I had seen meet Julia Margovan years before at that spot. But he was terribly altered — gray, worn and haggard. Dissipation and vice were in evidence in every look; illness was no less apparent. His clothing was in disorder, his hair fell across his forehead in a derangement which was at once uncanny and picturesque. He looked fitter for restraint than liberty — the restraint of a hospital.

With no defined purpose I rose and confronted him. He raised his head and looked me full in the face. I have no words to describe the ghastly change that came over his own; it was a look of unspeakable terror — he thought himself eye to eye with a ghost. But he was a courageous man. “Damn you, John Stevens!” he cried, and lifting his trembling arm he dashed his fist feebly at my face and fell headlong upon the gravel as I walked away.

Somebody found him there, stone-dead. Nothing more is known of him, not even his name. To know of a man that he is dead should be enough.

The Haunted Valley

i — How Trees are Felled in China

A half-mile north from Jo. Dunfer's, on the road from Hutton's to Mexican Hill, the highway dips into a sunless ravine which opens out on either hand in a half-confidential manner, as if it had a secret to impart at some more convenient season. I never used to ride through it without looking first to the one side and then to the other, to see if the time had arrived for the revelation. If I saw nothing — and I never did see anything — there was no feeling of disappointment, for I knew the disclosure was merely withheld temporarily for some good reason which I had no right to question. That I should one day be taken into full confidence I no more doubted than I doubted the existence of Jo. Dunfer himself, through whose premises the ravine ran.

It was said that Jo. had once undertaken to erect a cabin in some remote part of it, but for some reason had abandoned the enterprise and constructed his present hermaphrodite habitation, half residence and half groggery, at the roadside, upon an extreme corner of his estate; as far away as possible, as if on purpose to show how radically he had changed his mind.

This Jo. Dunfer — or, as he was familiarly known in the neighborhood, Whisky Jo. — was a very important personage in those parts. He was apparently about forty years of age, a long, shock-headed fellow, with a corded face, a gnarled arm and a knotty hand like a bunch of prison-keys. He was a hairy man, with a stoop in his walk, like that of one who is about to spring upon something and rend it.

Next to the peculiarity to which he owed his local appellation, Mr. Dunfer's most obvious characteristic was a deep-seated antipathy to the Chinese. I saw him once in a towering rage because one of his herdsmen had permitted a travel-heated Asian to slake his thirst at the horse-trough in front of the saloon end of Jo.'s establishment. I ventured faintly to remonstrate with Jo. for his unchristian spirit, but he merely explained that there was nothing about Chinamen in the New Testament, and strode away to wreak his displeasure upon his dog, which also, I suppose, the inspired scribes had overlooked.

Some days afterward, finding him sitting alone in his barroom, I cautiously approached the subject, when, greatly to my relief, the habitual austerity of his expression visibly softened into something that I took for condescension.

“You young Easterners,” he said, “are a mile-and-a-half too good for this country, and you don’t catch on to our play. People who don’t know a Chileno from a Kanaka can afford to hang out liberal ideas about Chinese immigration, but a fellow that has to fight for his bone with a lot of mongrel coolies hasn’t any time for foolishness.”

This long consumer, who had probably never done an honest day’s-work in his life, sprung the lid of a Chinese tobacco-box and with thumb and forefinger forked out a wad like a small haycock. Holding this reinforcement within supporting distance he fired away with renewed confidence.

“They’re a flight of devouring locusts, and they’re going for everything green in this God blest land, if you want to know.”

Here he pushed his reserve into the breach and when his gabble-gear was again disengaged resumed his uplifting discourse.

“I had one of them on this ranch five years ago, and I’ll tell you about it, so that you can see the nub of this whole question. I didn’t pan out particularly well those days — drank more whisky than was prescribed for me and didn’t seem to care for my duty as a patriotic American citizen; so I took that pagan in, as a kind of cook. But when I got religion over at the Hill and they talked of running me for the Legislature it was given to me to see the light. But what was I to do? If I gave him the go somebody else would take him, and mightn’t treat him white. WHAT was I to do? What would any good Christian do, especially one new to the trade and full to the neck with the brotherhood of Man and the fatherhood of God?”

Jo. paused for a reply, with an expression of unstable satisfaction, as of one who has solved a problem by a distrusted method. Presently he rose and swallowed a glass of whisky from a full bottle on the counter, then resumed his story.

“Besides, he didn’t count for much — didn’t know anything and gave himself airs. They all do that. I said him nay, but he muled it through on that line while he lasted; but after turning the other cheek seventy and seven times I doctored the dice so that he didn’t last forever. And I’m almighty glad I had the sand to do it.

Jo.’s gladness, which somehow did not impress me, was duly and ostentatiously celebrated at the bottle.

“About five years ago I started in to stick up a shack. That was before this one was built, and I put it in another place. I set Ah Wee and a little cuss named Gopher to cutting the timber. Of course I didn’t expect Ah Wee to help much, for he had a face like a day in June and big black eyes — I guess maybe they were the damn’dest eyes in this neck o’ woods.”

While delivering this trenchant thrust at common sense Mr. Dunfer absently regarded a knot-hole in the thin board partition separating the bar from the living-room, as if that were one of the eyes whose size and color had incapacitated his servant for good service.

"Now you Eastern galoots won't believe anything against the yellow devils," he suddenly flamed out with an appearance of earnestness not altogether convincing, "but I tell you that Chink was the perversest scoundrel outside San Francisco. The miserable pigtail Mongolian went to hewing away at the saplings all round the stems, like a worm o' the dust gnawing a radish. I pointed out his error as patiently as I knew how, and showed him how to cut them on two sides, so as to make them fall right; but no sooner would I turn my back on him, like this" — and he turned it on me, amplifying the illustration by taking some more liquor—"than he was at it again. It was just this way: while I looked at him, SO" — regarding me rather unsteadily and with evident complexity of vision—"he was all right; but when I looked away, SO" — taking a long pull at the bottle —"he defied me. Then I'd gaze at him reproachfully, SO, and butter wouldn't have melted in his mouth."

Doubtless Mr. Dunfer honestly intended the look that he fixed upon me to be merely reproachful, but it was singularly fit to arouse the gravest apprehension in any unarmed person incurring it; and as I had lost all interest in his pointless and interminable narrative, I rose to go. Before I had fairly risen, he had again turned to the counter, and with a barely audible "so," had emptied the bottle at a gulp.

Heavens! what a yell! It was like a Titan in his last, strong agony. Jo. staggered back after emitting it, as a cannon recoils from its own thunder, and then dropped into his chair, as if he had been "knocked in the head" like a beef — his eyes drawn sidewise toward the wall, with a stare of terror. Looking in the same direction, I saw that the knot-hole in the wall had indeed become a human eye — a full, black eye, that glared into my own with an entire lack of expression more awful than the most devilish glitter. I think I must have covered my face with my hands to shut out the horrible illusion, if such it was, and Jo.'s little white man-of-all-work coming into the room broke the spell, and I walked out of the house with a sort of dazed fear that delirium tremens might be infectious. My horse was hitched at the watering-trough, and untying him I mounted and gave him his head, too much troubled in mind to note whither he took me.

I did not know what to think of all this, and like every one who does not know what to think I thought a great deal, and to little purpose. The only reflection that seemed at all satisfactory, was, that on the morrow I should be some miles away, with a strong probability of never returning.

A sudden coolness brought me out of my abstraction, and looking up I found myself entering the deep shadows of the ravine. The day was stifling; and this transition from the pitiless, visible heat of the parched fields to the cool gloom, heavy with pungency of cedars and vocal with twittering of the birds that had been driven to its leafy asylum, was exquisitely refreshing. I looked for my mystery, as usual, but not finding the ravine in a communicative mood, dismounted, led my sweating animal into the undergrowth, tied him securely to a tree and sat down upon a rock to meditate.

I began bravely by analyzing my pet superstition about the place. Having resolved it into its constituent elements I arranged them in convenient troops and squadrons, and collecting all the forces of my logic bore down upon them from impregnable premises with the thunder of irresistible conclusions and a great noise of chariots and general intellectual shouting. Then, when my big mental guns had overturned all opposition, and were growling almost inaudibly away on the horizon of pure speculation, the routed enemy straggled in upon their rear, massed silently into a solid phalanx, and captured me, bag and baggage. An indefinable dread came upon me. I rose to shake it off, and began threading the narrow dell by an old, grass-grown cow-path that seemed to flow along the bottom, as a substitute for the brook that Nature had neglected to provide.

The trees among which the path straggled were ordinary, well-behaved plants, a trifle perverted as to trunk and eccentric as to bough, but with nothing unearthly in their general aspect. A few loose bowlders, which had detached themselves from the sides of the depression to set up an independent existence at the bottom, had dammed up the pathway, here and there, but their stony repose had nothing in it of the stillness of death. There was a kind of death-chamber hush in the valley, it is true, and a mysterious whisper above: the wind was just fingering the tops of the trees — that was all.

I had not thought of connecting Jo. Dunfer’s drunken narrative with what I now sought, and only when I came into a clear space and stumbled over the level trunks of some small trees did I have the revelation. This was the site of the abandoned “shack.” The discovery was verified by noting that some of the rotting stumps were hacked all round, in a most unwoodmanlike way, while others were cut straight across, and the butt ends of the corresponding trunks had the blunt wedge-form given by the axe of a master.

The opening among the trees was not more than thirty paces across. At one side was a little knoll — a natural hillock, bare of shrubbery but covered with wild grass, and on this, standing out of the grass, the headstone of a grave!

I do not remember that I felt anything like surprise at this discovery. I viewed that lonely grave with something of the feeling that Columbus must have had when he saw the hills and headlands of the new world. Before approaching it I leisurely completed my survey of the surroundings. I was even guilty of the affectation of winding my watch at that unusual hour, and with needless care and deliberation. Then I approached my mystery.

The grave — a rather short one — was in somewhat better repair than was consistent with its obvious age and isolation, and my eyes, I dare say, widened a trifle at a clump of unmistakable garden flowers showing evidence of recent watering. The stone had clearly enough done duty once as a doorstep. In its front was carved, or rather dug, an inscription. It read thus:

AH WEE — CHINAMAN.

Age unknown. Worked for Jo. Dunfer.
This monument is erected by him to keep the Chink's memory green. Likewise as a warning to Celestials not to take on airs. Devil take 'em! She Was a Good Egg.

I cannot adequately relate my astonishment at this uncommon inscription! The meagre but sufficient identification of the deceased; the impudent candor of confession; the brutal anathema; the ludicrous change of sex and sentiment — all marked this record as the work of one who must have been at least as much demented as bereaved. I felt that any further disclosure would be a paltry anti-climax, and with an unconscious regard for dramatic effect turned squarely about and walked away. Nor did I return to that part of the county for four years.

ii — Who Drives Sane Oxen Should Himself Be Sane

"Gee-up, there, old Fuddy–Duddy!"

This unique adjuration came from the lips of a queer little man perched upon a wagonful of firewood, behind a brace of oxen that were hauling it easily along with a simulation of mighty effort which had evidently not imposed on their lord and master. As that gentleman happened at the moment to be staring me squarely in the face as I stood by the roadside it was not altogether clear whether he was addressing me or his beasts; nor could I say if they were named Fuddy and Duddy and were both subjects of the imperative verb "to gee-up." Anyhow the command produced no effect on us, and the queer little man removed his eyes from mine long enough to spear Fuddy and Duddy alternately with a long pole, remarking, quietly but with feeling: "Dern your skin," as if they enjoyed that integument in common. Observing that my request for a ride took no attention, and finding myself falling slowly astern, I placed one foot upon the inner circumference of a hind wheel and was slowly elevated to the level of the hub, whence I boarded the concern, sans ceremonie, and scrambling forward seated myself beside the driver — who took no notice of me until he had administered another indiscriminate castigation to his cattle, accompanied with the advice to "buckle down, you derned Incapable!" Then, the master of the outfit (or rather the former master, for I could not suppress a whimsical feeling that the entire establishment was my lawful prize) trained his big, black eyes upon me with an expression strangely, and somewhat unpleasantly, familiar, laid down his rod — which neither blossomed nor turned into a serpent, as I half expected — folded his arms, and gravely demanded, "W'at did you do to W'isky?"

My natural reply would have been that I drank it, but there was something about the query that suggested a hidden significance, and something about the man that did not invite a shallow jest. And so, having no other answer ready, I merely held my tongue, but felt as if I were resting under an imputation of guilt, and that my silence was being construed into a confession.

Just then a cold shadow fell upon my cheek, and caused me to look up. We were descending into my ravine! I cannot describe the sensation that came upon me: I had not seen it since it unbosomed itself four years before, and now I felt like one to whom a friend has made some sorrowing confession of crime long past, and who has basely deserted him in consequence. The old memories of Jo. Dunfer, his fragmentary revelation, and the unsatisfying explanatory note by the headstone, came back with singular distinctness. I wondered what had become of Jo., and — I turned sharply round and asked my prisoner. He was intently watching his cattle, and without withdrawing his eyes replied:

"Gee-up, old Terrapin! He lies aside of Ah Wee up the gulch. Like to see it? They always come back to the spot — I've been expectin' you. H-woa!"

At the enunciation of the aspirate, Fuddy–Duddy, the incapable terrapin, came to a dead halt, and before the vowel had died away up the ravine had folded up all his eight legs and lain down in the dusty road, regardless of the effect upon his derned skin. The queer little man slid off his seat to the ground and started up the dell without deigning to look back to see if I was following. But I was.

It was about the same season of the year, and at near the same hour of the day, of my last visit. The jays clamored loudly, and the trees whispered darkly, as before; and I somehow traced in the two sounds a fanciful analogy to the open boastfulness of Mr. Jo. Dunfer's mouth and the mysterious reticence of his manner, and to the mingled hardihood and tenderness of his sole literary production — the epitaph. All things in the valley seemed unchanged, excepting the cow-path, which was almost wholly overgrown with weeds. When we came out into the "clearing," however, there was change enough. Among the stumps and trunks of the fallen saplings, those that had been hacked "China fashion" were no longer distinguishable from those that were cut "'Melican way." It was as if the Old–World barbarism and the New–World civilization had reconciled their differences by the arbitration of an impartial decay — as is the way of civilizations. The knoll was there, but the Hunnish brambles had overrun and all but obliterated its effete grasses; and the patrician garden-violet had capitulated to his plebeian brother — perhaps had merely reverted to his original type. Another grave — a long, robust mound — had been made beside the first, which seemed to shrink from the comparison; and in the shadow of a new headstone the old one lay prostrate, with its marvelous inscription illegible by accumulation of leaves and soil. In point of literary merit the new was inferior to the old — was even repulsive in its terse and savage jocularity:

JO. DUNFER. DONE FOR.

I turned from it with indifference, and brushing away the leaves from the tablet of the dead pagan restored to light the mocking words which, fresh from their long neglect, seemed to have a certain pathos. My guide, too, appeared to take on an added seriousness as he read it, and I fancied that I could detect beneath his whimsical manner something of manliness, almost of dignity. But while I looked at him his former aspect, so subtly inhuman, so tantalizingly familiar, crept back into his big eyes, repellant and attractive. I resolved to make an end of the mystery if possible.

"My friend," I said, pointing to the smaller grave, "did Jo. Dunfer murder that

Chinaman?”

He was leaning against a tree and looking across the open space into the top of another, or into the blue sky beyond. He neither withdrew his eyes, nor altered his posture as he slowly replied:

“No, sir; he justifiably homicided him.”

“Then he really did kill him.”

“Kill ‘im? I should say he did, rather. Doesn’t everybody know that? Didn’t he stan’ up before the coroner’s jury and confess it? And didn’t they find a verdict of ‘Came to ‘is death by a wholesome Christian sentiment workin’ in the Caucasian breast’? An’ didn’t the church at the Hill turn W’isky down for it? And didn’t the sovereign people elect him Justice of the Peace to get even on the gospelers? I don’t know where you were brought up.”

“But did Jo. do that because the Chinaman did not, or would n’ot, learn to cut down trees like a white man?”

“Sure! — it stan’s so on the record, which makes it true an’ legal. My knowin’ better doesn’t make any difference with legal truth; it wasn’t my funeral and I wasn’t invited to deliver an oration. But the fact is, W’isky was jealous o’ ME” — and the little wretch actually swelled out like a turkeycock and made a pretense of adjusting an imaginary neck-tie, noting the effect in the palm of his hand, held up before him to represent a mirror.

“Jealous of YOU!” I repeated with ill-mannered astonishment.

“That’s what I said. Why not? — don’t I look all right?”

He assumed a mocking attitude of studied grace, and twitched the wrinkles out of his threadbare waistcoat. Then, suddenly dropping his voice to a low pitch of singular sweetness, he continued:

“W’isky thought a lot o’ that Chink; nobody but me knew how ‘e doted on ‘im. Couldn’t bear ‘im out of ‘is sight, the derned protoplasm! And w’en ‘e came down to this clearin’ one day an’ found him an’ me neglectin’ our work — him asleep an’ me grapplin a tarantula out of ‘is sleeve — W’isky laid hold of my axe and let us have it, good an’ hard! I dodged just then, for the spider bit me, but Ah Wee got it bad in the side an’ tumbled about like anything. W’isky was just weigh-in’ me out one w’en ‘e saw the spider fastened on my finger; then ‘e knew he’d made a jack ass of ‘imself. He threw away the axe and got down on ‘is knees alongside of Ah Wee, who gave a last little kick and opened ‘is eyes — he had eyes like mine — an’ puttin’ up ‘is hands drew down W’isky’s ugly head and held it there w’ile ‘e stayed. That wasn’t long, for a tremblin’ ran through ‘im and ‘e gave a bit of a moan an’ beat the game.”

During the progress of the story the narrator had become transfigured. The comic, or rather, the sardonic element was all out of him, and as he painted that strange scene it was with difficulty that I kept my composure. And this consummate actor had somehow so managed me that the sympathy due to his dramatis persone was given to himself. I stepped forward to grasp his hand, when suddenly a broad grin danced across his face and with a light, mocking laugh he continued:

"W'en W'isky got 'is nut out o' that 'e was a sight to see! All his fine clothes — he dressed mighty blindin' those days — were spoiled everlastin'! 'Is hair was towsled and his face — what I could see of it — was whiter than the ace of lilies. 'E stared once at me, and looked away as if I didn't count; an' then there were shootin' pains chasin' one another from my bitten finger into my head, and it was Gopher to the dark. That's why I wasn't at the inquest."

"But why did you hold your tongue afterward?" I asked.

"It's that kind of tongue," he replied, and not another word would he say about it.

"After that W'isky took to drinkin' harder an' harder, and was rabider an' rabider anti-coolie, but I don't think 'e was ever particularly glad that 'e dispelled Ah Wee. He didn't put on so much dog about it w'en we were alone as w'en he had the ear of a derned Spectacular Extravaganza like you. 'E put up that headstone and gouged the inscription accordin' to his varyin' moods. It took 'im three weeks, workin' between drinks. I gouged his in one day."

"When did Jo. die?" I asked rather absently. The answer took my breath:

"Pretty soon after I looked at him through that knot-hole, w'en you had put something in his w'isky, you derned Borgia!"

Recovering somewhat from my surprise at this astounding charge, I was half-minded to throttle the audacious accuser, but was restrained by a sudden conviction that came to me in the light of a revelation. I fixed a grave look upon him and asked, as calmly as I could: "And when did you go luny?"

"Nine years ago!" he shrieked, throwing out his clenched hands—"nine years ago, w'en that big brute killed the woman who loved him better than she did me! — me who had followed 'er from San Francisco, where 'e won 'er at draw poker! — me who had watched over 'er for years w'en the scoundrel she belonged to was ashamed to acknowledge 'er and treat 'er white! — me who for her sake kept 'is cussed secret till it ate 'im up! — me who w'en you poisoned the beast fulfilled 'is last request to lay 'im alongside 'er and give 'im a stone to the head of 'im! And I've never since seen 'er grave till now, for I didn't want to meet 'im here."

"Meet him? Why, Gopher, my poor fellow, he is dead!"

"That's why I'm afraid of 'im."

I followed the little wretch back to his wagon and wrung his hand at parting. It was now nightfall, and as I stood there at the roadside in the deepening gloom, watching the blank outlines of the receding wagon, a sound was borne to me on the evening wind — a sound as of a series of vigorous thumps — and a voice came out of the night:

“Gee-up, there, you derned old Geranium.”

A Jug of Sirup

This narrative begins with the death of its hero. Silas Deemer died on the 16th day of July, 1863, and two days later his remains were buried. As he had been personally known to every man, woman and well-grown child in the village, the funeral, as the local newspaper phrased it, “was largely attended.” In accordance with a custom of the time and place, the coffin was opened at the graveside and the entire assembly of friends and neighbors filed past, taking a last look at the face of the dead. And then, before the eyes of all, Silas Deemer was put into the ground. Some of the eyes were a trifle dim, but in a general way it may be said that at that interment there was lack of neither observance nor observation; Silas was indubitably dead, and none could have pointed out any ritual delinquency that would have justified him in coming back from the grave. Yet if human testimony is good for anything (and certainly it once put an end to witchcraft in and about Salem) he came back.

I forgot to state that the death and burial of Silas Deemer occurred in the little village of Hillbrook, where he had lived for thirty-one years. He had been what is known in some parts of the Union (which is admittedly a free country) as a “merchant”; that is to say, he kept a retail shop for the sale of such things as are commonly sold in shops of that character. His honesty had never been questioned, so far as is known, and he was held in high esteem by all. The only thing that could be urged against him by the most censorious was a too close attention to business. It was not urged against him, though many another, who manifested it in no greater degree, was less leniently judged. The business to which Silas was devoted was mostly his own — that, possibly, may have made a difference.

At the time of Deemer’s death nobody could recollect a single day, Sundays excepted, that he had not passed in his “store,” since he had opened it more than a quarter-century before. His health having been perfect during all that time, he had been unable to discern any validity in whatever may or might have been urged to lure him astray from his counter and it is related that once when he was summoned to the county seat as a witness in an important law case and did not attend, the lawyer who had the hardihood to move that he be “admonished” was solemnly informed that the Court regarded the proposal with “surprise.” Judicial surprise being an emotion that attorneys are not commonly ambitious to arouse, the motion was hastily withdrawn and an agreement with the other side effected as to what Mr. Deemer would have said if he had been there — the other side pushing its advantage to the extreme and making the supposititious testimony distinctly damaging to the interests of its proponents. In brief, it was the general feeling in all that region that Silas Deemer was the one immobile verity of Hillbrook, and that his translation in space would precipitate some dismal public ill or strenuous calamity.

Mrs. Deemer and two grown daughters occupied the upper rooms of the building, but Silas had never been known to sleep elsewhere than on a cot behind the counter of the store. And there, quite by accident, he was found one night, dying, and passed away just before the time for taking down the shutters. Though speechless, he appeared conscious, and it was thought by those who knew him best that if the end had unfortunately been delayed beyond the usual hour for opening the store the effect upon him would have been deplorable.

Such had been Silas Deemer — such the fixity and invariety of his life and habit, that the village humorist (who had once attended college) was moved to bestow upon him the sobriquet of “Old Ibidem,” and, in the first issue of the local newspaper after the death, to explain without offence that Silas had taken “a day off.” It was more than a day, but from the record it appears that well within a month Mr. Deemer made it plain that he had not the leisure to be dead.

One of Hillbrook’s most respected citizens was Alvan Creede, a banker. He lived in the finest house in town, kept a carriage and was a most estimable man variously. He knew something of the advantages of travel, too, having been frequently in Boston, and once, it was thought, in New York, though he modestly disclaimed that glittering distinction. The matter is mentioned here merely as a contribution to an understanding of Mr. Creede’s worth, for either way it is creditable to him — to his intelligence if he had put himself, even temporarily, into contact with metropolitan culture; to his candor if he had not.

One pleasant summer evening at about the hour of ten Mr. Creede, entering at his garden gate, passed up the gravel walk, which looked very white in the moonlight, mounted the stone steps of his fine house and pausing a moment inserted his latchkey in the door. As he pushed this open he met his wife, who was crossing the passage from the parlor to the library. She greeted him pleasantly and pulling the door further back held it for him to enter. Instead he turned and, looking about his feet in front of the threshold, uttered an exclamation of surprise.

“Why! — what the devil,” he said, “has become of that jug?”

“What jug, Alvan?” his wife inquired, not very sympathetically.

“A jug of maple sirup — I brought it along from the store and set it down here to open the door. What the—”

"There, there, Alvan, please don't swear again," said the lady, interrupting. Hillbrook, by the way, is not the only place in Christendom where a vestigial polytheism forbids the taking in vain of the Evil One's name.

The jug of maple sirup which the easy ways of village life had permitted Hillbrook's foremost citizen to carry home from the store was not there.

"Are you quite sure, Alvan?"

"My dear, do you suppose a man does not know when he is carrying a jug? I bought that sirup at Deemer's as I was passing. Deemer himself drew it and lent me the jug, and I—"

The sentence remains to this day unfinished. Mr. Creede staggered into the house, entered the parlor and dropped into an armchair, trembling in every limb. He had suddenly remembered that Silas Deemer was three weeks dead.

Mrs. Creede stood by her husband, regarding him with surprise and anxiety.

"For Heaven's sake," she said, "what ails you?"

Mr. Creede's ailment having no obvious relation to the interests of the better land he did not apparently deem it necessary to expound it on that demand; he said nothing — merely stared. There were long moments of silence broken by nothing but the measured ticking of the clock, which seemed somewhat slower than usual, as if it were civilly granting them an extension of time in which to recover their wits.

"Jane, I have gone mad — that is it." He spoke thickly and hurriedly. "You should have told me; you must have observed my symptoms before they became so pronounced that I have observed them myself. I thought I was passing Deemer's store; it was open and lit up — that is what I thought; of course it is never open now. Silas Deemer stood at his desk behind the counter. My God, Jane, I saw him as distinctly as I see you. Remembering that you had said you wanted some maple sirup, I went in and bought some — that is all — I bought two quarts of maple sirup from Silas Deemer, who is dead and underground, but nevertheless drew that sirup from a cask and handed it to me in a jug. He talked with me, too, rather gravely, I remember, even more so than was his way, but not a word of what he said can I now recall. But I saw him — good Lord, I saw and talked with him — and he is dead! So I thought, but I'm mad, Jane, I'm as crazy as a beetle; and you have kept it from me."

This monologue gave the woman time to collect what faculties she had.

"Alvan," she said, "you have given no evidence of insanity, believe me. This was undoubtedly an illusion — how should it be anything else? That would be too terrible! But there is no insanity; you are working too hard at the bank. You should not have attended the meeting of directors this evening; any one could see that you were ill; I knew something would occur."

It may have seemed to him that the prophecy had lagged a bit, awaiting the event, but he said nothing of that, being concerned with his own condition. He was calm now, and could think coherently.

“Doubtless the phenomenon was subjective,” he said, with a somewhat ludicrous transition to the slang of science. “Granting the possibility of spiritual apparition and even materialization, yet the apparition and materialization of a half-gallon brown clay jug — a piece of coarse, heavy pottery evolved from nothing — that is hardly thinkable.”

As he finished speaking, a child ran into the room — his little daughter. She was clad in a bedgown. Hastening to her father she threw her arms about his neck, saying: “You naughty papa, you forgot to come in and kiss me. We heard you open the gate and got up and looked out. And, papa dear, Eddy says mayn’t he have the little jug when it is empty?”

As the full import of that revelation imparted itself to Alvan Creede’s understanding he visibly shuddered. For the child could not have heard a word of the conversation.

The estate of Silas Deemer being in the hands of an administrator who had thought it best to dispose of the “business” the store had been closed ever since the owner’s death, the goods having been removed by another “merchant” who had purchased them en bloc. The rooms above were vacant as well, for the widow and daughters had gone to another town.

On the evening immediately after Alvan Creede’s adventure (which had somehow “got out”) a crowd of men, women and children thronged the sidewalk opposite the store. That the place was haunted by the spirit of the late Silas Deemer was now well known to every resident of Hillbrook, though many affected disbelief. Of these the hardiest, and in a general way the youngest, threw stones against the front of the building, the only part accessible, but carefully missed the unshuttered windows. Incredulity had not grown to malice. A few venturesome souls crossed the street and rattled the door in its frame; struck matches and held them near the window; attempted to view the black interior. Some of the spectators invited attention to their wit by shouting and groaning and challenging the ghost to a footrace.

After a considerable time had elapsed without any manifestation, and many of the crowd had gone away, all those remaining began to observe that the interior of the store was suffused with a dim, yellow light. At this all demonstrations ceased; the intrepid souls about the door and windows fell back to the opposite side of the street and were merged in the crowd; the small boys ceased throwing stones. Nobody spoke above his breath; all whispered excitedly and pointed to the now steadily growing light. How long a time had passed since the first faint glow had been observed none could have guessed, but eventually the illumination was bright enough to reveal the whole interior of the store; and there, standing at his desk behind the counter, Silas Deemer was distinctly visible!

The effect upon the crowd was marvelous. It began rapidly to melt away at both flanks, as the timid left the place. Many ran as fast as their legs would let them; others moved off with greater dignity, turning occasionally to look backward over the shoulder. At last a score or more, mostly men, remained where they were, speechless, staring, excited. The apparition inside gave them no attention; it was apparently occupied with a book of accounts.

Presently three men left the crowd on the sidewalk as if by a common impulse and crossed the street. One of them, a heavy man, was about to set his shoulder against the door when it opened, apparently without human agency, and the courageous investigators passed in. No sooner had they crossed the threshold than they were seen by the awed observers outside to be acting in the most unaccountable way. They thrust out their hands before them, pursued devious courses, came into violent collision with the counter, with boxes and barrels on the floor, and with one another. They turned awkwardly hither and thither and seemed trying to escape, but unable to retrace their steps. Their voices were heard in exclamations and curses. But in no way did the apparition of Silas Deemer manifest an interest in what was going on.

By what impulse the crowd was moved none ever recollected, but the entire mass — men, women, children, dogs — made a simultaneous and tumultuous rush for the entrance. They congested the doorway, pushing for precedence — resolving themselves at length into a line and moving up step by step. By some subtle spiritual or physical alchemy observation had been transmuted into action — the sightseers had become participants in the spectacle — the audience had usurped the stage.

To the only spectator remaining on the other side of the street — Alvan Creede, the banker — the interior of the store with its inpouring crowd continued in full illumination; all the strange things going on there were clearly visible. To those inside all was black darkness. It was as if each person as he was thrust in at the door had been stricken blind, and was maddened by the mischance. They groped with aimless imprecision, tried to force their way out against the current, pushed and elbowed, struck at random, fell and were trampled, rose and trampled in their turn. They seized one another by the garments, the hair, the beard — fought like animals, cursed, shouted, called one another opprobrious and obscene names. When, finally, Alvan Creede had seen the last person of the line pass into that awful tumult the light that had illuminated it was suddenly quenched and all was as black to him as to those within. He turned away and left the place.

In the early morning a curious crowd had gathered about “Deemer’s.” It was composed partly of those who had run away the night before, but now had the courage of sunshine, partly of honest folk going to their daily toil. The door of the store stood open; the place was vacant, but on the walls, the floor, the furniture, were shreds of clothing and tangles of hair. Hillbrook militant had managed somehow to pull itself out and had gone home to medicine its hurts and swear that it had been all night in bed. On the dusty desk, behind the counter, was the sales-book. The entries in it, in Deemer’s handwriting, had ceased on the 16th day of July, the last of his life. There was no record of a later sale to Alvan Creede.

That is the entire story — except that men’s passions having subsided and reason having resumed its immemorial sway, it was confessed in Hillbrook that, considering the harmless and honorable character of his first commercial transaction under the new conditions, Silas Deemer, deceased, might properly have been suffered to resume business at the old stand without mobbing. In that judgment the local historian from whose unpublished work these facts are compiled had the thoughtfulness to signify his concurrence.

Staley Fleming's Hallucination

Of two men who were talking one was a physician.

"I sent for you, Doctor," said the other, "but I don't think you can do me any good. May be you can recommend a specialist in psychopathy. I fancy I'm a bit loony."

"You look all right," the physician said.

"You shall judge — I have hallucinations. I wake every night and see in my room, intently watching me, a big black Newfoundland dog with a white forefoot."

"You say you wake; are you sure about that? 'Hallucinations' are sometimes only dreams."

"Oh, I wake, all right. Sometimes I lie still a long time, looking at the dog as earnestly as the dog looks at me — I always leave the light going. When I can't endure it any longer I sit up in bed — and nothing is there!"

"'M, 'm — what is the beast's expression?"

"It seems to me sinister. Of course I know that, except in art, an animal's face in repose has always the same expression. But this is not a real animal. Newfoundland dogs are pretty mild looking, you know; what's the matter with this one?"

"Really, my diagnosis would have no value: I am not going to treat the dog."

The physician laughed at his own pleasantry, but narrowly watched his patient from the corner of his eye. Presently he said: "Fleming, your description of the beast fits the dog of the late Atwell Barton."

Fleming half-rose from his chair, sat again and made a visible attempt at indifference. "I remember Barton," he said; "I believe he was — it was reported that — wasn't there something suspicious in his death?"

Looking squarely now into the eyes of his patient, the physician said: "Three years ago the body of your old enemy, Atwell Barton, was found in the woods near his house and yours. He had been stabbed to death. There have been no arrests; there was no clew. Some of us had 'theories.' I had one. Have you?"

"I? Why, bless your soul, what could I know about it? You remember that I left for Europe almost immediately afterward — a considerable time afterward. In the few weeks since my return you could not expect me to construct a 'theory.' In fact, I have not given the matter a thought. What about his dog?"

"It was first to find the body. It died of starvation on his grave."

We do not know the inexorable law underlying coincidences. Staley Fleming did not, or he would perhaps not have sprung to his feet as the night wind brought in through the open window the long wailing howl of a distant dog. He strode several times across the room in the steadfast gaze of the physician; then, abruptly confronting him, almost shouted: “What has all this to do with my trouble, Dr. Halderman? You forget why you were sent for.”

Rising, the physician laid his hand upon his patient’s arm and said, gently: “Pardon me. I cannot diagnose your disorder off-hand — tomorrow, perhaps. Please go to bed, leaving your door unlocked; I will pass the night here with your books. Can you call me without rising?”

“Yes, there is an electric bell.”

“Good. If anything disturbs you push the button without sitting up. Good night.”

Comfortably installed in an armchair the man of medicine stared into the glowing coals and thought deeply and long, but apparently to little purpose, for he frequently rose and opening a door leading to the staircase, listened intently; then resumed his seat. Presently, however, he fell asleep, and when he woke it was past midnight. He stirred the failing fire, lifted a book from the table at his side and looked at the title. It was Denneker’s “Meditations.” He opened it at random and began to read:

“Forasmuch as it is ordained of God that all flesh hath spirit and thereby taketh on spiritual powers, so, also, the spirit hath powers of the flesh, even when it is gone out of the flesh and liveth as a thing apart, as many a violence performed by wraith and lemure sheweth. And there be who say that man is not single in this, but the beasts have the like evil inducement, and—”

The reading was interrupted by a shaking of the house, as by the fall of a heavy object. The reader flung down the book, rushed from the room and mounted the stairs to Fleming’s bed-chamber. He tried the door, but contrary to his instructions it was locked. He set his shoulder against it with such force that it gave way. On the floor near the disordered bed, in his night clothes, lay Fleming gasping away his life.

The physician raised the dying man’s head from the floor and observed a wound in the throat. “I should have thought of this,” he said, believing it suicide.

When the man was dead an examination disclosed the unmistakable marks of an animal’s fangs deeply sunken into the jugular vein.

But there was no animal.

A Resumed Identity

i — The Review as a Form of Welcome

One summer night a man stood on a low hill overlooking a wide expanse of forest and field. By the full moon hanging low in the west he knew what he might not have known otherwise: that it was near the hour of dawn. A light mist lay along the earth, partly veiling the lower features of the landscape, but above it the taller trees showed in well-defined masses against a clear sky. Two or three farmhouses were visible through the haze, but in none of them, naturally, was a light. Nowhere, indeed, was any sign or suggestion of life except the barking of a distant dog, which, repeated with mechanical iteration, served rather to accentuate than dispel the loneliness of the scene.

The man looked curiously about him on all sides, as one who among familiar surroundings is unable to determine his exact place and part in the scheme of things. It is so, perhaps, that we shall act when, risen from the dead, we await the call to judgment.

A hundred yards away was a straight road, showing white in the moonlight. Endeavoring to orient himself, as a surveyor or navigator might say, the man moved his eyes slowly along its visible length and at a distance of a quarter-mile to the south of his station saw, dim and gray in the haze, a group of horsemen riding to the north. Behind them were men afoot, marching in column, with dimly gleaming rifles aslant above their shoulders. They moved slowly and in silence. Another group of horsemen, another regiment of infantry, another and another — all in unceasing motion toward the man’s point of view, past it, and beyond. A battery of artillery followed, the cannoneers riding with folded arms on limber and caisson. And still the interminable procession came out of the obscurity to south and passed into the obscurity to north, with never a sound of voice, nor hoof, nor wheel.

The man could not rightly understand: he thought himself deaf; said so, and heard his own voice, although it had an unfamiliar quality that almost alarmed him; it disappointed his ear’s expectancy in the matter of timbre and resonance. But he was not deaf, and that for the moment sufficed.

Then he remembered that there are natural phenomena to which some one has given the name “acoustic shadows.” If you stand in an acoustic shadow there is one direction from which you will hear nothing. At the battle of Gaines’s Mill, one of the fiercest conflicts of the Civil War, with a hundred guns in play, spectators a mile and a half away on the opposite side of the Chickahominy valley heard nothing of what they clearly saw. The bombardment of Port Royal, heard and felt at St. Augustine, a hundred and fifty miles to the south, was inaudible two miles to the north in a still atmosphere. A few days before the surrender at Appomattox a thunderous engagement between the commands of Sheridan and Pickett was unknown to the latter commander, a mile in the rear of his own line.

These instances were not known to the man of whom we write, but less striking ones of the same character had not escaped his observation. He was profoundly disquieted, but for another reason than the uncanny silence of that moonlight march.

“Good Lord!” he said to himself — and again it was as if another had spoken his thought—”if those people are what I take them to be we have lost the battle and they are moving on Nashville!”

Then came a thought of self — an apprehension — a strong sense of personal peril, such as in another we call fear. He stepped quickly into the shadow of a tree. And still the silent battalions moved slowly forward in the haze.

The chill of a sudden breeze upon the back of his neck drew his attention to the quarter whence it came, and turning to the east he saw a faint gray light along the horizon — the first sign of returning day. This increased his apprehension.

“I must get away from here,” he thought, “or I shall be discovered and taken.”

He moved out of the shadow, walking rapidly toward the graying east. From the safer seclusion of a clump of cedars he looked back. The entire column had passed out of sight: the straight white road lay bare and desolate in the moonlight!

Puzzled before, he was now inexpressibly astonished. So swift a passing of so slow an army! — he could not comprehend it. Minute after minute passed unnoted; he had lost his sense of time. He sought with a terrible earnestness a solution of the mystery, but sought in vain. When at last he roused himself from his abstraction the sun’s rim was visible above the hills, but in the new conditions he found no other light than that of day; his understanding was involved as darkly in doubt as before.

On every side lay cultivated fields showing no sign of war and war’s ravages. From the chimneys of the farmhouses thin ascensions of blue smoke signaled preparations for a day’s peaceful toil. Having stilled its immemorial allocution to the moon, the watch-dog was assisting a negro who, prefixing a team of mules to the plow, was flatting and sharping contentedly at his task. The hero of this tale stared stupidly at the pastoral picture as if he had never seen such a thing in all his life; then he put his hand to his head, passed it through his hair and, withdrawing it, attentively considered the palm — a singular thing to do. Apparently reassured by the act, he walked confidently toward the road.

ii — When You have Lost Your Life Consult a Physician

Dr. Stilling Malson, of Murfreesboro, having visited a patient six or seven miles away, on the Nashville road, had remained with him all night. At daybreak he set out for home on horseback, as was the custom of doctors of the time and region. He had passed into the neighborhood of Stone’s River battlefield when a man approached him from the roadside and saluted in the military fashion, with a movement of the right hand to the hat-brim. But the hat was not a military hat, the man was not in uniform and had not a martial bearing. The doctor nodded civilly, half thinking that the stranger’s uncommon greeting was perhaps in deference to the historic surroundings. As the stranger evidently desired speech with him he courteously reined in his horse and waited.

“Sir,” said the stranger, “although a civilian, you are perhaps an enemy.”

“I am a physician,” was the non-committal reply.

“Thank you,” said the other. “I am a lieutenant, of the staff of General Hazen.” He paused a moment and looked sharply at the person whom he was addressing, then added, “Of the Federal army.”

The physician merely nodded.

“Kindly tell me,” continued the other, “what has happened here. Where are the armies? Which has won the battle?”

The physician regarded his questioner curiously with half-shut eyes. After a professional scrutiny, prolonged to the limit of politeness, “Pardon me,” he said; “one asking information should be willing to impart it. Are you wounded?” he added, smiling.

“Not seriously — it seems.”

The man removed the unmilitary hat, put his hand to his head, passed it through his hair and, withdrawing it, attentively considered the palm.

“I was struck by a bullet and have been unconscious. It must have been a light, glancing blow: I find no blood and feel no pain. I will not trouble you for treatment, but will you kindly direct me to my command — to any part of the Federal army — if you know?”

Again the doctor did not immediately reply: he was recalling much that is recorded in the books of his profession — something about lost identity and the effect of familiar scenes in restoring it. At length he looked the man in the face, smiled, and said:

“Lieutenant, you are not wearing the uniform of your rank and service.”

At this the man glanced down at his civilian attire, lifted his eyes, and said with hesitation:

“That is true. I — I don’t quite understand.”

Still regarding him sharply but not unsympathetically the man of science bluntly inquired:

“How old are you?”

“Twenty-three — if that has anything to do with it.”

“You don’t look it; I should hardly have guessed you to be just that.”

The man was growing impatient. “We need not discuss that,” he said; “I want to know about the army. Not two hours ago I saw a column of troops moving northward on this road. You must have met them. Be good enough to tell me the color of their clothing, which I was unable to make out, and I’ll trouble you no more.”

“You are quite sure that you saw them?”

“Sure? My God, sir, I could have counted them!”

“Why, really,” said the physician, with an amusing consciousness of his own resemblance to the loquacious barber of the Arabian Nights, “this is very interesting. I met no troops.”

The man looked at him coldly, as if he had himself observed the likeness to the barber. “It is plain,” he said, “that you do not care to assist me. Sir, you may go to the devil!”

He turned and strode away, very much at random, across the dewy fields, his half-penitent tormentor quietly watching him from his point of vantage in the saddle till he disappeared beyond an array of trees.

iii — The Danger of Looking into a Pool of Water

After leaving the road the man slackened his pace, and now went forward, rather deviously, with a distinct feeling of fatigue. He could not account for this, though truly the interminable loquacity of that country doctor offered itself in explanation. Seating himself upon a rock, he laid one hand upon his knee, back upward, and casually looked at it. It was lean and withered. He lifted both hands to his face. It was seamed and furrowed; he could trace the lines with the tips of his fingers. How strange! — a mere bullet-stroke and a brief unconsciousness should not make one a physical wreck.

"I must have been a long time in hospital," he said aloud. "Why, what a fool I am! The battle was in December, and it is now summer!" He laughed. "No wonder that fellow thought me an escaped lunatic. He was wrong: I am only an escaped patient."

At a little distance a small plot of ground enclosed by a stone wall caught his attention. With no very definite intent he rose and went to it. In the center was a square, solid monument of hewn stone. It was brown with age, weather-worn at the angles, spotted with moss and lichen. Between the massive blocks were strips of grass the leverage of whose roots had pushed them apart. In answer to the challenge of this ambitious structure Time had laid his destroying hand upon it, and it would soon be "one with Nineveh and Tyre." In an inscription on one side his eye caught a familiar name. Shaking with excitement, he craned his body across the wall and read:

Hazen's Brigade
To the Memory of its Soldiers who fell at Stone River, Dec. 31, 1862.

The man fell back from the wall, faint and sick. Almost within an arm's length was a little depression in the earth; it had been filled by a recent rain — a pool of clear water. He crept to it to revive himself, lifted the upper part of his body on his trembling arms, thrust forward his head and saw the reflection of his face, as in a mirror. He uttered a terrible cry. His arms gave way; he fell, face downward, into the pool and yielded up the life that had spanned another life.

A Baby Tramp

If you had seen little Jo standing at the street corner in the rain, you would hardly have admired him. It was apparently an ordinary autumn rainstorm, but the water which fell upon Jo (who was hardly old enough to be either just or unjust, and so perhaps did not come under the law of impartial distribution) appeared to have some property peculiar to itself: one would have said it was dark and adhesive — sticky. But that could hardly be so, even in Blackburg, where things certainly did occur that were a good deal out of the common.

For example, ten or twelve years before, a shower of small frogs had fallen, as is credibly attested by a contemporaneous chronicle, the record concluding with a somewhat obscure statement to the effect that the chronicler considered it good growing-weather for Frenchmen.

Some years later Blackburg had a fall of crimson snow; it is cold in Blackburg when winter is on, and the snows are frequent and deep. There can be no doubt of it — the snow in this instance was of the color of blood and melted into water of the same hue, if water it was, not blood. The phenomenon had attracted wide attention, and science had as many explanations as there were scientists who knew nothing about it. But the men of Blackburg — men who for many years had lived right there where the red snow fell, and might be supposed to know a good deal about the matter — shook their heads and said something would come of it.

And something did, for the next summer was made memorable by the prevalence of a mysterious disease — epidemic, endemic, or the Lord knows what, though the physicians didn't — which carried away a full half of the population. Most of the other half carried themselves away and were slow to return, but finally came back, and were now increasing and multiplying as before, but Blackburg had not since been altogether the same.

Of quite another kind, though equally "out of the common," was the incident of Hetty Parlow's ghost. Hetty Parlow's maiden name had been Brownon, and in Blackburg that meant more than one would think.

The Brownons had from time immemorial — from the very earliest of the old colonial days — been the leading family of the town. It was the richest and it was the best, and Blackburg would have shed the last drop of its plebeian blood in defense of the Brownon fair fame. As few of the family's members had ever been known to live permanently away from Blackburg, although most of them were educated elsewhere and nearly all had traveled, there was quite a number of them. The men held most of the public offices, and the women were foremost in all good works. Of these latter, Hetty was most beloved by reason of the sweetness of her disposition, the purity of her character and her singular personal beauty. She married in Boston a young scapegrace named Parlow, and like a good Brownon brought him to Blackburg forthwith and made a man and a town councilman of him. They had a child which they named Joseph and dearly loved, as was then the fashion among parents in all that region. Then they died of the mysterious disorder already mentioned, and at the age of one whole year Joseph set up as an orphan.

Unfortunately for Joseph the disease which had cut off his parents did not stop at that; it went on and extirpated nearly the whole Brownon contingent and its allies by marriage; and those who fled did not return. The tradition was broken, the Brownon estates passed into alien hands and the only Brownons remaining in that place were underground in Oak Hill Cemetery, where, indeed, was a colony of them powerful enough to resist the encroachment of surrounding tribes and hold the best part of the grounds. But about the ghost:

One night, about three years after the death of Hetty Parlow, a number of the young people of Blackburg were passing Oak Hill Cemetery in a wagon — if you have been there you will remember that the road to Greenton runs alongside it on the south. They had been attending a May Day festival at Greenton; and that serves to fix the date. Altogether there may have been a dozen, and a jolly party they were, considering the legacy of gloom left by the town’s recent somber experiences. As they passed the cemetery the man driving suddenly reined in his team with an exclamation of surprise. It was sufficiently surprising, no doubt, for just ahead, and almost at the roadside, though inside the cemetery, stood the ghost of Hetty Parlow. There could be no doubt of it, for she had been personally known to every youth and maiden in the party. That established the thing’s identity; its character as ghost was signified by all the customary signs — the shroud, the long, undone hair, the “far-away look” — everything. This disquieting apparition was stretching out its arms toward the west, as if in supplication for the evening star, which, certainly, was an alluring object, though obviously out of reach. As they all sat silent (so the story goes) every member of that party of merrymakers — they had merry-made on coffee and lemonade only — distinctly heard that ghost call the name “Joey, Joey!” A moment later nothing was there. Of course one does not have to believe all that.

Now, at that moment, as was afterward ascertained, Joey was wandering about in the sage-brush on the opposite side of the continent, near Winnemucca, in the State of Nevada. He had been taken to that town by some good persons distantly related to his dead father, and by them adopted and tenderly cared for. But on that evening the poor child had strayed from home and was lost in the desert.

His after history is involved in obscurity and has gaps which conjecture alone can fill. It is known that he was found by a family of Piute Indians, who kept the little wretch with them for a time and then sold him — actually sold him for money to a woman on one of the east-bound trains, at a station a long way from Winnemucca. The woman professed to have made all manner of inquiries, but all in vain: so, being childless and a widow, she adopted him herself. At this point of his career Jo seemed to be getting a long way from the condition of orphanage; the interposition of a multitude of parents between himself and that woeful state promised him a long immunity from its disadvantages.

Mrs. Darnell, his newest mother, lived in Cleveland, Ohio. But her adopted son did not long remain with her. He was seen one afternoon by a policeman, new to that beat, deliberately toddling away from her house, and being questioned answered that he was “a doin’ home.” He must have traveled by rail, somehow, for three days later he was in the town of Whiteville, which, as you know, is a long way from Blackburg. His clothing was in pretty fair condition, but he was sinfully dirty. Unable to give any account of himself he was arrested as a vagrant and sentenced to imprisonment in the Infants’ Sheltering Home — where he was washed.

Jo ran away from the Infants’ Sheltering Home at Whiteville — just took to the woods one day, and the Home knew him no more forever.

We find him next, or rather get back to him, standing forlorn in the cold autumn rain at a suburban street corner in Blackburg; and it seems right to explain now that the raindrops falling upon him there were really not dark and gummy; they only failed to make his face and hands less so. Jo was indeed fearfully and wonderfully besmirched, as by the hand of an artist. And the forlorn little tramp had no shoes; his feet were bare, red, and swollen, and when he walked he limped with both legs. As to clothing — ah, you would hardly have had the skill to name any single garment that he wore, or say by what magic he kept it upon him. That he was cold all over and all through did not admit of a doubt; he knew it himself. Anyone would have been cold there that evening; but, for that reason, no one else was there. How Jo came to be there himself, he could not for the flickering little life of him have told, even if gifted with a vocabulary exceeding a hundred words. From the way he stared about him one could have seen that he had not the faintest notion of where (nor why) he was.

Yet he was not altogether a fool in his day and generation; being cold and hungry, and still able to walk a little by bending his knees very much indeed and putting his feet down toes first, he decided to enter one of the houses which flanked the street at long intervals and looked so bright and warm. But when he attempted to act upon that very sensible decision a burly dog came bowsing out and disputed his right. Inexpressibly frightened and believing, no doubt (with some reason, too) that brutes without meant brutality within, he hobbled away from all the houses, and with gray, wet fields to right of him and gray, wet fields to left of him — with the rain half blinding him and the night coming in mist and darkness, held his way along the road that leads to Greenton. That is to say, the road leads those to Greenton who succeed in passing the Oak Hill Cemetery. A considerable number every year do not.

Jo did not.

They found him there the next morning, very wet, very cold, but no longer hungry. He had apparently entered the cemetery gate — hoping, perhaps, that it led to a house where there was no dog — and gone blundering about in the darkness, falling over many a grave, no doubt, until he had tired of it all and given up. The little body lay upon one side, with one soiled cheek upon one soiled hand, the other hand tucked away among the rags to make it warm, the other cheek washed clean and white at last, as for a kiss from one of God's great angels. It was observed — though nothing was thought of it at the time, the body being as yet unidentified — that the little fellow was lying upon the grave of Hetty Parlow. The grave, however, had not opened to receive him. That is a circumstance which, without actual irreverence, one may wish had been ordered otherwise.

The Night-Doings at “Deadman’s”

A Story that is Untrue

It was a singularly sharp night, and clear as the heart of a diamond. Clear nights have a trick of being keen. In darkness you may be cold and not know it; when you see, you suffer. This night was bright enough to bite like a serpent. The moon was moving mysteriously along behind the giant pines crowning the South Mountain, striking a cold sparkle from the crusted snow, and bringing out against the black west the ghostly outlines of the Coast Range, beyond which lay the invisible Pacific. The snow had piled itself, in the open spaces along the bottom of the gulch, into long ridges that seemed to heave, and into hills that appeared to toss and scatter spray. The spray was sunlight, twice reflected: dashed once from the moon, once from the snow.

In this snow many of the shanties of the abandoned mining camp were obliterated, (a sailor might have said they had gone down) and at irregular intervals it had overtopped the tall trestles which had once supported a river called a flume; for, of course, “flume” is flumen. Among the advantages of which the mountains cannot deprive the gold-hunter is the privilege of speaking Latin. He says of his dead neighbor, “He has gone up the flume.” This is not a bad way to say, “His life has returned to the Fountain of Life.”

While putting on its armor against the assaults of the wind, this snow had neglected no coign of vantage. Snow pursued by the wind is not wholly unlike a retreating army. In the open field it ranges itself in ranks and battalions; where it can get a foothold it makes a stand; where it can take cover it does so. You may see whole platoons of snow cowering behind a bit of broken wall. The devious old road, hewn out of the mountain side, was full of it. Squadron upon squadron had struggled to escape by this line, when suddenly pursuit had ceased. A more desolate and dreary spot than Deadman’s Gulch in a winter midnight it is impossible to imagine. Yet Mr. Hiram Beeson elected to live there, the sole inhabitant.

Away up the side of the North Mountain his little pine-log shanty projected from its single pane of glass a long, thin beam of light, and looked not altogether unlike a black beetle fastened to the hillside with a bright new pin. Within it sat Mr. Beeson himself, before a roaring fire, staring into its hot heart as if he had never before seen such a thing in all his life. He was not a comely man. He was gray; he was ragged and slovenly in his attire; his face was wan and haggard; his eyes were too bright. As to his age, if one had attempted to guess it, one might have said forty-seven, then corrected himself and said seventy-four. He was really twenty-eight. Emaciated he was; as much, perhaps, as he dared be, with a needy undertaker at Bentley's Flat and a new and enterprising coroner at Sonora. Poverty and zeal are an upper and a nether millstone. It is dangerous to make a third in that kind of sandwich.

As Mr. Beeson sat there, with his ragged elbows on his ragged knees, his lean jaws buried in his lean hands, and with no apparent intention of going to bed, he looked as if the slightest movement would tumble him to pieces. Yet during the last hour he had winked no fewer than three times.

There was a sharp rapping at the door. A rap at that time of night and in that weather might have surprised an ordinary mortal who had dwelt two years in the gulch without seeing a human face, and could not fail to know that the country was impassable; but Mr. Beeson did not so much as pull his eyes out of the coals. And even when the door was pushed open he only shrugged a little more closely into himself, as one does who is expecting something that he would rather not see. You may observe this movement in women when, in a mortuary chapel, the coffin is borne up the aisle behind them.

But when a long old man in a blanket overcoat, his head tied up in a handkerchief and nearly his entire face in a muffler, wearing green goggles and with a complexion of glittering whiteness where it could be seen, strode silently into the room, laying a hard, gloved hand on Mr. Beeson's shoulder, the latter so far forgot himself as to look up with an appearance of no small astonishment; whomever he may have been expecting, he had evidently not counted on meeting anyone like this. Nevertheless, the sight of this unexpected guest produced in Mr. Beeson the following sequence: a feeling of astonishment; a sense of gratification; a sentiment of profound good will. Rising from his seat, he took the knotty hand from his shoulder, and shook it up and down with a fervor quite unaccountable; for in the old man's aspect was nothing to attract, much to repel. However, attraction is too general a property for repulsion to be without it. The most attractive object in the world is the face we instinctively cover with a cloth. When it becomes still more attractive — fascinating — we put seven feet of earth above it.

“Sir,” said Mr. Beeson, releasing the old man's hand, which fell passively against his thigh with a quiet clack, “it is an extremely disagreeable night. Pray be seated; I am very glad to see you.”

Mr. Beeson spoke with an easy good breeding that one would hardly have expected, considering all things. Indeed, the contrast between his appearance and his manner was sufficiently surprising to be one of the commonest of social phenomena in the mines. The old man advanced a step toward the fire, glowing cavernously in the green goggles. Mr. Beeson resumed:

“You bet your life I am!”

Mr. Beeson’s elegance was not too refined; it had made reasonable concessions to local taste. He paused a moment, letting his eyes drop from the muffled head of his guest, down along the row of moldy buttons confining the blanket overcoat, to the greenish cowhide boots powdered with snow, which had begun to melt and run along the floor in little rills. He took an inventory of his guest, and appeared satisfied. Who would not have been? Then he continued:

“The cheer I can offer you is, unfortunately, in keeping with my surroundings; but I shall esteem myself highly favored if it is your pleasure to partake of it, rather than seek better at Bentley’s Flat.”

With a singular refinement of hospitable humility Mr. Beeson spoke as if a sojourn in his warm cabin on such a night, as compared with walking fourteen miles up to the throat in snow with a cutting crust, would be an intolerable hardship. By way of reply, his guest unbuttoned the blanket overcoat. The host laid fresh fuel on the fire, swept the hearth with the tail of a wolf, and added:

“But *I* think you’d better skedaddle.”

The old man took a seat by the fire, spreading his broad soles to the heat without removing his hat. In the mines the hat is seldom removed except when the boots are. Without further remark Mr. Beeson also seated himself in a chair which had been a barrel, and which, retaining much of its original character, seemed to have been designed with a view to preserving his dust if it should please him to crumble. For a moment there was silence; then, from somewhere among the pines, came the snarling yelp of a coyote; and simultaneously the door rattled in its frame. There was no other connection between the two incidents than that the coyote has an aversion to storms, and the wind was rising; yet there seemed somehow a kind of supernatural conspiracy between the two, and Mr. Beeson shuddered with a vague sense of terror. He recovered himself in a moment and again addressed his guest.

“There are strange doings here. I will tell you everything, and then if you decide to go I shall hope to accompany you over the worst of the way; as far as where Baldy Peterson shot Ben Hike — I dare say you know the place.”

The old man nodded emphatically, as intimating not merely that he did, but that he did indeed.

“Two years ago,” began Mr. Beeson, “I, with two companions, occupied this house; but when the rush to the Flat occurred we left, along with the rest. In ten hours the Gulch was deserted. That evening, however, I discovered I had left behind me a valuable pistol (that is it) and returned for it, passing the night here alone, as I have passed every night since. I must explain that a few days before we left, our Chinese domestic had the misfortune to die while the ground was frozen so hard that it was impossible to dig a grave in the usual way. So, on the day of our hasty departure, we cut through the floor there, and gave him such burial as we could. But before putting him down I had the extremely bad taste to cut off his pigtail and spike it to that beam above his grave, where you may see it at this moment, or, preferably, when warmth has given you leisure for observation.

"I stated, did I not, that the Chinaman came to his death from natural causes? I had, of course, nothing to do with that, and returned through no irresistible attraction, or morbid fascination, but only because I had forgotten a pistol. This is clear to you, is it not, sir?"

The visitor nodded gravely. He appeared to be a man of few words, if any. Mr. Beeson continued:

"According to the Chinese faith, a man is like a kite: he cannot go to heaven without a tail. Well, to shorten this tedious story — which, however, I thought it my duty to relate — on that night, while I was here alone and thinking of anything but him, that Chinaman came back for his pigtail.

"He did not get it."

At this point Mr. Beeson relapsed into blank silence. Perhaps he was fatigued by the unwonted exercise of speaking; perhaps he had conjured up a memory that demanded his undivided attention. The wind was now fairly abroad, and the pines along the mountainside sang with singular distinctness. The narrator continued:

"You say you do not see much in that, and I must confess I do not myself.

"But he keeps coming!"

There was another long silence, during which both stared into the fire without the movement of a limb. Then Mr. Beeson broke out, almost fiercely, fixing his eyes on what he could see of the impassive face of his auditor:

"Give it him? Sir, in this matter I have no intention of troubling anyone for advice. You will pardon me, I am sure" — here he became singularly persuasive —"but I have ventured to nail that pigtail fast, and have assumed the somewhat onerous obligation of guarding it. So it is quite impossible to act on your considerate suggestion.

"Do you play me for a Modoc?"

Nothing could exceed the sudden ferocity with which he thrust this indignant remonstrance into the ear of his guest. It was as if he had struck him on the side of the head with a steel gauntlet. It was a protest, but it was a challenge. To be mistaken for a coward — to be played for a Modoc: these two expressions are one. Sometimes it is a Chinaman. Do you play me for a Chinaman? is a question frequently addressed to the ear of the suddenly dead.

Mr. Beeson's buffet produced no effect, and after a moment's pause, during which the wind thundered in the chimney like the sound of clods upon a coffin, he resumed:

"But, as you say, it is wearing me out. I feel that the life of the last two years has been a mistake — a mistake that corrects itself; you see how. The grave! No; there is no one to dig it. The ground is frozen, too. But you are very welcome. You may say at Bentley's — but that is not important. It was very tough to cut: they braid silk into their pigtails. Kwaagh."

Mr. Beeson was speaking with his eyes shut, and he wandered. His last word was a snore. A moment later he drew a long breath, opened his eyes with an effort, made a single remark, and fell into a deep sleep. What he said was this:

"They are swiping my dust!"

Then the aged stranger, who had not uttered one word since his arrival, arose from his seat and deliberately laid off his outer clothing, looking as angular in his flannels as the late Signorina Festorazzi, an Irish woman, six feet in height, and weighing fifty-six pounds, who used to exhibit herself in her chemise to the people of San Francisco. He then crept into one of the "bunks," having first placed a revolver in easy reach, according to the custom of the country. This revolver he took from a shelf, and it was the one which Mr. Beeson had mentioned as that for which he had returned to the Gulch two years before.

In a few moments Mr. Beeson awoke, and seeing that his guest had retired he did likewise. But before doing so he approached the long, plaited wisp of pagan hair and gave it a powerful tug, to assure himself that it was fast and firm. The two beds — mere shelves covered with blankets not overclean — faced each other from opposite sides of the room, the little square trapdoor that had given access to the Chinaman's grave being midway between. This, by the way, was crossed by a double row of spike-heads. In his resistance to the supernatural, Mr. Beeson had not disdained the use of material precautions.

The fire was now low, the flames burning bluely and petulantly, with occasional flashes, projecting spectral shadows on the walls — shadows that moved mysteriously about, now dividing, now uniting. The shadow of the pendent queue, however, kept moodily apart, near the roof at the further end of the room, looking like a note of admiration. The song of the pines outside had now risen to the dignity of a triumphal hymn. In the pauses the silence was dreadful.

It was during one of these intervals that the trap in the floor began to lift.

Slowly and steadily it rose, and slowly and steadily rose the swaddled head of the old man in the bunk to observe it. Then, with a clap that shook the house to its foundation, it was thrown clean back, where it lay with its unsightly spikes pointing threateningly upward. Mr. Beeson awoke, and without rising, pressed his fingers into his eyes. He shuddered; his teeth chattered. His guest was now reclining on one elbow, watching the proceedings with the goggles that glowed like lamps.

Suddenly a howling gust of wind swooped down the chimney, scattering ashes and smoke in all directions, for a moment obscuring everything. When the firelight again illuminated the room there was seen, sitting gingerly on the edge of a stool by the hearthside, a swarthy little man of prepossessing appearance and dressed with faultless taste, nodding to the old man with a friendly and engaging smile. “From San Francisco, evidently,” thought Mr. Beeson, who having somewhat recovered from his fright was groping his way to a solution of the evening’s events.

But now another actor appeared upon the scene. Out of the square black hole in the middle of the floor protruded the head of the departed Chinaman, his glassy eyes turned upward in their angular slits and fastened on the dangling queue above with a look of yearning unspeakable. Mr. Beeson groaned, and again spread his hands upon his face. A mild odor of opium pervaded the place. The phantom, clad only in a short blue tunic quilted and silken but covered with grave-mold, rose slowly, as if pushed by a weak spiral spring. Its knees were at the level of the floor, when with a quick upward impulse like the silent leaping of a flame it grasped the queue with both hands, drew up its body and took the tip in its horrible yellow teeth. To this it clung in a seeming frenzy, grimacing ghastly, surging and plunging from side to side in its efforts to disengage its property from the beam, but uttering no sound. It was like a corpse artificially convulsed by means of a galvanic battery. The contrast between its superhuman activity and its silence was no less than hideous!

Mr. Beeson cowered in his bed. The swarthy little gentleman uncrossed his legs, beat an impatient tattoo with the toe of his boot and consulted a heavy gold watch. The old man sat erect and quietly laid hold of the revolver.

Bang!

Like a body cut from the gallows the Chinaman plumped into the black hole below, carrying his tail in his teeth. The trapdoor turned over, shutting down with a snap. The swarthy little gentleman from San Francisco sprang nimbly from his perch, caught something in the air with his hat, as a boy catches a butterfly, and vanished into the chimney as if drawn up by suction.

From away somewhere in the outer darkness floated in through the open door a faint, far cry — a long, sobbing wail, as of a child death-strangled in the desert, or a lost soul borne away by the Adversary. It may have been the coyote.

In the early days of the following spring a party of miners on their way to new diggings passed along the Gulch, and straying through the deserted shanties found in one of them the body of Hiram Beeson, stretched upon a bunk, with a bullet hole through the heart. The ball had evidently been fired from the opposite side of the room, for in one of the oaken beams overhead was a shallow blue dint, where it had struck a knot and been deflected downward to the breast of its victim. Strongly attached to the same beam was what appeared to be an end of a rope of braided horsehair, which had been cut by the bullet in its passage to the knot. Nothing else of interest was noted, excepting a suit of moldy and incongruous clothing, several articles of which were afterward identified by respectable witnesses as those in which certain deceased citizens of Deadman's had been buried years before. But it is not easy to understand how that could be, unless, indeed, the garments had been worn as a disguise by Death himself — which is hardly credible.

Beyond the Wall

Many years ago, on my way from Hongkong to New York, I assed a week in San Francisco. A long time had gone by since I had been in that city, during which my ventures in the Orient had prospered beyond my hope; I was rich and could afford to revisit my own country to renew my friendship with such of the companions of my youth as still lived and remembered me with the old affection. Chief of these, I hoped, was Mohun Dampier, an old schoolmate with whom I had held a desultory correspondence which had long ceased, as is the way of correspondence between men. You may have observed that the indisposition to write a merely social letter is in the ratio of the square of the distance between you and your correspondent. It is a law.

I remembered Dampier as a handsome, strong young fellow of scholarly tastes, with an aversion to work and a marked indifference to many of the things that the world cares for, including wealth, of which, however, he had inherited enough to put him beyond the reach of want. In his family, one of the oldest and most aristocratic in the country, it was, I think, a matter of pride that no member of it had ever been in trade nor politics, nor suffered any kind of distinction. Mohun was a trifle sentimental, and had in him a singular element of superstition, which led him to the study of all manner of occult subjects, although his sane mental health safeguarded him against fantastic and perilous faiths. He made daring incursions into the realm of the unreal without renouncing his residence in the partly surveyed and charted region of what we are pleased to call certitude.

The night of my visit to him was stormy. The Californian winter was on, and the incessant rain plashed in the deserted streets, or, lifted by irregular gusts of wind, was hurled against the houses with incredible fury. With no small difficulty my cabman found the right place, away out toward the ocean beach, in a sparsely populated suburb. The dwelling, a rather ugly one, apparently, stood in the center of its grounds, which as nearly as I could make out in the gloom were destitute of either flowers or grass. Three or four trees, writhing and moaning in the torment of the tempest, appeared to be trying to escape from their dismal environment and take the chance of finding a better one out at sea. The house was a two-story brick structure with a tower, a story higher, at one corner. In a window of that was the only visible light. Something in the appearance of the place made me shudder, a performance that may have been assisted by a rill of rain-water down my back as I scuttled to cover in the doorway.

In answer to my note apprising him of my wish to call, Dampier had written, “Don’t ring — open the door and come up.” I did so. The staircase was dimly lighted by a single gas-jet at the top of the second flight. I managed to reach the landing without disaster and entered by an open door into the lighted square room of the tower. Dampier came forward in gown and slippers to receive me, giving me the greeting that I wished, and if I had held a thought that it might more fitly have been accorded me at the front door the first look at him dispelled any sense of his inhospitality.

He was not the same. Hardly past middle age, he had gone gray and had acquired a pronounced stoop. His figure was thin and angular, his face deeply lined, his complexion dead-white, without a touch of color. His eyes, unnaturally large, glowed with a fire that was almost uncanny.

He seated me, proffered a cigar, and with grave and obvious sincerity assured me of the pleasure that it gave him to meet me. Some unimportant conversation followed, but all the while I was dominated by a melancholy sense of the great change in him. This he must have perceived, for he suddenly said with a bright enough smile, “You are disappointed in me — non sum qualis eram.”

I hardly knew what to reply, but managed to say: “Why, really, I don’t know: your Latin is about the same.”

He brightened again. “No,” he said, “being a dead language, it grows in appropriateness. But please have the patience to wait: where I am going there is perhaps a better tongue. Will you care to have a message in it?”

The smile faded as he spoke, and as he concluded he was looking into my eyes with a gravity that distressed me. Yet I would not surrender myself to his mood, nor permit him to see how deeply his prescience of death affected me.

“I fancy that it will be long,” I said, “before human speech will cease to serve our need; and then the need, with its possibilities of service, will have passed.”

He made no reply, and I too was silent, for the talk had taken a dispiriting turn, yet I knew not how to give it a more agreeable character. Suddenly, in a pause of the storm, when the dead silence was almost startling by contrast with the previous uproar, I heard a gentle tapping, which appeared to come from the wall behind my chair. The sound was such as might have been made by a human hand, not as upon a door by one asking admittance, but rather, I thought, as an agreed signal, an assurance of someone’s presence in an adjoining room; most of us, I fancy, have had more experience of such communications than we should care to relate. I glanced at Dampier. If possibly there was something of amusement in the look he did not observe it. He appeared to have forgotten my presence, and was staring at the wall behind me with an expression in his eyes that I am unable to name, although my memory of it is as vivid to-day as was my sense of it then. The situation was embarrassing; I rose to take my leave. At this he seemed to recover himself.

"Please be seated," he said; "it is nothing — no one is there."

But the tapping was repeated, and with the same gentle, slow insistence as before.

"Pardon me," I said, "it is late. May I call to-morrow?"

He smiled — a little mechanically, I thought. "It is very delicate of you," said he, "but quite needless. Really, this is the only room in the tower, and no one is there. At least—" He left the sentence incomplete, rose, and threw up a window, the only opening in the wall from which the sound seemed to come. "See."

Not clearly knowing what else to do I followed him to the window and looked out. A street-lamp some little distance away gave enough light through the murk of the rain that was again falling in torrents to make it entirely plain that "no one was there." In truth there was nothing but the sheer blank wall of the tower.

Dampier closed the window and signing me to my seat resumed his own.

The incident was not in itself particularly mysterious; any one of a dozen explanations was possible (though none has occurred to me), yet it impressed me strangely, the more, perhaps, from my friend's effort to reassure me, which seemed to dignify it with a certain significance and importance. He had proved that no one was there, but in that fact lay all the interest; and he proffered no explanation. His silence was irritating and made me resentful.

"My good friend," I said, somewhat ironically, I fear, "I am not disposed to question your right to harbor as many spooks as you find agreeable to your taste and consistent with your notions of companionship; that is no business of mine. But being just a plain man of affairs, mostly of this world, I find spooks needless to my peace and comfort. I am going to my hotel, where my fellow-guests are still in the flesh."

It was not a very civil speech, but he manifested no feeling about it. "Kindly remain," he said. "I am grateful for your presence here. What you have heard to-night I believe myself to have heard twice before. Now I KNOW it was no illusion. That is much to me — more than you know. Have a fresh cigar and a good stock of patience while I tell you the story."

The rain was now falling more steadily, with a low, monotonous susurration, interrupted at long intervals by the sudden slashing of the boughs of the trees as the wind rose and failed. The night was well advanced, but both sympathy and curiosity held me a willing listener to my friend's monologue, which I did not interrupt by a single word from beginning to end.

"Ten years ago," he said, "I occupied a ground-floor apartment in one of a row of houses, all alike, away at the other end of the town, on what we call Rincon Hill. This had been the best quarter of San Francisco, but had fallen into neglect and decay, partly because the primitive character of its domestic architecture no longer suited the maturing tastes of our wealthy citizens, partly because certain public improvements had made a wreck of it. The row of dwellings in one of which I lived stood a little way back from the street, each having a miniature garden, separated from its neighbors by low iron fences and bisected with mathematical precision by a box-bordered gravel walk from gate to door.

"One morning as I was leaving my lodging I observed a young girl entering the adjoining garden on the left. It was a warm day in June, and she was lightly gowned in white. From her shoulders hung a broad straw hat profusely decorated with flowers and wonderfully beribboned in the fashion of the time. My attention was not long held by the exquisite simplicity of her costume, for no one could look at her face and think of anything earthly. Do not fear; I shall not profane it by description; it was beautiful exceedingly. All that I had ever seen or dreamed of loveliness was in that matchless living picture by the hand of the Divine Artist. So deeply did it move me that, without a thought of the impropriety of the act, I unconsciously bared my head, as a devout Catholic or well-bred Protestant uncovers before an image of the Blessed Virgin. The maiden showed no displeasure; she merely turned her glorious dark eyes upon me with a look that made me catch my breath, and without other recognition of my act passed into the house. For a moment I stood motionless, hat in hand, painfully conscious of my rudeness, yet so dominated by the emotion inspired by that vision of incomparable beauty that my penitence was less poignant than it should have been. Then I went my way, leaving my heart behind. In the natural course of things I should probably have remained away until nightfall, but by the middle of the afternoon I was back in the little garden, affecting an interest in the few foolish flowers that I had never before observed. My hope was vain; she did not appear.

"To a night of unrest succeeded a day of expectation and disappointment, but on the day after, as I wandered aimlessly about the neighborhood, I met her. Of course I did not repeat my folly of uncovering, nor venture by even so much as too long a look to manifest an interest in her; yet my heart was beating audibly. I trembled and consciously colored as she turned her big black eyes upon me with a look of obvious recognition entirely devoid of boldness or coquetry.

"I will not weary you with particulars; many times afterward I met the maiden, yet never either addressed her or sought to fix her attention. Nor did I take any action toward making her acquaintance. Perhaps my forbearance, requiring so supreme an effort of self-denial, will not be entirely clear to you. That I was heels over head in love is true, but who can overcome his habit of thought, or reconstruct his character?

“I was what some foolish persons are pleased to call, and others, more foolish, are pleased to be called — an aristocrat; and despite her beauty, her charms and graces, the girl was not of my class. I had learned her name — which it is needless to speak — and something of her family. She was an orphan, a dependent niece of the impossible elderly fat woman in whose lodging-house she lived. My income was small and I lacked the talent for marrying; it is perhaps a gift. An alliance with that family would condemn me to its manner of life, part me from my books and studies, and in a social sense reduce me to the ranks. It is easy to deprecate such considerations as these and I have not retained myself for the defense. Let judgment be entered against me, but in strict justice all my ancestors for generations should be made co-defendants and I be permitted to plead in mitigation of punishment the imperious mandate of heredity. To a mesalliance of that kind every globule of my ancestral blood spoke in opposition. In brief, my tastes, habits, instinct, with whatever of reason my love had left me — all fought against it. Moreover, I was an irreclaimable sentimentalist, and found a subtle charm in an impersonal and spiritual relation which acquaintance might vulgarize and marriage would certainly dispel. No woman, I argued, is what this lovely creature seems. Love is a delicious dream; why should I bring about my own awakening?

“The course dictated by all this sense and sentiment was obvious. Honor, pride, prudence, preservation of my ideals — all commanded me to go away, but for that I was too weak. The utmost that I could do by a mighty effort of will was to cease meeting the girl, and that I did. I even avoided the chance encounters of the garden, leaving my lodging only when I knew that she had gone to her music lessons, and returning after nightfall. Yet all the while I was as one in a trance, indulging the most fascinating fancies and ordering my entire intellectual life in accordance with my dream. Ah, my friend, as one whose actions have a traceable relation to reason, you cannot know the fool’s paradise in which I lived.

“One evening the devil put it into my head to be an unspeakable idiot. By apparently careless and purposeless questioning I learned from my gossipy landlady that the young woman’s bedroom adjoined my own, a party-wall between. Yielding to a sudden and coarse impulse I gently rapped on the wall. There was no response, naturally, but I was in no mood to accept a rebuke. A madness was upon me and I repeated the folly, the offense, but again ineffectually, and I had the decency to desist.

“An hour later, while absorbed in some of my infernal studies, I heard, or thought I heard, my signal answered. Flinging down my books I sprang to the wall and as steadily as my beating heart would permit gave three slow taps upon it. This time the response was distinct, unmistakable: one, two, three — an exact repetition of my signal. That was all I could elicit, but it was enough — too much.

“The next evening, and for many evenings afterward, that folly went on, I always having ‘the last word.’ During the whole period I was deliriously happy, but with the perversity of my nature I persevered in my resolution not to see her. Then, as I should have expected, I got no further answers. ‘She is disgusted,’ I said to myself, ‘with what she thinks my timidity in making no more definite advances’; and I resolved to seek her and make her acquaintance and — what? I did not know, nor do I now know, what might have come of it. I know only that I passed days and days trying to meet her, and all in vain; she was invisible as well as inaudible. I haunted the streets where we had met, but she did not come. From my window I watched the garden in front of her house, but she passed neither in nor out. I fell into the deepest dejection, believing that she had gone away, yet took no steps to resolve my doubt by inquiry of my landlady, to whom, indeed, I had taken an unconquerable aversion from her having once spoken of the girl with less of reverence than I thought befitting.

“There came a fateful night. Worn out with emotion, irresolution and despondency, I had retired early and fallen into such sleep as was still possible to me. In the middle of the night something — some malign power bent upon the wrecking of my peace forever — caused me to open my eyes and sit up, wide awake and listening intently for I knew not what. Then I thought I heard a faint tapping on the wall — the mere ghost of the familiar signal. In a few moments it was repeated: one, two, three — no louder than before, but addressing a sense alert and strained to receive it. I was about to reply when the Adversary of Peace again intervened in my affairs with a rascally suggestion of retaliation. She had long and cruelly ignored me; now I would ignore her. Incredible fatuity — may God forgive it! All the rest of the night I lay awake, fortifying my obstinacy with shameless justifications and — listening.

“Late the next morning, as I was leaving the house, I met my landlady, entering.

“‘Good morning, Mr. Dampier,’ she said. ‘Have you heard the news?’

“I replied in words that I had heard no news; in manner, that I did not care to hear any. The manner escaped her observation.

“‘About the sick young lady next door,’ she babbled on. ‘What! you did not know? Why, she has been ill for weeks. And now—’

“I almost sprang upon her. ‘And now,’ I cried, ‘now what?’

"'She is dead.'

"That is not the whole story. In the middle of the night, as I learned later, the patient, awakening from a long stupor after a week of delirium, had asked — it was her last utterance — that her bed be moved to the opposite side of the room. Those in attendance had thought the request a vagary of her delirium, but had complied. And there the poor passing soul had exerted its failing will to restore a broken connection — a golden thread of sentiment between its innocence and a monstrous baseness owning a blind, brutal allegiance to the Law of Self.

"What reparation could I make? Are there masses that can be said for the repose of souls that are abroad such nights as this — spirits 'blown about by the viewless winds' — coming in the storm and darkness with signs and portents, hints of memory and presages of doom?

"This is the third visitation. On the first occasion I was too skeptical to do more than verify by natural methods the character of the incident; on the second, I responded to the signal after it had been several times repeated, but without result. To-night's recurrence completes the 'fatal triad' expounded by Parapelius Necromantius. There is no more to tell."

When Dampier had finished his story I could think of nothing relevant that I cared to say, and to question him would have been a hideous impertinence. I rose and bade him good night in a way to convey to him a sense of my sympathy, which he silently acknowledged by a pressure of the hand. That night, alone with his sorrow and remorse, he passed into the Unknown.

A Psychological Shipwreck

In the summer of 1874 I was in Liverpool, whither I had gone on business for the mercantile house of Bronson & Jarrett, New York. I am William Jarrett; my partner was Zenas Bronson. The firm failed last year, and unable to endure the fall from affluence to poverty he died.

Having finished my business, and feeling the lassitude and exhaustion incident to its dispatch, I felt that a protracted sea voyage would be both agreeable and beneficial, so instead of embarking for my return on one of the many fine passenger steamers I booked for New York on the sailing vessel Morrow, upon which I had shipped a large and valuable invoice of the goods I had bought. The Morrow was an English ship with, of course, but little accommodation for passengers, of whom there were only myself, a young woman and her servant, who was a middle-aged negress. I thought it singular that a traveling English girl should be so attended, but she afterward explained to me that the woman had been left with her family by a man and his wife from South Carolina, both of whom had died on the same day at the house of the young lady's father in Devonshire — a circumstance in itself sufficiently uncommon to remain rather distinctly in my memory, even had it not afterward transpired in conversation with the young lady that the name of the man was William Jarrett, the same as my own. I knew that a branch of my family had settled in South Carolina, but of them and their history I was ignorant.

The Morrow sailed from the mouth of the Mersey on the 15th of June and for several weeks we had fair breezes and unclouded skies. The skipper, an admirable seaman but nothing more, favored us with very little of his society, except at his table; and the young woman, Miss Janette Harford, and I became very well acquainted. We were, in truth, nearly always together, and being of an introspective turn of mind I often endeavored to analyze and define the novel feeling with which she inspired me — a secret, subtle, but powerful attraction which constantly impelled me to seek her; but the attempt was hopeless. I could only be sure that at least it was not love. Having assured myself of this and being certain that she was quite as whole-hearted, I ventured one evening (I remember it was on the 3d of July) as we sat on deck to ask her, laughingly, if she could assist me to resolve my psychological doubt.

For a moment she was silent, with averted face, and I began to fear I had been extremely rude and indelicate; then she fixed her eyes gravely on my own. In an instant my mind was dominated by as strange a fancy as ever entered human consciousness. It seemed as if she were looking at me, not WITH, but THROUGH, those eyes — from an immeasurable distance behind them — and that a number of other persons, men, women and children, upon whose faces I caught strangely familiar evanescent expressions, clustered about her, struggling with gentle eagerness to look at me through the same orbs. Ship, ocean, sky — all had vanished. I was conscious of nothing but the figures in this extraordinary and fantastic scene. Then all at once darkness fell upon me, and anon from out of it, as to one who grows accustomed by degrees to a dimmer light, my former surroundings of deck and mast and cordage slowly resolved themselves. Miss Harford had closed her eyes and was leaning back in her chair, apparently asleep, the book she had been reading open in her lap. Impelled by surely I cannot say what motive, I glanced at the top of the page; it was a copy of that rare and curious work, "Denneker's Meditations," and the lady's index finger rested on this passage:

"To sundry it is given to be drawn away, and to be apart from the body for a season; for, as concerning rills which would flow across each other the weaker is borne along by the stronger, so there be certain of kin whose paths intersecting, their souls do bear company, the while their bodies go fore-appointed ways, unknowing."

Miss Harford arose, shuddering; the sun had sunk below the horizon, but it was not cold. There was not a breath of wind; there were no clouds in the sky, yet not a star was visible. A hurried tramping sounded on the deck; the captain, summoned from below, joined the first officer, who stood looking at the barometer. "Good God!" I heard him exclaim.

An hour later the form of Janette Harford, invisible in the darkness and spray, was torn from my grasp by the cruel vortex of the sinking ship, and I fainted in the cordage of the floating mast to which I had lashed myself.

It was by lamplight that I awoke. I lay in a berth amid the familiar surroundings of the stateroom of a steamer. On a couch opposite sat a man, half undressed for bed, reading a book. I recognized the face of my friend Gordon Doyle, whom I had met in Liverpool on the day of my embarkation, when he was himself about to sail on the steamer City of Prague, on which he had urged me to accompany him.

After some moments I now spoke his name. He simply said, "Well," and turned a leaf in his book without removing his eyes from the page.

"Doyle," I repeated, "did they save HER?"

He now deigned to look at me and smiled as if amused. He evidently thought me but half awake.

"Her? Whom do you mean?"

"Janette Harford."

His amusement turned to amazement; he stared at me fixedly, saying nothing.

"You will tell me after a while," I continued; "I suppose you will tell me after a while."

A moment later I asked: "What ship is this?"

Doyle stared again. "The steamer City of Prague, bound from Liverpool to New York, three weeks out with a broken shaft. Principal passenger, Mr. Gordon Doyle; ditto lunatic, Mr. William Jarrett. These two distinguished travelers embarked together, but they are about to part, it being the resolute intention of the former to pitch the latter overboard."

I sat bolt upright. "Do you mean to say that I have been for three weeks a passenger on this steamer?"

"Yes, pretty nearly; this is the 3d of July."

"Have I been ill?"

"Right as a trivet all the time, and punctual at your meals."

"My God! Doyle, there is some mystery here; do have the goodness to be serious. Was I not rescued from the wreck of the ship Morrow?"

Doyle changed color, and approaching me, laid his fingers on my wrist. A moment later, "What do you know of Janette Harford?" he asked very calmly.

"First tell me what YOU know of her?"

Mr. Doyle gazed at me for some moments as if thinking what to do, then seating himself again on the couch, said:

"Why should I not? I am engaged to marry Janette Harford, whom I met a year ago in London. Her family, one of the wealthiest in Devonshire, cut up rough about it, and we eloped — are eloping rather, for on the day that you and I walked to the landing stage to go aboard this steamer she and her faithful servant, a negress, passed us, driving to the ship Morrow. She would not consent to go in the same vessel with me, and it had been deemed best that she take a sailing vessel in order to avoid observation and lessen the risk of detection. I am now alarmed lest this cursed breaking of our machinery may detain us so long that the Morrow will get to New York before us, and the poor girl will not know where to go."

I lay still in my berth — so still I hardly breathed. But the subject was evidently not displeasing to Doyle, and after a short pause he resumed:

"By the way, she is only an adopted daughter of the Harfords. Her mother was killed at their place by being thrown from a horse while hunting, and her father, mad with grief, made away with himself the same day. No one ever claimed the child, and after a reasonable time they adopted her. She has grown up in the belief that she is their daughter."

"Doyle, what book are you reading?"

"Oh, it's called 'Denneker's Meditations.' It's a rum lot, Janette gave it to me; she happened to have two copies. Want to see it?"

He tossed me the volume, which opened as it fell. On one of the exposed pages was a marked passage:

"To sundry it is given to be drawn away, and to be apart from the body for a season; for, as concerning rills which would flow across each other the weaker is borne along by the stronger, so there be certain of kin whose paths intersecting, their souls do bear company, the while their bodies go fore-appointed ways, unknowing."

"She had — she has — a singular taste in reading," I managed to say, mastering my agitation.

"Yes. And now perhaps you will have the kindness to explain how you knew her name and that of the ship she sailed in."

"You talked of her in your sleep," I said.

A week later we were towed into the port of New York. But the Morrow was never heard from.

The Middle Toe of the Right Foot

i

It is well known that the old Manton house is haunted. In all the rural district near about, and even in the town of Marshall, a mile away, not one person of unbiased mind entertains a doubt of it; incredulity is confined to those opinionated persons who will be called “cranks” as soon as the useful word shall have penetrated the intellectual demesne of the Marshall Advance. The evidence that the house is haunted is of two kinds: the testimony of disinterested witnesses who have had ocular proof, and that of the house itself. The former may be disregarded and ruled out on any of the various grounds of objection which may be urged against it by the ingenious; but facts within the observation of all are material and controlling.

In the first place, the Manton house has been unoccupied by mortals for more than ten years, and with its outbuildings is slowly falling into decay — a circumstance which in itself the judicious will hardly venture to ignore. It stands a little way off the loneliest reach of the Marshall and Harriston road, in an opening which was once a farm and is still disfigured with strips of rotting fence and half covered with brambles overrunning a stony and sterile soil long unacquainted with the plow. The house itself is in tolerably good condition, though badly weather-stained and in dire need of attention from the glazier, the smaller male population of the region having attested in the manner of its kind its disapproval of dwelling without dwellers. It is two stories in height, nearly square, its front pierced by a single doorway flanked on each side by a window boarded up to the very top. Corresponding windows above, not protected, serve to admit light and rain to the rooms of the upper floor. Grass and weeds grow pretty rankly all about, and a few shade trees, somewhat the worse for wind, and leaning all in one direction, seem to be making a concerted effort to run away. In short, as the Marshall town humorist explained in the columns of the Advance, “the proposition that the Manton house is badly haunted is the only logical conclusion from the premises.” The fact that in this dwelling Mr. Manton thought it expedient one night some ten years ago to rise and cut the throats of his wife and two small children, removing at once to another part of the country, has no doubt done its share in directing public attention to the fitness of the place for supernatural phenomena.

To this house, one summer evening, came four men in a wagon. Three of them promptly alighted, and the one who had been driving hitched the team to the only remaining post of what had been a fence. The fourth remained seated in the wagon. “Come,” said one of his companions, approaching him, while the others moved away in the direction of the dwelling—”this is the place.”

The man addressed did not move. “By God!” he said harshly, “this is a trick, and it looks to me as if you were in it.”

“Perhaps I am,” the other said, looking him straight in the face and speaking in a tone which had something of contempt in it. “You will remember, however, that the choice of place was with your own assent left to the other side. Of course if you are afraid of spooks—”

“I am afraid of nothing,” the man interrupted with another oath, and sprang to the ground. The two then joined the others at the door, which one of them had already opened with some difficulty, caused by rust of lock and hinge. All entered. Inside it was dark, but the man who had unlocked the door produced a candle and matches and made a light. He then unlocked a door on their right as they stood in the passage. This gave them entrance to a large, square room that the candle but dimly lighted. The floor had a thick carpeting of dust, which partly muffled their footfalls. Cobwebs were in the angles of the walls and depended from the ceiling like strips of rotting lace, making undulatory movements in the disturbed air. The room had two windows in adjoining sides, but from neither could anything be seen except the rough inner surfaces of boards a few inches from the glass. There was no fireplace, no furniture; there was nothing: besides the cobwebs and the dust, the four men were the only objects there which were not a part of the structure.

Strange enough they looked in the yellow light of the candle. The one who had so reluctantly alighted was especially spectacular — he might have been called sensational. He was of middle age, heavily built, deep chested and broad shouldered. Looking at his figure, one would have said that he had a giant’s strength; at his features, that he would use it like a giant. He was clean shaven, his hair rather closely cropped and gray. His low forehead was seamed with wrinkles above the eyes, and over the nose these became vertical. The heavy black brows followed the same law, saved from meeting only by an upward turn at what would otherwise have been the point of contact. Deeply sunken beneath these, glowed in the obscure light a pair of eyes of uncertain color, but obviously enough too small. There was something forbidding in their expression, which was not bettered by the cruel mouth and wide jaw. The nose was well enough, as noses go; one does not expect much of noses. All that was sinister in the man’s face seemed accentuated by an unnatural pallor — he appeared altogether bloodless.

The appearance of the other men was sufficiently commonplace: they were such persons as one meets and forgets that he met. All were younger than the man described, between whom and the eldest of the others, who stood apart, there was apparently no kindly feeling. They avoided looking at each other.

“Gentlemen,” said the man holding the candle and keys, “I believe everything is right. Are you ready, Mr. Rosser?”

The man standing apart from the group bowed and smiled.

“And you, Mr. Grossmith?”

The heavy man bowed and scowled.

“You will be pleased to remove your outer clothing.”

Their hats, coats, waistcoats and neckwear were soon removed and thrown outside the door, in the passage. The man with the candle now nodded, and the fourth man — he who had urged Grossmith to leave the wagon — produced from the pocket of his overcoat two long, murderous-looking bowie-knives, which he drew now from their leather scabbards.

“They are exactly alike,” he said, presenting one to each of the two principals — for by this time the dullest observer would have understood the nature of this meeting. It was to be a duel to the death.

Each combatant took a knife, examined it critically near the candle and tested the strength of blade and handle across his lifted knee. Their persons were then searched in turn, each by the second of the other.

“If it is agreeable to you, Mr. Grossmith,” said the man holding the light, “you will place yourself in that corner.”

He indicated the angle of the room farthest from the door, whither Grossmith retired, his second parting from him with a grasp of the hand which had nothing of cordiality in it. In the angle nearest the door Mr. Rosser stationed himself, and after a whispered consultation his second left him, joining the other near the door. At that moment the candle was suddenly extinguished, leaving all in profound darkness. This may have been done by a draught from the opened door; whatever the cause, the effect was startling.

“Gentlemen,” said a voice which sounded strangely unfamiliar in the altered condition affecting the relations of the senses—”gentlemen, you will not move until you hear the closing of the outer door.”

A sound of trampling ensued, then the closing of the inner door; and finally the outer one closed with a concussion which shook the entire building.

A few minutes afterward a belated farmer’s boy met a light wagon which was being driven furiously toward the town of Marshall. He declared that behind the two figures on the front seat stood a third, with its hands upon the bowed shoulders of the others, who appeared to struggle vainly to free themselves from its grasp. This figure, unlike the others, was clad in white, and had undoubtedly boarded the wagon as it passed the haunted house. As the lad could boast a considerable former experience with the supernatural thereabouts his word had the weight justly due to the testimony of an expert. The story (in connection with the next day's events) eventually appeared in the Advance, with some slight literary embellishments and a concluding intimation that the gentlemen referred to would be allowed the use of the paper's columns for their version of the night's adventure. But the privilege remained without a claimant.

ii

The events that led up to this "duel in the dark" were simple enough. One evening three young men of the town of Marshall were sitting in a quiet corner of the porch of the village hotel, smoking and discussing such matters as three educated young men of a Southern village would naturally find interesting. Their names were King, Sancher and Rosser. At a little distance, within easy hearing, but taking no part in the conversation, sat a fourth. He was a stranger to the others. They merely knew that on his arrival by the stage-coach that afternoon he had written in the hotel register the name Robert Grossmith. He had not been observed to speak to anyone except the hotel clerk. He seemed, indeed, singularly fond of his own company — or, as the PERSONNEL of the Advance expressed it, "grossly addicted to evil associations." But then it should be said in justice to the stranger that the PERSONNEL was himself of a too convivial disposition fairly to judge one differently gifted, and had, moreover, experienced a slight rebuff in an effort at an "interview."

"I hate any kind of deformity in a woman," said King, "whether natural or — acquired. I have a theory that any physical defect has its correlative mental and moral defect."

"I infer, then," said Rosser, gravely, "that a lady lacking the moral advantage of a nose would find the struggle to become Mrs. King an arduous enterprise."

"Of course you may put it that way," was the reply; "but, seriously, I once threw over a most charming girl on learning quite accidentally that she had suffered amputation of a toe. My conduct was brutal if you like, but if I had married that girl I should have been miserable for life and should have made her so."

"Whereas," said Sancher, with a light laugh, "by marrying a gentleman of more liberal views she escaped with a parted throat."

"Ah, you know to whom I refer. Yes, she married Manton, but I don't know about his liberality; I’m not sure but he cut her throat because he discovered that she lacked that excellent thing in woman, the middle toe of the right foot.”

“Look at that chap!” said Rosser in a low voice, his eyes fixed upon the stranger.

That chap was obviously listening intently to the conversation.

“Damn his impudence!” muttered King—”what ought we to do?”

“That’s an easy one,” Rosser replied, rising. “Sir,” he continued, addressing the stranger, “I think it would be better if you would remove your chair to the other end of the veranda. The presence of gentlemen is evidently an unfamiliar situation to you.”

The man sprang to his feet and strode forward with clenched hands, his face white with rage. All were now standing. Sancher stepped between the belligerents.

“You are hasty and unjust,” he said to Rosser; “this gentleman has done nothing to deserve such language.”

But Rosser would not withdraw a word. By the custom of the country and the time there could be but one outcome to the quarrel.

“I demand the satisfaction due to a gentleman,” said the stranger, who had become more calm. “I have not an acquaintance in this region. Perhaps you, sir,” bowing to Sancher, “will be kind enough to represent me in this matter.”

Sancher accepted the trust — somewhat reluctantly it must be confessed, for the man’s appearance and manner were not at all to his liking. King, who during the colloquy had hardly removed his eyes from the stranger’s face and had not spoken a word, consented with a nod to act for Rosser, and the upshot of it was that, the principals having retired, a meeting was arranged for the next evening. The nature of the arrangements has been already disclosed. The duel with knives in a dark room was once a commoner feature of Southwestern life than it is likely to be again. How thin a veneering of “chivalry” covered the essential brutality of the code under which such encounters were possible we shall see.

iii

In the blaze of a midsummer noonday the old Manton house was hardly true to its traditions. It was of the earth, earthy. The sunshine caressed it warmly and affectionately, with evident disregard of its bad reputation. The grass greening all the expanse in its front seemed to grow, not rankly, but with a natural and joyous exuberance, and the weeds blossomed quite like plants. Full of charming lights and shadows and populous with pleasant-voiced birds, the neglected shade trees no longer struggled to run away, but bent reverently beneath their burdens of sun and song. Even in the glassless upper windows was an expression of peace and contentment, due to the light within. Over the stony fields the visible heat danced with a lively tremor incompatible with the gravity which is an attribute of the supernatural.

Such was the aspect under which the place presented itself to Sheriff Adams and two other men who had come out from Marshall to look at it. One of these men was Mr. King, the sheriff's deputy; the other, whose name was Brewer, was a brother of the late Mrs. Manton. Under a beneficent law of the State relating to property which has been for a certain period abandoned by an owner whose residence cannot be ascertained, the sheriff was legal custodian of the Manton farm and appurtenances thereunto belonging. His present visit was in mere perfunctory compliance with some order of a court in which Mr. Brewer had an action to get possession of the property as heir to his deceased sister. By a mere coincidence, the visit was made on the day after the night that Deputy King had unlocked the house for another and very different purpose. His presence now was not of his own choosing: he had been ordered to accompany his superior and at the moment could think of nothing more prudent than simulated alacrity in obedience to the command.

Carelessly opening the front door, which to his surprise was not locked, the sheriff was amazed to see, lying on the floor of the passage into which it opened, a confused heap of men's apparel. Examination showed it to consist of two hats, and the same number of coats, waistcoats and scarves, all in a remarkably good state of preservation, albeit somewhat defiled by the dust in which they lay. Mr. Brewer was equally astonished, but Mr. King's emotion is not of record. With a new and lively interest in his own actions the sheriff now unlatched and pushed open a door on the right, and the three entered. The room was apparently vacant — no; as their eyes became accustomed to the dimmer light something was visible in the farthest angle of the wall. It was a human figure — that of a man crouching close in the corner. Something in the attitude made the intruders halt when they had barely passed the threshold. The figure more and more clearly defined itself. The man was upon one knee, his back in the angle of the wall, his shoulders elevated to the level of his ears, his hands before his face, palms outward, the fingers spread and crooked like claws; the white face turned upward on the retracted neck had an expression of unutterable fright, the mouth half open, the eyes incredibly expanded. He was stone dead. Yet, with the exception of a bowie-knife, which had evidently fallen from his own hand, not another object was in the room.

In thick dust that covered the floor were some confused footprints near the door and along the wall through which it opened. Along one of the adjoining walls, too, past the boarded-up windows, was the trail made by the man himself in reaching his corner. Instinctively in approaching the body the three men followed that trail. The sheriff grasped one of the outthrown arms; it was as rigid as iron, and the application of a gentle force rocked the entire body without altering the relation of its parts. Brewer, pale with excitement, gazed intently into the distorted face. "God of mercy!" he suddenly cried, "it is Manton!"

"You are right," said King, with an evident attempt at calmness: "I knew Manton. He then wore a full beard and his hair long, but this is he."

He might have added: "I recognized him when he challenged Rosser. I told Rosser and Sancher who he was before we played him this horrible trick. When Rosser left this dark room at our heels, forgetting his outer clothing in the excitement, and driving away with us in his shirt sleeves — all through the discreditable proceedings we knew whom we were dealing with, murderer and coward that he was!"

But nothing of this did Mr. King say. With his better light he was trying to penetrate the mystery of the man's death. That he had not once moved from the corner where he had been stationed; that his posture was that of neither attack nor defense; that he had dropped his weapon; that he had obviously perished of sheer horror of something that he saw — these were circumstances which Mr. King's disturbed intelligence could not rightly comprehend.

Groping in intellectual darkness for a clew to his maze of doubt, his gaze, directed mechanically downward in the way of one who ponders momentous matters, fell upon something which, there, in the light of day and in the presence of living companions, affected him with terror. In the dust of years that lay thick upon the floor — leading from the door by which they had entered, straight across the room to within a yard of Manton's crouching corpse — were three parallel lines of footprints — light but definite impressions of bare feet, the outer ones those of small children, the inner a woman's. From the point at which they ended they did not return; they pointed all one way. Brewer, who had observed them at the same moment, was leaning forward in an attitude of rapt attention, horribly pale.

"Look at that!" he cried, pointing with both hands at the nearest print of the woman's right foot, where she had apparently stopped and stood. "The middle toe is missing — it was Gertrude!"

Gertrude was the late Mrs. Manton, sister to Mr. Brewer.

John Mortonson’s Funeral

* Rough notes of this tale were found among the papers of the late Leigh Bierce. It is printed here with such revision only as the author might himself have made in transcription.

John Mortonson was dead: his lines in “the tragedy ‘Man’” had all been spoken and he had left the stage.

The body rested in a fine mahogany coffin fitted with a plate of glass. All arrangements for the funeral had been so well attended to that had the deceased known he would doubtless have approved. The face, as it showed under the glass, was not disagreeable to look upon: it bore a faint smile, and as the death had been painless, had not been distorted beyond the repairing power of the undertaker. At two o’clock of the afternoon the friends were to assemble to pay their last tribute of respect to one who had no further need of friends and respect. The surviving members of the family came severally every few minutes to the casket and wept above the placid features beneath the glass. This did them no good; it did no good to John Mortonson; but in the presence of death reason and philosophy are silent.

As the hour of two approached the friends began to arrive and after offering such consolation to the stricken relatives as the proprieties of the occasion required, solemnly seated themselves about the room with an augmented consciousness of their importance in the scheme funereal. Then the minister came, and in that overshadowing presence the lesser lights went into eclipse. His entrance was followed by that of the widow, whose lamentations filled the room. She approached the casket and after leaning her face against the cold glass for a moment was gently led to a seat near her daughter. Mournfully and low the man of God began his eulogy of the dead, and his doleful voice, mingled with the sobbing which it was its purpose to stimulate and sustain, rose and fell, seemed to come and go, like the sound of a sullen sea. The gloomy day grew darker as he spoke; a curtain of cloud underspread the sky and a few drops of rain fell audibly. It seemed as if all nature were weeping for John Mortonson.

When the minister had finished his eulogy with prayer a hymn was sung and the pall-bearers took their places beside the bier. As the last notes of the hymn died away the widow ran to the coffin, cast herself upon it and sobbed hysterically. Gradually, however, she yielded to dissuasion, becoming more composed; and as the minister was in the act of leading her away her eyes sought the face of the dead beneath the glass. She threw up her arms and with a shriek fell backward insensible.

The mourners sprang forward to the coffin, the friends followed, and as the clock on the mantel solemnly struck three all were staring down upon the face of John Mortonson, deceased.

They turned away, sick and faint. One man, trying in his terror to escape the awful sight, stumbled against the coffin so heavily as to knock away one of its frail supports. The coffin fell to the floor, the glass was shattered to bits by the concussion.

From the opening crawled John Mortonson’s cat, which lazily leapt to the floor, sat up, tranquilly wiped its crimson muzzle with a forepaw, then walked with dignity from the room.

The Realm of the Unreal

For a part of the distance between Auburn and Newcastle the road — first on one side of a creek and then on the other — occupies the whole bottom of the ravine, being partly cut out of the steep hillside, and partly built up with bowlders removed from the creek-bed by the miners. The hills are wooded, the course of the ravine is sinuous. In a dark night careful driving is required in order not to go off into the water. The night that I have in memory was dark, the creek a torrent, swollen by a recent storm. I had driven up from Newcastle and was within about a mile of Auburn in the darkest and narrowest part of the ravine, looking intently ahead of my horse for the roadway. Suddenly I saw a man almost under the animal's nose, and reined in with a jerk that came near setting the creature upon its haunches.

"I beg your pardon," I said; "I did not see you, sir."

"You could hardly be expected to see me," the man replied, civilly, approaching the side of the vehicle; "and the noise of the creek prevented my hearing you."

I at once recognized the voice, although five years had passed since I had heard it. I was not particularly well pleased to hear it now.

"You are Dr. Dorrimore, I think," said I.

"Yes; and you are my good friend Mr. Manrich. I am more than glad to see you — the excess," he added, with a light laugh, "being due to the fact that I am going your way, and naturally expect an invitation to ride with you."

"Which I extend with all my heart."

That was not altogether true.

Dr. Dorrimore thanked me as he seated himself beside me, and I drove cautiously forward, as before. Doubtless it is fancy, but it seems to me now that the remaining distance was made in a chill fog; that I was uncomfortably cold; that the way was longer than ever before, and the town, when we reached it, cheerless, forbidding, and desolate. It must have been early in the evening, yet I do not recollect a light in any of the houses nor a living thing in the streets. Dorrimore explained at some length how he happened to be there, and where he had been during the years that had elapsed since I had seen him. I recall the fact of the narrative, but none of the facts narrated. He had been in foreign countries and had returned — this is all that my memory retains, and this I already knew. As to myself I cannot remember that I spoke a word, though doubtless I did. Of one thing I am distinctly conscious: the man’s presence at my side was strangely distasteful and disquieting — so much so that when I at last pulled up under the lights of the Putnam House I experienced a sense of having escaped some spiritual peril of a nature peculiarly forbidding. This sense of relief was somewhat modified by the discovery that Dr. Dorrimore was living at the same hotel.

ii

In partial explanation of my feelings regarding Dr. Dorrimore I will relate briefly the circumstances under which I had met him some years before. One evening a half-dozen men of whom I was one were sitting in the library of the Bohemian Club in San Francisco. The conversation had turned to the subject of sleight-of-hand and the feats of the prestidigitateurs, one of whom was then exhibiting at a local theatre.

“These fellows are pretenders in a double sense,” said one of the party; “they can do nothing which it is worth one’s while to be made a dupe by. The humblest wayside juggler in India could mystify them to the verge of lunacy.”

“For example, how?” asked another, lighting a cigar.

“For example, by all their common and familiar performances — throwing large objects into the air which never come down; causing plants to sprout, grow visibly and blossom, in bare ground chosen by spectators; putting a man into a wicker basket, piercing him through and through with a sword while he shrieks and bleeds, and then — the basket being opened nothing is there; tossing the free end of a silken ladder into the air, mounting it and disappearing.”

“Nonsense!” I said, rather uncivilly, I fear. “You surely do not believe such things?”

“Certainly not: I have seen them too often.”

“But I do,” said a journalist of considerable local fame as a picturesque reporter. “I have so frequently related them that nothing but observation could shake my conviction. Why, gentlemen, I have my own word for it.”

Nobody laughed — all were looking at something behind me. Turning in my seat I saw a man in evening dress who had just entered the room. He was exceedingly dark, almost swarthy, with a thin face, black-bearded to the lips, an abundance of coarse black hair in some disorder, a high nose and eyes that glittered with as soulless an expression as those of a cobra. One of the group rose and introduced him as Dr. Dorrimore, of Calcutta. As each of us was presented in turn he acknowledged the fact with a profound bow in the Oriental manner, but with nothing of Oriental gravity. His smile impressed me as cynical and a trifle contemptuous. His whole demeanor I can describe only as disagreeably engaging.

His presence led the conversation into other channels. He said little — I do not recall anything of what he did say. I thought his voice singularly rich and melodious, but it affected me in the same way as his eyes and smile. In a few minutes I rose to go. He also rose and put on his overcoat.

“Mr. Manrich,” he said, “I am going your way.”

“The devil you are!” I thought. “How do you know which way I am going?” Then I said, “I shall be pleased to have your company.”

We left the building together. No cabs were in sight, the street cars had gone to bed, there was a full moon and the cool night air was delightful; we walked up the California street hill. I took that direction thinking he would naturally wish to take another, toward one of the hotels.

“You do not believe what is told of the Hindu jugglers,” he said abruptly.

“How do you know that?” I asked.

Without replying he laid his hand lightly upon my arm and with the other pointed to the stone sidewalk directly in front. There, almost at our feet, lay the dead body of a man, the face upturned and white in the moonlight! A sword whose hilt sparkled with gems stood fixed and upright in the breast; a pool of blood had collected on the stones of the sidewalk.

I was startled and terrified — not only by what I saw, but by the circumstances under which I saw it. Repeatedly during our ascent of the hill my eyes, I thought, had traversed the whole reach of that sidewalk, from street to street. How could they have been insensible to this dreadful object now so conspicuous in the white moonlight?

As my dazed faculties cleared I observed that the body was in evening dress; the overcoat thrown wide open revealed the dress-coat, the white tie, the broad expanse of shirt front pierced by the sword. And — horrible revelation! — the face, except for its pallor, was that of my companion! It was to the minutest detail of dress and feature Dr. Dorrimore himself. Bewildered and horrified, I turned to look for the living man. He was nowhere visible, and with an added terror I retired from the place, down the hill in the direction whence I had come. I had taken but a few strides when a strong grasp upon my shoulder arrested me. I came near crying out with terror: the dead man, the sword still fixed in his breast, stood beside me! Pulling out the sword with his disengaged hand, he flung it from him, the moonlight glinting upon the jewels of its hilt and the unsullied steel of its blade. It fell with a clang upon the sidewalk ahead and — vanished! The man, swarthy as before, relaxed his grasp upon my shoulder and looked at me with the same cynical regard that I had observed on first meeting him. The dead have not that look — it partly restored me, and turning my head backward, I saw the smooth white expanse of sidewalk, unbroken from street to street.

"What is all this nonsense, you devil?" I demanded, fiercely enough, though weak and trembling in every limb.

"It is what some are pleased to call jugglery," he answered, with a light, hard laugh.

He turned down Dupont street and I saw him no more until we met in the Auburn ravine.

iii

On the day after my second meeting with Dr. Dorrimore I did not see him: the clerk in the Putnam House explained that a slight illness confined him to his rooms. That afternoon at the railway station I was surprised and made happy by the unexpected arrival of Miss Margaret Corray and her mother, from Oakland.

This is not a love story. I am no storyteller, and love as it is cannot be portrayed in a literature dominated and enthralled by the debasing tyranny which "sentences letters" in the name of the Young Girl. Under the Young Girl's blighting reign — or rather under the rule of those false Ministers of the Censure who have appointed themselves to the custody of her welfare — love

veils her sacred fires,
And, unaware, Morality expires,

famished upon the sifted meal and distilled water of a prudish purveyance.

Let it suffice that Miss Corray and I were engaged in marriage. She and her mother went to the hotel at which I lived, and for two weeks I saw her daily. That I was happy needs hardly be said; the only bar to my perfect enjoyment of those golden days was the presence of Dr. Dorrimore, whom I had felt compelled to introduce to the ladies.

By them he was evidently held in favor. What could I say? I knew absolutely nothing to his discredit. His manners were those of a cultivated and considerate gentleman; and to women a man's manner is the man. On one or two occasions when I saw Miss Corray walking with him I was furious, and once had the indiscretion to protest. Asked for reasons, I had none to give and fancied I saw in her expression a shade of contempt for the vagaries of a jealous mind. In time I grew morose and consciously disagreeable, and resolved in my madness to return to San Francisco the next day. Of this, however, I said nothing.

iv

There was at Auburn an old, abandoned cemetery. It was nearly in the heart of the town, yet by night it was as gruesome a place as the most dismal of human moods could crave. The railings about the plats were prostrate, decayed, or altogether gone. Many of the graves were sunken, from others grew sturdy pines, whose roots had committed unspeakable sin. The headstones were fallen and broken across; brambles overran the ground; the fence was mostly gone, and cows and pigs wandered there at will; the place was a dishonor to the living, a calumny on the dead, a blasphemy against God.

The evening of the day on which I had taken my madman's resolution to depart in anger from all that was dear to me found me in that congenial spot. The light of the half moon fell ghostly through the foliage of trees in spots and patches, revealing much that was unsightly, and the black shadows seemed conspiracies withholding to the proper time revelations of darker import. Passing along what had been a gravel path, I saw emerging from shadow the figure of Dr. Dorrimore. I was myself in shadow, and stood still with clenched hands and set teeth, trying to control the impulse to leap upon and strangle him. A moment later a second figure joined him and clung to his arm. It was Margaret Corray!

I cannot rightly relate what occurred. I know that I sprang forward, bent upon murder; I know that I was found in the gray of the morning, bruised and bloody, with finger marks upon my throat. I was taken to the Putnam House, where for days I lay in a delirium. All this I know, for I have been told. And of my own knowledge I know that when consciousness returned with convalescence I sent for the clerk of the hotel.

"Are Mrs. Corray and her daughter still here?" I asked.

"What name did you say?"

"Corray."

"Nobody of that name has been here."

"I beg you will not trifle with me," I said petulantly. "You see that I am all right now; tell me the truth."

"I give you my word," he replied with evident sincerity, "we have had no guests of that name."

His words stupefied me. I lay for a few moments in silence; then I asked: "Where is Dr. Dorrimore?"

"He left on the morning of your fight and has not been heard of since. It was a rough deal he gave you."

V

Such are the facts of this case. Margaret Corray is now my wife. She has never seen Auburn, and during the weeks whose history as it shaped itself in my brain I have endeavored to relate, was living at her home in Oakland, wondering where her lover was and why he did not write. The other day I saw in the Baltimore Sun the following paragraph:

"Professor Valentine Dorrimore, the hypnotist, had a large audience last night. The lecturer, who has lived most of his life in India, gave some marvelous exhibitions of his power, hypnotizing anyone who chose to submit himself to the experiment, by merely looking at him. In fact, he twice hypnotized the entire audience (reporters alone exempted), making all entertain the most extraordinary illusions. The most valuable feature of the lecture was the disclosure of the methods of the Hindu jugglers in their famous performances, familiar in the mouths of travelers. The professor declares that these thaumaturgists have acquired such skill in the art which he learned at their feet that they perform their miracles by simply throwing the 'spectators' into a state of hypnosis and telling them what to see and hear. His assertion that a peculiarly susceptible subject may be kept in the realm of the unreal for weeks, months, and even years, dominated by whatever delusions and hallucinations the operator may from time to time suggest, is a trifle disquieting."

John Bartine’s Watch

A Story by a Physician

“The exact time? Good God! my friend, why do you insist? One would think — but what does it matter; it is easily bedtime — isn’t that near enough? But, here, if you must set your watch, take mine and see for yourself.”

With that he detached his watch — a tremendously heavy, old-fashioned one — from the chain, and handed it to me; then turned away, and walking across the room to a shelf of books, began an examination of their backs. His agitation and evident distress surprised me; they appeared reasonless. Having set my watch by his, I stepped over to where he stood and said, “Thank you.”

As he took his timepiece and reattached it to the guard I observed that his hands were unsteady. With a tact upon which I greatly prided myself, I sauntered carelessly to the sideboard and took some brandy and water; then, begging his pardon for my thoughtlessness, asked him to have some and went back to my seat by the fire, leaving him to help himself, as was our custom. He did so and presently joined me at the hearth, as tranquil as ever.

This odd little incident occurred in my apartment, where John Bartine was passing an evening. We had dined together at the club, had come home in a cab and — in short, everything had been done in the most prosaic way; and why John Bartine should break in upon the natural and established order of things to make himself spectacular with a display of emotion, apparently for his own entertainment, I could nowise understand. The more I thought of it, while his brilliant conversational gifts were commending themselves to my inattention, the more curious I grew, and of course had no difficulty in persuading myself that my curiosity was friendly solicitude. That is the disguise that curiosity usually assumes to evade resentment. So I ruined one of the finest sentences of his disregarded monologue by cutting it short without ceremony.

“John Bartine,” I said, “you must try to forgive me if I am wrong, but with the light that I have at present I cannot concede your right to go all to pieces when asked the time o’ night. I cannot admit that it is proper to experience a mysterious reluctance to look your own watch in the face and to cherish in my presence, without explanation, painful emotions which are denied to me, and which are none of my business.”

To this ridiculous speech Bartine made no immediate reply, but sat looking gravely into the fire. Fearing that I had offended I was about to apologize and beg him to think no more about the matter, when looking me calmly in the eyes he said:

"My dear fellow, the levity of your manner does not at all disguise the hideous impudence of your demand; but happily I had already decided to tell you what you wish to know, and no manifestation of your unworthiness to hear it shall alter my decision. Be good enough to give me your attention and you shall hear all about the matter.

"This watch," he said, "had been in my family for three generations before it fell to me. Its original owner, for whom it was made, was my great-grandfather, Bramwell Olcott Bartine, a wealthy planter of Colonial Virginia, and as stanch a Tory as ever lay awake nights contriving new kinds of maledictions for the head of Mr. Washington, and new methods of aiding and abetting good King George. One day this worthy gentleman had the deep misfortune to perform for his cause a service of capital importance which was not recognized as legitimate by those who suffered its disadvantages. It does not matter what it was, but among its minor consequences was my excellent ancestor's arrest one night in his own house by a party of Mr. Washington's rebels. He was permitted to say farewell to his weeping family, and was then marched away into the darkness which swallowed him up forever. Not the slenderest clew to his fate was ever found. After the war the most diligent inquiry and the offer of large rewards failed to turn up any of his captors or any fact concerning his disappearance. He had disappeared, and that was all."

Something in Bartine's manner that was not in his words — I hardly knew what it was — prompted me to ask:

"What is your view of the matter — of the justice of it?"

"My view of it," he flamed out, bringing his clenched hand down upon the table as if he had been in a public house dicing with blackguards—"my view of it is that it was a characteristically dastardly assassination by that damned traitor, Washington, and his ragamuffin rebels!"

For some minutes nothing was said: Bartine was recovering his temper, and I waited. Then I said:

"Was that all?"

"No — there was something else. A few weeks after my great-grandfather's arrest his watch was found lying on the porch at the front door of his dwelling. It was wrapped in a sheet of letter paper bearing the name of Rupert Bartine, his only son, my grandfather. I am wearing that watch."

Bartine paused. His usually restless black eyes were staring fixedly into the grate, a point of red light in each, reflected from the glowing coals. He seemed to have forgotten me. A sudden threshing of the branches of a tree outside one of the windows, and almost at the same instant a rattle of rain against the glass, recalled him to a sense of his surroundings. A storm had risen, heralded by a single gust of wind, and in a few moments the steady plash of the water on the pavement was distinctly heard. I hardly know why I relate this incident; it seemed somehow to have a certain significance and relevancy which I am unable now to discern. It at least added an element of seriousness, almost solemnity. Bartine resumed:

"I have a singular feeling toward this watch — a kind of affection for it; I like to have it about me, though partly from its weight, and partly for a reason I shall now explain, I seldom carry it. The reason is this: Every evening when I have it with me I feel an unaccountable desire to open and consult it, even if I can think of no reason for wishing to know the time. But if I yield to it, the moment my eyes rest upon the dial I am filled with a mysterious apprehension — a sense of imminent calamity. And this is the more insupportable the nearer it is to eleven o'clock — by this watch, no matter what the actual hour may be. After the hands have registered eleven the desire to look is gone; I am entirely indifferent. Then I can consult the thing as often as I like, with no more emotion than you feel in looking at your own. Naturally I have trained myself not to look at that watch in the evening before eleven; nothing could induce me. Your insistence this evening upset me a trifle. I felt very much as I suppose an opium-eater might feel if his yearning for his special and particular kind of hell were re-enforced by opportunity and advice.

"Now that is my story, and I have told it in the interest of your trumpery science; but if on any evening hereafter you observe me wearing this damnable watch, and you have the thoughtfulness to ask me the hour, I shall beg leave to put you to the inconvenience of being knocked down."

His humor did not amuse me. I could see that in relating his delusion he was again somewhat disturbed. His concluding smile was positively ghastly, and his eyes had resumed something more than their old restlessness; they shifted hither and thither about the room with apparent aimlessness and I fancied had taken on a wild expression, such as is sometimes observed in cases of dementia. Perhaps this was my own imagination, but at any rate I was now persuaded that my friend was afflicted with a most singular and interesting monomania. Without, I trust, any abatement of my affectionate solicitude for him as a friend, I began to regard him as a patient, rich in possibilities of profitable study. Why not? Had he not described his delusion in the interest of science? Ah, poor fellow, he was doing more for science than he knew: not only his story but himself was in evidence. I should cure him if I could, of course, but first I should make a little experiment in psychology — nay, the experiment itself might be a step in his restoration.

"That is very frank and friendly of you, Bartine," I said cordially, "and I'm rather proud of your confidence. It is all very odd, certainly. Do you mind showing me the watch?"

He detached it from his waistcoat, chain and all, and passed it to me without a word. The case was of gold, very thick and strong, and singularly engraved. After closely examining the dial and observing that it was nearly twelve o'clock, I opened it at the back and was interested to observe an inner case of ivory, upon which was painted a miniature portrait in that exquisite and delicate manner which was in vogue during the eighteenth century.

"Why, bless my soul!" I exclaimed, feeling a sharp artistic delight—"how under the sun did you get that done? I thought miniature painting on ivory was a lost art."

"That," he replied, gravely smiling, "is not I; it is my excellent great-grandfather, the late Bramwell Olcott Bartine, Esquire, of Virginia. He was younger then than later — about my age, in fact. It is said to resemble me; do you think so?"

"Resemble you? I should say so! Barring the costume, which I supposed you to have assumed out of compliment to the art — or for vraisemblance, so to say — and the no mustache, that portrait is you in every feature, line, and expression."

No more was said at that time. Bartine took a book from the table and began reading. I heard outside the incessant plash of the rain in the street. There were occasional hurried footfalls on the sidewalks; and once a slower, heavier tread seemed to cease at my door — a policeman, I thought, seeking shelter in the doorway. The boughs of the trees tapped significantly on the window panes, as if asking for admittance. I remember it all through these years and years of a wiser, graver life.

Seeing myself unobserved, I took the old-fashioned key that dangled from the chain and quickly turned back the hands of the watch a full hour; then, closing the case, I handed Bartine his property and saw him replace it on his person.

"I think you said," I began, with assumed carelessness, "that after eleven the sight of the dial no longer affects you. As it is now nearly twelve" — looking at my own timepiece—"perhaps, if you don't resent my pursuit of proof, you will look at it now."

He smiled good-humoredly, pulled out the watch again, opened it, and instantly sprang to his feet with a cry that Heaven has not had the mercy to permit me to forget! His eyes, their blackness strikingly intensified by the pallor of his face, were fixed upon the watch, which he clutched in both hands. For some time he remained in that attitude without uttering another sound; then, in a voice that I should not have recognized as his, he said:

“Damn you! it is two minutes to eleven!”

I was not unprepared for some such outbreak, and without rising replied, calmly enough:

“I beg your pardon; I must have misread your watch in setting my own by it.”

He shut the case with a sharp snap and put the watch in his pocket. He looked at me and made an attempt to smile, but his lower lip quivered and he seemed unable to close his mouth. His hands, also, were shaking, and he thrust them, clenched, into the pockets of his sack-coat. The courageous spirit was manifestly endeavoring to subdue the coward body. The effort was too great; he began to sway from side to side, as from vertigo, and before I could spring from my chair to support him his knees gave way and he pitched awkwardly forward and fell upon his face. I sprang to assist him to rise; but when John Bartine rises we shall all rise.

The post-mortem examination disclosed nothing; every organ was normal and sound. But when the body had been prepared for burial a faint dark circle was seen to have developed around the neck; at least I was so assured by several persons who said they saw it, but of my own knowledge I cannot say if that was true.

Nor can I set limitations to the law of heredity. I do not know that in the spiritual world a sentiment or emotion may not survive the heart that held it, and seek expression in a kindred life, ages removed. Surely, if I were to guess at the fate of Bramwell Olcott Bartine, I should guess that he was hanged at eleven o’clock in the evening, and that he had been allowed several hours in which to prepare for the change.

As to John Bartine, my friend, my patient for five minutes, and — Heaven forgive me! — my victim for eternity, there is no more to say. He is buried, and his watch with him — I saw to that. May God rest his soul in Paradise, and the soul of his Virginian ancestor, if, indeed, they are two souls.

The Damned Thing

i — One Does Not Always Eat what is on the Table

By the light of a tallow candle which had been placed on one end of a rough table a man was reading something written in a book. It was an old account book, greatly worn; and the writing was not, apparently, very legible, for the man sometimes held the page close to the flame of the candle to get a stronger light on it. The shadow of the book would then throw into obscurity a half of the room, darkening a number of faces and figures; for besides the reader, eight other men were present. Seven of them sat against the rough log walls, silent, motionless, and the room being small, not very far from the table. By extending an arm any one of them could have touched the eighth man, who lay on the table, face upward, partly covered by a sheet, his arms at his sides. He was dead.

The man with the book was not reading aloud, and no one spoke; all seemed to be waiting for something to occur; the dead man only was without expectation. From the blank darkness outside came in, through the aperture that served for a window, all the ever unfamiliar noises of night in the wilderness — the long nameless note of a distant coyote; the stilly pulsing thrill of tireless insects in trees; strange cries of night birds, so different from those of the birds of day; the drone of great blundering beetles, and all that mysterious chorus of small sounds that seem always to have been but half heard when they have suddenly ceased, as if conscious of an indiscretion. But nothing of all this was noted in that company; its members were not overmuch addicted to idle interest in matters of no practical importance; that was obvious in every line of their rugged faces — obvious even in the dim light of the single candle. They were evidently men of the vicinity — farmers and woodsmen.

The person reading was a trifle different; one would have said of him that he was of the world, worldly, albeit there was that in his attire which attested a certain fellowship with the organisms of his environment. His coat would hardly have passed muster in San Francisco; his foot-gear was not of urban origin, and the hat that lay by him on the floor (he was the only one uncovered) was such that if one had considered it as an article of mere personal adornment he would have missed its meaning. In countenance the man was rather prepossessing, with just a hint of sternness; though that he may have assumed or cultivated, as appropriate to one in authority. For he was a coroner. It was by virtue of his office that he had possession of the book in which he was reading; it had been found among the dead man's effects — in his cabin, where the inquest was now taking place.

When the coroner had finished reading he put the book into his breast pocket. At that moment the door was pushed open and a young man entered. He, clearly, was not of mountain birth and breeding: he was clad as those who dwell in cities. His clothing was dusty, however, as from travel. He had, in fact, been riding hard to attend the inquest.

The coroner nodded; no one else greeted him.

"We have waited for you," said the coroner. "It is necessary to have done with this business to-night."

The young man smiled. "I am sorry to have kept you," he said. "I went away, not to evade your summons, but to post to my newspaper an account of what I suppose I am called back to relate."

The coroner smiled.

"The account that you posted to your newspaper," he said, "differs, probably, from that which you will give here under oath."

"That," replied the other, rather hotly and with a visible flush, "is as you please. I used manifold paper and have a copy of what I sent. It was not written as news, for it is incredible, but as fiction. It may go as a part of my testimony under oath."

"But you say it is incredible."

"That is nothing to you, sir, if I also swear that it is true."

The coroner was silent for a time, his eyes upon the floor. The men about the sides of the cabin talked in whispers, but seldom withdrew their gaze from the face of the corpse. Presently the coroner lifted his eyes and said: "We will resume the inquest."

The men removed their hats. The witness was sworn.

"What is your name?" the coroner asked.

"William Harker."

"Age?"

"Twenty-seven."

"You knew the deceased, Hugh Morgan?"

"Yes."

"You were with him when he died?"

"Near him."

"How did that happen — your presence, I mean?"

"I was visiting him at this place to shoot and fish. A part of my purpose, however, was to study him and his odd, solitary way of life. He seemed a good model for a character in fiction. I sometimes write stories.”

“I sometimes read them.”

“Thank you.”

“Stories in general — not yours.”

Some of the jurors laughed. Against a sombre background humor shows high lights. Soldiers in the intervals of battle laugh easily, and a jest in the death chamber conquers by surprise.

“Relate the circumstances of this man’s death,” said the coroner. “You may use any notes or memoranda that you please.”

The witness understood. Pulling a manuscript from his breast pocket he held it near the candle and turning the leaves until he found the passage that he wanted began to read.

ii — What May Happen in a Field of Wild Oats

"... The sun had hardly risen when we left the house. We were looking for quail, each with a shotgun, but we had only one dog. Morgan said that our best ground was beyond a certain ridge that he pointed out, and we crossed it by a trail through the chaparral. On the other side was comparatively level ground, thickly covered with wild oats. As we emerged from the chaparral Morgan was but a few yards in advance. Suddenly we heard, at a little distance to our right and partly in front, a noise as of some animal thrashing about in the bushes, which we could see were violently agitated.

"'We've started a deer,' I said. 'I wish we had brought a rifle.'

"Morgan, who had stopped and was intently watching the agitated chaparral, said nothing, but had cocked both barrels of his gun and was holding it in readiness to aim. I thought him a trifle excited, which surprised me, for he had a reputation for exceptional coolness, even in moments of sudden and imminent peril.

"'O, come,' I said. 'You are not going to fill up a deer with quail-shot, are you?'

"Still he did not reply; but catching a sight of his face as he turned it slightly toward me I was struck by the intensity of his look. Then I understood that we had serious business in hand and my first conjecture was that we had 'jumped' a grizzly. I advanced to Morgan's side, cocking my piece as I moved.

"The bushes were now quiet and the sounds had ceased, but Morgan was as attentive to the place as before.

"'What is it? What the devil is it?' I asked.

"'That Damned Thing!' he replied, without turning his head. His voice was husky and unnatural. He trembled visibly.

"I was about to speak further, when I observed the wild oats near the place of the disturbance moving in the most inexplicable way. I can hardly describe it. It seemed as if stirred by a streak of wind, which not only bent it, but pressed it down — crushed it so that it did not rise; and this movement was slowly prolonging itself directly toward us.

"Nothing that I had ever seen had affected me so strangely as this unfamiliar and unaccountable phenomenon, yet I am unable to recall any sense of fear. I remember — and tell it here because, singularly enough, I recollected it then — that once in looking carelessly out of an open window I momentarily mistook a small tree close at hand for one of a group of larger trees at a little distance away. It looked the same size as the others, but being more distinctly and sharply defined in mass and detail seemed out of harmony with them. It was a mere falsification of the law of aerial perspective, but it startled, almost terrified me. We so rely upon the orderly operation of familiar natural laws that any seeming suspension of them is noted as a menace to our safety, a warning of unthinkable calamity. So now the apparently causeless movement of the herbage and the slow, undeviating approach of the line of disturbance were distinctly disquieting. My companion appeared actually frightened, and I could hardly credit my senses when I saw him suddenly throw his gun to his shoulder and fire both barrels at the agitated grain! Before the smoke of the discharge had cleared away I heard a loud savage cry — a scream like that of a wild animal — and flinging his gun upon the ground Morgan sprang away and ran swiftly from the spot. At the same instant I was thrown violently to the ground by the impact of something unseen in the smoke — some soft, heavy substance that seemed thrown against me with great force.

“Before I could get upon my feet and recover my gun, which seemed to have been struck from my hands, I heard Morgan crying out as if in mortal agony, and mingling with his cries were such hoarse, savage sounds as one hears from fighting dogs. Inexpressibly terrified, I struggled to my feet and looked in the direction of Morgan’s retreat; and may Heaven in mercy spare me from another sight like that! At a distance of less than thirty yards was my friend, down upon one knee, his head thrown back at a frightful angle, hatless, his long hair in disorder and his whole body in violent movement from side to side, backward and forward. His right arm was lifted and seemed to lack the hand — at least, I could see none. The other arm was invisible. At times, as my memory now reports this extraordinary scene, I could discern but a part of his body; it was as if he had been partly blotted out — I cannot otherwise express it — then a shifting of his position would bring it all into view again.

“All this must have occurred within a few seconds, yet in that time Morgan assumed all the postures of a determined wrestler vanquished by superior weight and strength. I saw nothing but him, and him not always distinctly. During the entire incident his shouts and curses were heard, as if through an enveloping uproar of such sounds of rage and fury as I had never heard from the throat of man or brute!

“For a moment only I stood irresolute, then throwing down my gun I ran forward to my friend’s assistance. I had a vague belief that he was suffering from a fit, or some form of convulsion. Before I could reach his side he was down and quiet. All sounds had ceased, but with a feeling of such terror as even these awful events had not inspired I now saw again the mysterious movement of the wild oats, prolonging itself from the trampled area about the prostrate man toward the edge of a wood. It was only when it had reached the wood that I was able to withdraw my eyes and look at my companion. He was dead.”

iii — A Man Though Naked May Be in Rags

The coroner rose from his seat and stood beside the dead man. Lifting an edge of the sheet he pulled it away, exposing the entire body, altogether naked and showing in the candle-light a claylike yellow. It had, however, broad maculations of bluish black, obviously caused by extravasated blood from contusions. The chest and sides looked as if they had been beaten with a bludgeon. There were dreadful lacerations; the skin was torn in strips and shreds.

The coroner moved round to the end of the table and undid a silk handkerchief which had been passed under the chin and knotted on the top of the head. When the handkerchief was drawn away it exposed what had been the throat. Some of the jurors who had risen to get a better view repented their curiosity and turned away their faces. Witness Harker went to the open window and leaned out across the sill, faint and sick. Dropping the handkerchief upon the dead man's neck the coroner stepped to an angle of the room and from a pile of clothing produced one garment after another, each of which he held up a moment for inspection. All were torn, and stiff with blood. The jurors did not make a closer inspection. They seemed rather uninterested. They had, in truth, seen all this before; the only thing that was new to them being Harker's testimony.

"Gentlemen," the coroner said, "we have no more evidence, I think. Your duty has been already explained to you; if there is nothing you wish to ask you may go outside and consider your verdict."

The foreman rose — a tall, bearded man of sixty, coarsely clad.

"I should like to ask one question, Mr. Coroner," he said. "What asylum did this yer last witness escape from?"

"Mr. Harker," said the coroner, gravely and tranquilly, "from what asylum did you last escape?"

Harker flushed crimson again, but said nothing, and the seven jurors rose and solemnly filed out of the cabin.

"If you have done insulting me, sir," said Harker, as soon as he and the officer were left alone with the dead man, "I suppose I am at liberty to go?"

"Yes."

Harker started to leave, but paused, with his hand on the door latch. The habit of his profession was strong in him — stronger than his sense of personal dignity. He turned about and said:

"The book that you have there — I recognize it as Morgan's diary. You seemed greatly interested in it; you read in it while I was testifying. May I see it?

The public would like—"

"The book will cut no figure in this matter," replied the official, slipping it into his coat pocket; "all the entries in it were made before the writer's death."

As Harker passed out of the house the jury reentered and stood about the table, on which the now covered corpse showed under the sheet with sharp definition. The foreman seated himself near the candle, produced from his breast pocket a pencil and scrap of paper and wrote rather laboriously the following verdict, which with various degrees of effort all signed:

"We, the jury, do find that the remains come to their death at the hands of a mountain lion, but some of us thinks, all the same, they had fits."

iv — An Explanation from the Tomb

In the diary of the late Hugh Morgan are certain interesting entries having, possibly, a scientific value as suggestions. At the inquest upon his body the book was not put in evidence; possibly the coroner thought it not worth while to confuse the jury. The date of the first of the entries mentioned cannot be ascertained; the upper part of the leaf is torn away; the part of the entry remaining follows:

“... would run in a half-circle, keeping his head turned always toward the centre, and again he would stand still, barking furiously. At last he ran away into the brush as fast as he could go. I thought at first that he had gone mad, but on returning to the house found no other alteration in his manner than what was obviously due to fear of punishment.

“Can a dog see with his nose? Do odors impress some cerebral centre with images of the thing that emitted them?...

“Sept. 2. — Looking at the stars last night as they rose above the crest of the ridge east of the house, I observed them successively disappear — from left to right. Each was eclipsed but an instant, and only a few at the same time, but along the entire length of the ridge all that were within a degree or two of the crest were blotted out. It was as if something had passed along between me and them; but I could not see it, and the stars were not thick enough to define its outline. Ugh! I don’t like this.”...

Several weeks’ entries are missing, three leaves being torn from the book.

“Sept. 27. — It has been about here again — I find evidences of its presence every day. I watched again all last night in the same cover, gun in hand, double-charged with buckshot. In the morning the fresh footprints were there, as before. Yet I would have sworn that I did not sleep — indeed, I hardly sleep at all. It is terrible, insupportable! If these amazing experiences are real I shall go mad; if they are fanciful I am mad already.

“Oct. 3. — I shall not go — it shall not drive me away. No, this is MY house, MY land. God hates a coward...

“Oct. 5. — I can stand it no longer; I have invited Harker to pass a few weeks with me — he has a level head. I can judge from his manner if he thinks me mad.

“Oct. 7. — I have the solution of the mystery; it came to me last night — suddenly, as by revelation. How simple — how terribly simple!

“There are sounds that we cannot hear. At either end of the scale are notes that stir no chord of that imperfect instrument, the human ear. They are too high or too grave. I have observed a flock of blackbirds occupying an entire tree-top — the tops of several trees — and all in full song. Suddenly — in a moment — at absolutely the same instant — all spring into the air and fly away. How? They could not all see one another — whole tree-tops intervened. At no point could a leader have been visible to all. There must have been a signal of warning or command, high and shrill above the din, but by me unheard. I have observed, too, the same simultaneous flight when all were silent, among not only blackbirds, but other birds — quail, for example, widely separated by bushes — even on opposite sides of a hill.

"It is known to seamen that a school of whales basking or sporting on the surface of the ocean, miles apart, with the convexity of the earth between, will sometimes dive at the same instant — all gone out of sight in a moment. The signal has been sounded — too grave for the ear of the sailor at the masthead and his comrades on the deck — who nevertheless feel its vibrations in the ship as the stones of a cathedral are stirred by the bass of the organ.

"As with sounds, so with colors. At each end of the solar spectrum the chemist can detect the presence of what are known as 'actinic' rays. They represent colors — integral colors in the composition of light — which we are unable to discern. The human eye is an imperfect instrument; its range is but a few octaves of the real 'chromatic scale.' I am not mad; there are colors that we cannot see.

"And, God help me! the Damned Thing is of such a color!"

Haita the Shepherd

In the heart of Haita the illusions of youth had not been supplanted by those of age and experience. His thoughts were pure and pleasant, for his life was simple and his soul devoid of ambition. He rose with the sun and went forth to pray at the shrine of Hastur, the god of shepherds, who heard and was pleased. After performance of this pious rite Haita unbarred the gate of the fold and with a cheerful mind drove his flock afield, eating his morning meal of curds and oat cake as he went, occasionally pausing to add a few berries, cold with dew, or to drink of the waters that came away from the hills to join the stream in the middle of the valley and be borne along with it, he knew not whither.

During the long summer day, as his sheep cropped the good grass which the gods had made to grow for them, or lay with their forelegs doubled under their breasts and chewed the cud, Haita, reclining in the shadow of a tree, or sitting upon a rock, played so sweet music upon his reed pipe that sometimes from the corner of his eye he got accidental glimpses of the minor sylvan deities, leaning forward out of the copse to hear; but if he looked at them directly they vanished. From this — for he must be thinking if he would not turn into one of his own sheep — he drew the solemn inference that happiness may come if not sought, but if looked for will never be seen; for next to the favor of Hastur, who never disclosed himself, Haita most valued the friendly interest of his neighbors, the shy immortals of the wood and stream. At nightfall he drove his flock back to the fold, saw that the gate was secure and retired to his cave for refreshment and for dreams.

So passed his life, one day like another, save when the storms uttered the wrath of an offended god. Then Haita cowered in his cave, his face hidden in his hands, and prayed that he alone might be punished for his sins and the world saved from destruction. Sometimes when there was a great rain, and the stream came out of its banks, compelling him to urge his terrified flock to the uplands, he interceded for the people in the cities which he had been told lay in the plain beyond the two blue hills forming the gateway of his valley.

“It is kind of thee, O Hastur,” so he prayed, “to give me mountains so near to my dwelling and my fold that I and my sheep can escape the angry torrents; but the rest of the world thou must thyself deliver in some way that I know not of, or I will no longer worship thee.”

And Hastur, knowing that Haita was a youth who kept his word, spared the cities and turned the waters into the sea.

So he had lived since he could remember. He could not rightly conceive any other mode of existence. The holy hermit who dwelt at the head of the valley, a full hour’s journey away, from whom he had heard the tale of the great cities where dwelt people — poor souls! — who had no sheep, gave him no knowledge of that early time, when, so he reasoned, he must have been small and helpless like a lamb.

It was through thinking on these mysteries and marvels, and on that horrible change to silence and decay which he felt sure must some time come to him, as he had seen it come to so many of his flock — as it came to all living things except the birds — that Haita first became conscious how miserable and hopeless was his lot.

“It is necessary,” he said, “that I know whence and how I came; for how can one perform his duties unless able to judge what they are by the way in which he was intrusted with them? And what contentment can I have when I know not how long it is going to last? Perhaps before another sun I may be changed, and then what will become of the sheep? What, indeed, will have become of me?”

Pondering these things Haita became melancholy and morose. He no longer spoke cheerfully to his flock, nor ran with alacrity to the shrine of Hastur. In every breeze he heard whispers of malign deities whose existence he now first observed. Every cloud was a portent signifying disaster, and the darkness was full of terrors. His reed pipe when applied to his lips gave out no melody, but a dismal wail; the sylvan and riparian intelligences no longer thronged the thicket-side to listen, but fled from the sound, as he knew by the stirred leaves and bent flowers. He relaxed his vigilance and many of his sheep strayed away into the hills and were lost. Those that remained became lean and ill for lack of good pasturage, for he would not seek it for them, but conducted them day after day to the same spot, through mere abstraction, while puzzling about life and death — of immortality he knew not.

One day while indulging in the gloomiest reflections he suddenly sprang from the rock upon which he sat, and with a determined gesture of the right hand exclaimed: “I will no longer be a suppliant for knowledge which the gods withhold. Let them look to it that they do me no wrong. I will do my duty as best I can and if I err upon their own heads be it!”

Suddenly, as he spoke, a great brightness fell about him, causing him to look upward, thinking the sun had burst through a rift in the clouds; but there were no clouds. No more than an arm’s length away stood a beautiful maiden. So beautiful she was that the flowers about her feet folded their petals in despair and bent their heads in token of submission; so sweet her look that the humming birds thronged her eyes, thrusting their thirsty bills almost into them, and the wild bees were about her lips. And such was her brightness that the shadows of all objects lay divergent from her feet, turning as she moved.

Haita was entranced. Rising, he knelt before her in adoration, and she laid her hand upon his head.

“Come,” she said in a voice that had the music of all the bells of his flock —”come, thou art not to worship me, who am no goddess, but if thou art truthful and dutiful I will abide with thee.”

Haita seized her hand, and stammering his joy and gratitude arose, and hand in hand they stood and smiled into each other’s eyes. He gazed on her with reverence and rapture. He said: “I pray thee, lovely maid, tell me thy name and whence and why thou comest.”

At this she laid a warning finger on her lip and began to withdraw. Her beauty underwent a visible alteration that made him shudder, he knew not why, for still she was beautiful. The landscape was darkened by a giant shadow sweeping across the valley with the speed of a vulture. In the obscurity the maiden’s figure grew dim and indistinct and her voice seemed to come from a distance, as she said, in a tone of sorrowful reproach: “Presumptuous and ungrateful youth! must I then so soon leave thee? Would nothing do but thou must at once break the eternal compact?”

Inexpressibly grieved, Haita fell upon his knees and implored her to remain — rose and sought her in the deepening darkness — ran in circles, calling to her aloud, but all in vain. She was no longer visible, but out of the gloom he heard her voice saying: “Nay, thou shalt not have me by seeking. Go to thy duty, faithless shepherd, or we shall never meet again.”

Night had fallen; the wolves were howling in the hills and the terrified sheep crowding about Haita’s feet. In the demands of the hour he forgot his disappointment, drove his sheep to the fold and repairing to the place of worship poured out his heart in gratitude to Hastur for permitting him to save his flock, then retired to his cave and slept.

When Haita awoke the sun was high and shone in at the cave, illuminating it with a great glory. And there, beside him, sat the maiden. She smiled upon him with a smile that seemed the visible music of his pipe of reeds. He dared not speak, fearing to offend her as before, for he knew not what he could venture to say.

“Because,” she said, “thou didst thy duty by the flock, and didst not forget to thank Hastur for staying the wolves of the night, I am come to thee again. Wilt thou have me for a companion?”

“Who would not have thee forever?” replied Haita. “Oh! never again leave me until — until I — change and become silent and motionless.”

Haita had no word for death.

“I wish, indeed,” he continued, “that thou wert of my own sex, that we might wrestle and run races and so never tire of being together.”

At these words the maiden arose and passed out of the cave, and Haita, springing from his couch of fragrant boughs to overtake and detain her, observed to his astonishment that the rain was falling and the stream in the middle of the valley had come out of its banks. The sheep were bleating in terror, for the rising waters had invaded their fold. And there was danger for the unknown cities of the distant plain.

It was many days before Haita saw the maiden again. One day he was returning from the head of the valley, where he had gone with ewe’s milk and oat cake and berries for the holy hermit, who was too old and feeble to provide himself with food.

“Poor old man!” he said aloud, as he trudged along homeward. “I will return to-morrow and bear him on my back to my own dwelling, where I can care for him. Doubtless it is for this that Hastur has reared me all these many years, and gives me health and strength.”

As he spoke, the maiden, clad in glittering garments, met him in the path with a smile that took away his breath.

“I am come again,” she said, “to dwell with thee if thou wilt now have me, for none else will. Thou mayest have learned wisdom, and art willing to take me as I am, nor care to know.”

Haita threw himself at her feet. “Beautiful being,” he cried, “if thou wilt but deign to accept all the devotion of my heart and soul — after Hastur be served — it is thine forever. But, alas! thou art capricious and wayward. Before to-morrow’s sun I may lose thee again. Promise, I beseech thee, that however in my ignorance I may offend, thou wilt forgive and remain always with me.”

Scarcely had he finished speaking when a troop of bears came out of the hills, racing toward him with crimson mouths and fiery eyes. The maiden again vanished, and he turned and fled for his life. Nor did he stop until he was in the cot of the holy hermit, whence he had set out. Hastily barring the door against the bears he cast himself upon the ground and wept.

“My son,” said the hermit from his couch of straw, freshly gathered that morning by Haita’s hands, “it is not like thee to weep for bears — tell me what sorrow hath befallen thee, that age may minister to the hurts of youth with such balms as it hath of its wisdom.”

Haita told him all: how thrice he had met the radiant maid, and thrice she had left him forlorn. He related minutely all that had passed between them, omitting no word of what had been said.

When he had ended, the holy hermit was a moment silent, then said: “My son, I have attended to thy story, and I know the maiden. I have myself seen her, as have many. Know, then, that her name, which she would not even permit thee to inquire, is Happiness. Thou saidst the truth to her, that she is capricious for she imposeth conditions that man cannot fulfill, and delinquency is punished by desertion. She cometh only when unsought, and will not be questioned. One manifestation of curiosity, one sign of doubt, one expression of misgiving, and she is away! How long didst thou have her at any time before she fled?”

“Only a single instant,” answered Haita, blushing with shame at the confession. “Each time I drove her away in one moment.”

“Unfortunate youth!” said the holy hermit, “but for thine indiscretion thou mightst have had her for two.”

An Inhabitant of Carcosa

For there be divers sorts of death — some wherein the body remaineth; and in some it vanisheth quite away with the spirit. This commonly occurreth only in solitude (such is God's will) and, none seeing the end, we say the man is lost, or gone on a long journey — which indeed he hath; but sometimes it hath happened in sight of many, as abundant testimony showeth. In one kind of death the spirit also dieth, and this it hath been known to do while yet the body was in vigor for many years. Sometimes, as is veritably attested, it dieth with the body, but after a season is raised up again in that place where the body did decay.

Pondering these words of Hali (whom God rest) and questioning their full meaning, as one who, having an intimation, yet doubts if there be not something behind, other than that which he has discerned, I noted not whither I had strayed until a sudden chill wind striking my face revived in me a sense of my surroundings. I observed with astonishment that everything seemed unfamiliar. On every side of me stretched a bleak and desolate expanse of plain, covered with a tall overgrowth of sere grass, which rustled and whistled in the autumn wind with heaven knows what mysterious and disquieting suggestion. Protruded at long intervals above it, stood strangely shaped and somber-colored rocks, which seemed to have an understanding with one another and to exchange looks of uncomfortable significance, as if they had reared their heads to watch the issue of some foreseen event. A few blasted trees here and there appeared as leaders in this malevolent conspiracy of silent expectation.

The day, I thought, must be far advanced, though the sun was invisible; and although sensible that the air was raw and chill my consciousness of that fact was rather mental than physical — I had no feeling of discomfort. Over all the dismal landscape a canopy of low, lead-colored clouds hung like a visible curse. In all this there were a menace and a portent — a hint of evil, an intimation of doom. Bird, beast, or insect there was none. The wind sighed in the bare branches of the dead trees and the gray grass bent to whisper its dread secret to the earth; but no other sound nor motion broke the awful repose of that dismal place.

I observed in the herbage a number of weather-worn stones, evidently shaped with tools. They were broken, covered with moss and half sunken in the earth. Some lay prostrate, some leaned at various angles, none was vertical. They were obviously headstones of graves, though the graves themselves no longer existed as either mounds or depressions; the years had leveled all. Scattered here and there, more massive blocks showed where some pompous tomb or ambitious monument had once flung its feeble defiance at oblivion. So old seemed these relics, these vestiges of vanity and memorials of affection and piety, so battered and worn and stained — so neglected, deserted, forgotten the place, that I could not help thinking myself the discoverer of the burial-ground of a prehistoric race of men whose very name was long extinct.

Filled with these reflections, I was for some time heedless of the sequence of my own experiences, but soon I thought, “How came I hither?” A moment’s reflection seemed to make this all clear and explain at the same time, though in a disquieting way, the singular character with which my fancy had invested all that I saw or heard. I was ill. I remembered now that I had been prostrated by a sudden fever, and that my family had told me that in my periods of delirium I had constantly cried out for liberty and air, and had been held in bed to prevent my escape out-of-doors. Now I had eluded the vigilance of my attendants and had wandered hither to — to where? I could not conjecture. Clearly I was at a considerable distance from the city where I dwelt — the ancient and famous city of Carcosa.

No signs of human life were anywhere visible nor audible; no rising smoke, no watch-dog’s bark, no lowing of cattle, no shouts of children at play — nothing but that dismal burial-place, with its air of mystery and dread, due to my own disordered brain. Was I not becoming again delirious, there beyond human aid? Was it not indeed ALL an illusion of my madness? I called aloud the names of my wives and sons, reached out my hands in search of theirs, even as I walked among the crumbling stones and in the withered grass.

A noise behind me caused me to turn about. A wild animal — a lynx — was approaching. The thought came to me: If I break down here in the desert — if the fever return and I fail, this beast will be at my throat. I sprang toward it, shouting. It trotted tranquilly by within a hand’s breadth of me and disappeared behind a rock.

A moment later a man’s head appeared to rise out of the ground a short distance away. He was ascending the farther slope of a low hill whose crest was hardly to be distinguished from the general level. His whole figure soon came into view against the background of gray cloud. He was half naked, half clad in skins. His hair was unkempt, his beard long and ragged. In one hand he carried a bow and arrow; the other held a blazing torch with a long trail of black smoke. He walked slowly and with caution, as if he feared falling into some open grave concealed by the tall grass. This strange apparition surprised but did not alarm, and taking such a course as to intercept him I met him almost face to face, accosting him with the familiar salutation, “God keep you.”

He gave no heed, nor did he arrest his pace.

“Good stranger,” I continued, “I am ill and lost. Direct me, I beseech you, to Carcosa.”

The man broke into a barbarous chant in an unknown tongue, passing on and away.

An owl on the branch of a decayed tree hooted dismally and was answered by another in the distance. Looking upward, I saw through a sudden rift in the clouds Aldebaran and the Hyades! In all this there was a hint of night — the lynx, the man with the torch, the owl. Yet I saw — I saw even the stars in absence of the darkness. I saw, but was apparently not seen nor heard. Under what awful spell did I exist?

I seated myself at the root of a great tree, seriously to consider what it were best to do. That I was mad I could no longer doubt, yet recognized a ground of doubt in the conviction. Of fever I had no trace. I had, withal, a sense of exhilaration and vigor altogether unknown to me — a feeling of mental and physical exaltation. My senses seemed all alert; I could feel the air as a ponderous substance; I could hear the silence.

A great root of the giant tree against whose trunk I leaned as I sat held inclosed in its grasp a slab of stone, a part of which protruded into a recess formed by another root. The stone was thus partly protected from the weather, though greatly decomposed. Its edges were worn round, its corners eaten away, its surface deeply furrowed and scaled. Glittering particles of mica were visible in the earth about it — vestiges of its decomposition. This stone had apparently marked the grave out of which the tree had sprung ages ago. The tree’s exacting roots had robbed the grave and made the stone a prisoner.

A sudden wind pushed some dry leaves and twigs from the uppermost face of the stone; I saw the low-relief letters of an inscription and bent to read it. God in Heaven! MY name in full! — the date of MY birth! — the date of MY death!

A level shaft of light illuminated the whole side of the tree as I sprang to my feet in terror. The sun was rising in the rosy east. I stood between the tree and his broad red disk — no shadow darkened the trunk!

A chorus of howling wolves saluted the dawn. I saw them sitting on their haunches, singly and in groups, on the summits of irregular mounds and tumuli filling a half of my desert prospect and extending to the horizon. And then I knew that these were ruins of the ancient and famous city of Carcosa.

Such are the facts imparted to the medium Bayrolles by the spirit Hoseib Alar Robardin.

The Stranger

A man stepped out of the darkness into the little illuminated circle about our failing campfire and seated himself upon a rock.

“You are not the first to explore this region,” he said, gravely.

Nobody controverted his statement; he was himself proof of its truth, for he was not of our party and must have been somewhere near when we camped. Moreover, he must have companions not far away; it was not a place where one would be living or traveling alone. For more than a week we had seen, besides ourselves and our animals, only such living things as rattlesnakes and horned toads. In an Arizona desert one does not long coexist with only such creatures as these: one must have pack animals, supplies, arms—”an outfit.” And all these imply comrades. It was perhaps a doubt as to what manner of men this unceremonious stranger’s comrades might be, together with something in his words interpretable as a challenge, that caused every man of our half-dozen “gentlemen adventurers” to rise to a sitting posture and lay his hand upon a weapon — an act signifying, in that time and place, a policy of expectation. The stranger gave the matter no attention and began again to speak in the same deliberate, uninflected monotone in which he had delivered his first sentence:

“Thirty years ago Ramon Gallegos, William Shaw, George W. Kent and Berry Davis, all of Tucson, crossed the Santa Catalina mountains and traveled due west, as nearly as the configuration of the country permitted. We were prospecting and it was our intention, if we found nothing, to push through to the Gila river at some point near Big Bend, where we understood there was a settlement. We had a good outfit but no guide — just Ramon Gallegos, William Shaw, George W. Kent and Berry Davis.”

The man repeated the names slowly and distinctly, as if to fix them in the memories of his audience, every member of which was now attentively observing him, but with a slackened apprehension regarding his possible companions somewhere in the darkness that seemed to enclose us like a black wall; in the manner of this volunteer historian was no suggestion of an unfriendly purpose. His act was rather that of a harmless lunatic than an enemy. We were not so new to the country as not to know that the solitary life of many a plainsman had a tendency to develop eccentricities of conduct and character not always easily distinguishable from mental aberration. A man is like a tree: in a forest of his fellows he will grow as straight as his generic and individual nature permits; alone in the open, he yields to the deforming stresses and tortions that environ him. Some such thoughts were in my mind as I watched the man from the shadow of my hat, pulled low to shut out the firelight. A witless fellow, no doubt, but what could he be doing there in the heart of a desert?

Having undertaken to tell this story, I wish that I could describe the man's appearance; that would be a natural thing to do. Unfortunately, and somewhat strangely, I find myself unable to do so with any degree of confidence, for afterward no two of us agreed as to what he wore and how he looked; and when I try to set down my own impressions they elude me. Anyone can tell some kind of story; narration is one of the elemental powers of the race. But the talent for description is a gift.

Nobody having broken silence the visitor went on to say:

"This country was not then what it is now. There was not a ranch between the Gila and the Gulf. There was a little game here and there in the mountains, and near the infrequent water-holes grass enough to keep our animals from starvation. If we should be so fortunate as to encounter no Indians we might get through. But within a week the purpose of the expedition had altered from discovery of wealth to preservation of life. We had gone too far to go back, for what was ahead could be no worse than what was behind; so we pushed on, riding by night to avoid Indians and the intolerable heat, and concealing ourselves by day as best we could. Sometimes, having exhausted our supply of wild meat and emptied our casks, we were days without food or drink; then a water-hole or a shallow pool in the bottom of an arroyo so restored our strength and sanity that we were able to shoot some of the wild animals that sought it also. Sometimes it was a bear, sometimes an antelope, a coyote, a cougar — that was as God pleased; all were food.

"One morning as we skirted a mountain range, seeking a practicable pass, we were attacked by a band of Apaches who had followed our trail up a gulch — it is not far from here. Knowing that they outnumbered us ten to one, they took none of their usual cowardly precautions, but dashed upon us at a gallop, firing and yelling. Fighting was out of the question: we urged our feeble animals up the gulch as far as there was footing for a hoof, then threw ourselves out of our saddles and took to the chaparral on one of the slopes, abandoning our entire outfit to the enemy. But we retained our rifles, every man — Ramon Gallegos, William Shaw, George W. Kent and Berry Davis."

"Same old crowd," said the humorist of our party. He was an Eastern man, unfamiliar with the decent observances of social intercourse. A gesture of disapproval from our leader silenced him and the stranger proceeded with his tale:

"The savages dismounted also, and some of them ran up the gulch beyond the point at which we had left it, cutting off further retreat in that direction and forcing us on up the side. Unfortunately the chaparral extended only a short distance up the slope, and as we came into the open ground above we took the fire of a dozen rifles; but Apaches shoot badly when in a hurry, and God so willed it that none of us fell. Twenty yards up the slope, beyond the edge of the brush, were vertical cliffs, in which, directly in front of us, was a narrow opening. Into that we ran, finding ourselves in a cavern about as large as an ordinary room in a house. Here for a time we were safe: a single man with a repeating rifle could defend the entrance against all the Apaches in the land. But against hunger and thirst we had no defense. Courage we still had, but hope was a memory.

"Not one of those Indians did we afterward see, but by the smoke and glare of their fires in the gulch we knew that by day and by night they watched with ready rifles in the edge of the bush — knew that if we made a sortie not a man of us would live to take three steps into the open. For three days, watching in turn, we held out before our suffering became insupportable. Then — it was the morning of the fourth day — Ramon Gallegos said:

"'Senores, I know not well of the good God and what please him. I have live without religion, and I am not acquaint with that of you. Pardon, senores, if I shock you, but for me the time is come to beat the game of the Apache.'

"He knelt upon the rock floor of the cave and pressed his pistol against his temple. 'Madre de Dios,' he said, 'comes now the soul of Ramon Gallegos.'

"And so he left us — William Shaw, George W. Kent and Berry Davis.

"I was the leader: it was for me to speak.

"'He was a brave man,' I said—'he knew when to die, and how. It is foolish to go mad from thirst and fall by Apache bullets, or be skinned alive — it is in bad taste. Let us join Ramon Gallegos.'

"'That is right,' said William Shaw.

"'That is right,' said George W. Kent.

"I straightened the limbs of Ramon Gallegos and put a handkerchief over his face. Then William Shaw said: 'I should like to look like that — a little while.'

"And George W. Kent said that he felt that way, too.

"'It shall be so,' I said: 'the red devils will wait a week. William Shaw and George W. Kent, draw and kneel.'

"They did so and I stood before them.

"'Almighty God, our Father,' said I.

"'Almighty God, our Father,' said William Shaw.

"'Almighty God, our Father,' said George W. Kent.

"'Forgive us our sins,' said I.

"'Forgive us our sins,' said they.

"'And receive our souls.'

"'And receive our souls.'

"'Amen!'

"'Amen!'

"I laid them beside Ramon Gallegos and covered their faces."

There was a quick commotion on the opposite side of the campfire: one of our party had sprung to his feet, pistol in hand.

"And you!" he shouted—"YOU dared to escape? — you dare to be alive? You cowardly hound, I'll send you to join them if I hang for it!"

But with the leap of a panther the captain was upon him, grasping his wrist. "Hold it in, Sam Yountsey, hold it in!"

We were now all upon our feet — except the stranger, who sat motionless and apparently inattentive. Some one seized Yountsey's other arm.

"Captain," I said, "there is something wrong here. This fellow is either a lunatic or merely a liar — just a plain, every-day liar whom Yountsey has no call to kill. If this man was of that party it had five members, one of whom — probably himself — he has not named."

"Yes," said the captain, releasing the insurgent, who sat down, "there is something — unusual. Years ago four dead bodies of white men, scalped and shamefully mutilated, were found about the mouth of that cave. They are buried there; I have seen the graves — we shall all see them to-morrow."

The stranger rose, standing tall in the light of the expiring fire, which in our breathless attention to his story we had neglected to keep going.

"There were four," he said—"Ramon Gallegos, William Shaw, George W. Kent and Berry Davis."

With this reiterated roll-call of the dead he walked into the darkness and we saw him no more.

At that moment one of our party, who had been on guard, strode in among us, rifle in hand and somewhat excited.

"Captain," he said, "for the last half-hour three men have been standing out there on the mesa." He pointed in the direction taken by the stranger. "I could see them distinctly, for the moon is up, but as they had no guns and I had them covered with mine I thought it was their move. They have made none, but, damn it! they have got on to my nerves."

"Go back to your post, and stay till you see them again," said the captain. "The rest of you lie down again, or I'll kick you all into the fire."

The sentinel obediently withdrew, swearing, and did not return. As we were arranging our blankets the fiery Yountsey said: “I beg your pardon, Captain, but who the devil do you take them to be?”

“Ramon Gallegos, William Shaw and George W. Kent.”

“But how about Berry Davis? I ought to have shot him.”

“Quite needless; you couldn’t have made him any deader. Go to sleep.”

FANTASTIC FABLES

Fantastic Fables appeared in 1899, published by G. P. Putnam's Sons of New York. Employing his often skewering, yet droll, wit in these 245 satiric fables, Bierce attacks hypocrites and humbugs of all kinds, from politicians to preachers to medical men. A contemporary review in *The Literary World* described the humor in Bierce's fables as "genuine. There is at times a suggestion of cynicism, but of a cynicism that is good natured and while it barks, it never bites…The person that can read this handsome little book without a succession of broad smiles must be well-nigh destitute of humor." *The Critic* proclaimed that "the book will…be a mine for jaded after-dinner speakers." *Book Notes* described the collection as "an up-to-date breviary of wit and wisdom."

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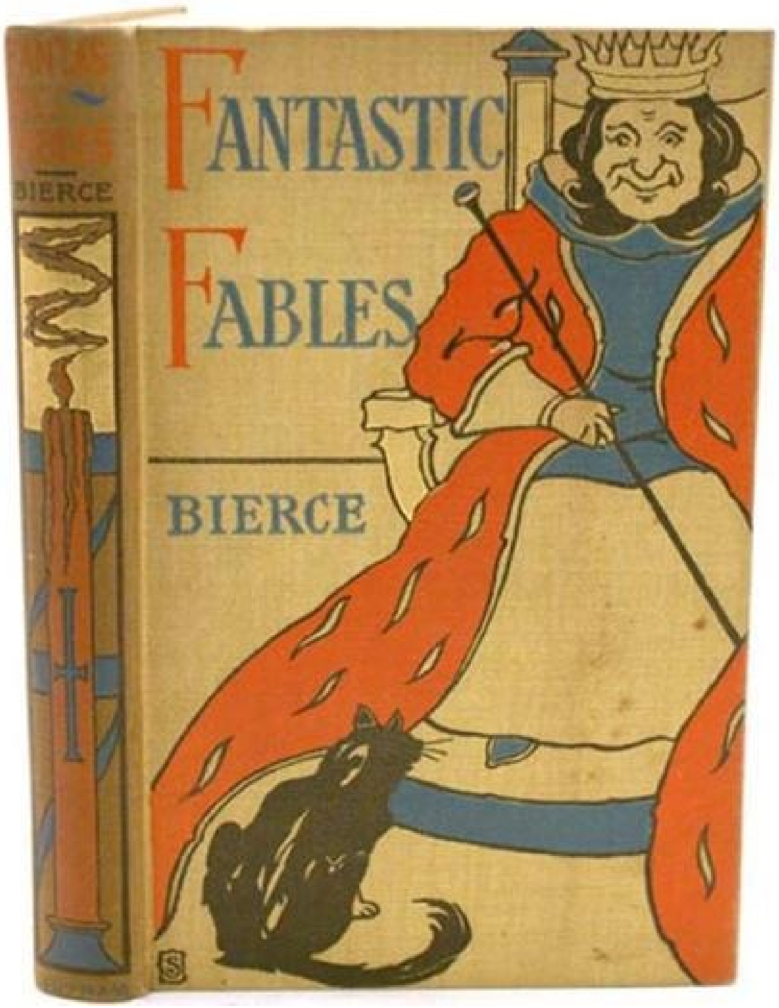
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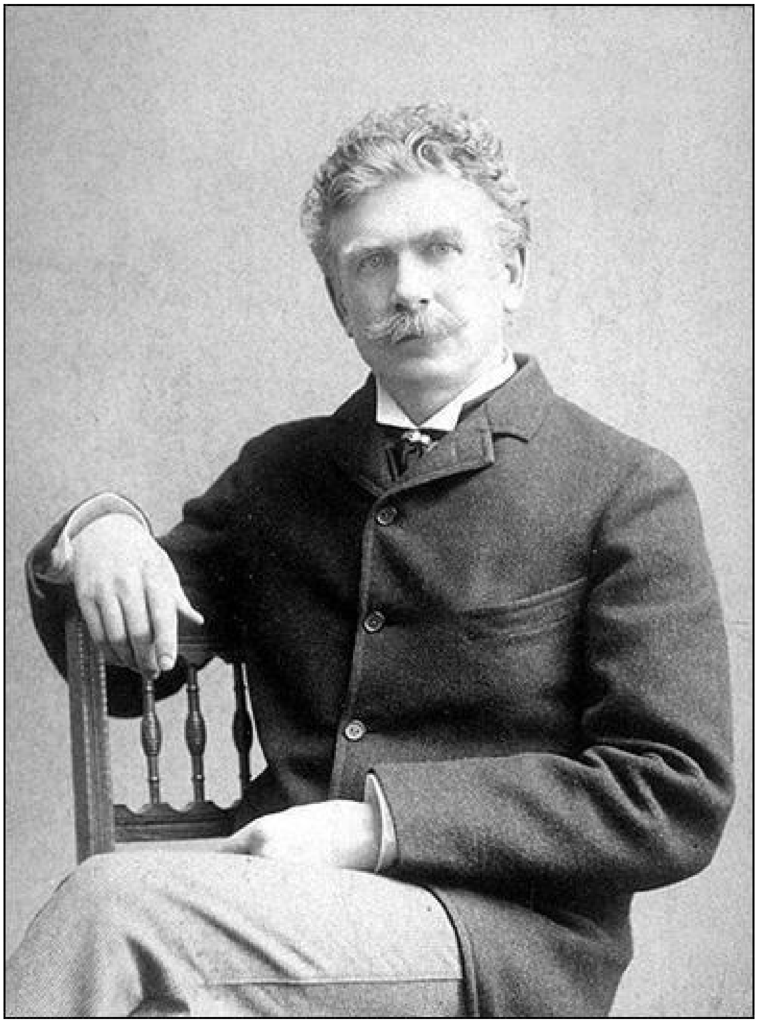
First edition, first issue, 1899 G.P. Putnam’s Sons



Bierce, 1892

The Moral Principle and the Material Interest

A Moral Principle met a Material Interest on a bridge wide enough for but one.

“Down, you base thing!” thundered the Moral Principle, “and let me pass over you!”

The Material Interest merely looked in the other’s eyes without saying anything.

“Ah,” said the Moral Principle, hesitatingly, “let us draw lots to see which shall retire till the other has crossed.”

The Material Interest maintained an unbroken silence and an unwavering stare.

“In order to avoid a conflict,” the Moral Principle resumed, somewhat uneasily, “I shall myself lie down and let you walk over me.”

Then the Material Interest found a tongue, and by a strange coincidence it was its own tongue. “I don’t think you are very good walking,” it said. “I am a little particular about what I have underfoot. Suppose you get off into the water.”

It occurred that way.

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The Crimson Candle

A man lying at the point of death called his wife to his bedside and said: “I am about to leave you forever; give me, therefore, one last proof of your affection and fidelity, for, according to our holy religion, a married man seeking admittance at the gate of Heaven is required to swear that he has never defiled himself with an unworthy woman. In my desk you will find a crimson candle, which has been blessed by the High Priest and has a peculiar mystical significance. Swear to me that while it is in existence you will not remarry.”

The Woman swore and the Man died. At the funeral the Woman stood at the head of the bier, holding a lighted crimson candle till it was wasted entirely away.

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The Blotted Escutcheon and the Soiled Ermine

A Blotted Escutcheon, rising to a question of privilege, said:

"Mr. Speaker, I wish to hurl back an allegation and explain that the spots upon me are the natural markings of one who is a direct descendant of the sun and a spotted fawn. They come of no accident of character, but inhere in the divine order and constitution of things."

When the Blotted Escutcheon had resumed his seat a Soiled Ermine rose and said:

"Mr. Speaker, I have heard with profound attention and entire approval the explanation of the honourable member, and wish to offer a few remarks on my own behalf. I, too, have been foully calumniated by our ancient enemy, the Infamous Falsehood, and I wish to point out that I am made of the fur of the *Mustela maculata*, which is dirty from birth."

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The Ingenious Patriot

Having obtained an audience of the King an Ingenious Patriot pulled a paper from his pocket, saying:

"May it please your Majesty, I have here a formula for constructing armour-plating which no gun can pierce. If these plates are adopted in the Royal Navy our warships will be invulnerable, and therefore invincible. Here, also, are reports of your Majesty's Ministers, attesting the value of the invention. I will part with my right in it for a million tumtums."

After examining the papers, the King put them away and promised him an order on the Lord High Treasurer of the Extortion Department for a million tumtums.

"And here," said the Ingenious Patriot, pulling another paper from another pocket, "are the working plans of a gun that I have invented, which will pierce that armour. Your Majesty's Royal Brother, the Emperor of Bang, is anxious to purchase it, but loyalty to your Majesty's throne and person constrains me to offer it first to your Majesty. The price is one million tumtums."

Having received the promise of another check, he thrust his hand into still another pocket, remarking:

"The price of the irresistible gun would have been much greater, your Majesty, but for the fact that its missiles can be so effectively averted by my peculiar method of treating the armour plates with a new—"

The King signed to the Great Head Factotum to approach.

"Search this man," he said, "and report how many pockets he has."

"Forty-three, Sire," said the Great Head Factotum, completing the scrutiny.

"May it please your Majesty," cried the Ingenious Patriot, in terror, "one of them contains tobacco."

"Hold him up by the ankles and shake him," said the King; "then give him a check for forty-two million tumtums and put him to death. Let a decree issue declaring ingenuity a capital offence."

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Two Kings

The King of Madagao, being engaged in a dispute with the King of Bornegascar, wrote him as follows: “Before proceeding further in this matter I demand the recall of your Minister from my capital.”

Greatly enraged by this impossible demand, the King of Bornegascar replied: “I shall not recall my Minister. Moreover, if you do not immediately retract your demand I shall withdraw him!”

This threat so terrified the King of Madagao that in hastening to comply he fell over his own feet, breaking the Third Commandment.

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An Officer and a Thug

A Chief of Police who had seen an Officer beating a Thug was very indignant, and said he must not do so any more on pain of dismissal.

"Don't be too hard on me," said the Officer, smiling; "I was beating him with a stuffed club."

"Nevertheless," persisted the Chief of Police, "it was a liberty that must have been very disagreeable, though it may not have hurt. Please do not repeat it."

"But," said the Officer, still smiling, "it was a stuffed Thug."

In attempting to express his gratification, the Chief of Police thrust out his right hand with such violence that his skin was ruptured at the arm-pit and a stream of sawdust poured from the wound. He was a stuffed Chief of Police.

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The Conscientious Official

While a Division Superintendent of a railway was attending closely to his business of placing obstructions on the track and tampering with the switches he received word that the President of the road was about to discharge him for incompetency.

“Good Heavens!” he cried; “there are more accidents on my division than on all the rest of the line.”

“The President is very particular,” said the Man who brought him the news; “he thinks the same loss of life might be effected with less damage to the company’s property.”

“Does he expect me to shoot passengers through the car windows?” exclaimed the indignant official, spiking a loose tie across the rails. “Does he take me for an assassin?”

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How Leisure Came

A Man to Whom Time Was Money, and who was bolting his breakfast in order to catch a train, had leaned his newspaper against the sugar-bowl and was reading as he ate. In his haste and abstraction he stuck a pickle-fork into his right eye, and on removing the fork the eye came with it. In buying spectacles the needless outlay for the right lens soon reduced him to poverty, and the Man to Whom Time Was Money had to sustain life by fishing from the end of a wharf.

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The Moral Sentiment

A Pugilist met the Moral Sentiment of the Community, who was carrying a hat-box. “What have you in the hat-box, my friend?” inquired the Pugilist.

“A new frown,” was the answer. “I am bringing it from the frownery — the one over there with the gilded steeple.”

“And what are you going to do with the nice new frown?” the Pugilist asked.

“Put down pugilism — if I have to wear it night and day,” said the Moral Sentiment of the Community, sternly.

“That’s right,” said the Pugilist, “that is right, my good friend; if pugilism had been put down yesterday, I wouldn’t have this kind of Nose to-day. I had a rattling hot fight last evening with—”

“Is that so?” cried the Moral Sentiment of the Community, with sudden animation. “Which licked? Sit down here on the hat-box and tell me all about it!”

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The Politicians

An Old Politician and a Young Politician were travelling through a beautiful country, by the dusty highway which leads to the City of Prosperous Obscurity. Lured by the flowers and the shade and charmed by the songs of birds which invited to woodland paths and green fields, his imagination fired by glimpses of golden domes and glittering palaces in the distance on either hand, the Young Politician said:

“Let us, I beseech thee, turn aside from this comfortless road leading, thou knowest whither, but not I. Let us turn our backs upon duty and abandon ourselves to the delights and advantages which beckon from every grove and call to us from every shining hill. Let us, if so thou wilt, follow this beautiful path, which, as thou seest, hath a guide-board saying, ‘Turn in here all ye who seek the Palace of Political Distinction.’”

“It is a beautiful path, my son,” said the Old Politician, without either slackening his pace or turning his head, “and it leadeth among pleasant scenes. But the search for the Palace of Political Distinction is beset with one mighty peril.”

“What is that?” said the Young Politician.

“The peril of finding it,” the Old Politician replied, pushing on.

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The Thoughtful Warden

The Warden of a Penitentiary was one day putting locks on the doors of all the cells when a mechanic said to him: “Those locks can all be opened from the inside — you are very imprudent.”

The Warden did not look up from his work, but said: “If that is called imprudence, I wonder what would be called a thoughtful provision against the vicissitudes of fortune.”

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The Treasury and the Arms

A Public Treasury, feeling Two Arms lifting out its contents, exclaimed: “Mr. Shareman, I move for a division.”

“You seem to know something about parliamentary forms of speech,” said the Two Arms.

“Yes,” replied the Public Treasury, “I am familiar with the hauls of legislation.”

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The Christian Serpent

A Rattlesnake came home to his brood and said: “My children, gather about and receive your father’s last blessing, and see how a Christian dies.”

“What ails you, Father?” asked the Small Snakes.

“I have been bitten by the editor of a partisan journal,” was the reply, accompanied by the ominous death-rattle.

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The Broom of the Temple

The city of Gakwak being about to lose its character of capital of the province of Ukwuk, the Wampog issued a proclamation convening all the male residents in council in the Temple of Ul to devise means of defence. The first speaker thought the best policy would be to offer a fried jackass to the gods. The second suggested a public procession, headed by the Wampog himself, bearing the Holy Poker on a cushion of cloth-of-brass. Another thought that a scarlet mole should be buried alive in the public park and a suitable incantation chanted over the remains. The advice of the fourth was that the columns of the capitol be rubbed with oil of dog by a person having a moustache on the calf of his leg. When all the others had spoken an Aged Man rose and said:

"High and mighty Wampog and fellow-citizens, I have listened attentively to all the plans proposed. All seem wise, and I do not suffer myself to doubt that any one of them would be efficacious. Nevertheless, I cannot help thinking that if we would put an improved breed of polliwogs in our drinking water, construct shallower roadways, groom the street cows, offer the stranger within our gates a free choice between the poniard and the potion, and relinquish our private system of morals, the other measures of public safety would be needless."

The Aged Man was about to speak further, but the meeting informally adjourned in order to sweep the floor of the temple — for the men of Gakwak are the tidiest housewives in all that province. The last speaker was the broom.

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The Critics

While bathing, Antinous was seen by Minerva, who was so enamoured of his beauty that, all armed as she happened to be, she descended from Olympus to woo him; but, unluckily displaying her shield, with the head of Medusa on it, she had the unhappiness to see the beautiful mortal turn to stone from catching a glimpse of it. She straightway ascended to ask Jove to restore him; but before this could be done a Sculptor and a Critic passed that way and espied him.

“This is a very bad Apollo,” said the Sculptor: “the chest is too narrow, and one arm is at least a half-inch shorter than the other. The attitude is unnatural, and I may say impossible. Ah! my friend, you should see my statue of Antinous.”

“In my judgment, the figure,” said the Critic, “is tolerably good, though rather Etrurian, but the expression of the face is decidedly Tuscan, and therefore false to nature. By the way, have you read my work on ‘The Fallaciousness of the Aspectual in Art’?”

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The Foolish Woman

A Married Woman, whose lover was about to reform by running away, procured a pistol and shot him dead.

"Why did you do that, Madam?" inquired a Policeman, sauntering by.

"Because," replied the Married Woman, "he was a wicked man, and had purchased a ticket to Chicago."

"My sister," said an adjacent Man of God, solemnly, "you cannot stop the wicked from going to Chicago by killing them."

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Father and Son

“My boy,” said an aged Father to his fiery and disobedient Son, “a hot temper is the soil of remorse. Promise me that when next you are angry you will count one hundred before you move or speak.”

No sooner had the Son promised than he received a stinging blow from the paternal walking-stick, and by the time he had counted to seventy-five had the unhappiness to see the old man jump into a waiting cab and whirl away.

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The Discontented Malefactor

A Judge having sentenced a Malefactor to the penitentiary was proceeding to point out to him the disadvantages of crime and the profit of reformation.

“Your Honour,” said the Malefactor, interrupting, “would you be kind enough to alter my punishment to ten years in the penitentiary and nothing else?”

“Why,” said the Judge, surprised, “I have given you only three years!”

“Yes, I know,” assented the Malefactor—”three years’ imprisonment and the preaching. If you please, I should like to commute the preaching.”

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A Call to Quit

Seeing that his audiences were becoming smaller every Sunday, a Minister of the Gospel broke off in the midst of a sermon, descended the pulpit stairs, and walked on his hands down the central aisle of the church. He then remounted his feet, ascended to the pulpit, and resumed his discourse, making no allusion to the incident.

"Now," said he to himself, as he went home, "I shall have, henceforth, a large attendance and no snoring."

But on the following Friday he was waited upon by the Pillars of the Church, who informed him that in order to be in harmony with the New Theology and get full advantage of modern methods of Gospel interpretation they had deemed it advisable to make a change. They had therefore sent a call to Brother Jowjeetum–Fallal, the World–Renowned Hindoo Human Pin–Wheel, then holding forth in Hoopitup's circus. They were happy to say that the reverend gentleman had been moved by the Spirit to accept the call, and on the ensuing Sabbath would break the bread of life for the brethren or break his neck in the attempt.

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The Man and the Lightning

A Man Running for Office was overtaken by Lightning.

"You see," said the Lightning, as it crept past him inch by inch, "I can travel considerably faster than you."

"Yes," the Man Running for Office replied, "but think how much longer I keep going!"

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The Lassoed Bear

A Hunter who had lassoed a Bear was trying to disengage himself from the rope, but the slip-knot about his wrist would not yield, for the Bear was all the time pulling in the slack with his paws. In the midst of his trouble the Hunter saw a Showman passing by, and managed to attract his attention.

"What will you give me," he said, "for my Bear?"

"It will be some five or ten minutes," said the Showman, "before I shall want a fresh Bear, and it looks to me as if prices would fall during that time. I think I'll wait and watch the market."

"The price of this animal," the Hunter replied, "is down to bed-rock; you can have him for nothing a pound, spot cash, and I'll throw in the next one that I lasso. But the purchaser must remove the goods from the premises forthwith, to make room for three man-eating tigers, a cat-headed gorilla, and an armful of rattlesnakes."

But the Showman passed on, in maiden meditation, fancy free, and being joined soon afterward by the Bear, who was absently picking his teeth, it was inferred that they were not unacquainted.

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The Ineffective Rooter

A Drunken Man was lying in the road with a bleeding nose, upon which he had fallen, when a Pig passed that way.

“You wallow fairly well,” said the Pig, “but, my fine fellow, you have much to learn about rooting.”

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A Protagonist of Silver

Some Financiers who were whetting their tongues on their teeth because the Government had "struck down" silver, and were about to "inaugurate" a season of sweatshed, were addressed as follows by a Member of their honourable and warlike body:

"Comrades of the thunder and companions of death, I cannot but regard it as singularly fortunate that we who by conviction and sympathy are designated by nature as the champions of that fairest of her products, the white metal, should also, by a happy chance, be engaged mostly in the business of mining it. Nothing could be more appropriate than that those who from unselfish motives and elevated sentiments are doing battle for the people's rights and interests, should themselves be the chief beneficiaries of success. Therefore, O children of the earthquake and the storm, let us stand shoulder to shoulder, heart to heart, and pocket to pocket!"

This speech so pleased the other Members of the convention that, actuated by a magnanimous impulse, they sprang to their feet and left the hall. It was the first time they had ever been known to leave anything having value.

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The Holy Deacon

An Itinerant Preacher who had wrought hard in the moral vineyard for several hours whispered to a Holy Deacon of the local church: “Brother, these people know you, and your active support will bear fruit abundantly. Please pass the plate for me, and you shall have one fourth.”

The Holy Deacon did so, and putting the money into his pocket waited till the congregation was dismissed and said goodnight.

“But the money, brother, the money that you collected!” said the Itinerant Preacher.

“Nothing is coming to you,” was the reply; “the Adversary has hardened their hearts, and one fourth is all they gave.”

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A Hasty Settlement

“Your Honour,” said an Attorney, rising, “what is the present status of this case — as far as it has gone?”

“I have given a judgment for the residuary legatee under the will,” said the Court, “put the costs upon the contestants, decided all questions relating to fees and other charges; and, in short, the estate in litigation has been settled, with all controversies, disputes, misunderstandings, and differences of opinion thereunto appertaining.”

“Ah, yes, I see,” said the Attorney, thoughtfully, “we are making progress — we are getting on famously.”

“Progress?” echoed the Judge—”progress? Why, sir, the matter is concluded!”

“Exactly, exactly; it had to be concluded in order to give relevancy to the motion that I am about to make. Your Honour, I move that the judgment of the Court be set aside and the case reopened.”

“Upon what ground, sir?” the Judge asked in surprise.

“Upon the ground,” said the Attorney, “that after paying all fees and expenses of litigation and all charges against the estate there will still be something left.”

“There may have been an error,” said His Honour, thoughtfully—”the Court may have underestimated the value of the estate. The motion is taken under advisement.”

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The Wooden Guns

An Artillery Regiment of a State Militia applied to the Governor for wooden guns to practise with.

“Those,” they explained, “will be cheaper than real ones.”

“It shall not be said that I sacrificed efficiency to economy,” said the Governor. “You shall have real guns.”

“Thank you, thank you,” cried the warriors, effusively. “We will take good care of them, and in the event of war return them to the arsenal.”

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The Reform School Board

The members of the School Board in Doosnoswair being suspected of appointing female teachers for an improper consideration, the people elected a Board composed wholly of women. In a few years the scandal was at an end; there were no female teachers in the Department.

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The Poet’s Doom

An Object was walking along the King’s highway wrapped in meditation and with little else on, when he suddenly found himself at the gates of a strange city. On applying for admittance, he was arrested as a necessitator of ordinances, and taken before the King.

“Who are you,” said the King, “and what is your business in life?”

“Snouter the Sneak,” replied the Object, with ready invention; “pick-pocket.”

The King was about to command him to be released when the Prime Minister suggested that the prisoner’s fingers be examined. They were found greatly flattened and calloused at the ends.

“Ha!” cried the King; “I told you so! — he is addicted to counting syllables. This is a poet. Turn him over to the Lord High Dissuader from the Head Habit.”

“My liege,” said the Inventor-in-Ordinary of Ingenious Penalties, “I venture to suggest a keener affliction.

“Name it,” the King said.

“Let him retain that head!”

It was so ordered.

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The Noser and the Note

The Head Rifler of an insolvent bank, learning that it was about to be visited by the official Noser into Things, placed his own personal note for a large amount among its resources, and, gaily touching his guitar, awaited the inspection. When the Noser came to the note he asked, “What’s this?”

“That,” said the Assistant Pocketer of Deposits, “is one of our liabilities.”

“A liability?” exclaimed the Noser. “Nay, nay, an asset. That is what you mean, doubtless.”

“Therein you err,” the Pocketer explained; “that note was written in the bank with our own pen, ink, and paper, and we have not paid a stationery bill for six months.”

“Ah, I see,” the Noser said, thoughtfully; “it is a liability. May I ask how you expect to meet it?”

“With fortitude, please God,” answered the Assistant Pocketer, his eyes to Heaven raising—”with fortitude and a firm reliance on the laxity of the law.”

“Enough, enough,” exclaimed the faithful servant of the State, choking with emotion; “here is a certificate of solvency.”

“And here is a bottle of ink,” the grateful financier said, slipping it into the other’s pocket; “it is all that we have.”

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The Cat and the King

A Cat was looking at a King, as permitted by the proverb.

“Well,” said the monarch, observing her inspection of the royal person, “how do you like me?”

“I can imagine a King,” said the Cat, “whom I should like better.”

“For example?”

“The King of the Mice.”

The sovereign was so pleased with the wit of the reply that he gave her permission to scratch his Prime Minister’s eyes out.

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The Literary Astronomer

The Director of an Observatory, who, with a thirty-six-inch refractor, had discovered the moon, hastened to an Editor, with a four-column account of the event.

“How much?” said the Editor, sententiously, without looking up from his essay on the circularity of the political horizon.

“One hundred and sixty dollars,” replied the man who had discovered the moon.

“Not half enough,” was the Editor’s comment.

“Generous man!” cried the Astronomer, glowing with warm and elevated sentiments, “pay me, then, what you will.”

“Great and good friend,” said the Editor, blandly, looking up from his work, “we are far asunder, it seems. The paying is to be done by you.”

The Director of the Observatory gathered up the manuscript and went away, explaining that it needed correction; he had neglected to dot an m.

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The Lion and the Rattlesnake

A Man having found a Lion in his path undertook to subdue him by the power of the human eye; and near by was a Rattlesnake engaged in fascinating a small bird.

“How are you getting on, brother?” the Man called out to the other reptile, without removing his eyes from those of the Lion.

“Admirably,” replied the serpent. “My success is assured; my victim draws nearer and nearer in spite of her efforts.”

“And mine,” said the Man, “draws nearer and nearer in spite of mine. Are you sure it is all right?”

“If you don’t think so,” the reptile replied as well as he then could, with his mouth full of bird, “you better give it up.”

A half-hour later, the Lion, thoughtfully picking his teeth with his claws, told the Rattlesnake that he had never in all his varied experience in being subdued, seen a subduer try so earnestly to give it up. “But,” he added, with a wide, significant smile, “I looked him into countenance.”

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The Man with No Enemies

An Inoffensive Person walking in a public place was assaulted by a Stranger with a Club, and severely beaten.

When the Stranger with a Club was brought to trial, the complainant said to the Judge: “I do not know why I was assaulted; I have not an enemy in the world.”

“That,” said the defendant, “is why I struck him.”

“Let the prisoner be discharged,” said the Judge; “a man who has no enemies has no friends. The courts are not for such.”

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The Alderman and the Raccoon

"I see quite a number of rings on your tail," said an Alderman to a Raccoon that he met in a zoological garden.

"Yes," replied the Raccoon, "and I hear quite a number of tales on your ring."

The Alderman, being of a sensitive, retiring disposition, shrank from further comparison, and, strolling to another part of the garden, stole the camel.

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The Flying–Machine

An Ingenious Man who had built a flying-machine invited a great concourse of people to see it go up. At the appointed moment, everything being ready, he boarded the car and turned on the power. The machine immediately broke through the massive substructure upon which it was builded, and sank out of sight into the earth, the aeronaut springing out barely in time to save himself.

“Well,” said he, “I have done enough to demonstrate the correctness of my details. The defects,” he added, with a look at the ruined brick-work, “are merely basic and fundamental.”

Upon this assurance the people came forward with subscriptions to build a second machine.

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The Angel's Tear

An Unworthy Man who had laughed at the woes of a Woman whom he loved, was bewailing his indiscretion in sack-cloth-of-gold and ashes-of-roses, when the Angel of Compassion looked down upon him, saying:

"Poor mortal! — how unblest not to know the wickedness of laughing at another's misfortune!"

So saying, he let fall a great tear, which, encountering in its descent a current of cold air, was congealed into a hail-stone. This struck the Unworthy Man on the head and set him rubbing that bruised organ vigorously with one hand while vainly attempting to expand an umbrella with the other.

Thereat the Angel of Compassion did most shamelessly and wickedly laugh.

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The City of Political Distinction

Jamrach the Rich, being anxious to reach the City of Political Distinction before nightfall, arrived at a fork of the road and was undecided which branch to follow; so he consulted a Wise–Looking Person who sat by the wayside.

“Take *that* road,” said the Wise–Looking Person, pointing it out; “it is known as the Political Highway.”

“Thank you,” said Jamrach, and was about to proceed.

“About how much do you thank me?” was the reply. “Do you suppose I am here for my health?”

As Jamrach had not become rich by stupidity, he handed something to his guide and hastened on, and soon came to a toll-gate kept by a Benevolent Gentleman, to whom he gave something, and was suffered to pass. A little farther along he came to a bridge across an imaginary stream, where a Civil Engineer (who had built the bridge) demanded something for interest on his investment, and it was forthcoming. It was growing late when Jamrach came to the margin of what appeared to be a lake of black ink, and there the road terminated. Seeing a Ferryman in his boat he paid something for his passage and was about to embark.

“No,” said the Ferryman. “Put your neck in this noose, and I will tow you over. It is the only way,” he added, seeing that the passenger was about to complain of the accommodations.

In due time he was dragged across, half strangled, and dreadfully beslubbered by the feculent waters. “There,” said the Ferryman, hauling him ashore and disengaging him, “you are now in the City of Political Distinction. It has fifty millions of inhabitants, and as the colour of the Filthy Pool does not wash off, they all look exactly alike.”

“Alas!” exclaimed Jamrach, weeping and bewailing the loss of all his possessions, paid out in tips and tolls; “I will go back with you.”

“I don’t think you will,”, said the Ferryman, pushing off; “this city is situated on the Island of the Unreturning.”

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The Party Over There

A Man in a Hurry, whose watch was at his lawyer’s, asked a Grave Person the time of day.

“I heard you ask that Party Over There the same question,” said the Grave Person. “What answer did he give you?”

“He said it was about three o’clock,” replied the Man in a Hurry; “but he did not look at his watch, and as the sun is nearly down, I think it is later.”

“The fact that the sun is nearly down,” the Grave Person said, “is immaterial, but the fact that he did not consult his timepiece and make answer after due deliberation and consideration is fatal. The answer given,” continued the Grave Person, consulting his own timepiece, “is of no effect, invalid, and absurd.”

“What, then,” said the Man in a Hurry, eagerly, “is the time of day?”

“The question is remanded to the Party Over There for a new answer,” replied the Grave Person, returning his watch to his pocket and moving away with great dignity.

He was a Judge of an Appellate Court.

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The Poetess of Reform

One pleasant day in the latter part of eternity, as the Shades of all the great writers were reposing upon beds of asphodel and moly in the Elysian fields, each happy in hearing from the lips of the others nothing but copious quotation from his own works (for so Jove had kindly bedeviled their ears), there came in among them with triumphant mien a Shade whom none knew. She (for the newcomer showed such evidences of sex as cropped hair and a manly stride) took a seat in their midst, and smiling a superior smile explained:

"After centuries of oppression I have wrested my rights from the grasp of the jealous gods. On earth I was the Poetess of Reform, and sang to inattentive ears. Now for an eternity of honour and glory."

But it was not to be so, and soon she was the unhappiest of mortals, vainly desirous to wander again in gloom by the infernal lakes. For Jove had not bedeviled her ears, and she heard from the lips of each blessed Shade an incessant flow of quotation from his own works. Moreover, she was denied the happiness of repeating her poems. She could not recall a line of them, for Jove had decreed that the memory of them abide in Pluto's painful domain, as a part of the apparatus.

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The Unchanged Diplomatist

The republic of Madagonia had been long and well represented at the court of the King of Patagascar by an officer called a Dazie, but one day the Madagonian Parliament conferred upon him the superior rank of Dandee. The next day after being apprised of his new dignity he hastened to inform the King of Patagascar.

“Ah, yes, I understand,” said the King; “you have been promoted and given increased pay and allowances. There was an appropriation?”

“Yes, your Majesty.”

“And you have now two heads, have you not?”

“Oh, no, your Majesty — only one, I assure you.”

“Indeed? And how many legs and arms?”

“Two of each, Sire — only two of each.”

“And only one body?”

“Just a single body, as you perceive.”

Thoughtfully removing his crown and scratching the royal head, the monarch was silent a moment, and then he said: “I fancy that appropriation has been misapplied. You seem to be about the same kind of idiot that you were before.”

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An Invitation

A Pious Person who had overcharged his paunch with dead bird by way of attesting his gratitude for escaping the many calamities which Heaven had sent upon others, fell asleep at table and dreamed. He thought he lived in a country where turkeys were the ruling class, and every year they held a feast to manifest their sense of Heaven's goodness in sparing their lives to kill them later. One day, about a week before one of these feasts, he met the Supreme Gobbler, who said:

"You will please get yourself into good condition for the Thanksgiving dinner."

"Yes, your Excellency," replied the Pious Person, delighted, "I shall come hungry, I assure you. It is no small privilege to dine with your Excellency."

The Supreme Gobbler eyed him for a moment in silence; then he said:

"As one of the lower domestic animals, you cannot be expected to know much, but you might know something. Since you do not, you will permit me to point out that being asked to dinner is one thing; being asked to dine is another and a different thing."

With this significant remark the Supreme Gobbler left him, and thenceforward the Pious Person dreamed of himself as white meat and dark until rudely awakened by decapitation.

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The Ashes of Madame Blavatsky

The two brightest lights of Theosophy being in the same place at once in company with the Ashes of Madame Blavatsky, an Inquiring Soul thought the time propitious to learn something worth while. So he sat at the feet of one awhile, and then he sat awhile at the feet of the other, and at last he applied his ear to the keyhole of the casket containing the Ashes of Madame Blavatsky. When the Inquiring Soul had completed his course of instruction he declared himself the Ahkoond of Swat, fell into the baleful habit of standing on his head, and swore that the mother who bore him was a pragmatic paralogism. Wherefore he was held in high reverence, and when the two other gentlemen were hanged for lying the Theosophists elected him to the leadership of their Disastral Body, and after a quiet life and an honourable death by the kick of a jackass he was reincarnated as a Yellow Dog. As such he ate the Ashes of Madame Blavatsky, and Theosophy was no more.

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The Opossum of the Future

One day an Opossum who had gone to sleep hanging from the highest branch of a tree by the tail, awoke and saw a large Snake wound about the limb, between him and the trunk of the tree.

"If I hold on," he said to himself, "I shall be swallowed; if I let go I shall break my neck."

But suddenly he bethought himself to dissemble.

"My perfected friend," he said, "my parental instinct recognises in you a noble evidence and illustration of the theory of development. You are the Opossum of the Future, the ultimate Fittest Survivor of our species, the ripe result of progressive prehensility — all tail!"

But the Snake, proud of his ancient eminence in Scriptural history, was strictly orthodox, and did not accept the scientific view.

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The Life–Savers

Seventy–Five Men presented themselves before the President of the Humane Society and demanded the great gold medal for life-saving.

“Why, yes,” said the President; “by diligent effort so many men must have saved a considerable number of lives. How many did you save?”

“Seventy-five, sir,” replied their Spokesman.

“Ah, yes, that is one each — very good work — very good work, indeed,” the President said. “You shall not only have the Society’s great gold medal, but its recommendation for employment at the various life-boat stations along the coast. But how did you save so many lives?”

The Spokesman of the Men replied:

“We are officers of the law, and have just returned from the pursuit of two murderous outlaws.”

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The Australian Grasshopper

A Distinguished Naturalist was travelling in Australia, when he saw a Kangaroo in session and flung a stone at it. The Kangaroo immediately adjourned, tracing against the sunset sky a parabolic curve spanning seven provinces, and evanished below the horizon. The Distinguished Naturalist looked interested, but said nothing for an hour; then he said to his native Guide:

"You have pretty wide meadows here, I suppose?"

"No, not very wide," the Guide answered; "about the same as in England and America."

After another long silence the Distinguished Naturalist said:

"The hay which we shall purchase for our horses this evening — I shall expect to find the stalks about fifty feet long. Am I right?"

"Why, no," said the Guide; "a foot or two is about the usual length of our hay. What can you be thinking of?"

The Distinguished Naturalist made no immediate reply, but later, as in the shades of night they journeyed through the desolate vastness of the Great Lone Land, he broke the silence:

"I was thinking," he said, "of the uncommon magnitude of that grasshopper."

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The Pavior

An Author saw a Labourer hammering stones into the pavement of a street, and approaching him said:

"My friend, you seem weary. Ambition is a hard taskmaster."

"I'm working for Mr. Jones, sir," the Labourer replied.

"Well, cheer up," the Author resumed; "fame comes at the most unexpected times. To-day you are poor, obscure, and disheartened, and to-morrow the world may be ringing with your name."

"What are you giving me?" the Labourer said. "Cannot an honest pavior perform his work in peace, and get his money for it, and his living by it, without others talking rot about ambition and hopes of fame?"

"Cannot an honest writer?" said the Author.

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The Tried Assassin

An Assassin being put upon trial in a New England court, his Counsel rose and said: “Your Honour, I move for a discharge on the ground of ‘once in jeopardy’: my client has been already tried for that murder and acquitted.”

“In what court?” asked the Judge.

“In the Superior Court of San Francisco,” the Counsel replied.

“Let the trial proceed — your motion is denied,” said the Judge. “An Assassin is not in jeopardy when tried in California.”

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The Bumbo of Jiam

The Pahdour of Patagascar and the Gookul of Madagonia were disputing about an island which both claimed. Finally, at the suggestion of the International League of Cannon Founders, which had important branches in both countries, they decided to refer their claims to the Bumbo of Jiam, and abide by his judgment. In settling the preliminaries of the arbitration they had, however, the misfortune to disagree, and appealed to arms. At the end of a long and disastrous war, when both sides were exhausted and bankrupt, the Bumbo of Jiam intervened in the interest of peace.

“My great and good friends,” he said to his brother sovereigns, “it will be advantageous to you to learn that some questions are more complex and perilous than others, presenting a greater number of points upon which it is possible to differ. For four generations your royal predecessors disputed about possession of that island, without falling out. Beware, oh, beware the perils of international arbitration! — against which I feel it my duty to protect you henceforth.”

So saying, he annexed both countries, and after a long, peaceful, and happy reign was poisoned by his Prime Minister.

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The Two Poets

Two Poets were quarrelling for the Apple of Discord and the Bone of Contention, for they were very hungry.

"My sons," said Apollo, "I will part the prizes between you. You," he said to the First Poet, "excel in Art — take the Apple. And you," he said to the Second Poet, "in Imagination — take the Bone."

"To Art the best prize!" said the First Poet, triumphantly, and endeavouring to devour his award broke all his teeth. The Apple was a work of Art.

"That shows our Master's contempt for mere Art," said the Second Poet, grinning.

Thereupon he attempted to gnaw his Bone, but his teeth passed through it without resistance. It was an imaginary Bone.

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The Thistles upon the Grave

A Mind Reader made a wager that he would be buried alive and remain so for six months, then be dug up alive. In order to secure the grave against secret disturbance, it was sown with thistles. At the end of three months, the Mind Reader lost his money. He had come up to eat the thistles.

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The Shadow of the Leader

A Political Leader was walking out one sunny day, when he observed his Shadow leaving him and walking rapidly away.

“Come back here, you scoundrel,” he cried.

“If I had been a scoundrel,” answered the Shadow, increasing its speed, “I should not have left you.”

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The Sagacious Rat

A Rat that was about to emerge from his hole caught a glimpse of a Cat waiting for him, and descending to the colony at the bottom of the hole invited a Friend to join him in a visit to a neighbouring corn-bin. “I would have gone alone,” he said, “but could not deny myself the pleasure of such distinguished company.”

“Very well,” said the Friend, “I will go with you. Lead on.”

“Lead?” exclaimed the other. “What! *I* precede so great and illustrious a rat as you? No, indeed — after you, sir, after you.”

Pleased with this great show of deference, the Friend went ahead, and, leaving the hole first, was caught by the Cat, who immediately trotted away with him. The other then went out unmolested.

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The Member and the Soap

A Member of the Kansas Legislature meeting a Cake of Soap was passing it by without recognition, but the Cake of Soap insisted on stopping and shaking hands. Thinking it might possibly be in the enjoyment of the elective franchise, he gave it a cordial and earnest grasp. On letting it go he observed that a portion of it adhered to his fingers, and running to a brook in great alarm he proceeded to wash it off. In doing so he necessarily got some on the other hand, and when he had finished washing, both were so white that he went to bed and sent for a physician.

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Alarm and Pride

“Good–Morning, my friend,” said Alarm to Pride; “how are you this morning?”

“Very tired,” replied Pride, seating himself on a stone by the wayside and mopping his steaming brow. “The politicians are wearing me out by pointing to their dirty records with *me*, when they could as well use a stick.”

Alarm sighed sympathetically, and said:

“It is pretty much the same way here. Instead of using an opera-glass they view the acts of their opponents with *me*!”

As these patient drudges were mingling their tears, they were notified that they must go on duty again, for one of the political parties had nominated a thief and was about to hold a gratification meeting.

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A Causeway

A Rich Woman having returned from abroad disembarked at the foot of Knee~deep Street, and was about to walk to her hotel through the mud.

“Madam,” said a Policeman, “I cannot permit you to do that; you would soil your shoes and stockings.”

“Oh, that is of no importance, really,” replied the Rich Woman, with a cheerful smile.

“But, madam, it is needless; from the wharf to the hotel, as you observe, extends an unbroken line of prostrate newspaper men who crave the honour of having you walk upon them.”

“In that case,” she said, seating herself in a doorway and unlocking her satchel, “I shall have to put on my rubber boots.”

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Two in Trouble

Meeting a fat and patriotic Statesman on his way to Washington to beseech the President for an office, an idle Tramp accosted him and begged twenty~five cents with which to buy a suit of clothes.

“Melancholy wreck,” said the Statesman, “what brought you to this state of degradation? Liquor, I suppose.”

“I am temperate to the verge of absurdity,” replied the Tramp. “My foible was patriotism; I was ruined by the baneful habit of trying to serve my country. What ruined you?”

“Indolence.”

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The Witch's Steed

A Broomstick which had long served a witch as a steed complained of the nature of its employment, which it thought degrading.

"Very well," said the Witch, "I will give you work in which you will be associated with intellect — you will come in contact with brains. I shall present you to a housewife."

"What!" said the Broomstick, "do you consider the hands of a housewife intellectual?"

"I referred," said the Witch, "to the head of her good man."

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The All Dog

A Lion seeing a Poodle fell into laughter at the ridiculous spectacle.

"Who ever saw so small a beast?" he said.

"It is very true," said the Poodle, with austere dignity, "that I am small; but, sir, I beg to observe that I am all dog."

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The Farmer’s Friend

A Great Philanthropist who had thought of himself in connection with the Presidency and had introduced a bill into Congress requiring the Government to loan every voter all the money that he needed, on his personal security, was explaining to a Sunday-school at a railway station how much he had done for the country, when an angel looked down from Heaven and wept.

“For example,” said the Great Philanthropist, watching the teardrops pattering in the dust, “these early rains are of incalculable advantage to the farmer.”

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Physicians Two

A Wicked Old Man finding himself ill sent for a Physician, who prescribed for him and went away. Then the Wicked Old Man sent for another Physician, saying nothing of the first, and an entirely different treatment was ordered. This continued for some weeks, the physicians visiting him on alternate days and treating him for two different disorders, with constantly enlarging doses of medicine and more and more rigorous nursing. But one day they accidently met at his bedside while he slept, and the truth coming out a violent quarrel ensued.

"My good friends," said the patient, awakened by the noise of the dispute, and apprehending the cause of it, "pray be more reasonable. If I could for weeks endure you both, can you not for a little while endure each other? I have been well for ten days, but have remained in bed in the hope of gaining by repose the strength that would justify me in taking your medicines. So far I have touched none of it."

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The Overlooked Factor

A Man that owned a fine Dog, and by a careful selection of its mate had bred a number of animals but a little lower than the angels, fell in love with his washerwoman, married her, and reared a family of dolts.

“Alas!” he exclaimed, contemplating the melancholy result, “had I but chosen a mate for myself with half the care that I did for my Dog I should now be a proud and happy father.”

“I’m not so sure of that,” said the Dog, overhearing the lament. “There’s a difference, certainly, between your whelps and mine, but I venture to flatter myself that it is not due altogether to the mothers. You and I are not entirely alike ourselves.”

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A Racial Parallel

Some White Christians engaged in driving Chinese Heathens out of an American town found a newspaper published in Peking in the Chinese tongue, and compelled one of their victims to translate an editorial. It turned out to be an appeal to the people of the Province of Pang Ki to drive the foreign devils out of the country and burn their dwellings and churches. At this evidence of Mongolian barbarity the White Christians were so greatly incensed that they carried out their original design.

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The Honest Cadi

A Robber who had plundered a Merchant of one thousand pieces of gold was taken before the Cadi, who asked him if he had anything to say why he should not be decapitated.

“Your Honour,” said the Robber, “I could do no otherwise than take the money, for Allah made me that way.”

“Your defence is ingenious and sound,” said the Cadi, “and I must acquit you of criminality. Unfortunately, Allah has made me so that I must also take off your head — unless,” he added, thoughtfully, “you offer me half of the gold; for He made me weak under temptation.”

Thereupon the Robber put five hundred pieces of gold into the Cadi’s hand.

“Good,” said the Cadi. “I shall now remove but one half your head. To show my trust in your discretion I shall leave intact the half you talk with.”

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The Kangaroo and the Zebra

A Kangaroo hopping awkwardly along with some bulky object concealed in her pouch met a Zebra, and desirous of keeping his attention upon himself, said: “Your costume looks as if you might have come out of the penitentiary.”

“Appearances are deceitful,” replied the Zebra, smiling in the consciousness of a more insupportable wit, “or I should have to think that you had come out of the Legislature.”

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A Matter of Method

A Philosopher seeing a Fool beating his Donkey, said:

"Abstain, my son, abstain, I implore. Those who resort to violence shall suffer from violence."

"That," said the Fool, diligently belabouring the animal, "is what I'm trying to teach this beast — which has kicked me."

"Doubtless," said the Philosopher to himself, as he walked away, "the wisdom of fools is no deeper nor truer than ours, but they really do seem to have a more impressive way of imparting it."

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The Man of Principle

During a shower of rain the Keeper of a Zoological garden observed a Man of Principle crouching beneath the belly of the ostrich, which had drawn itself up to its full height to sleep.

“Why, my dear sir,” said the Keeper, “if you fear to get wet, you’d better creep into the pouch of yonder female kangaroo — the *Saltarix mackintosha* — for if that ostrich wakes he will kick you to death in a minute.”

“I can’t help that,” the Man of Principle replied, with that lofty scorn of practical considerations distinguishing his species. “He may kick me to death if he wish, but until he does he shall give me shelter from the storm. He has swallowed my umbrella.”

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The Returned Californian

A Man was hanged by the neck until he was dead.

"Whence do you come?" Saint Peter asked when the Man presented himself at the gate of Heaven.

"From California," replied the applicant.

"Enter, my son, enter; you bring joyous tidings."

When the Man had vanished inside, Saint Peter took his memorandum-tablet and made the following entry:

"February 16, 1893. California occupied by the Christians."

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The Compassionate Physician

A Kind–Hearted Physician sitting at the bedside of a patient afflicted with an incurable and painful disease, heard a noise behind him, and turning saw a cat laughing at the feeble efforts of a wounded mouse to drag itself out of the room.

“You cruel beast!” cried he. “Why don’t you kill it at once, like a lady?”

Rising, he kicked the cat out of the door, and picking up the mouse compassionately put it out of its misery by pulling off its head. Recalled to the bedside by the moans of his patient, the Kind-hearted Physician administered a stimulant, a tonic, and a nutrient, and went away.

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Two of the Damned

Two Blighted Beings, haggard, lachrymose, and detested, met on a blasted heath in the light of a struggling moon.

"I wish you a merry Christmas," said the First Blighted Being, in a voice like that of a singing tomb.

"And I you a happy New Year," responded the Second Blighted Being, with the accent of a penitent accordeon.

They then fell upon each other's neck and wept scalding rills down each other's spine in token of their banishment to the Realm of Ineffable Bosh. For one of these accursed creatures was the First of January, and the other the Twenty-fifth of December.

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The Austere Governor

A Governor visiting a State prison was implored by a Convict to pardon him.

"What are you in for?" asked the Governor.

"I held a high office," the Convict humbly replied, "and sold subordinate appointments."

"Then I decline to interfere," said the Governor, with asperity; "a man who abuses his office by making it serve a private end and purvey a personal advantage is unfit to be free. By the way, Mr. Warden," he added to that official, as the Convict slunk away, "in appointing you to this position, I was given to understand that your friends could make the Shikane county delegation to the next State convention solid for — for the present Administration. Was I rightly informed?"

"You were, sir."

"Very well, then, I will bid you good-day. Please be so good as to appoint my nephew Night Chaplain and Reminder of Mothers and Sisters."

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Religions of Error

Hearing a sound of strife, a Christian in the Orient asked his Dragoman the cause of it.

“The Buddhists are cutting Mohammedan throats,” the Dragoman replied, with oriental composure.

“I did not know,” remarked the Christian, with scientific interest, “that that would make so much noise.”

“The Mohammedans are cutting Buddhist throats, too,” added the Dragoman.

“It is astonishing,” mused the Christian, “how violent and how general are religious animosities. Everywhere in the world the devotees of each local faith abhor the devotees of every other, and abstain from murder only so long as they dare not commit it. And the strangest thing about it is that all religions are erroneous and mischievous excepting mine. Mine, thank God, is true and benign.”

So saying he visibly smugged and went off to telegraph for a brigade of cutthroats to protect Christian interests.

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The Penitent Elector

A Person belonging to the Society for Passing Resolutions of Respect for the Memory of Deceased Members having died received the customary attention.

“Good Heavens!” exclaimed a Sovereign Elector, on hearing the resolutions read, “what a loss to the nation! And to think that I once voted against that angel for Inspector of Gate-latches in Public Squares!”

In remorse the Sovereign Elector deprived himself of political influence by learning to read.

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The Tail of the Sphinx

A Dog of a taciturn disposition said to his Tail: “Whenever I am angry, you rise and bristle; when I am pleased, you wag; when I am alarmed, you tuck yourself in out of danger. You are too mercurial — you disclose all my emotions. My notion is that tails are given to conceal thought. It is my dearest ambition to be as impassive as the Sphinx.”

“My friend, you must recognise the laws and limitations of your being,” replied the Tail, with flexions appropriate to the sentiments uttered, “and try to be great some other way. The Sphinx has one hundred and fifty qualifications for impassiveness which you lack.”

“What are they?” the Dog asked.

“One hundred and forty-nine tons of sand on her tail.”

“And — ?”

“A stone tail.”

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A Prophet of Evil

An Undertaker Who Was a Member of a Trust saw a Man Leaning on a Spade, and asked him why he was not at work.

“Because,” said the Man Leaning on a Spade, “I belong to the Gravediggers’ National Extortion Society, and we have decided to limit the production of graves and get more money for the reduced output. We have a corner in graves and propose to work it to the best advantage.”

“My friend,” said the Undertaker Who Was a Member of a Trust, “this is a most hateful and injurious scheme. If people cannot be assured of graves, I fear they will no longer die, and the best interests of civilisation will wither like a frosted leaf.”

And blowing his eyes upon his handkerchief, he walked away lamenting.

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The Crew of the Life-boat

The Gallant Crew at a life-saving station were about to launch their life~boat for a spin along the coast when they discovered, but a little distance away, a capsized vessel with a dozen men clinging to her keel.

“We are fortunate,” said the Gallant Crew, “to have seen that in time. Our fate might have been the same as theirs.”

So they hauled the life-boat back into its house, and were spared to the service of their country.

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A Treaty of Peace

Through massacres of each other’s citizens China and the United States had been four times plunged into devastating wars, when, in the year 1994, arose a Philosopher in Madagascar, who laid before the Governments of the two distracted countries the following *modus vivendi*:

“Massacres are to be sternly forbidden as heretofore; but any citizen or subject of either country disobeying the injunction is to detach the scalps of all persons massacred and deposit them with a local officer designated to receive and preserve them and sworn to keep and render a true account thereof. At the conclusion of each massacre in either country, or as soon thereafter as practicable, or at stated regular periods, as may be provided by treaty, there shall be an exchange of scalps between the two Governments, scalp for scalp, without regard to sex or age; the Government having the greatest number is to be taxed on the excess at the rate of $1000 a scalp, and the other Government credited with the amount. Once in every decade there shall be a general settlement, when the balance due shall be paid to the creditor nation in Mexican dollars.”

The plan was adopted, the necessary treaty made, with legislation to carry out its provisions; the Madagascarene Philosopher took his seat in the Temple of Immortality, and Peace spread her white wings over the two nations, to the unspeakable defiling of her plumage.

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The Nightside of Character

A Gifted and Honourable Editor, who by practice of his profession had acquired wealth and distinction, applied to an Old Friend for the hand of his daughter in marriage.

“With all my heart, and God bless you!” said the Old Friend, grasping him by both hands. “It is a greater honour than I had dared to hope for.”

“I knew what your answer would be,” replied the Gifted and Honourable Editor. “And yet,” he added, with a sly smile, “I feel that I ought to give you as much knowledge of my character as I possess. In this scrap~book is such testimony relating to my shady side, as I have within the past ten years been able to cut from the columns of my competitors in the business of elevating humanity to a higher plane of mind and morals — my ‘loathsome contemporaries.’”

Laying the book on a table, he withdrew in high spirits to make arrangements for the wedding. Three days later he received the scrap~book from a messenger, with a note warning him never again to darken his Old Friend’s door.

“See!” the Gifted and Honourable Editor exclaimed, pointing to that injunction—”I am a painter and grainer!”

And he was led away to the Asylum for the Indiscreet.

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The Faithful Cashier

The Cashier of a bank having defaulted was asked by the Directors what he had done with the money taken.

"I am greatly surprised by such a question," said the Cashier; "it sounds as if you suspected me of selfishness. Gentlemen, I applied that money to the purpose for which I took it; I paid it as an initiation fee and one year's dues in advance to the Treasurer of the Cashiers' Mutual Defence Association."

"What is the object of that organisation?" the Directors inquired.

"When any one of its members is under suspicion," replied the Cashier, "the Association undertakes to clear his character by submitting evidence that he was never a prominent member of any church, nor foremost in Sunday-school work."

Recognising the value to the bank of a spotless reputation for its officers, the President drew his check for the amount of the shortage and the Cashier was restored to favour.

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The Circular Clew

A Detective searching for the murderer of a dead man was accosted by a Clew.

“Follow me,” said the Clew, “and there’s no knowing what you may discover.”

So the Detective followed the Clew a whole year through a thousand sinuosities, and at last found himself in the office of the Morgue.

“There!” said the Clew, pointing to the open register.

The Detective eagerly scanned the page, and found an official statement that the deceased was dead. Thereupon he hastened to Police Headquarters to report progress. The Clew, meanwhile, sauntered among the busy haunts of men, arm in arm with an Ingenious Theory.

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The Devoted Widow

A Widow weeping on her husband’s grave was approached by an Engaging Gentleman who, in a respectful manner, assured her that he had long entertained for her the most tender feelings.

“Wretch!” cried the Widow. “Leave me this instant! Is this a time to talk to me of love?”

“I assure you, madam, that I had not intended to disclose my affection,” the Engaging Gentleman humbly explained, “but the power of your beauty has overcome my discretion.”

“You should see me when I have not been crying,” said the Widow.

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The Hardy Patriots

A Dispenser–Elect of Patronage gave notice through the newspapers that applicants for places would be given none until he should assume the duties of his office.

“You are exposing yourself to a grave danger,” said a Lawyer.

“How so?” the Dispenser–Elect inquired.

“It will be nearly two months,” the Lawyer answered, “before the day that you mention. Few patriots can live so long without eating, and some of the applicants will be compelled to go to work in the meantime. If that kills them, you will be liable to prosecution for murder.”

“You underrate their powers of endurance,” the official replied.

“What!” said the Lawyer, “you think they can stand work?”

“No,” said the other—”hunger.”

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The Humble Peasant

An Office Seeker whom the President had ordered out of Washington was watering the homeward highway with his tears.

“Ah,” he said, “how disastrous is ambition! how unsatisfying its rewards! how terrible its disappointments! Behold yonder peasant tilling his field in peace and contentment! He rises with the lark, passes the day in wholesome toil, and lies down at night to pleasant dreams. In the mad struggle for place and power he has no part; the roar of the strife reaches his ear like the distant murmur of the ocean. Happy, thrice happy man! I will approach him and bask in the sunshine of his humble felicity. Peasant, all hail!”

Leaning upon his rake, the Peasant returned the salutation with a nod, but said nothing.

“My friend,” said the Office Seeker, “you see before you the wreck of an ambitious man — ruined by the pursuit of place and power. This morning when I set out from the national capital—”

“Stranger,” the Peasant interrupted, “if you’re going back there soon maybe you wouldn’t mind using your influence to make me Postmaster at Smith’s Corners.”

The traveller passed on.

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The Various Delegation

The King of Wideout having been offered the sovereignty of Wayoff, sent for the Three Persons who had made the offer, and said to them:

"I am extremely obliged to you, but before accepting so great a responsibility I must ascertain the sentiments of the people of Wayoff."

"Sire," said the Spokesman of the Three Persons, "they stand before you."

"Indeed!" said the King; "are you, then, the people of Wayoff?"

"Yes, your Majesty."

"There are not many of you," the King said, attentively regarding them with the royal eye, "and you are not so very large; I hardly think you are a quorum. Moreover, I never heard of you until you came here; whereas Wayoff is noted for the quality of its pork and contains hogs of distinction. I shall send a Commissioner to ascertain the sentiments of the hogs."

The Three Persons, bowing profoundly, backed out of the presence; but soon afterward they desired another audience, and, on being readmitted, said, through their Spokesman:

"May it please your Majesty, we are the hogs."

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The No Case

A Statesman who had been indicted by an unfeeling Grand Jury was arrested by a Sheriff and thrown into jail. As this was abhorrent to his fine spiritual nature, he sent for the District Attorney and asked that the case against him be dismissed.

"Upon what grounds?" asked the District Attorney.

"Lack of evidence to convict," replied the accused.

"Do you happen to have the lack with you?" the official asked. "I should like to see it."

"With pleasure," said the other; "here it is."

So saying he handed the other a check, which the District Attorney carefully examined, and then pronounced it the most complete absence of both proof and presumption that he had ever seen. He said it would acquit the oldest man in the world.

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A Harmless Visitor

At a meeting of the Golden League of Mystery a Woman was discovered, writing in a note-book. A member directed the attention of the Superb High Chairman to her, and she was asked to explain her presence there, and what she was doing.

“I came in for my own pleasure and instruction,” she said, “and was so struck by the wisdom of the speakers that I could not help making a few notes.”

“Madam,” said the Superb High Chairman, “we have no objection to visitors if they will pledge themselves not to publish anything they hear. Are you — on your honour as a lady, now, madam — are you not connected with some newspaper?”

“Good gracious, no!” cried the Woman, earnestly. “Why, sir, I am an officer of the Women’s Press Association!”

She was permitted to remain, and presented with resolutions of apology.

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The Judge and the Rash Act

A Judge who had for years looked in vain for an opportunity for infamous distinction, but whom no litigant thought worth bribing, sat one day upon the Bench, lamenting his hard lot, and threatening to put an end to his life if business did not improve. Suddenly he found himself confronted by a dreadful figure clad in a shroud, whose pallor and stony eyes smote him with a horrible apprehension.

"Who are you," he faltered, "and why do you come here?"

"I am the Rash Act," was the sepulchral reply; "you may commit me."

"No," the judge said, thoughtfully, "no, that would be quite irregular. I do not sit to-day as a committing magistrate."

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The Prerogative of Might

A Slander travelling rapidly through the land upon its joyous mission was accosted by a Retraction and commanded to halt and be killed.

"Your career of mischief is at an end," said the Retraction, drawing his club, rolling up his sleeves, and spitting on his hands.

"Why should you slay me?" protested the Slander. "Whatever my intentions were, I have been innocuous, for you have dogged my strides and counteracted my influence."

"Dogged your grandmother!" said the Retraction, with contemptuous vulgarity of speech. "In the order of nature it is appointed that we two shall never travel the same road."

"How then," the Slander asked, triumphantly, "have you overtaken me?"

"I have not," replied the Retraction; "we have accidentally met. I came round the world the other way."

But when he tried to execute his fell purpose he found that in the order of nature it was appointed that he himself perish miserably in the encounter.

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An Inflated Ambition

The President of a great Corporation went into a dry-goods shop and saw a placard which read: “If You Don’t See What You Want, Ask For It.”

Approaching the shopkeeper, who had been narrowly observing him as he read the placard, he was about to speak, when the shopkeeper called to a salesman: “John, show this gentleman the world.”

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Rejected Services

A Heavy Operator overtaken by a Reverse of Fortune was bewailing his sudden fall from affluence to indigence.

“Do not weep,” said the Reverse of Fortune. “You need not suffer alone. Name any one of the men who have opposed your schemes, and I will overtake *him*.”

“It is hardly worth while,” said the victim, earnestly. “Not a soul of them has a cent!”

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The Power of the Scalawag

A Forestry Commissioner had just felled a giant tree when, seeing an honest man approaching, he dropped his axe and fled. The next day when he cautiously returned to get his axe, he found the following lines pencilled on the stump: “What nature reared by centuries of toil, A scalawag in half a day can spoil; An equal fate for him may Heaven provide — Damned in the moment of his tallest pride.”

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At Large — One Temper

A Turbulent Person was brought before a Judge to be tried for an assault with intent to commit murder, and it was proved that he had been variously obstreperous without apparent provocation, had affected the peripheries of several luckless fellow-citizens with the trunk of a small tree, and subsequently cleaned out the town. While trying to palliate these misdeeds, the defendant’s Attorney turned suddenly to the Judge, saying:

“Did your Honour ever lose your temper?”

“I fine you twenty-five dollars for contempt of court!” roared the Judge, in wrath. “How dare you mention the loss of my temper in connection with this case?”

After a moment’s silence the Attorney said, meekly:

“I thought my client might perhaps have found it.”

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The Seeker and the Sought

A Politician seeing a fat Turkey which he wanted for dinner, baited a hook with a grain of corn and dragged it before the fowl at the end of a long and almost invisible line. When the Turkey had swallowed the hook, the Politician ran, drawing the creature after him.

"Fellow-citizens," he cried, addressing some turkey-breeders whom he met, "you observe that the man does not seek the bird, but the bird seeks the man. For this unsolicited and unexpected dinner I thank you with all my heart."

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His Fly–Speck Majesty

A Distinguished Advocate of Republican Institutions was seen pickling his shins in the ocean.

"Why don't you come out on dry land?" said the Spectator. "What are you in there for?"

"Sir," replied the Distinguished Advocate of Republican Institutions, "a ship is expected, bearing His Majesty the King of the Fly–Speck Islands, and I wish to be the first to grasp the crowned hand."

"But," said the Spectator, "you said in your famous speech before the Society for the Prevention of the Protrusion of Nail Heads from Plank Sidewalks that Kings were blood-smeared oppressors and hell-bound loafers."

"My dear sir," said the Distinguished Advocate of Republican Institutions, without removing his eyes from the horizon, "you wander away into the strangest irrelevancies! I spoke of Kings in the abstract."

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The Pugilist’s Diet

The Trainer of a Pugilist consulted a Physician regarding the champion’s diet.

“Beef-steaks are too tender,” said the Physician; “have his meat cut from the neck of a bull.”

“I thought the steaks more digestible,” the Trainer explained.

“That is very true,” said the Physician; “but they do not sufficiently exercise the chin.”

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The Old Man and the Pupil

A Beautiful Old Man, meeting a Sunday-school Pupil, laid his hand tenderly upon the lad’s head, saying: “Listen, my son, to the words of the wise and heed the advice of the righteous.”

“All right,” said the Sunday-school Pupil; “go ahead.”

“Oh, I haven’t anything to do with it myself,” said the Beautiful Old Man. “I am only observing one of the customs of the age. I am a pirate.”

And when he had taken his hand from the lad’s head, the latter observed that his hair was full of clotted blood. Then the Beautiful Old Man went his way, instructing other youth.

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The Deceased and his Heirs

A Man died leaving a large estate and many sorrowful relations who claimed it. After some years, when all but one had had judgment given against them, that one was awarded the estate, which he asked his Attorney to have appraised.

“There is nothing to appraise,” said the Attorney, pocketing his last fee.

“Then,” said the Successful Claimant, “what good has all this litigation done me?”

“You have been a good client to me,” the Attorney replied, gathering up his books and papers, “but I must say you betray a surprising ignorance of the purpose of litigation.”

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The Politicians and the Plunder

Several Political Entities were dividing the spoils.

"I will take the management of the prisons," said a Decent Respect for Public Opinion, "and make a radical change."

"And I," said the Blotted Escutcheon, "will retain my present general connection with affairs, while my friend here, the Soiled Ermine, will remain in the Judiciary."

The Political Pot said it would not boil any more unless replenished from the Filthy Pool.

The Cohesive Power of Public Plunder quietly remarked that the two bosses would, he supposed, naturally be his share.

"No," said the Depth of Degradation, "they have already fallen to me."

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The Man and the Wart

A Person with a Wart on His Nose met a Person Similarly Afflicted, and said:

"Let me propose your name for membership in the Imperial Order of Abnormal Proboscidians, of which I am the High Noble Toby and Surreptitious Treasurer. Two months ago I was the only member. One month ago there were two. To-day we number four Emperors of the Abnormal Proboscis in good standing — doubles every four weeks, see? That's geometrical progression — you know how that piles up. In a year and a half every man in California will have a wart on his Nose. Powerful Order! Initiation, five dollars."

"My friend," said the Person Similarly Afflicted, "here are five dollars. Keep my name off your books."

"Thank you kindly," the Man with a Wart on His Nose replied, pocketing the money; "it is just the same to us as if you joined. Good-by."

He went away, but in a little while he was back.

"I quite forgot to mention the monthly dues," he said.

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The Divided Delegation

A Delegation at Washington went to a New President, and said:

"Your Excellency, we are unable to agree upon a Favourite Son to represent us in your Cabinet."

"Then," said the New President, "I shall have to lock you up until you do agree."

So the Delegation was cast into the deepest dungeon beneath the moat, where it maintained a divided mind for many weeks, but finally reconciled its differences and asked to be taken before the New President.

"My child," said he, "nothing is so beautiful as harmony. My Cabinet Selections were all made before our former interview, but you have supplied a noble instance of patriotism in subordinating your personal preferences to the general good. Go now to your beautiful homes and be happy."

It is not recorded that the Delegation was happy.

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A Forfeited Right

The Chief of the Weather Bureau having predicted a fine day, a Thrifty Person hastened to lay in a large stock of umbrellas, which he exposed for sale on the sidewalk; but the weather remained clear, and nobody would buy. Thereupon the Thrifty Person brought an action against the Chief of the Weather Bureau for the cost of the umbrellas.

“Your Honour,” said the defendant’s attorney, when the case was called, “I move that this astonishing action be dismissed. Not only is my client in no way responsible for the loss, but he distinctly foreshadowed the very thing that caused it.”

“That is just it, your Honour,” replied the counsel for the plaintiff; “the defendant by making a correct forecast fooled my client in the only way that he could do so. He has lied so much and so notoriously that he has neither the legal nor moral right to tell the truth.”

Judgment for the plaintiff.

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Revenge

An Insurance Agent was trying to induce a Hard Man to Deal With to take out a policy on his house. After listening to him for an hour, while he painted in vivid colours the extreme danger of fire consuming the house, the Hard Man to Deal With said: “Do you really think it likely that my house will burn down inside the time that policy will run?”

“Certainly,” replied the Insurance Agent; “have I not been trying all this time to convince you that I do?”

“Then,” said the Hard Man to Deal With, “why are you so anxious to have your Company bet me money that it will not?”

The Agent was silent and thoughtful for a moment; then he drew the other apart into an unfrequented place and whispered in his ear: “My friend, I will impart to you a dark secret. Years ago the Company betrayed my sweetheart by promise of marriage. Under an assumed name I have wormed myself into its service for revenge; and as there is a heaven above us, I will have its heart’s blood!”

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An Optimist

Two Frogs in the belly of a snake were considering their altered circumstances.

"This is pretty hard luck," said one.

"Don't jump to conclusions," the other said; "we are out of the wet and provided with board and lodging."

"With lodging, certainly," said the First Frog; "but I don't see the board."

"You are a croaker," the other explained. "We are ourselves the board."

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A Valuable Suggestion

A Big Nation having a quarrel with a Little Nation, resolved to terrify its antagonist by a grand naval demonstration in the latter's principal port. So the Big Nation assembled all its ships of war from all over the world, and was about to send them three hundred and fifty thousand miles to the place of rendezvous, when the President of the Big Nation received the following note from the President of the Little Nation:

"My great and good friend, I hear that you are going to show us your navy, in order to impress us with a sense of your power. How needless the expense! To prove to you that we already know all about it, I inclose herewith a list and description of all the ships you have."

The great and good friend was so struck by the hard sense of the letter that he kept his navy at home, and saved one thousand million dollars. This economy enabled him to buy a satisfactory decision when the cause of the quarrel was submitted to arbitration.

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Two Footpads

Two Footpads sat at their grog in a roadside resort, comparing the evening's adventures.

"I stood up the Chief of Police," said the First Footpad, "and I got away with what he had."

"And I," said the Second Footpad, "stood up the United States District Attorney, and got away with—"

"Good Lord!" interrupted the other in astonishment and admiration—"you got away with what that fellow had?"

"No," the unfortunate narrator explained—"with a small part of what *I* had."

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Equipped for Service

During the Civil War a Patriot was passing through the State of Maryland with a pass from the President to join Grant’s army and see the fighting. Stopping a day at Annapolis, he visited the shop of a well-known optician and ordered seven powerful telescopes, one for every day in the week. In recognition of this munificent patronage of the State’s languishing industries, the Governor commissioned him a colonel.

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The Basking Cyclone

A Negro in a boat, gathering driftwood, saw a sleeping Alligator, and, thinking it was a log, fell to estimating the number of shingles it would make for his new cabin. Having satisfied his mind on that point, he stuck his boat-hook into the beast's back to harvest his good fortune. Thereupon the saurian emerged from his dream and took to the water, greatly to the surprise of the man-and-brother.

"I never befo' seen such a cyclone as dat," he exclaimed as soon as he had recovered his breath. "It done carry away de ruf of my house!"

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At the Pole

After a great expenditure of life and treasure a Daring Explorer had succeeded in reaching the North Pole, when he was approached by a Native Galeut who lived there.

"Good morning," said the Native Galeut. "I'm very glad to see you, but why did you come here?"

"Glory," said the Daring Explorer, curtly.

"Yes, yes, I know," the other persisted; "but of what benefit to man is your discovery? To what truths does it give access which were inaccessible before? — facts, I mean, having a scientific value?"

"I'll be Tom scatted if I know," the great man replied, frankly; "you will have to ask the Scientist of the Expedition."

But the Scientist of the Expedition explained that he had been so engrossed with the care of his instruments and the study of his tables that he had found no time to think of it.

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The Optimist and the Cynic

A Man who had experienced the favours of fortune and was an Optimist, met a man who had experienced an optimist and was a Cynic. So the Cynic turned out of the road to let the Optimist roll by in his gold carriage.

"My son," said the Optimist, stopping the gold carriage, "you look as if you had not a friend in the world."

"I don't know if I have or not," replied the Cynic, "for you have the world."

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The Poet and the Editor

“My dear sir,” said the editor to the man, who had called to see about his poem, “I regret to say that owing to an unfortunate altercation in this office the greater part of your manuscript is illegible; a bottle of ink was upset upon it, blotting out all but the first line — that is to say—”

“‘The autumn leaves were falling, falling.’

“Unluckily, not having read the poem, I was unable to supply the incidents that followed; otherwise we could have given them in our own words. If the news is not stale, and has not already appeared in the other papers, perhaps you will kindly relate what occurred, while I make notes of it.

“‘The autumn leaves were falling, falling,’

“Go on.”

“What!” said the poet, “do you expect me to reproduce the entire poem from memory?”

“Only the substance of it — just the leading facts. We will add whatever is necessary in the way of amplification and embellishment. It will detain you but a moment.

“‘The autumn leaves were falling, falling—’

“Now, then.”

There was a sound of a slow getting up and going away. The chronicler of passing events sat through it, motionless, with suspended pen; and when the movement was complete Poesy was represented in that place by nothing but a warm spot on the wooden chair.

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The Taken Hand

A Successful Man of Business, having occasion to write to a Thief, expressed a wish to see him and shake hands.

"No," replied the Thief, "there are some things which I will not take — among them your hand."

"You must use a little strategy," said a Philosopher to whom the Successful Man of Business had reported the Thief's haughty reply. "Leave your hand out some night, and he will take it."

So one night the Successful Man of Business left his hand out of his neighbour's pocket, and the Thief took it with avidity.

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An Unspeakable Imbecile

A Judge said to a Convicted Assassin:

"Prisoner at the bar, have you anything to say why the death-sentence should not be passed upon you?"

"Will what I say make any difference?" asked the Convicted Assassin.

"I do not see how it can," the Judge answered, reflectively. "No, it will not."

"Then," said the doomed one, "I should just like to remark that you are the most unspeakable old imbecile in seven States and the District of Columbia."

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A Needful War

The people of Madagonia had an antipathy to the people of Novakatka and set upon some sailors of a Novakatkan vessel, killing two and wounding twelve. The King of Madagonia having refused either to apologise or pay, the King of Novakatka made war upon him, saying that it was necessary to show that Novakatkans must not be slaughtered. In the battles which ensued the people of Madagonia slaughtered two thousand Novakatkans and wounded twelve thousand. But the Madagonians were unsuccessful, which so chagrined them that never thereafter in all their land was a Novakatkan secure in property or life.

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The Mine Owner and the Jackass

While the Owner of a Silver Mine was on his way to attend a convention of his species he was accosted by a Jackass, who said: “By an unjust discrimination against quadrupeds I am made ineligible to a seat in your convention; so I am compelled to seek representation through you.”

“It will give me great pleasure, sir,” said the Owner of a Silver Mine, “to serve one so closely allied to me in — in — well, you know,” he added, with a significant gesture of his two hands upward from the sides of his head. “What do you want?”

“Oh, nothing — nothing at all for myself individually,” replied the Donkey; “but his country’s welfare should be a patriot’s supreme care. If Americans are to retain the sacred liberties for which their fathers strove, Congress must declare our independence of European dictation by maintaining the price of mules.”

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The Dog and the Physician

A Dog that had seen a Physician attending the burial of a wealthy patient, said: “When do you expect to dig it up?”

“Why should I dig it up?” the Physician asked.

“When I bury a bone,” said the Dog, “it is with an intention to uncover it later and pick it.”

“The bones that I bury,” said the Physician, “are those that I can no longer pick.”

The Party Manager and the Gentleman

A Party Manager said to a Gentleman whom he saw minding his own business: “How much will you pay for a nomination to office?”

“Nothing,” the Gentleman replied.

“But you will contribute something to the campaign fund to assist in your election, will you not?” asked the Party Manager, winking.

“Oh, no,” said the Gentleman, gravely. “If the people wish me to work for them, they must hire me without solicitation. I am very comfortable without office.”

“But,” urged the Party Manager, “an election is a thing to be desired. It is a high honour to be a servant of the people.”

“If servitude is a high honour,” the Gentleman said, “it would be indecent for me to seek it; and if obtained by my own exertion it would be no honour.”

“Well,” persisted the Party Manager, “you will at least, I hope, indorse the party platform.”

The Gentleman replied: “It is improbable that its authors have accurately expressed my views without consulting me; and if I indorsed their work without approving it I should be a liar.”

“You are a detestable hypocrite and an idiot!” shouted the Party Manager.

“Even your good opinion of my fitness,” replied the Gentleman, “shall not persuade me.”

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The Legislator and the Citizen

An ex-Legislator asked a Most Respectable Citizen for a letter to the Governor recommending him for appointment as Commissioner of Shrimps and Crabs.

"Sir," said the Most Respectable Citizen, austerely, "were you not once in the State Senate?"

"Not so bad as that, sir, I assure you," was the reply. "I was a member of the Slower House. I was expelled for selling my influence for money."

"And you dare to ask for mine!" shouted the Most Respectable Citizen. "You have the impudence? A man who will accept bribes will probably offer them. Do you mean to—"

"I should not think of making a corrupt proposal to you, sir; but if I were Commissioner of Shrimps and Crabs, I might have some influence with the water-front population, and be able to help you make your fight for Coroner."

"In that case I do not feel justified in denying you the letter."

So he took his pen, and, some demon guiding his hand, he wrote, greatly to his astonishment: "Who sells his influence should stop it, An honest man will only swap it."

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The Rainmaker

An Officer of the Government, with a great outfit of mule-waggons loaded with balloons, kites, dynamite bombs, and electrical apparatus, halted in the midst of a desert, where there had been no rain for ten years, and set up a camp. After several months of preparation and an expenditure of a million dollars all was in readiness, and a series of tremendous explosions occurred on the earth and in the sky. This was followed by a great down-pour of rain, which washed the unfortunate Officer of the Government and the outfit off the face of creation and affected the agricultural heart with joy too deep for utterance. A Newspaper Reporter who had just arrived escaped by climbing a hill near by, and there he found the Sole Survivor of the expedition — a mule-driver — down on his knees behind a mesquite bush, praying with extreme fervour.

“Oh, you can’t stop it that way,” said the Reporter.

“My fellow-traveller to the bar of God,” replied the Sole Survivor, looking up over his shoulder, “your understanding is in darkness. I am not stopping this great blessing; under Providence, I am bringing it.”

“That is a pretty good joke,” said the Reporter, laughing as well as he could in the strangling rain—”a mule driver’s prayer answered!”

“Child of levity and scoffing,” replied the other; “you err again, misled by these humble habiliments. I am the Rev. Ezekiel Thrifft, a minister of the gospel, now in the service of the great manufacturing firm of Skinn & Sheer. They make balloons, kites, dynamite bombs, and electrical apparatus.”

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The Citizen and the Snakes

A Public–Spirited Citizen who had failed miserably in trying to secure a National political convention for his city suffered acutely from dejection. While in that frame of mind he leaned thoughtlessly against a druggist's show-window, wherein were one hundred and fifty kinds of assorted snakes. The glass breaking, the reptiles all escaped into the street.

"When you can't do what you wish," said the Public-spirited Citizen, "it is worth while to do what you can."

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Fortune and the Fabulist

A Writer of Fables was passing through a lonely forest when he met a Fortune. Greatly alarmed, he tried to climb a tree, but the Fortune pulled him down and bestowed itself upon him with cruel persistence.

“Why did you try to run away?” said the Fortune, when his struggles had ceased and his screams were stilled. “Why do you glare at me so inhospitably?”

“I don’t know what you are,” replied the Writer of Fables, deeply disturbed.

“I am wealth; I am respectability,” the Fortune explained; “I am elegant houses, a yacht, and a clean shirt every day. I am leisure, I am travel, wine, a shiny hat, and an unshiny coat. I am enough to eat.”

“All right,” said the Writer of Fables, in a whisper; “but for goodness’ sake speak lower.”

“Why so?” the Fortune asked, in surprise.

“So as not to wake me,” replied the Writer of Fables, a holy calm brooding upon his beautiful face.

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A Smiling Idol

An Idol said to a Missionary, “My friend, why do you seek to bring me into contempt? If it had not been for me, what would you have been? Remember thy creator that thy days be long in the land.”

“I confess,” replied the Missionary, fingering a number of ten-cent pieces which a Sunday-school in his own country had forwarded to him, “that I am a product of you, but I protest that you cannot quote Scripture with accuracy and point. Therefore will I continue to go up against you with the Sword of the Spirit.”

Shortly afterwards the Idol’s worshippers held a great religious ceremony at the base of his pedestal, and as a part of the rites the Missionary was roasted whole. As the tongue was removed for the high priest’s table, “Ah,” said the Idol to himself, “that is the Sword of the Spirit — the only Sword that is less dangerous when unsheathed.”

And he smiled so pleasantly at his own wit that the provinces of Ghargaroo, M’gwana, and Scowow were affected with a blight.

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Philosophers Three

A Bear, a Fox, and an Opossum were attacked by an inundation.

“Death loves a coward,” said the Bear, and went forward to fight the flood.

“What a fool!” said the Fox. “I know a trick worth two of that.” And he slipped into a hollow stump.

“There are malevolent forces,” said the Opossum, “which the wise will neither confront nor avoid. The thing is to know the nature of your antagonist.”

So saying the Opossum lay down and pretended to be dead.

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The Boneless King

Some Apes who had deposed their king fell at once into dissension and anarchy. In this strait they sent a Deputation to a neighbouring tribe to consult the Oldest and Wisest Ape in All the World.

"My children," said the Oldest and Wisest Ape in All the World, when he had heard the Deputation, "you did right in ridding yourselves of tyranny, but your tribe is not sufficiently advanced to dispense with the forms of monarchy. Entice the tyrant back with fair promises, kill him and enthrone. The skeleton of even the most lawless despot makes a good constitutional sovereign."

At this the Deputation was greatly abashed. "It is impossible," they said, moving away; "our king has no skeleton; he was stuffed."

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Uncalculating Zeal

A Man–Eating tiger was ravaging the Kingdom of Damnasia, and the King, greatly concerned for the lives and limbs of his Royal subjects, promised his daughter Zodroulra to any man who would kill the animal. After some days Camaraladdin appeared before the King and claimed the reward.

“But where is the tiger?” the King asked.

“May jackasses sing above my uncle’s grave,” replied Camaraladdin, “if I dared go within a league of him!”

“Wretch!” cried the King, unsheathing his consoler-under-disappointment; “how dare you claim my daughter when you have done nothing to earn her?”

“Thou art wiser, O King, than Solyman the Great, and thy servant is as dust in the tomb of thy dog, yet thou errest. I did not, it is true, kill the tiger, but behold! I have brought thee the scalp of the man who had accumulated five million pieces of gold and was after more.”

The King drew his consoler-under-disappointment, and, flicking off Camaraladdin’s head, said: “Learn, caitiff, the expediency of uncalculating zeal. If the millionaire had been let alone he would have devoured the tiger.”

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A Transposition

Travelling through the sage-brush country a Jackass met a rabbit, who exclaimed in great astonishment: “Good heavens! how did you grow so big? You are doubtless the largest rabbit living.”

“No,” said the Jackass, “you are the smallest donkey.”

After a good deal of fruitless argument the question was referred for decision to a passing Coyote, who was a bit of a demagogue and desirous to stand well with both.

“Gentlemen,” said he, “you are both right, as was to have been expected by persons so gifted with appliances for receiving instruction from the wise. You, sir,” — turning to the superior animal—”are, as he has accurately observed, a rabbit. And you” — to the other—”are correctly described as a jackass. In transposing your names man has acted with incredible folly.”

They were so pleased with the decision that they declared the Coyote their candidate for the Grizzly Bearship; but whether he ever obtained the office history does not relate.

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The Honest Citizen

A Political Preferment, labelled with its price, was canvassing the State to find a purchaser. One day it offered itself to a Truly Good Man, who, after examining the label and finding the price was exactly twice as great as he was willing to pay, spurned the Political Preferment from his door. Then the People said: “Behold, this is an honest citizen!” And the Truly Good Man humbly confessed that it was so.

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A Creaking Tail

An American Statesman who had twisted the tail of the British Lion until his arms ached was at last rewarded by a sharp, rasping sound.

"I knew your fortitude would give out after a while," said the American Statesman, delighted; "your agony attests my political power."

"Agony I know not!" said the British Lion, yawning; "the swivel in my tail needs a few drops of oil, that is all."

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Wasted Sweets

A Candidate canvassing his district met a Nurse wheeling a Baby in a carriage, and, stooping, imprinted a kiss upon the Baby’s clammy muzzle. Rising, he saw a Man, who laughed.

“Why do you laugh?” asked the Candidate.

“Because,” replied the Man, “the Baby belongs to the Orphan Asylum.”

“But the Nurse,” said the Candidate—”the Nurse will surely relate the touching incident wherever she goes, and perhaps write to her former master.”

“The Nurse,” said the Man who had laughed, “is an inmate of the Institution for the Illiterate–Deaf-and-Dumb.”

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Six and One

The Committee on Gerrymander worked late, drawing intricate lines on a map of the State, and being weary sought repose in a game of poker. At the close of the game the six Republican members were bankrupt and the single Democrat had all the money. On the next day, when the Committee was called to order for business, one of the luckless six mounted his legs, and said:

“Mr. Chairman, before we bend to our noble task of purifying politics, in the interest of good government I wish to say a word of the untoward events of last evening. If my memory serves me the disasters which overtook the Majority of this honourable body always befell when it was the Minority’s deal. It is my solemn conviction, Mr. Chairman, and to its affirmation I pledge my life, my fortune, and my sacred honour, that that wicked and unscrupulous Minority redistricted the cards!”

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The Sportsman and the Squirrel

A Sportsman who had wounded a Squirrel, which was making desperate efforts to drag itself away, ran after it with a stick, exclaiming: “Poor thing! I will put it out of its misery.”

At that moment the Squirrels stopped from exhaustion, and looking up at its enemy, said: “I don’t venture to doubt the sincerity of your compassion, though it comes rather late, but you seem to lack the faculty of observation. Do you not perceive by my actions that the dearest wish of my heart is to continue in my misery?”

At this exposure of his hypocrisy, the Sportsman was so overcome with shame and remorse that he would not strike the Squirrel, but pointing it out to his dog, walked thoughtfully away.

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The Fogy and the Sheik

A Fogy who lived in a cave near a great caravan route returned to his home one day and saw, near by, a great concourse of men and animals, and in their midst a tower, at the foot of which something with wheels smoked and panted like an exhausted horse. He sought the Sheik of the Outfit.

"What sin art thou committing now, O son of a Christian dog?" said the Fogy, with a truly Oriental politeness.

"Boring for water, you black-and-tan galoot!" replied the Sheik of the Outfit, with that ready repartee which distinguishes the Unbeliever.

"Knowest thou not, thou whelp of darkness and father of disordered livers," cried the Fogy, "that water will cause grass to spring up here, and trees, and possibly even flowers? Knowest thou not, that thou art, in truth, producing an oasis?"

"And don't you know," said the Sheik of the Outfit, "that caravans will then stop here for rest and refreshments, giving you a chance to steal the camels, the horses, and the goods?"

"May the wild hog defile my grave, but thou speakest wisdom!" the Fogy replied, with the dignity of his race, extending his hand. "Sheik."

They shook.

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At Heaven's Gate

Having arisen from the tomb, a Woman presented herself at the gate of Heaven, and knocked with a trembling hand.

"Madam," said Saint Peter, rising and approaching the wicket, "whence do you come?"

"From San Francisco," replied the Woman, with embarrassment, as great beads of perspiration spangled her spiritual brow.

"Never mind, my good girl," the Saint said, compassionately. "Eternity is a long time; you can live that down."

"But that, if you please, is not all." The Woman was growing more and more confused. "I poisoned my husband. I chopped up my babies. I—"

"Ah," said the Saint, with sudden austerity, "your confession suggests a very grave possibility. Were you a member of the Women's Press Association?"

The lady drew herself up and replied with warmth: "I was not."

The gates of pearl and jasper swung back upon their golden hinges, making the most ravishing music, and the Saint, stepping aside, bowed low, saying: "Enter, then, into thine eternal rest."

But the Woman hesitated.

"The poisoning — the chopping — the — the—" she stammered.

"Of no consequence, I assure you. We are not going to be hard on a lady who did not belong to the Women's Press Association. Take a harp."

"But I applied for membership — I was blackballed."

"Take two harps."

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The Catted Anarchist

An Anarchist Orator who had been struck in the face with a Dead Cat by some Respector of Law to him unknown, had the Dead Cat arrested and taken before a Magistrate.

“Why do you appeal to the law?” said the Magistrate—”You who go in for the abolition of law.”

“That,” replied the Anarchist, who was not without a certain hardness of head, “that is none of your business; I am not bound to be consistent. You sit here to do justice between me and this Dead Cat.”

“Very well,” said the Magistrate, putting on the black cap and a solemn look; “as the accused makes no defence, and is undoubtedly guilty, I sentence her to be eaten by the public executioner; and as that position happens to be vacant, I appoint you to it, without bonds.”

One of the most delighted spectators at the execution was the anonymous Respector of Law who had flung the condemned.

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The Honourable Member

A Member of a Legislature, who had pledged himself to his Constituents not to steal, brought home at the end of the session a large part of the dome of the Capitol. Thereupon the Constituents held an indignation meeting and passed a resolution of tar and feathers.

"You are most unjust," said the Member of the Legislature. "It is true I promised you I would not steal; but had I ever promised you that I would not lie?"

The Constituents said he was an honourable man and elected him to the United States Congress, unpledged and unfledged.

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The Expatriated Boss

A Boss who had gone to Canada was taunted by a Citizen of Montreal with having fled to avoid prosecution.

“You do me a grave injustice,” said the Boss, parting with a pair of tears. “I came to Canada solely because of its political attractions; its Government is the most corrupt in the world.”

“Pray forgive me,” said the Citizen of Montreal.

They fell upon each other’s neck, and at the conclusion of that touching rite the Boss had two watches.

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An Inadequate Fee

An Ox, unable to extricate himself from the mire into which he sank, was advised to make use of a Political Pull. When the Political Pull had arrived, the Ox said: “My good friend, please make fast to me, and let nature take her course.”

So the Political Pull made fast to the Ox’s head and nature took her course. The Ox was drawn, first, from the mire, and, next, from his skin. Then the Political Pull looked back upon the good fat carcase of beef that he was dragging to his lair and said, with a discontented spirit: “That is hardly my customary fee; I’ll take home this first instalment, then return and bring an action for salvage against the skin.”

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The Judge and the Plaintiff

A Man of Experience in Business was awaiting the judgment of the Court in an action for damages which he had brought against a railway company. The door opened and the Judge of the Court entered.

"Well," said he, "I am going to decide your case to-day. If I should decide in your favour, I wonder how you would express your satisfaction?"

"Sir," said the Man of Experience in Business, "I should risk your anger by offering you one half the sum awarded."

"Did I say I was going to decide that case?" said the Judge, abruptly, as if awakening from a dream. "Dear me, how absent-minded I am. I mean I have already decided it, and judgment has been entered for the full amount that you sued for."

"Did I say I would give you one half?" said the Man of Experience in Business, coldly. "Dear me, how near I came to being a rascal. I mean, that I am greatly obliged to you."

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The Return of the Representative

Hearing that the Legislature had adjourned, the people of an Assembly District held a mass-meeting to devise a suitable punishment for their representative. By one speaker it was proposed that he be disembowelled, by another that he be made to run the gauntlet. Some favoured hanging, some thought that it would do him good to appear in a suit of tar and feathers. An old man, famous for his wisdom and his habit of drooling on his shirt-front, suggested that they first catch their hare. So the Chairman appointed a committee to watch for the victim at midnight, and take him as he should attempt to sneak into town across-lots from the tamarack swamp. At this point in the proceedings they were interrupted by the sound of a brass band. Their dishonoured representative was driving up from the railway station in a coach-and-four, with music and a banner. A few moments later he entered the hall, went upon the platform, and said it was the proudest moment of his life. (Cheers.)

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A Statesman

A Statesman who attended a meeting of a Chamber of Commerce rose to speak, but was objected to on the ground that he had nothing to do with commerce.

“Mr. Chairman,” said an Aged Member, rising, “I conceive that the objection is not well taken; the gentleman’s connection with commerce is close and intimate. He is a Commodity.”

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Two Dogs

The Dog, as created, had a rigid tail, but after some centuries of a cheerless existence, unappreciated by Man, who made him work for his living, he implored the Creator to endow him with a wag. This being done he was able to dissemble his resentment with a sign of affection, and the earth was his and the fulness thereof. Observing this, the Politician (an animal created later) petitioned that a wag might be given him too. As he was incaudate it was conferred upon his chin, which he now wags with great profit and gratification except when he is at his meals.

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Three Recruits

A Farmer, an Artisan, and a Labourer went to the King of their country and complained that they were compelled to support a large standing army of mere consumers, who did nothing for their keep.

“Very well,” said the King, “my subjects’ wishes are the highest law.”

So he disbanded his army and the consumers became producers also. The sale of their products so brought down prices that farming was ruined, and their skilled and unskilled labour drove the artisans and labourers into the almshouses and highways. In a few years the national distress was so great that the Farmer, the Artisan, and the Labourer petitioned the King to reorganize the standing army.

“What!” said the King; “you wish to support those idle consumers again?”

“No, your Majesty,” they replied—”we wish to enlist.”

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The Mirror

A Silken–Eared Spaniel, who traced his descent from King Charles the Second of England, chanced to look into a mirror which was leaning against the wainscoting of a room on the ground floor of his mistress’s house. Seeing his reflection, he supposed it to be another dog, outside, and said:

“I can chew up any such milksoppy pup as that, and I will.”

So he ran out-of-doors and around to the side of the house where he fancied the enemy was. It so happened that at that moment a Bulldog sat there sunning his teeth. The Spaniel stopped short in dire consternation, and, after regarding the Bulldog a moment from a safe distance, said:

“I don’t know whether you cultivate the arts of peace or your flag is flung to the battle and the breeze and your voice is for war. If you are a civilian, the windows of this house flatter you worse than a newspaper, but if you’re a soldier, they do you a grave injustice.”

This speech being unintelligible to the Bulldog he only civilly smiled, which so terrified the Spaniel that he dropped dead in his tracks.

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Saint and Sinner

“My friend,” said a distinguished officer of the Salvation Army, to a Most Wicked Sinner, “I was once a drunkard, a thief, an assassin. The Divine Grace has made me what I am.”

The Most Wicked Sinner looked at him from head to foot. “Henceforth,” he said, “the Divine Grace, I fancy, will let well enough alone.”

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An Antidote

A Young Ostrich came to its Mother, groaning with pain and with its wings tightly crossed upon its stomach.

"What have you been eating?" the Mother asked, with solicitude.

"Nothing but a keg of Nails," was the reply.

"What!" exclaimed the Mother; "a whole keg of Nails, at your age! Why, you will kill yourself that way. Go quickly, my child, and swallow a claw-hammer."

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A Weary Echo

A Convention of female writers, which for two days had been stuffing Woman's couch with goose-quills and hailing the down of a new era, adjourned with unabated enthusiasm, shouting, "Place aux dames!" And Echo wearily replied, "Oh, damn."

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The Ingenious Blackmailer

An Inventor went to a King and was granted an audience, when the following conversation ensued: *Inventor*.—”May it please your Majesty, I have invented a rifle that discharges lightning.”

King.—”Ah, you wish to sell me the secret.”

Inventor.—”Yes; it will enable your army to overrun any nation that is accessible.”

King.—”In order to get any good of my outlay for your invention, I must make a war, and do so as soon as I can arm my troops — before your secret is discovered by foreign nations. How much do you want?”

Inventor.—”One million dollars.”

King.—”And how much will it cost to make the change of arms?”

Inventor.—”Fifty millions.”

King.—”And the war will Cost — ?”

Inventor.—”But consider the glory and the spoils!”

King.—”Exactly. But if I am not seeking these advantages? What if I decline to purchase?”

Inventor.—”There is no economy in that. Though a patriot, I am poor; if my own country will not patronise me, I must seek a market elsewhere.”

King (to Prime Minister).—”Take this blackmailer and cut off his head.”

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A Talisman

Having been summoned to serve as a juror, a Prominent Citizen sent a physician’s certificate stating that he was afflicted with softening of the brain.

“The gentleman is excused,” said the Judge, handing back the certificate to the person who had brought it, “he has a brain.”

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The Ancient Order

Hardly had that ancient order, the Sultans of Exceeding Splendour, been completely founded by the Grand Flashing Inaccessible, when a question arose as to what should be the title of address among the members. Some wanted it to be simply “my Lord,” others held out for “your Dukeness,” and still others preferred “my Sovereign Liege.” Finally the gorgeous jewel of the order, gleaming upon the breast of every member, suggested “your Badgesty,” which was adopted, and the order became popularly known as the Kings of Catarrh.

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A Fatal Disorder

A Dying Man who had been shot was requested by officers of the law to make a statement, and be quick about it.

“You were assaulted without provocation, of course,” said the District Attorney, preparing to set down the answer.

“No,” replied the Dying Man, “I was the aggressor.”

“Yes, I understand,” said the District Attorney; “you committed the aggression — you were compelled to, as it were. You did it in self-defence.”

“I don’t think he would have hurt me if I had let him alone,” said the other. “No, I fancy he was a man of peace, and would not have hurt a fly. I brought such a pressure to bear on him that he naturally had to yield — he couldn’t hold out. If he had refused to shoot me I don’t see how I could decently have continued his acquaintance.”

“Good Heavens!” exclaimed the District Attorney, throwing down his note~book and pencil; “this is all quite irregular. I can’t make use of such an ante-mortem statement as that.”

“I never before knew a man to tell the truth,” said the Chief of Police, “when dying of violence.”

“Violence nothing!” the Police Surgeon said, pulling out and inspecting the man’s tongue—”it is the truth that is killing him.”

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The Massacre

Some Holy Missionaries in China having been deprived of life by the Bigoted Heathens, the Christian Press made a note of it, and was greatly pained to point out the contrast between the Bigoted Heathens and the law~abiding countrymen of the Holy Missionaries who had wickedly been sent to eternal bliss.

"Yes," assented a Miserable Sinner, as he finished reading the articles, "the Heathens of Ying Shing are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. By the way," he added, turning over the paper to read the entertaining and instructive Fables, "I know the Heathenese lingo. Ying Shing means Rock Creek; it is in the Province of Wyo Ming."

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A Ship and a Man

Seeing a ship sailing by upon the sea of politics, an Ambitious Person started in hot pursuit along the strand; but the people’s eyes being fixed upon the Presidency no one observed the pursuer. This greatly annoyed him, and recollecting that he was not aquatic, he stopped and shouted across the waves’ tumultous roar:

“Take my name off the passenger list.”

Back to him over the waters, hollow and heartless, like laughter in a tomb, rang the voice of the Skipper:

“‘T ain’t on!”

And there, in the focus of a million pairs of convergent eyes, the Ambitious Person sat him down between the sun and moon and murmured sadly to his own soul:

“Marooned, by thunder!”

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Congress and the People

Successive Congresses having greatly impoverished the People, they were discouraged and wept copiously.

“Why do you weep?” inquired an Angel who had perched upon a fence near by.

“They have taken all we have,” replied the People—”excepting,” they added, noting the suggestive visitant—”excepting our hope in heaven. Thank God, they cannot deprive us of that!”

But at last came the Congress of 1889.

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The Justice and His Accuser

An eminent Justice of the Supreme Court of Patagascar was accused of having obtained his appointment by fraud.

“You wander,” he said to the Accuser; “it is of little importance how I obtained my power; it is only important how I have used it.”

“I confess,” said the Accuser, “that in comparison with the rascally way in which you have conducted yourself on the Bench, the rascally way in which you got there does seem rather a trifle.”

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The Highwayman and the Traveller

A Highwayman confronted a Traveller, and covering him with a firearm, shouted: “Your money or your life!”

“My good friend,” said the Traveller, “according to the terms of your demand my money will save my life, my life my money; you imply you will take one or the other, but not both. If that is what you mean, please be good enough to take my life.”

“That is not what I mean,” said the Highwayman; “you cannot save your money by giving up your life.”

“Then take it, anyhow,” the Traveller said. “If it will not save my money, it is good for nothing.”

The Highwayman was so pleased with the Traveller’s philosophy and wit that he took him into partnership, and this splendid combination of talent started a newspaper.

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The Policeman and the Citizen

A Policeman, finding a man that had fallen in a fit, said, “This man is drunk,” and began beating him on the head with his club. A passing Citizen said: “Why do you murder a man that is already harmless?”

Thereupon the Policeman left the man in a fit and attacked the Citizen, who, after receiving several severe contusions, ran away.

“Alas,” said the Policeman, “why did I not attack the sober one before exhausting myself upon the other?”

Thenceforward he pursued that plan, and by zeal and diligence rose to be Chief, and sobriety is unknown in the region subject to his sway.

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The Writer and the Tramps

An Ambitious Writer, distinguished for the condition of his linen, was travelling the high road to fame, when he met a Tramp.

"What is the matter with your shirt?" inquired the Tramp.

"It bears the marks of that superb unconcern which is the characteristic of genius," replied the Ambitious Writer, contemptuously passing him by.

Resting by the wayside a little later, the Tramp carved upon the smooth bark of a birch-tree the words, "John Gump, Champion Genius."

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Two Politicians

Two Politicians were exchanging ideas regarding the rewards for public service.

“The reward which I most desire,” said the First Politician, “is the gratitude of my fellow-citizens.”

“That would be very gratifying, no doubt,” said the Second Politician, “but, alas! in order to obtain it one has to retire from politics.”

For an instant they gazed upon each other with inexpressible tenderness; then the First Politician murmured, “God’s will be done! Since we cannot hope for reward, let us be content with what we have.”

And lifting their right hands from the public treasury they swore to be content.

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The Fugitive Office

A Traveller arriving at the capitol of the nation saw a vast plain outside the wall, filled with struggling and shouting men. While he looked upon the alarming spectacle an Office broke away from the Throng and took shelter in a tomb close to where he stood, the crowd being too intent upon hammering one another to observe that the cause of their contention had departed.

“Poor bruised and bleeding creature,” said the compassionate Traveller, “what misfortune caused you to be so far away from the source of power?”

“I ‘sought the man,’” said the Office.

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The Tyrant Frog

A Snake swallowing a frog head-first was approached by a Naturalist with a stick.

"Ah, my deliverer," said the Snake as well as he could, "you have arrived just in time; this reptile, you see, is pitching into me without provocation."

"Sir," replied the Naturalist, "I need a snakeskin for my collection, but if you had not explained I should not have interrupted you, for I thought you were at dinner."

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The Eligible Son-in-Law

A Truly Pious Person who conducted a savings bank and lent money to his sisters and his cousins and his aunts of both sexes, was approached by a Tatterdemalion, who applied for a loan of one hundred thousand dollars.

“What security have you to offer?” asked the Truly Pious Person.

“The best in the world,” the applicant replied, confidentially; “I am about to become your son-in-law.”

“That would indeed be gilt-edged,” said the banker, gravely; “but what claim have you to the hand of my daughter?”

“One that cannot be lightly denied,” said the Tatterdemalion. “I am about to become worth one hundred thousand dollars.”

Unable to detect a weak point in this scheme of mutual advantage, the financier gave the promoter in disguise an order for the money, and wrote a note to his wife directing her to count out the girl.

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The Statesman and the Horse

A Statesman who had saved his country was returning from Washington on foot, when he met a Race Horse going at full speed, and stopped it.

“Turn about and travel the other way,” said the Statesman, “and I will keep you company as far as my home. The advantages of travelling together are obvious.”

“I cannot do that,” said the Race Horse; “I am following my master to Washington. I did not go fast enough to suit him, and he has gone on ahead.”

“Who is your master?” inquired the Statesman.

“He is the Statesman who saved his country,” answered the Race Horse.

“There appears to be some mistake,” the other said. “Why did he wish to travel so fast?”

“So as to be there in time to get the country that he saved.”

“I guess he got it,” said the other, and limped along, sighing.

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An AErophobe

A Celebrated Divine having affirmed the fallibility of the Bible, was asked why, then, he preached the religion founded upon it.

“If it is fallible,” he replied, “there is the greater reason that I explain it, lest it mislead.”

“Then am I to infer,” said his Questioner, “that *you* are not fallible?”

“You are to infer that I am not pneumophagous.”

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The Thrift of Strength

A Weak Man going down-hill met a Strong Man going up, and said:

"I take this direction because it requires less exertion, not from choice. I pray you, sir, assist me to regain the summit."

"Gladly," said the Strong Man, his face illuminated with the glory of his thought. "I have always considered my strength a sacred gift in trust for my fellow-men. I will take you along with me. Just get behind me and push."

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The Good Government

“What a happy land you are!” said a Republican Form of Government to a Sovereign State. “Be good enough to lie still while I walk upon you, singing the praises of universal suffrage and descanting upon the blessings of civil and religious liberty. In the meantime you can relieve your feelings by cursing the one-man power and the effete monarchies of Europe.”

“My public servants have been fools and rogues from the date of your accession to power,” replied the State; “my legislative bodies, both State and municipal, are bands of thieves; my taxes are insupportable; my courts are corrupt; my cities are a disgrace to civilisation; my corporations have their hands at the throats of every private interest — all my affairs are in disorder and criminal confusion.”

“That is all very true,” said the Republican Form of Government, putting on its hobnail shoes; “but consider how I thrill you every Fourth of July.”

The Life Saver

An Ancient Maiden, standing on the edge of a wharf near a Modern Swain, was overheard rehearsing the words: “Noble preserver! The life that you have saved is yours!”

Having repeated them several times with various intonations, she sprang into the water, where she was suffered to drown.

“I am a noble preserver,” said the Modern Swain, thoughtfully moving away; “the life that I have saved is indeed mine.”

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The Man and the Bird

A Man with a Shotgun said to a Bird: “It is all nonsense, you know, about shooting being a cruel sport. I put my skill against your cunning-that is all there is of it. It is a fair game.”

“True,” said the Bird, “but I don’t wish to play.”

“Why not?” inquired the Man with a Shotgun.

“The game,” the Bird replied, “is fair as you say; the chances are about even; but consider the stake. I am in it for you, but what is there in it for me?”

Not being prepared with an answer to the question, the Man with a Shotgun sagaciously removed the propounder.

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From the Minutes

An Orator afflicted with atrophy of the organ of common-sense rose in his place in the halls of legislation and pointed with pride to his Unblotted Escutcheon. Seeing what it supposed to be the finger of scorn pointed at it, the Unblotted Escutcheon turned black with rage. Seeing the Unblotted Escutcheon turning black with what he supposed to be the record of his own misdeeds showing through the whitewash, the Orator fell dead of mortification. Seeing the Orator fall dead of what they supposed to be atrophy of the organ of common-sense, his colleagues resolved that whenever they should adjourn because they were tired, it should be out of respect to the memory of him who had so frequently made them so.

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Three of a Kind

A Lawyer in whom an instinct of justice had survived the wreck of his ignorance of law was retained for the defence of a burglar whom the police had taken after a desperate struggle with someone not in custody. In consultation with his client the Lawyer asked, “Have you accomplices?”

“Yes, sir,” replied the Burglar. “I have two, but neither has been taken. I hired one to defend me against capture, you to defend me against conviction.”

This answer deeply impressed the Lawyer, and having ascertained that the Burglar had accumulated no money in his profession he threw up the case.

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The Fabulist and the Animals

A Wise and illustrious Writer of Fables was visiting a travelling menagerie with a view to collecting literary materials. As he was passing near the Elephant, that animal said:

“How sad that so justly famous a satirist should mar his work by ridicule of people with long noses — who are the salt of the earth!”

The Kangaroo said:

“I do so enjoy that great man’s censure of the ridiculous — particularly his attacks on the Proboscidae; but, alas! he has no reverence for the Marsupials, and laughs at our way of carrying our young in a pouch.”

The Camel said:

“If he would only respect the sacred Hump, he would be faultless. As it is, I cannot permit his fables to be read in the presence of my family.”

The Ostrich, seeing his approach, thrust her head in the straw, saying:

“If I do not conceal myself, he may be reminded to write something disagreeable about my lack of a crest or my appetite for scrap-iron; and although he is inexpressibly brilliant when he devotes himself to censure of folly and greed, his dulness is matchless when he transcends the limits of legitimate comment.”

“That,” said the Buzzard to his mate, “is the distinguished author of that glorious fable, ‘The Ostrich and the Keg of Raw Nails.’ I regret to add, that he wrote, also, ‘The Buzzard’s Feast,’ in which a carrion diet is contumeliously disparaged. A carrion diet is the foundation of sound health. If nothing else but corpses were eaten, death would be unknown.”

Seeing an attendant approaching, the wise and illustrious Writer of Fables passed out of the tent and mingled with the crowd. It was afterward discovered that he had crept in under the canvas without paying.

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A Revivalist Revived

A Revivalist who had fallen dead in the pulpit from too violent religious exercise was astonished to wake up in Hades. He promptly sent for the Adversary of Souls and demanded his freedom, explaining that he was entirely orthodox, and had always led a pious and holy life.

"That is all very true," said the Adversary, "but you taught by example that a verb should not agree with its subject in person and number, whereas the Good Book says that contention is worse than a dinner of herbs. You also tried to release the objective case from its thraldom to the preposition, and it is written that servants should obey their masters. You stay right here."

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The Debaters

A Hurled–Back Allegation, which, after a brief rest, had again started forth upon its mission of mischief, met an Inkstand in mid-air.

“How did the Honourable Member whom you represent know that I was coming again?” inquired the Hurled-back Allegation.

“He did not,” the Inkstand replied; “he isn’t at all forehanded at repartee.”

“Why, then, do you come, things being even when he had hurled me back?”

“He wanted to be a little ahead.”

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Two of the Pious

A Christian and a Heathen in His Blindness were disputing, when the Christian, with that charming consideration which serves to distinguish the truly pious from the wolves that perish, exclaimed: “If I could have my way, I’d blow up all your gods with dynamite.”

“And if I could have mine,” retorted the Heathen in His Blindness, bitterly malevolent but oleaginuously suave, “I’d fan all yours out of the universe.”

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The Desperate Object

A Dishonest Gain was driving in its luxurious carriage through its private park, when it saw something which frantically and repeatedly ran against a stone wall, endeavouring to butt out its brains.

“Hold! Hold! thou desperate Object,” cried the Dishonest Gain; “these beautiful private grounds are no place for such work as thine.”

“True,” said the Object, pausing; “I have other and better grounds for it.”

“Then thou art a happy man,” said the Dishonest Gain, “and thy bleeding head is but mere dissembling. Who art thou, great actor?”

“I am known,” said the Object, dashing itself again at the wall, “as the Consciousness of Duty Well Performed.”

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The Appropriate Memorial

A High Public Functionary having died, the citizens of his town held a meeting to consider how to honour his memory, and an Other High Public Functionary rose and addressed the meeting.

“Mr. Chairman and Gintlemen,” said the Other, “it sames to me, and I’m hopin’ yez wull approve the suggistion, that an appropriet way to honour the mimory of the decaised would be to erect an emolument sootably inscribed wid his vartues.”

The soul of the great man looked down from Heaven and wept.

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A Needless Labour

After waiting many a weary day to revenge himself upon a Lion for some unconsidered manifestation of contempt, a Skunk finally saw him coming, and posting himself in the path ahead uttered the inaudible discord of his race. Observing that the Lion gave no attention to the matter, the Skunk, keeping carefully out of reach, said: “Sir, I beg leave to point out that I have set on foot an implacable odour.”

“My dear fellow,” the Lion replied, “you have taken a needless trouble; I already knew that you were a Skunk.”

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A Flourishing Industry

“Are the industries of this country in a flourishing condition?” asked a Traveller from a Foreign Land of the first man he met in America.

“Splendid!” said the Man. “I have more orders than I can fill.”

“What is your business?” the Traveller from a Foreign Land inquired.

The Man replied, “I make boxing-gloves for the tongues of pugilists.”

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The Self–Made Monkey

A Man of humble birth and no breading, who held a high political office, was passing through a forest, when he met a Monkey.

“I take it you are one of my constituents,” the Man said.

“No,” replied the Monkey; “but I will support you if you can urge a valid claim to my approval.”

“I am a self-made man,” said the other, proudly.

“That is nothing,” the Monkey said. And going to a bigger pine, he rose by his own unaided exertions to the top branch, where he sat, all bedaubed with the pitch which that vegetable exudes. “Now,” he added, “I am a self-made Monkey.”

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The Patriot and the Banker

A Patriot who had taken office poor and retired rich was introduced at a bank where he desired to open an account.

"With pleasure," said the Honest Banker; "we shall be glad to do business with you; but first you must make yourself an honest man by restoring what you stole from the Government."

"Good heavens!" cried the Patriot; "if I do that, I shall have nothing to deposit with you."

"I don't see that," the Honest Banker replied. "We are not the whole American people."

"Ah, I understand," said the Patriot, musing. "At what sum do you estimate this bank's proportion of the country's loss by me?"

"About a dollar," answered the Honest Banker.

And with a proud consciousness of serving his country wisely and well he charged that sum to the account.

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The Mourning Brothers

Observing that he was about to die, an Old Man called his two Sons to his bedside and expounded the situation.

"My children," said he, "you have not shown me many marks of respect during my life, but you will attest your sorrow for my death. To him who the longer wears a weed upon his hat in memory of me shall go my entire fortune. I have made a will to that effect."

So when the Old Man was dead each of the youths put a weed upon his hat and wore it until he was himself old, when, seeing that neither would give in, they agreed that the younger should leave off his weeds and the elder give him half of the estate. But when the elder applied for the property he found that there had been an Executor!

Thus were hypocrisy and obstinacy fitly punished.

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The Disinterested Arbiter

Two Dogs who had been fighting for a bone, without advantage to either, referred their dispute to a Sheep. The Sheep patiently heard their statements, then flung the bone into a pond.

“Why did you do that?” said the Dogs.

“Because,” replied the Sheep, “I am a vegetarian.”

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The Thief and the Honest Man

A Thief who had brought a suit against his accomplices to recover his share of the plunder taken from an Honest Man, demanded the Honest Man’s attendance at the trial to testify to his loss. But the Honest Man explained that as he was merely the agent of a company of other honest men it was none of his affair; and when the officers came to serve him with a subpoena he hid himself behind his back and wiled away the dragging hours of retirement and inaction by picking his own pockets.

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The Dutiful Son

A Millionaire who had gone to an almshouse to visit his father met a Neighbour there, who was greatly surprised.

"What!" said the Neighbour, "you do sometimes visit your father?"

"If our situations were reversed," said the Millionaire, "I am sure he would visit me. The old man has always been rather proud of me. Besides," he added, softly, "I had to have his signature; I am insuring his life."

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Aesopus Emendatus

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The Cat and the Youth

A Cat fell in love with a handsome Young Man, and entreated Venus to change her into a woman.

“I should think,” said Venus, “you might make so trifling a change without bothering me. However, be a woman.”

Afterward, wishing to see if the change were complete, Venus caused a mouse to approach, whereupon the woman shrieked and made such a show of herself that the Young Man would not marry her.

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The Farmer and His Sons

A Farmer being about to die, and knowing that during his illness his Sons had permitted the vineyard to become overgrown with weeds while they improved the shining hour by gambling with the doctor, said to them: “My boys, there is a great treasure buried in the vineyard. You dig in the ground until you find it.”

So the Sons dug up all the weeds, and all the vines too, and even neglected to bury the old man.

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Jupiter and the Baby Show

Jupiter held a baby show, open to all animals, and a Monkey entered her hideous cub for a prize, but Jupiter only laughed at her.

“It is all very well,” said the Monkey, “to laugh at my offspring, but you go into any gallery of antique sculpture and look at the statues and busts of the fellows that you begot yourself.”

“‘Sh! don’t expose me,” said Jupiter, and awarded her the first prize.

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The Man and the Dog

A Man who had been bitten by a Dog was told that the wound would heal if he would dip a piece of bread in the blood and give it to the Dog. He did so.

"No," said the Dog; "if I were to accept that, it might be thought that in biting you I was actuated by improper motives."

"And by what motives were you actuated?" asked the Man.

"I desired," replied the Dog, "merely to harmonise myself with the Divine Scheme of Things. I'm a child of Nature."

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The Cat and the Birds

Hearing that the Birds in an aviary were ill, a Cat went to them and said that he was a physician, and would cure them if they would let him in.

"To what school of medicine do you belong?" asked the Birds.

"I am a Miaulopathist," said the Cat.

"Did you ever practise Gohomoeopathy?" the Birds inquired, winking faintly.

The Cat took the hint and his leave.

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Mercury and the Woodchopper

A Woodchopper, who had dropped his axe into a deep pool, besought Mercury to recover it for him. That thoughtless deity immediately plunged into the pool, which became so salivated that the trees about its margin all came loose and dropped out.

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The Fox and the Grapes

A Fox, seeing some sour grapes hanging within an inch of his nose, and being unwilling to admit that there was anything he would not eat, solemnly declared that they were out of his reach.

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The Penitent Thief

A Boy who had been taught by his Mother to steal grew to be a man and was a professional public official. One day he was taken in the act and condemned to die. While going to the place of execution he passed his Mother and said to her: “Behold your work! If you had not taught me to steal, I should not have come to this.”

“Indeed!” said the Mother. “And who, pray, taught you to be detected?”

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The Archer and the Eagle

An Eagle mortally wounded by an Archer was greatly comforted to observe that the arrow was feathered with one of his own quills.

"I should have felt bad, indeed," he said, "to think that any other eagle had a hand in this."

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Truth and the Traveller

A Man travelling in a desert met a Woman.

"Who art thou?" asked the Man, "and why dost thou dwell in this dreadful place?"

"My name," replied the Woman, "is Truth; and I live in the desert in order to be near my worshippers when they are driven from among their fellows. They all come, sooner or later."

"Well," said the Man, looking about, "the country doesn't seem to be very thickly settled here."

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The Wolf and the Lamb

A Lamb, pursued by a Wolf, fled into the temple.

"The priest will catch you and sacrifice you," said the Wolf, "if you remain there."

"It is just as well to be sacrificed by the priest as to be eaten by you," said the Lamb.

"My friend," said the Wolf, "it pains me to see you considering so great a question from a purely selfish point of view. It is not just as well for me."

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The Lion and the Boar

A Lion and a Boar, who were fighting for water at a pool, saw some vultures hovering significantly above them. “Let us make up our quarrel,” said the Boar, “or these fellows will get one of us, sure.”

“I should not so much mind that,” replied the Lion, “if they would get the right one. However, I am willing to stop fighting, and then perhaps I can grab a vulture. I like chicken better than pork, anyhow.”

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The Grasshopper and the Ant

One day in winter a hungry Grasshopper applied to an Ant for some of the food which they had stored.

“Why,” said the Ant, “did you not store up some food for yourself, instead of singing all the time?”

“So I did,” said the Grasshopper; “so I did; but you fellows broke in and carried it all away.”

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The Fisher and the Fished

A Fisherman who had caught a very small Fish was putting it in his basket when it said: “I pray you put me back into the stream, for I can be of no use to you; the gods do not eat fish.”

“But I am no god,” said the Fisherman.

“True,” said the Fish, “but as soon as Jupiter has heard of your exploit, he will elevate you to the deitage. You are the only man that ever caught a small fish.”

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The Farmer and the Fox

A Farmer who had a deadly and implacable hatred against a certain Fox, caught him and tied some tow to his tail; then carrying him to the centre of his own grain-field, set the tow on fire and let the animal go.

“Alas!” said the Farmer, seeing the result; “if that grain had not been heavily insured, I might have had to dissemble my hatred of the Fox.”

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Dame Fortune and the Traveller

A Weary Traveller who had lain down and fallen asleep on the brink of a deep well was discovered by Dame Fortune.

“If this fool,” she said, “should have an uneasy dream and roll into the well men would say that I did it. It is painful to me to be unjustly accused, and I shall see that I am not.”

So saying she rolled the man into the well.

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The Victor and the Victim

Two Game Cocks, having fought a battle, the defeated one skulked away and hid, but the victor mounted a wall and crowed lustily. This attracted the attention of a hawk, who said: “Behold! how pride goeth before a fall.”

So he swooped down upon the boasting bird and was about to destroy him, when the vanquished Cock came out of his hiding-place, and between the two the Hawk was calamitously defeated.

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The Wolf and the Shepherds

A Wolf passing a Shepherd's hut looked in and saw the shepherds dining.

"Come in," said one of them, ironically, "and partake of your favourite dish, a haunch of mutton."

"Thank you," said the Wolf, moving away, "but you must excuse me; I have just had a saddle of shepherd."

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The Goose and the Swan

A Certain rich man reared a Goose and a Swan, the one for his table, the other because she was reputed a good singer. One night when the Cook went to kill the Goose he got hold of the Swan instead. Thereupon the Swan, to induce him to spare her life, began to sing; but she saved him nothing but the trouble of killing her, for she died of the song.

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The Lion, the Cock, and the Ass

A Lion was about to attack a braying Ass, when a Cock near by crowed shrilly, and the Lion ran away. “What frightened him?” the Ass asked.

“Lions have a superstitious terror of my voice,” answered the Cock, proudly.

“Well, well, well,” said the Ass, shaking his head; “I should think that any animal that is afraid of your voice and doesn’t mind mine must have an uncommon kind of ear.”

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The Snake and the Swallow

A Swallow who had built her nest in a court of justice reared a fine family of young birds. One day a Snake came out of a chink in the wall and was about to eat them. The Just Judge at once issued an injunction, and making an order for their removal to his own house, ate them himself.

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The Wolves and the Dogs

"Why should there be strife between us?" said the Wolves to the Sheep. "It is all owing to those quarrelsome dogs. Dismiss them, and we shall have peace."

"You seem to think," replied the Sheep, "that it is an easy thing to dismiss dogs. Have you always found it so?"

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The Hen and the Vipers

A Hen who had patiently hatched out a brood of vipers, was accosted by a Swallow, who said: “What a fool you are to give life to creatures who will reward you by destroying you.”

“I am a little bit on the destroy myself,” said the Hen, tranquilly swallowing one of the little reptiles; “and it is not an act of folly to provide oneself with the delicacies of the season.”

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A Seasonable Joke

A Spendthrift, seeing a single swallow, pawned his cloak, thinking that Summer was at hand. It was.

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The Lion and the Thorn

A Lion roaming through the forest, got a thorn in his foot, and, meeting a Shepherd, asked him to remove it. The Shepherd did so, and the Lion, having just surfeited himself on another shepherd, went away without harming him. Some time afterward the Shepherd was condemned on a false accusation to be cast to the lions in the amphitheatre. When they were about to devour him, one of them said: “This is the man who removed the thorn from my foot.”

Hearing this, the others honourably abstained, and the claimant ate the Shepherd all himself.

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The Fawn and the Buck

A Fawn said to its father: “You are larger, stronger, and more active than a dog, and you have sharp horns. Why do you run away when you hear one barking?”

“Because, my child,” replied the Buck, “my temper is so uncertain that if I permit one of those noisy creatures to come into my presence I am likely to forget myself and do him an injury.”

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The Kite, the Pigeons, and the Hawk

Some Pigeons exposed to the attacks of a Kite asked a Hawk to defend them. He consented, and being admitted into the cote waited for the Kite, whom he fell upon and devoured. When he was so surfeited that he could scarcely move, the grateful Pigeons scratched out his eyes.

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The Wolf and the Babe

A Famishing Wolf, passing the door of a cottage in the forest, heard a Mother say to her babe: “Be quiet, or I will throw you out of the window, and the wolves will get you.”

So he waited all day below the window, growing more hungry all the time. But at night the Old Man, having returned from the village club, threw out both Mother and Child.

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The Wolf and the Ostrich

A Wolf, who in devouring a man had choked himself with a bunch of keys, asked an ostrich to put her head down his throat and pull them out, which she did.

"I suppose," said the Wolf, "you expect payment for that service."

"A kind act," replied the Ostrich, "is its own reward; I have eaten the keys."

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The Herdsman and the Lion

A Herdsman who had lost a bullock entreated the gods to bring him the thief, and vowed he would sacrifice a goat to them. Just then a Lion, his jaws dripping with bullock's blood, approached the Herdsman.

"I thank you, good deities," said the Herdsman, continuing his prayer, "for showing me the thief. And now if you will take him away, I will stand another goat."

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The Man and the Viper

A Man finding a frozen Viper put it into his bosom.

"The coldness of the human heart," he said, with a grin, "will keep the creature in his present condition until I can reach home and revive him on the coals."

But the pleasures of hope so fired his heart that the Viper thawed, and sliding to the ground thanked the Man civilly for his hospitality and glided away.

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The Man and the Eagle

An Eagle was once captured by a Man, who clipped his wings and put him in the poultry yard, along with the chickens. The Eagle was much depressed in spirits by the change.

"Why should you not rather rejoice?" said the Man. "You were only an ordinary fellow as an eagle; but as an old rooster you are a fowl of incomparable distinction."

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The War-horse and the Miller

Having heard that the State was about to be invaded by a hostile army, a War-horse belonging to a Colonel of the Militia offered his services to a passing Miller.

"No," said the patriotic Miller, "I will employ no one who deserts his position in the hour of danger. It is sweet to die for one's country."

Something in the sentiment sounded familiar, and, looking at the Miller more closely the War-horse recognised his master in disguise.

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The Dog and the Reflection

A Dog passing over a stream on a plank saw his reflection in the water.

“You ugly brute!” he cried; “how dare you look at me in that insolent way.”

He made a grab in the water, and, getting hold of what he supposed was the other dog’s lip, lifted out a fine piece of meat which a butcher’s boy had dropped into the stream.

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The Man and the Fish-horn

A Truthful Man, finding a musical instrument in the road, asked the name of it, and was told that it was a fish-horn. The next time he went fishing he set his nets and blew the fish-horn all day to charm the fish into them; but at nightfall there were not only no fish in his nets, but none along that part of the coast. Meeting a friend while on his way home he was asked what luck he had had.

“Well,” said the Truthful Man, “the weather is not right for fishing, but it’s a red-letter day for music.”

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The Hare and the Tortoise

A Hare having ridiculed the slow movements of a Tortoise, was challenged by the latter to run a race, a Fox to go to the goal and be the judge. They got off well together, the hare at the top of her speed, the Tortoise, who had no other intention than making his antagonist exert herself, going very leisurely. After sauntering along for some time he discovered the Hare by the wayside, apparently asleep, and seeing a chance to win pushed on as fast as he could, arriving at the goal hours afterward, suffering from extreme fatigue and claiming the victory.

“Not so,” said the Fox; “the Hare was here long ago, and went back to cheer you on your way.”

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Hercules and the Carter

A Carter was driving a waggon loaded with a merchant’s goods, when the wheels stuck in a rut. Thereupon he began to pray to Hercules, without other exertion.

“Indolent fellow!” said Hercules; “you ask me to help you, but will not help yourself.”

So the Carter helped himself to so many of the most valuable goods that the horses easily ran away with the remainder.

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The Lion and the Bull

A Lion wishing to lure a Bull to a place where it would be safe to attack him, said: “My friend, I have killed a fine sheep; will you come with me and partake of the mutton?”

“With pleasure,” said the Bull, “as soon as you have refreshed yourself a little for the journey. Pray have some grass.”

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The Man and his Goose

“See these valuable golden eggs,” said a Man that owned a Goose. “Surely a Goose which can lay such eggs as those must have a gold mine inside her.”

So he killed the Goose and cut her open, but found that she was just like any other goose. Moreover, on examining the eggs that she had laid he found they were just like any other eggs.

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The Wolf and the Feeding Goat

A Wolf saw a Goat feeding at the summit of a rock, where he could not get at her.

"Why do you stay up there in that sterile place and go hungry?" said the Wolf. "Down here where I am the broken-bottle vine cometh up as a flower, the celluloid collar blossoms as the rose, and the tin-can tree brings forth after its kind."

"That is true, no doubt," said the Goat, "but how about the circus-poster crop? I hear that it failed this year down there."

The Wolf, perceiving that he was being chaffed, went away and resumed his duties at the doors of the poor.

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Jupiter and the Birds

Jupiter commanded all the birds to appear before him, so that he might choose the most beautiful to be their king. The ugly jackdaw, collecting all the fine feathers which had fallen from the other birds, attached them to his own body and appeared at the examination, looking very gay. The other birds, recognising their own borrowed plumage, indignantly protested, and began to strip him.

"Hold!" said Jupiter; "this self-made bird has more sense than any of you. He is your king."

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The Lion and the Mouse

A Lion who had caught a Mouse was about to kill him, when the Mouse said:

"If you will spare my life, I will do as much for you some day."

The Lion, good-naturedly let him go. It happened shortly afterwards that the Lion was caught by some hunters and bound with cords. The Mouse, passing that way, and seeing that his benefactor was helpless, gnawed off his tail.

The Old Man and His Sons

An Old Man, afflicted with a family of contentious Sons, brought in a bundle of sticks and asked the young men to break it. After repeated efforts they confessed that it could not be done. "Behold," said the Old Man, "the advantage of unity; as long as these sticks are in alliance they are invincible, but observe how feeble they are individually."

Pulling a single stick from the bundle, he broke it easily upon the head of the eldest Son, and this he repeated until all had been served.

The Crab and His Son

A Logical Crab said to his Son, “Why do you not walk straight forward? Your sidelong gait is singularly ungraceful.”

“Why don’t you walk straight forward yourself,” said the Son.

“Erring youth,” replied the Logical Crab, “you are introducing new and irrelevant matter.”

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The North Wind and the Sun

The Sun and the North Wind disputed which was the more powerful, and agreed that he should be declared victor who could the sooner strip a traveller of his clothes. So they waited until a traveller came by. But the traveller had been indiscreet enough to stay over night at a summer hotel, and had no clothes.

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The Mountain and the Mouse

A Mountain was in labour, and the people of seven cities had assembled to watch its movements and hear its groans. While they waited in breathless expectancy out came a Mouse.

"Oh, what a baby!" they cried in derision.

"I may be a baby," said the Mouse, gravely, as he passed outward through the forest of shins, "but I know tolerably well how to diagnose a volcano."

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The Bellamy and the Members

The Members of a body of Socialists rose in insurrection against their Bellamy.

“Why,” said they, “should we be all the time tucking you out with food when you do nothing to tuck us out?”

So, resolving to take no further action, they went away, and looking backward had the satisfaction to see the Bellamy compelled to sell his own book.

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Old Saws with New Teeth

Certain Ancient Fables Applied to the Life of Our Times

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The Wolf and the Crane

A Rich Man wanted to tell a certain lie, but the lie was of such monstrous size that it stuck in his throat; so he employed an Editor to write it out and publish it in his paper as an editorial. But when the Editor presented his bill, the Rich Man said: “Be content — is it nothing that I refrained from advising you about investments?”

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The Lion and the Mouse

A Judge was awakened by the noise of a lawyer prosecuting a Thief. Rising in wrath he was about to sentence the Thief to life imprisonment when the latter said: “I beg that you will set me free, and I will some day requite your kindness.”

Pleased and flattered to be bribed, although by nothing but an empty promise, the Judge let him go. Soon afterward he found that it was more than an empty promise, for, having become a Thief, he was himself set free by the other, who had become a Judge.

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The Hares and the Frogs

The Members of a Legislature, being told that they were the meanest thieves in the world, resolved to commit suicide. So they bought shrouds, and laying them in a convenient place prepared to cut their throats. While they were grinding their razors some Tramps passing that way stole the shrouds.

"Let us live, my friends," said one of the Legislators to the others; "the world is better than we thought. It contains meaner thieves than we."

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The Belly and the Members

Some Workingmen employed in a shoe factory went on a strike, saying: “Why should we continue to work to feed and clothe our employer when we have none too much to eat and wear ourselves?”

The Manufacturer, seeing that he could get no labour for a long time and finding the times pretty hard anyhow, burned down his shoe factory for the insurance, and when the strikers wanted to resume work there was no work to resume. So they boycotted a tanner.

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The Piping Fisherman

An Editor who was always vaunting the purity, enterprise, and fearlessness of his paper was pained to observe that he got no subscribers. One day it occurred to him to stop saying that his paper was pure and enterprising and fearless, and make it so. “If these are not good qualities,” he reasoned, “it is folly to claim them.”

Under the new policy he got so many subscribers that his rivals endeavoured to discover the secret of his prosperity, but he kept it, and when he died it died with him.

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The Ants and the Grasshopper

Some Members of a Legislature were making schedules of their wealth at the end of the session, when an Honest Miner came along and asked them to divide with him. The members of the Legislature inquired: “Why did you not acquire property of your own?”

“Because,” replied the Honest Miner, “I was so busy digging out gold that I had no leisure to lay up something worth while.”

Then the Members of the Legislature derided him, saying:

“If you waste your time in profitless amusement, you cannot, of course, expect to share the rewards of industry.”

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The Dog and His Reflection

A State Official carrying off the Dome of the Capitol met the Ghost of his predecessor, who had come out of his political grave to warn him that God saw him. As the place of meeting was lonely and the time midnight, the State Official set down the Dome of the Capitol, and commanded the supposed traveller to throw up his hands. The Ghost replied that he had not eaten them, and while he was explaining the situation another State Official silently added the dome to his own collection.

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The Lion, the Bear, and the Fox

Two Thieves having stolen a Piano and being unable to divide it fairly without a remainder went to law about it and continued the contest as long as either one could steal a dollar to bribe the judge. When they could give no more an Honest Man came along and by a single small payment obtained a judgment and took the Piano home, where his daughter used it to develop her biceps muscles, becoming a famous pugiliste.

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The Ass and the Lion’s Skin

A Member of the State Militia stood at a street corner, scowling stormily, and the people passing that way went a long way around him, thinking of the horrors of war. But presently, in order to terrify them still more, he strode toward them, when, his sword entangling his legs, he fell upon the field of glory, and the people passed over him singing their sweetest songs.

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The Ass and the Grasshoppers

A Statesman heard some Labourers singing at their work, and wishing to be happy too, asked them what made them so.

“Honesty,” replied the Labourers.

So the Statesman resolved that he too would be honest, and the result was that he died of want.

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The Wolf and the Lion

An Indian who had been driven out of a fertile valley by a White Settler, said:

"Now that you have robbed me of my land, there is nothing for me to do but issue invitations to a war-dance."

"I don't so much mind your dancing," said the White Settler, putting a fresh cartridge into his rifle, "but if you attempt to make me dance you will become a good Indian lamented by all who didn't know you. How did *you* get this land, anyhow?"

The Indian's claim was compromised for a plug hat and a tin horn.

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The Hare and the Tortoise

Of two Writers one was brilliant but indolent; the other though dull, industrious. They set out for the goal of fame with equal opportunities. Before they died the brilliant one was detected in seventy languages as the author of but two or three books of fiction and poetry, while the other was honoured in the Bureau of Statistics of his native land as the compiler of sixteen volumes of tabulated information relating to the domestic hog.

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The Milkmaid and Her Bucket

A Senator fell to musing as follows: “With the money which I shall get for my vote in favour of the bill to subsidise cat-ranches, I can buy a kit of burglar’s tools and open a bank. The profit of that enterprise will enable me to obtain a long, low, black schooner, raise a death’s~head flag and engage in commerce on the high seas. From my gains in that business I can pay for the Presidency, which at $50,000 a year will give me in four years—” but it took him so long to make the calculation that the bill to subsidise cat-ranches passed without his vote, and he was compelled to return to his constituents an honest man, tormented with a clean conscience.

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King Log and King Stork

The People being dissatisfied with a Democratic Legislature, which stole no more than they had, elected a Republican one, which not only stole all they had but exacted a promissory note for the balance due, secured by a mortgage upon their hope of death.

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The Wolf Who Would Be a Lion

A Foolish Fellow who had been told that he was a great man believed it, and got himself appointed a Commissioner to the Interasylum Exposition of Preserved Idiots. At the first meeting of the Board he was mistaken for one of the exhibits, and the janitor was ordered to remove him to his appropriate glass case.

"Alas!" he exclaimed as he was carried out, "why was I not content to remain where the cut of my forehead is so common as to be known as the Pacific Slope?"

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The Monkey and the Nuts

A Certain City desiring to purchase a site for a public Deformatory procured an appropriation from the Government of the country. Deeming this insufficient for purchase of the site and payment of reasonable commissions to themselves, the men in charge of the matter asked for a larger sum, which was readily given. Believing that the fountain could not be dipped dry, they applied for still more and more yet. Wearied at last by their importunities, the Government said it would be damned if it gave anything. So it gave nothing and was damned all the harder.

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The Boys and the Frogs

Some editors of newspapers were engaged in diffusing general intelligence and elevating the moral sentiment of the public. They had been doing this for some time, when an Eminent Statesman stuck his head out of the pool of politics, and, speaking for the members of his profession, said: “My friends, I beg you will desist. I know you make a great deal of money by this kind of thing, but consider the damage you inflict upon the business of others!”

FANTASTIC FABLES

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NEGLIGIBLE TALES

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A Bottomless Grave

My name is John Brenwalter. My father, a drunkard, had a patent for an invention, for making coffee-berries out of clay; but he was an honest man and would not himself engage in the manufacture. He was, therefore, only moderately wealthy, his royalties from his really valuable invention bringing him hardly enough to pay his expenses of litigation with rogues guilty of infringement. So I lacked many advantages enjoyed by the children of unscrupulous and dishonorable parents, and had it not been for a noble and devoted mother, who neglected all my brothers and sisters and personally supervised my education, should have grown up in ignorance and been compelled to teach school. To be the favorite child of a good woman is better than gold.

When I was nineteen years of age my father had the misfortune to die. He had always had perfect health, and his death, which occurred at the dinner table without a moment’s warning, surprised no one more than himself. He had that very morning been notified that a patent had been granted him for a device to burst open safes by hydraulic pressure, without noise. The Commissioner of Patents had pronounced it the most ingenious, effective and generally meritorious invention that had ever been submitted to him, and my father had naturally looked forward to an old age of prosperity and honor. His sudden death was, therefore, a deep disappointment to him; but my mother, whose piety and resignation to the will of Heaven were conspicuous virtues of her character, was apparently less affected. At the close of the meal, when my poor father’s body had been removed from the floor, she called us all into an adjoining room and addressed us as follows:

“My children, the uncommon occurrence that you have just witnessed is one of the most disagreeable incidents in a good man’s life, and one in which I take little pleasure, I assure you. I beg you to believe that I had no hand in bringing it about. Of course,” she added, after a pause, during which her eyes were cast down in deep thought, “of course it is better that he is dead.”

She uttered this with so evident a sense of its obviousness as a self-evident truth that none of us had the courage to brave her surprise by asking an explanation. My mother’s air of surprise when any of us went wrong in any way was very terrible to us. One day, when in a fit of peevish temper, I had taken the liberty to cut off the baby’s ear, her simple words, “John, you surprise me!”

appeared to me so sharp a reproof that after a sleepless night I went to her in tears, and throwing myself at her feet, exclaimed: “Mother, forgive me for surprising you.” So now we all — including the one-eared baby — felt that it would keep matters smoother to accept without question the statement that it was better, somehow, for our dear father to be dead. My mother continued:

“I must tell you, my children, that in a case of sudden and mysterious death the law requires the Coroner to come and cut the body into pieces and submit them to a number of men who, having inspected them, pronounce the person dead. For this the Coroner gets a large sum of money. I wish to avoid that painful formality in this instance; it is one which never had the approval of — of the remains. John” — here my mother turned her angel face to me-”you are an educated lad, and very discreet. You have now an opportunity to show your gratitude for all the sacrifices that your education has entailed upon the rest of us. John, go and remove the Coroner.”

Inexpressibly delighted by this proof of my mother’s confidence, and by the chance to distinguish myself by an act that squared with my natural disposition, I knelt before her, carried her hand to my lips and bathed it with tears of sensibility. Before five o’clock that afternoon I had removed the Coroner.

I was immediately arrested and thrown into jail, where I passed a most uncomfortable night, being unable to sleep because of the profanity of my fellow-prisoners, two clergymen, whose theological training had given them a fertility of impious ideas and a command of blasphemous language altogether unparalleled. But along toward morning the jailer, who, sleeping in an adjoining room, had been equally disturbed, entered the cell and with a fearful oath warned the reverend gentlemen that if he heard any more swearing their sacred calling would not prevent him from turning them into the street. After that they moderated their objectionable conversation, substituting an accordion, and I slept the peaceful and refreshing sleep of youth and innocence.

The next morning I was taken before the Superior Judge, sitting as a committing magistrate, and put upon my preliminary examination. I pleaded not guilty, adding that the man whom I had murdered was a notorious Democrat. (My good mother was a Republican, and from early childhood I had been carefully instructed by her in the principles of honest government and the necessity of suppressing factional opposition.) The Judge, elected by a Republican ballot-box with a sliding bottom, was visibly impressed by the cogency of my plea and offered me a cigarette.

“May it please your Honor,” began the District Attorney, “I do not deem it necessary to submit any evidence in this case. Under the law of the land you sit here as a committing magistrate. It is therefore your duty to commit. Testimony and argument alike would imply a doubt that your Honor means to perform your sworn duty. That is my case."

My counsel, a brother of the deceased Coroner, rose and said: "May it please the Court, my learned friend on the other side has so well and eloquently stated the law governing in this case that it only remains for me to inquire to what extent it has been already complied with. It is true, your Honor is a committing magistrate, and as such it is your duty to commit — what? That is a matter which the law has wisely and justly left to your own discretion, and wisely you have discharged already every obligation that the law imposes. Since I have known your Honor you have done nothing but commit. You have committed embracery, theft, arson, perjury, adultery, murder — every crime in the calendar and every excess known to the sensual and depraved, including my learned friend, the District Attorney. You have done your whole duty as a committing magistrate, and as there is no evidence against this worthy young man, my client, I move that he be discharged."

An impressive silence ensued. The Judge arose, put on the black cap and in a voice trembling with emotion sentenced me to life and liberty. Then turning to my counsel he said, coldly but significantly:

"I will see you later."

The next morning the lawyer who had so conscientiously defended me against a charge of murdering his own brother — with whom he had a quarrel about some land — had disappeared and his fate is to this day unknown.

In the meantime my poor father's body had been secretly buried at midnight in the back yard of his late residence, with his late boots on and the contents of his late stomach unanalyzed. "He was opposed to display," said my dear mother, as she finished tamping down the earth above him and assisted the children to litter the place with straw; "his instincts were all domestic and he loved a quiet life."

My mother's application for letters of administration stated that she had good reason to believe that the deceased was dead, for he had not come home to his meals for several days; but the Judge of the Crowbait Court — as she ever afterward contemptuously called it — decided that the proof of death was insufficient, and put the estate into the hands of the Public Administrator, who was his son-in-law. It was found that the liabilities were exactly balanced by the assets; there was left only the patent for the device for bursting open safes without noise, by hydraulic pressure and this had passed into the ownership of the Probate Judge and the Public Administrator — as my dear mother preferred to spell it. Thus, within a few brief months a worthy and respectable family was reduced from prosperity to crime; necessity compelled us to go to work.

In the selection of occupations we were governed by a variety of considerations, such as personal fitness, inclination, and so forth. My mother opened a select private school for instruction in the art of changing the spots upon leopard-skin rugs; my eldest brother, George Henry, who had a turn for music, became a bugler in a neighboring asylum for deaf mutes; my sister, Mary Maria, took orders for Professor Pumpernickel's Essence of Latchkeys for flavoring mineral springs, and I set up as an adjuster and gilder of crossbeams for gibbets. The other children, too young for labor, continued to steal small articles exposed in front of shops, as they had been taught.

In our intervals of leisure we decoyed travelers into our house and buried the bodies in a cellar.

In one part of this cellar we kept wines, liquors and provisions. From the rapidity of their disappearance we acquired the superstitious belief that the spirits of the persons buried there came at dead of night and held a festival. It was at least certain that frequently of a morning we would discover fragments of pickled meats, canned goods and such débris, littering the place, although it had been securely locked and barred against human intrusion. It was proposed to remove the provisions and store them elsewhere, but our dear mother, always generous and hospitable, said it was better to endure the loss than risk exposure: if the ghosts were denied this trifling gratification they might set on foot an investigation, which would overthrow our scheme of the division of labor, by diverting the energies of the whole family into the single industry pursued by me — we might all decorate the crossbeams of gibbets. We accepted her decision with filial submission, due to our reverence for her wordly wisdom and the purity of her character.

One night while we were all in the cellar — none dared to enter it alone — engaged in bestowing upon the Mayor of an adjoining town the solemn offices of Christian burial, my mother and the younger children, holding a candle each, while George Henry and I labored with a spade and pick, my sister Mary Maria uttered a shriek and covered her eyes with her hands. We were all dreadfully startled and the Mayor's obsequies were instantly suspended, while with pale faces and in trembling tones we begged her to say what had alarmed her. The younger children were so agitated that they held their candles unsteadily, and the waving shadows of our figures danced with uncouth and grotesque movements on the walls and flung themselves into the most uncanny attitudes. The face of the dead man, now gleaming ghastly in the light, and now extinguished by some floating shadow, appeared at each emergence to have taken on a new and more forbidding expression, a maligner menace. Frightened even more than ourselves by the girl's scream, rats raced in multitudes about the place, squeaking shrilly, or starred the black opacity of some distant corner with steadfast eyes, mere points of green light, matching the faint phosphorescence of decay that filled the half-dug grave and seemed the visible manifestation of that faint odor of mortality which tainted the unwholesome air. The children now sobbed and clung about the limbs of their elders, dropping their candles, and we were near being left in total darkness, except for that sinister light, which slowly welled upward from the disturbed earth and overflowed the edges of the grave like a fountain.

Meanwhile my sister, crouching in the earth that had been thrown out of the excavation, had removed her hands from her face and was staring with expanded eyes into an obscure space between two wine casks.

"There it is! — there it is!" she shrieked, pointing; "God in heaven! can't you see it?"

And there indeed it was! — a human figure, dimly discernible in the gloom — a figure that wavered from side to side as if about to fall, clutching at the wine-casks for support, had stepped unsteadily forward and for one moment stood revealed in the light of our remaining candles; then it surged heavily and fell prone upon the earth. In that moment we had all recognized the figure, the face and bearing of our father — dead these ten months and buried by our own hands! — our father indubitably risen and ghastly drunk!

On the incidents of our precipitate flight from that horrible place — on the extinction of all human sentiment in that tumultuous, mad scramble up the damp and mouldy stairs — slipping, falling, pulling one another down and clambering over one another's back — the lights extinguished, babes trampled beneath the feet of their strong brothers and hurled backward to death by a mother's arm! — on all this I do not dare to dwell. My mother, my eldest brother and sister and I escaped; the others remained below, to perish of their wounds, or of their terror — some, perhaps, by flame. For within an hour we four, hastily gathering together what money and jewels we had and what clothing we could carry, fired the dwelling and fled by its light into the hills. We did not even pause to collect the insurance, and my dear mother said on her death-bed, years afterward in a distant land, that this was the only sin of omission that lay upon her conscience. Her confessor, a holy man, assured her that under the circumstances Heaven would pardon the neglect.

About ten years after our removal from the scenes of my childhood I, then a prosperous forger, returned in disguise to the spot with a view to obtaining, if possible, some treasure belonging to us, which had been buried in the cellar. I may say that I was unsuccessful: the discovery of many human bones in the ruins had set the authorities digging for more. They had found the treasure and had kept it for their honesty. The house had not been rebuilt; the whole suburb was, in fact, a desolation. So many unearthly sights and sounds had been reported thereabout that nobody would live there. As there was none to question nor molest, I resolved to gratify my filial piety by gazing once more upon the face of my beloved father, if indeed our eyes had deceived us and he was still in his grave. I remembered, too, that he had always worn an enormous diamond ring, and never having seen it nor heard of it since his death, I had reason to think he might have been buried in it. Procuring a spade, I soon located the grave in what had been the backyard and began digging. When I had got down about four feet the whole bottom fell out of the grave and I was precipitated into a large drain, falling through a long hole in its crumbling arch. There was no body, nor any vestige of one.

Unable to get out of the excavation, I crept through the drain, and having with some difficulty removed a mass of charred rubbish and blackened masonry that choked it, emerged into what had been that fateful cellar.

All was clear. My father, whatever had caused him to be “taken bad” at his meal (and I think my sainted mother could have thrown some light upon that matter) had indubitably been buried alive. The grave having been accidentally dug above the forgotten drain, and down almost to the crown of its arch, and no coffin having been used, his struggles on reviving had broken the rotten masonry and he had fallen through, escaping finally into the cellar. Feeling that he was not welcome in his own house, yet having no other, he had lived in subterranean seclusion, a witness to our thrift and a pensioner on our providence. It was he who had eaten our food; it was he who had drunk our wine — he was no better than a thief! In a moment of intoxication, and feeling, no doubt, that need of companionship which is the one sympathetic link between a drunken man and his race, he had left his place of concealment at a strangely inopportune time, entailing the most deplorable consequences upon those nearest and dearest to him — a blunder that had almost the dignity of crime.

Jupiter Doke, Brigadier-General

From the Secretary of War to the Hon. Jupiter Doke, Hardpan Crossroads, Posey County, Illinois.

WASHINGTON, November 3, 1861.

Having faith in your patriotism and ability, the President has been pleased to appoint you a brigadier-general of volunteers. Do you accept?

From the Hon. Jupiter Doke to the Secretary of War.

HARDPAN, ILLINOIS, November 9, 1861.

It is the proudest moment of my life. The office is one which should be neither sought nor declined. In times that try men’s souls the patriot knows no North, no South, no East, no West. His motto should be: “My country, my whole country and nothing but my country.” I accept the great trust confided in me by a free and intelligent people, and with a firm reliance on the principles of constitutional liberty, and invoking the guidance of an all-wise Providence, Ruler of Nations, shall labor so to discharge it as to leave no blot upon my political escutcheon. Say to his Excellency, the successor of the immortal Washington in the Seat of Power, that the patronage of my office will be bestowed with an eye single to securing the greatest good to the greatest number, the stability of republican institutions and the triumph of the party in all elections; and to this I pledge my life, my fortune and my sacred honor. I shall at once prepare an appropriate response to the speech of the chairman of the committee deputed to inform me of my appointment, and I trust the sentiments therein expressed will strike a sympathetic chord in the public heart, as well as command the Executive approval.

From the Secretary of War to Major-General Blount Wardorg, Commanding the Military Department of Eastern Kentucky.

WASHINGTON, November 14, 1861.

I have assigned to your department Brigadier-General Jupiter Doke, who will soon proceed to Distilleryville, on the Little Buttermilk River, and take command of the Illinois Brigade at that point, reporting to you by letter for orders. Is the route from Covington by way of Bluegrass, Opossum Corners and Horsecave still infested with bushwhackers, as reported in your last dispatch? I have a plan for cleaning them out.

From Major-General Blount Wardorg to the Secretary of War.

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, November 20, 1861.

The name and services of Brigadier-General Doke are unfamiliar to me, but I shall be pleased to have the advantage of his skill. The route from Covington to Distilleryville *via* Opossum Corners and Horsecave I have been compelled to abandon to the enemy, whose guerilla warfare made it possible to keep it open without detaching too many troops from the front. The brigade at Distilleryville is supplied by steamboats up the Little Buttermilk.

From the Secretary of War to Brigadier-General Jupiter Doke, Hardpan, Illinois.

WASHINGTON, November 26, 1861.

I deeply regret that your commission had been forwarded by mail before the receipt of your letter of acceptance; so we must dispense with the formality of official notification to you by a committee. The President is highly gratified by the noble and patriotic sentiments of your letter, and directs that you proceed at once to your command at Distilleryville, Kentucky, and there report by letter to Major-General Wardorg at Louisville, for orders. It is important that the strictest secrecy be observed regarding your movements until you have passed Covington, as it is desired to hold the enemy in front of Distilleryville until you are within three days of him. Then if your approach is known it will operate as a demonstration against his right and cause him to strengthen it with his left now at Memphis, Tennessee, which it is desirable to capture first. Go by way of Bluegrass, Opossum Corners and Horsecave. All officers are expected to be in full uniform when *en route* to the front.

From Brigadier-General Jupiter Doke to the Secretary of War.

COVINGTON, KENTUCKY, December 7, 1861.

I arrived yesterday at this point, and have given my proxy to Joel Briller, Esq., my wife’s cousin, and a staunch Republican, who will worthily represent Posey County in field and forum. He points with pride to a stainless record in the halls of legislation, which have often echoed to his soul-stirring eloquence on questions which lie at the very foundation of popular government. He has been called the Patrick Henry of Hardpan, where he has done yeoman’s service in the cause of civil and religious liberty. Mr. Briller left for Distilleryville last evening, and the standard bearer of the Democratic host confronting that stronghold of freedom will find him a lion in his path. I have been asked to remain here and deliver some addresses to the people in a local contest involving issues of paramount importance. That duty being performed, I shall in person enter the arena of armed debate and move in the direction of the heaviest firing, burning my ships behind me. I forward by this mail to his Excellency the President a request for the appointment of my son, Jabez Leonidas Doke, as postmaster at Hardpan. I would take it, sir, as a great favor if you would give the application a strong oral indorsement, as the appointment is in the line of reform. Be kind enough to inform me what are the emoluments of the office I hold in the military arm, and if they are by salary or fees. Are there any perquisites? My mileage account will be transmitted monthly.

From Brigadier-General Jupiter Doke to Major General Blount Wardorg.

DISTILLERYVILLE, KENTUCKY, January 12, 1862.

I arrived on the tented field yesterday by steamboat, the recent storms having inundated the landscape, covering, I understand, the greater part of a congressional district. I am pained to find that Joel Briller, Esq., a prominent citizen of Posey County, Illinois, and a far-seeing statesman who held my proxy, and who a month ago should have been thundering at the gates of Disunion, has not been heard from, and has doubtless been sacrificed upon the altar of his country. In him the American people lose a bulwark of freedom. I would respectfully move that you designate a committee to draw up resolutions of respect to his memory, and that the office holders and men under your command wear the usual badge of mourning for thirty days. I shall at once place myself at the head of affairs here, and am now ready to entertain any suggestions which you may make, looking to the better enforcement of the laws in this commonwealth. The militant Democrats on the other side of the river appear to be contemplating extreme measures. They have two large cannons facing this way, and yesterday morning, I am told, some of them came down to the water's edge and remained in session for some time, making infamous allegations.

From the Diary of Brigadier-General Jupiter Doke, at Distilleryville, Kentucky.

January 12, 1862. — On my arrival yesterday at the Henry Clay Hotel (named in honor of the late far-seeing statesman) I was waited on by a delegation consisting of the three colonels intrusted with the command of the regiments of my brigade. It was an occasion that will be memorable in the political annals of America. Forwarded copies of the speeches to the Posey *Maverick*, to be spread upon the record of the ages. The gentlemen composing the delegation unanimously reaffirmed their devotion to the principles of national unity and the Republican party. Was gratified to recognize in them men of political prominence and untarnished escutcheons. At the subsequent banquet, sentiments of lofty patriotism were expressed. Wrote to Mr. Wardorg at Louisville for instructions.

January 13, 1862. — Leased a prominent residence (the former incumbent being absent in arms against his country) for the term of one year, and wrote at once for Mrs. Brigadier-General Doke and the vital issues — excepting Jabez Leonidas. In the camp of treason opposite here there are supposed to be three thousand misguided men laying the ax at the root of the tree of liberty. They have a clear majority, many of our men having returned without leave to their constituents. We could probably not poll more than two thousand votes. Have advised my heads of regiments to make a canvass of those remaining, all bolters to be read out of the phalanx.

January 14, 1862. — Wrote to the President, asking for the contract to supply this command with firearms and regalia through my brother-in-law, prominently identified with the manufacturing interests of the country. Club of cannon soldiers arrived at Jayhawk, three miles back from here, on their way to join us in battle array. Marched my whole brigade to Jayhawk to escort them into town, but their chairman, mistaking us for the opposing party, opened fire on the head of the procession and by the extraordinary noise of the cannon balls (I had no conception of it!) so frightened my horse that I was unseated without a contest. The meeting adjourned in disorder and returning to camp I found that a deputation of the enemy had crossed the river in our absence and made a division of the loaves and fishes. Wrote to the President, applying for the Gubernatorial Chair of the Territory of Idaho.

From Editorial Article in the Posey, Illinois, "Maverick," January 20, 1862.

Brigadier-General Doke's thrilling account, in another column, of the Battle of Distilleryville will make the heart of every loyal Illinoisian leap with exultation. The brilliant exploit marks an era in military history, and as General Doke says, "lays broad and deep the foundations of American prowess in arms." As none of the troops engaged, except the gallant author-chieftain (a host in himself) hails from Posey County, he justly considered that a list of the fallen would only occupy our valuable space to the exclusion of more important matter, but his account of the strategic ruse by which he apparently abandoned his camp and so inveigled a perfidious enemy into it for the purpose of murdering the sick, the unfortunate *countertempus* at Jayhawk, the subsequent dash upon a trapped enemy flushed with a supposed success, driving their terrified legions across an impassable river which precluded pursuit — all these "moving accidents by flood and field" are related with a pen of fire and have all the terrible interest of romance.

Verily, truth is stranger than fiction and the pen is mightier than the sword. When by the graphic power of the art preservative of all arts we are brought face to face with such glorious events as these, the *Maverick's* enterprise in securing for its thousands of readers the services of so distinguished a contributor as the Great Captain who made the history as well as wrote it seems a matter of almost secondary importance. For President in 1864 (subject to the decision of the Republican National Convention) Brigadier-General Jupiter Doke, of Illinois!

From Major-General Blount Wardorg to Brigadier-General Jupiter Doke.

LOUISVILLE, January 22, 1862.

Your letter apprising me of your arrival at Distilleryville was delayed in transmission, having only just been received (open) through the courtesy of the Confederate department commander under a flag of truce. He begs me to assure you that he would consider it an act of cruelty to trouble you, and I think it would be. Maintain, however, a threatening attitude, but at the least pressure retire. Your position is simply an outpost which it is not intended to hold.

From Major-General Blount Wardorg to the Secretary of War.

LOUISVILLE, January 23, 1862.

I have certain information that the enemy has concentrated twenty thousand troops of all arms on the Little Buttermilk. According to your assignment, General Doke is in command of the small brigade of raw troops opposing them. It is no part of my plan to contest the enemy's advance at that point, but I cannot hold myself responsible for any reverses to the brigade mentioned, under its present commander. I think him a fool.

From the Secretary of War to Major-General Blount Wardorg.

WASHINGTON, February 1, 1862.

The President has great faith in General Doke. If your estimate of him is correct, however, he would seem to be singularly well placed where he now is, as your plans appear to contemplate a considerable sacrifice for whatever advantages you expect to gain.

From Brigadier-General Jupiter Doke to Major-General Blount Wardorg.

DISTILLERYVILLE, February 1, 1862.

To-morrow I shall remove my headquarters to Jayhawk in order to point the way whenever my brigade retires from Distilleryville, as foreshadowed by your letter of the 22d ult. I have appointed a Committee on Retreat, the minutes of whose first meeting I transmit to you. You will perceive that the committee having been duly organized by the election of a chairman and secretary, a resolution (prepared by myself) was adopted, to the effect that in case treason again raises her hideous head on this side of the river every man of the brigade is to mount a mule, the procession to move promptly in the direction of Louisville and the loyal North. In preparation for such an emergency I have for some time been collecting mules from the resident Democracy, and have on hand 2300 in a field at Jayhawk. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty!

From Major-General Gibeon J. Buxter, C.S.A., to the Confederate Secretary of War.

BUNG STATION, KENTUCKY, February 4, 1862.

On the night of the 2d inst., our entire force, consisting of 25,000 men and thirty-two field pieces, under command of Major-General Simmons B. Flood, crossed by a ford to the north side of Little Buttermilk River at a point three miles above Distilleryville and moved obliquely down and away from the stream, to strike the Covington turnpike at Jayhawk; the object being, as you know, to capture Covington, destroy Cincinnati and occupy the Ohio Valley. For some months there had been in our front only a small brigade of undisciplined troops, apparently without a commander, who were useful to us, for by not disturbing them we could create an impression of our weakness. But the movement on Jayhawk having isolated them, I was about to detach an Alabama regiment to bring them in, my division being the leading one, when an earth-shaking rumble was felt and heard, and suddenly the head-of-column was struck by one of the terrible tornadoes for which this region is famous, and utterly annihilated. The tornado, I believe, passed along the entire length of the road back to the ford, dispersing or destroying our entire army; but of this I cannot be sure, for I was lifted from the earth insensible and blown back to the south side of the river. Continuous firing all night on the north side and the reports of such of our men as have recrossed at the ford convince me that the Yankee brigade has exterminated the disabled survivors. Our loss has been uncommonly heavy. Of my own division of 15,000 infantry, the casualties — killed, wounded, captured, and missing — are 14,994. Of General Dolliver Billow’s division, 11,200 strong, I can find but two officers and a nigger cook. Of the artillery, 800 men, none has reported on this side of the river. General Flood is dead. I have assumed command of the expeditionary force, but owing to the heavy losses have deemed it advisable to contract my line of supplies as rapidly as possible. I shall push southward to-morrow morning early. The purposes of the campaign have been as yet but partly accomplished.

From Major-General Dolliver Billows, C.S.A., to the Confederate Secretary of War.

BUHAC, KENTUCKY, February 5, 1862.

... But during the 2d they had, unknown to us, been reinforced by fifty thousand cavalry, and being apprised of our movement by a spy, this vast body was drawn up in the darkness at Jayhawk, and as the head of our column reached that point at about 11 P.M., fell upon it with astonishing fury, destroying the division of General Buxter in an instant. General Baumschank’s brigade of artillery, which was in the rear, may have escaped — I did not wait to see, but withdrew my division to the river at a point several miles above the ford, and at daylight ferried it across on two fence rails lashed together with a suspender. Its losses, from an effective strength of 11,200, are 11,199. General Buxter is dead. I am changing my base to Mobile, Alabama.

From Brigadier-General Schneddeker Baumschank, C.S.A., to the Confederate Secretary of War.

IODINE, KENTUCKY, February 6, 1862.

... Yoost den somdings occur, I know nod vot it vos — somdings mackneefcent, but it vas nod vor — und I finds meinselluf, afder leedle viles, in dis blace, midout a hors und mit no men und goons. Sheneral Peelows is deadt, You will blease be so goot as to resign me — I vights no more in a dam gontry vere I gets vipped und knows nod how it vos done.

Resolutions of Congress, February 15, 1862.

Resolved, That the thanks of Congress are due, and hereby tendered, to Brigadier-General Jupiter Doke and the gallant men under his command for their unparalleled feat of attacking — themselves only 2000 strong — an army of 25,000 men and utterly overthrowing it, killing 5327, making prisoners of 19,003, of whom more than half were wounded, taking 32 guns, 20,000 stand of small arms and, in short, the enemy’s entire equipment.

Resolved, That for this unexampled victory the President be requested to designate a day of thanksgiving and public celebration of religious rites in the various churches.

Resolved, That he be requested, in further commemoration of the great event, and in reward of the gallant spirits whose deeds have added such imperishable lustre to the American arms, to appoint, with the advice and consent of the Senate, the following officer:

One major-general.

Statement of Mr. Hannibal Alcazar Peyton, of Jayhawk, Kentucky.

Dat wus a almighty dark night, sho’, and dese yere ole eyes aint wuf shuks, but I’s got a year like a sque’l, an’ w’en I cotch de mummer o’ v’ices I knowed dat gang b’long on de far side o’ de ribber. So I jes’ runs in de house an’ wakes Marse Doke an’ tells him: “Skin outer dis fo’ yo’ life!” An’ de Lo’d bress my soul! ef dat man didn’ go right fru de winder in his shir’ tail an’ break for to cross de mule patch! An’ dem twenty-free hunerd mules dey jes’ t’nk it is de debble hese’f wid de brandin’ iron, an’ dey bu’st outen dat patch like a yarthquake, an’ pile inter de upper ford road, an’ flash down it five deep, an’ it full o’ Con-fed’rates from en’ to en’!...

The Widower Turmore

The circumstances under which Joram Turmore became a widower have never been popularly understood. I know them, naturally, for I am Joram Turmore; and my wife, the late Elizabeth Mary Turmore, is by no means ignorant of them; but although she doubtless relates them, yet they remain a secret, for not a soul has ever believed her.

When I married Elizabeth Mary Johnin she was very wealthy, otherwise I could hardly have afforded to marry, for I had not a cent, and Heaven had not put into my heart any intention to earn one. I held the Professorship of Cats in the University of Graymaulkin, and scholastic pursuits had unfitted me for the heat and burden of business or labor. Moreover, I could not forget that I was a Turmore — a member of a family whose motto from the time of William of Normandy has been *Laborare est errare*. The only known infraction of the sacred family tradition occurred when Sir Aldebaran Turmore de Peters-Turmore, an illustrious master burglar of the seventeenth century, personally assisted at a difficult operation undertaken by some of his workmen. That blot upon our escutcheon cannot be contemplated without the most poignant mortification.

My incumbency of the Chair of Cats in the Graymaulkin University had not, of course, been marked by any instance of mean industry. There had never, at any one time, been more than two students of the Noble Science, and by merely repeating the manuscript lectures of my predecessor, which I had found among his effects (he died at sea on his way to Malta) I could sufficiently sate their famine for knowledge without really earning even the distinction which served in place of salary.

Naturally, under the straitened circumstances, I regarded Elizabeth Mary as a kind of special Providence. She unwisely refused to share her fortune with me, but for that I cared nothing; for, although by the laws of that country (as is well known) a wife has control of her separate property during her life, it passes to the husband at her death; nor can she dispose of it otherwise by will. The mortality among wives is considerable, but not excessive.

Having married Elizabeth Mary and, as it were, ennobled her by making her a Turmore, I felt that the manner of her death ought, in some sense, to match her social distinction. If I should remove her by any of the ordinary marital methods I should incur a just reproach, as one destitute of a proper family pride. Yet I could not hit upon a suitable plan.

In this emergency I decided to consult the Turmore archives, a priceless collection of documents, comprising the records of the family from the time of its founder in the seventh century of our era. I knew that among these sacred muniments I should find detailed accounts of all the principal murders committed by my sainted ancestors for forty generations. From that mass of papers I could hardly fail to derive the most valuable suggestions.

The collection contained also most interesting relics. There were patents of nobility granted to my forefathers for daring and ingenious removals of pretenders to thrones, or occupants of them; stars, crosses and other decorations attesting services of the most secret and unmentionable character; miscellaneous gifts from the world's greatest conspirators, representing an intrinsic money value beyond computation. There were robes, jewels, swords of honor, and every kind of "testimonials of esteem"; a king's skull fashioned into a wine cup; the title deeds to vast estates, long alienated by confiscation, sale, or abandonment; an illuminated breviary that had belonged to Sir Aldebaran Turmore de Peters-Turmore of accursed memory; embalmed ears of several of the family's most renowned enemies; the small intestine of a certain unworthy Italian statesman inimical to Turmores, which, twisted into a jumping rope, had served the youth of six kindred generations — mementoes and souvenirs precious beyond the appraisals of imagination, but by the sacred mandates of tradition and sentiment forever inalienable by sale or gift.

As the head of the family, I was custodian of all these priceless heirlooms, and for their safe keeping had constructed in the basement of my dwelling a strong-room of massive masonry, whose solid stone walls and single iron door could defy alike the earthquake's shock, the tireless assaults of Time, and Cupidity's unholy hand.

To this thesaurus of the soul, redolent of sentiment and tenderness, and rich in suggestions of crime, I now repaired for hints upon assassination. To my unspeakable astonishment and grief I found it empty! Every shelf, every chest, every coffer had been rifled. Of that unique and incomparable collection not a vestige remained! Yet I proved that until I had myself unlocked the massive metal door, not a bolt nor bar had been disturbed; the seals upon the lock had been intact.

I passed the night in alternate lamentation and research, equally fruitless, the mystery was impenetrable to conjecture, the pain invincible to balm. But never once throughout that dreadful night did my firm spirit relinquish its high design against Elizabeth Mary, and daybreak found me more resolute than before to harvest the fruits of my marriage. My great loss seemed but to bring me into nearer spiritual relations with my dead ancestors, and to lay upon me a new and more inevitable obedience to the suasion that spoke in every globule of my blood.

My plan of action was soon formed, and procuring a stout cord I entered my wife's bedroom finding her, as I expected, in a sound sleep. Before she was awake, I had her bound fast, hand and foot. She was greatly surprised and pained, but heedless of her remonstrances, delivered in a high key, I carried her into the now rifled strong-room, which I had never suffered her to enter, and of whose treasures I had not apprised her. Seating her, still bound, in an angle of the wall, I passed the next two days and nights in conveying bricks and mortar to the spot, and on the morning of the third day had her securely walled in, from floor to ceiling. All this time I gave no further heed to her pleas for mercy than (on her assurance of non-resistance, which I am bound to say she honorably observed) to grant her the freedom of her limbs. The space allowed her was about four feet by six. As I inserted the last bricks of the top course, in contact with the ceiling of the strong-room, she bade me farewell with what I deemed the composure of despair, and I rested from my work, feeling that I had faithfully observed the traditions of an ancient and illustrious family. My only bitter reflection, so far as my own conduct was concerned, came of the consciousness that in the performance of my design I had labored; but this no living soul would ever know.

After a night's rest I went to the Judge of the Court of Successions and Inheritances and made a true and sworn relation of all that I had done — except that I ascribed to a servant the manual labor of building the wall. His honor appointed a court commissioner, who made a careful examination of the work, and upon his report Elizabeth Mary Turmore was, at the end of a week, formally pronounced dead. By due process of law I was put into possession of her estate, and although this was not by hundreds of thousands of dollars as valuable as my lost treasures, it raised me from poverty to affluence and brought me the respect of the great and good.

Some six months after these events strange rumors reached me that the ghost of my deceased wife had been seen in several places about the country, but always at a considerable distance from Graymaulkin. These rumors, which I was unable to trace to any authentic source, differed widely in many particulars, but were alike in ascribing to the apparition a certain high degree of apparent worldly prosperity combined with an audacity most uncommon in ghosts. Not only was the spirit attired in most costly raiment, but it walked at noonday, and even drove! I was inexpressibly annoyed by these reports, and thinking there might be something more than superstition in the popular belief that only the spirits of the unburied dead still walk the earth, I took some workmen equipped with picks and crowbars into the now long unentered strong-room, and ordered them to demolish the brick wall that I had built about the partner of my joys. I was resolved to give the body of Elizabeth Mary such burial as I thought her immortal part might be willing to accept as an equivalent to the privilege of ranging at will among the haunts of the living.

In a few minutes we had broken down the wall and, thrusting a lamp through the breach, I looked in. Nothing! Not a bone, not a lock of hair, not a shred of clothing — the narrow space which, upon my affidavit, had been legally declared to hold all that was mortal of the late Mrs. Turmore was absolutely empty! This amazing disclosure, coming upon a mind already overwrought with too much of mystery and excitement, was more than I could bear. I shrieked aloud and fell in a fit. For months afterward I lay between life and death, fevered and delirious; nor did I recover until my physician had had the providence to take a case of valuable jewels from my safe and leave the country.

The next summer I had occasion to visit my wine cellar, in one corner of which I had built the now long disused strong-room. In moving a cask of Madeira I struck it with considerable force against the partition wall, and was surprised to observe that it displaced two large square stones forming a part of the wall.

Applying my hands to these, I easily pushed them out entirely, and looking through saw that they had fallen into the niche in which I had immured my lamented wife; facing the opening which their fall left, and at a distance of four feet, was the brickwork which my own hands had made for that unfortunate gentlewoman’s restraint. At this significant revelation I began a search of the wine cellar. Behind a row of casks I found four historically interesting but intrinsically valueless objects:

First, the mildewed remains of a ducal robe of state (Florentine) of the eleventh century; second, an illuminated vellum breviary with the name of Sir Aldebaran Turmore de Peters-Turmore inscribed in colors on the title page; third, a human skull fashioned into a drinking cup and deeply stained with wine; fourth, the iron cross of a Knight Commander of the Imperial Austrian Order of Assassins by Poison.

That was all — not an object having commercial value, no papers — nothing. But this was enough to clear up the mystery of the strong-room. My wife had early divined the existence and purpose of that apartment, and with the skill amounting to genius had effected an entrance by loosening the two stones in the wall.

Through that opening she had at several times abstracted the entire collection, which doubtless she had succeeded in converting into coin of the realm. When with an unconscious justice which deprives me of all satisfaction in the memory I decided to build her into the wall, by some malign fatality I selected that part of it in which were these movable stones, and doubtless before I had fairly finished my bricklaying she had removed them and, slipping through into the wine cellar, replaced them as they were originally laid. From the cellar she had easily escaped unobserved, to enjoy her infamous gains in distant parts. I have endeavored to procure a warrant, but the Lord High Baron of the Court of Indictment and Conviction reminds me that she is legally dead, and says my only course is to go before the Master in Cadavery and move for a writ of disinterment and constructive revival. So it looks as if I must suffer without redress this great wrong at the hands of a woman devoid alike of principle and shame.

The City of the Gone Away

I was born of poor because honest parents, and until I was twenty-three years old never knew the possibilities of happiness latent in another person's coin. At that time Providence threw me into a deep sleep and revealed to me in a dream the folly of labor. "Behold," said a vision of a holy hermit, "the poverty and squalor of your lot and listen to the teachings of nature. You rise in the morning from your pallet of straw and go forth to your daily labor in the fields. The flowers nod their heads in friendly salutation as you pass. The lark greets you with a burst of song. The early sun sheds his temperate beams upon you, and from the dewy grass you inhale an atmosphere cool and grateful to your lungs. All nature seems to salute you with the joy of a generous servant welcoming a faithful master. You are in harmony with her gentlest mood and your soul sings within you. You begin your daily task at the plow, hopeful that the noonday will fulfill the promise of the morn, maturing the charms of the landscape and confirming its benediction upon your spirit. You follow the plow until fatigue invokes repose, and seating yourself upon the earth at the end of your furrow you expect to enjoy in fulness the delights of which you did but taste.

"Alas! the sun has climbed into a brazen sky and his beams are become a torrent. The flowers have closed their petals, confining their perfume and denying their colors to the eye. Coolness no longer exhales from the grass: the dew has vanished and the dry surface of the fields repeats the fierce heat of the sky. No longer the birds of heaven salute you with melody, but the jay harshly upbraids you from the edge of the copse. Unhappy man! all the gentle and healing ministrations of nature are denied you in punishment of your sin. You have broken the First Commandment of the Natural Decalogue: you have labored!"

Awakening from my dream, I collected my few belongings, bade adieu to my erring parents and departed out of that land, pausing at the grave of my grandfather, who had been a priest, to take an oath that never again, Heaven helping me, would I earn an honest penny.

How long I traveled I know not, but I came at last to a great city by the sea, where I set up as a physician. The name of that place I do not now remember, for such were my activity and renown in my new profession that the Aldermen, moved by pressure of public opinion, altered it, and thenceforth the place was known as the City of the Gone Away. It is needless to say that I had no knowledge of medicine, but by securing the service of an eminent forger I obtained a diploma purporting to have been granted by the Royal Quackery of Charlatanic Empiricism at Hoodos, which, framed in immortelles and suspended by a bit of *crêpe* to a willow in front of my office, attracted the ailing in great numbers. In connection with my dispensary I conducted one of the largest undertaking establishments ever known, and as soon as my means permitted, purchased a wide tract of land and made it into a cemetery. I owned also some very profitable marble works on one side of the gateway to the cemetery, and on the other an extensive flower garden. My Mourner's Emporium was patronized by the beauty, fashion and sorrow of the city. In short, I was in a very prosperous way of business, and within a year was able to send for my parents and establish my old father very comfortably as a receiver of stolen goods — an act which I confess was saved from the reproach of filial gratitude only by my exaction of all the profits.

But the vicissitudes of fortune are avoidable only by practice of the sternest indigence: human foresight cannot provide against the envy of the gods and the tireless machinations of Fate. The widening circle of prosperity grows weaker as it spreads until the antagonistic forces which it has pushed back are made powerful by compression to resist and finally overwhelm. So great grew the renown of my skill in medicine that patients were brought to me from all the four quarters of the globe. Burdensome invalids whose tardiness in dying was a perpetual grief to their friends; wealthy testators whose legatees were desirous to come by their own; superfluous children of penitent parents and dependent parents of frugal children; wives of husbands ambitious to remarry and husbands of wives without standing in the courts of divorce — these and all conceivable classes of the surplus population were conducted to my dispensary in the City of the Gone Away. They came in incalculable multitudes.

Government agents brought me caravans of orphans, paupers, lunatics and all who had become a public charge. My skill in curing orphanism and pauperism was particularly acknowledged by a grateful parliament.

Naturally, all this promoted the public prosperity, for although I got the greater part of the money that strangers expended in the city, the rest went into the channels of trade, and I was myself a liberal investor, purchaser and employer, and a patron of the arts and sciences. The City of the Gone Away grew so rapidly that in a few years it had inclosed my cemetery, despite its own constant growth. In that fact lay the lion that rent me.

The Aldermen declared my cemetery a public evil and decided to take it from me, remove the bodies to another place and make a park of it. I was to be paid for it and could easily bribe the appraisers to fix a high price, but for a reason which will appear the decision gave me little joy. It was in vain that I protested against the sacrilege of disturbing the holy dead, although this was a powerful appeal, for in that land the dead are held in religious veneration. Temples are built in their honor and a separate priesthood maintained at the public expense, whose only duty is performance of memorial services of the most solemn and touching kind. On four days in the year there is a Festival of the Good, as it is called, when all the people lay by their work or business and, headed by the priests, march in procession through the cemeteries, adorning the graves and praying in the temples. However bad a man's life may be, it is believed that when dead he enters into a state of eternal and inexpressible happiness. To signify a doubt of this is an offense punishable by death. To deny burial to the dead, or to exhume a buried body, except under sanction of law by special dispensation and with solemn ceremony, is a crime having no stated penalty because no one has ever had the hardihood to commit it.

All these considerations were in my favor, yet so well assured were the people and their civic officers that my cemetery was injurious to the public health that it was condemned and appraised, and with terror in my heart I received three times its value and began to settle up my affairs with all speed.

A week later was the day appointed for the formal inauguration of the ceremony of removing the bodies. The day was fine and the entire population of the city and surrounding country was present at the imposing religious rites. These were directed by the mortuary priesthood in full canonicals. There was propitiatory sacrifice in the Temples of the Once, followed by a processional pageant of great splendor, ending at the cemetery. The Great Mayor in his robe of state led the procession. He was armed with a golden spade and followed by one hundred male and female singers, clad all in white and chanting the Hymn to the Gone Away. Behind these came the minor priesthood of the temples, all the civic authorities, habited in their official apparel, each carrying a living pig as an offering to the gods of the dead. Of the many divisions of the line, the last was formed by the populace, with uncovered heads, sifting dust into their hair in token of humility. In front of the mortuary chapel in the midst of the necropolis, the Supreme Priest stood in gorgeous vestments, supported on each hand by a line of bishops and other high dignitaries of his prelacy, all frowning with the utmost austerity. As the Great Mayor paused in the Presence, the minor clergy, the civic authorities, the choir and populace closed in and encompassed the spot. The Great Mayor, laying his golden spade at the feet of the Supreme Priest, knelt in silence.

"Why comest thou here, presumptuous mortal?" said the Supreme Priest in clear, deliberate tones. "Is it thy unhallowed purpose with this implement to uncover the mysteries of death and break the repose of the Good?”

The Great Mayor, still kneeling, drew from his robe a document with portentous seals: “Behold, O ineffable, thy servant, having warrant of his people, entreateth at thy holy hands the custody of the Good, to the end and purpose that they lie in fitter earth, by consecration duly prepared against their coming.”

With that he placed in the sacerdotal hands the order of the Council of Aldermen decreeing the removal. Merely touching the parchment, the Supreme Priest passed it to the Head Necropolitan at his side, and raising his hands relaxed the severity of his countenance and exclaimed: “The gods comply.”

Down the line of prelates on either side, his gesture, look and words were successively repeated. The Great Mayor rose to his feet, the choir began a solemn chant and, opportunely, a funeral car drawn by ten white horses with black plumes rolled in at the gate and made its way through the parting crowd to the grave selected for the occasion — that of a high official whom I had treated for chronic incumbency. The Great Mayor touched the grave with his golden spade (which he then presented to the Supreme Priest) and two stalwart diggers with iron ones set vigorously to work.

At that moment I was observed to leave the cemetery and the country; for a report of the rest of the proceedings I am indebted to my sainted father, who related it in a letter to me, written in jail the night before he had the irreparable misfortune to take the kink out of a rope.

As the workmen proceeded with their excavation, four bishops stationed themselves at the corners of the grave and in the profound silence of the multitude, broken otherwise only by the harsh grinding sound of spades, repeated continuously, one after another, the solemn invocations and responses from the Ritual of the Disturbed, imploring the blessed brother to forgive. But the blessed brother was not there. Full fathom two they mined for him in vain, then gave it up. The priests were visibly disconcerted, the populace was aghast, for that grave was indubitably vacant.

After a brief consultation with the Supreme Priest, the Great Mayor ordered the workmen to open another grave. The ritual was omitted this time until the coffin should be uncovered. There was no coffin, no body.

The cemetery was now a scene of the wildest confusion and dismay. The people shouted and ran hither and thither, gesticulating, clamoring, all talking at once, none listening. Some ran for spades, fire-shovels, hoes, sticks, anything. Some brought carpenters’ adzes, even chisels from the marble works, and with these inadequate aids set to work upon the first graves they came to. Others fell upon the mounds with their bare hands, scraping away the earth as eagerly as dogs digging for marmots. Before nightfall the surface of the greater part of the cemetery had been upturned; every grave had been explored to the bottom and thousands of men were tearing away at the interspaces with as furious a frenzy as exhaustion would permit. As night came on torches were lighted, and in the sinister glare these frantic mortals, looking like a legion of fiends performing some unholy rite, pursued their disappointing work until they had devastated the entire area. But not a body did they find — not even a coffin.

The explanation is exceedingly simple. An important part of my income had been derived from the sale of *cadavres* to medical colleges, which never before had been so well supplied, and which, in added recognition of my services to science, had all bestowed upon me diplomas, degrees and fellowships without number. But their demand for *cadavres* was unequal to my supply: by even the most prodigal extravagances they could not consume the one-half of the products of my skill as a physician. As to the rest, I had owned and operated the most extensive and thoroughly appointed soapworks in all the country. The excellence of my “Toilet Homoline” was attested by certificates from scores of the saintliest theologians, and I had one in autograph from Badelina Fatti the most famous living soaprano.

The Major’s Tale

In the days of the Civil War practical joking had not, I think, fallen into that disrepute which characterizes it now. That, doubtless, was owing to our extreme youth — men were much younger than now, and evermore your very young man has a boisterous spirit, running easily to horse-play. You cannot think how young the men were in the early sixties! Why, the average age of the entire Federal Army was not more than twenty-five; I doubt if it was more than twenty-three, but not having the statistics on that point (if there are any) I want to be moderate: we will say twenty-five. It is true a man of twenty-five was in that heroic time a good deal more of a man than one of that age is now; you could see that by looking at him. His face had nothing of that unripeness so conspicuous in his successor. I never see a young fellow now without observing how disagreeably young he really is; but during the war we did not think of a man’s age at all unless he happened to be pretty well along in life. In that case one could not help it, for the unloveliness of age assailed the human countenance then much earlier than now; the result, I suppose, of hard service — perhaps, to some extent, of hard drink, for, bless my soul! we did shed the blood of the grape and the grain abundantly during the war. I remember thinking General Grant, who could not have been more than forty, a pretty well preserved old chap, considering his habits. As to men of middle age — say from fifty to sixty — why, they all looked fit to personate the Last of the Hittites, or the Madagascarene Methuselah, in a museum. Depend upon it, my friends, men of that time were greatly younger than men are to-day, but looked much older. The change is quite remarkable.

I said that practical joking had not then gone out of fashion. It had not, at least, in the army; though possibly in the more serious life of the civilian it had no place except in the form of tarring and feathering an occasional “copperhead.” You all know, I suppose, what a “copperhead” was, so I will go directly at my story without introductory remark, as is my way.

It was a few days before the battle of Nashville. The enemy had driven us up out of northern Georgia and Alabama. At Nashville we had turned at bay and fortified, while old Pap Thomas, our commander, hurried down reinforcements and supplies from Louisville. Meantime Hood, the Confederate commander, had partly invested us and lay close enough to have tossed shells into the heart of the town. As a rule he abstained — he was afraid of killing the families of his own soldiers, I suppose, a great many of whom had lived there. I sometimes wondered what were the feelings of those fellows, gazing over our heads at their own dwellings, where their wives and children or their aged parents were perhaps suffering for the necessaries of life, and certainly (so their reasoning would run) cowering under the tyranny and power of the barbarous Yankees.

To begin, then, at the beginning, I was serving at that time on the staff of a division commander whose name I shall not disclose, for I am relating facts, and the person upon whom they bear hardest may have surviving relatives who would not care to have him traced. Our headquarters were in a large dwelling which stood just behind our line of works. This had been hastily abandoned by the civilian occupants, who had left everything pretty much as it was — had no place to store it, probably, and trusted that Heaven would preserve it from Federal cupidity and Confederate artillery. With regard to the latter we were as solicitous as they.

Rummaging about in some of the chambers and closets one evening, some of us found an abundant supply of lady-gear — gowns, shawls, bonnets, hats, petticoats and the Lord knows what; I could not at that time have named the half of it. The sight of all this pretty plunder inspired one of us with what he was pleased to call an “idea,” which, when submitted to the other scamps and scapegraces of the staff, met with instant and enthusiastic approval. We proceeded at once to act upon it for the undoing of one of our comrades.

Our selected victim was an aide, Lieutenant Haberton, so to call him. He was a good soldier — as gallant a chap as ever wore spurs; but he had an intolerable weakness: he was a lady-killer, and like most of his class, even in those days, eager that all should know it. He never tired of relating his amatory exploits, and I need not say how dismal that kind of narrative is to all but the narrator. It would be dismal even if sprightly and vivacious, for all men are rivals in woman’s favor, and to relate your successes to another man is to rouse in him a dumb resentment, tempered by disbelief. You will not convince him that you tell the tale for his entertainment; he will hear nothing in it but an expression of your own vanity. Moreover, as most men, whether rakes or not, are willing to be thought rakes, he is very likely to resent a stupid and unjust inference which he suspects you to have drawn from his reticence in the matter of his own adventures — namely, that he has had none. If, on the other hand, he has had no scruple in the matter and his reticence is due to lack of opportunity to talk, or of nimbleness in taking advantage of it, why, then he will be surly because you “have the floor” when he wants it himself. There are, in short, no circumstances under which a man, even from the best of motives, or no motive at all, can relate his feats of love without distinctly lowering himself in the esteem of his male auditor; and herein lies a just punishment for such as kiss and tell. In my younger days I was myself not entirely out of favor with the ladies, and have a memory stored with much concerning them which doubtless I might put into acceptable narrative had I not undertaken another tale, and if it were not my practice to relate one thing at a time, going straight away to the end, without digression.

Lieutenant Haberton was, it must be confessed, a singularly handsome man with engaging manners. He was, I suppose, judging from the imperfect viewpoint of my sex, what women call “fascinating.” Now, the qualities which make a man attractive to ladies entail a double disadvantage. First, they are of a sort readily discerned by other men, and by none more readily than by those who lack them. Their possessor, being feared by all these, is habitually slandered by them in self-defense. To all the ladies in whose welfare they deem themselves entitled to a voice and interest they hint at the vices and general unworth of the “ladies’ man” in no uncertain terms, and to their wives relate without shame the most monstrous falsehoods about him. Nor are they restrained by the consideration that he is their friend; the qualities which have engaged their own admiration make it necessary to warn away those to whom the allurement would be a peril. So the man of charming personality, while loved by all the ladies who know him well, yet not too well, must endure with such fortitude as he may the consciousness that those others who know him only “by reputation” consider him a shameless reprobate, a vicious and unworthy man — a type and example of moral depravity. To name the second disadvantage entailed by his charms: he commonly is.

In order to get forward with our busy story (and in my judgment a story once begun should not suffer impedition) it is necessary to explain that a young fellow attached to our headquarters as an orderly was notably effeminate in face and figure. He was not more than seventeen and had a perfectly smooth face and large lustrous eyes, which must have been the envy of many a beautiful woman in those days. And how beautiful the women of those days were! and how gracious! Those of the South showed in their demeanor toward us Yankees something of *hauteur*, but, for my part, I found it less insupportable than the studious indifference with which one’s attentions are received by the ladies of this new generation, whom I certainly think destitute of sentiment and sensibility.

This young orderly, whose name was Arman, we persuaded — by what arguments I am not bound to say — to clothe himself in female attire and personate a lady. When we had him arrayed to our satisfaction — and a charming girl he looked — he was conducted to a sofa in the office of the adjutant-general. That officer was in the secret, as indeed were all excepting

Haberton and the general; within the awful dignity hedging the latter lay possibilities of disapproval which we were unwilling to confront.

When all was ready I went to Haberton and said: “Lieutenant, there is a young woman in the adjutant-general’s office. She is the daughter of the insurgent gentleman who owns this house, and has, I think, called to see about its present occupancy. We none of us know just how to talk to her, but we think perhaps you would say about the right thing — at least you will say things in the right way. Would you mind coming down?”

The lieutenant would not mind; he made a hasty toilet and joined me. As we were going along a passage toward the Presence we encountered a formidable obstacle — the general.

“I say, Broadwood,” he said, addressing me in the familiar manner which meant that he was in excellent humor, “there’s a lady in Lawson’s office. Looks like a devilish fine girl — came on some errand of mercy or justice, no doubt. Have the goodness to conduct her to my quarters. I won’t saddle you youngsters with *all* the business of this division,” he added facetiously.

This was awkward; something had to be done.

“General,” I said, “I did not think the lady’s business of sufficient importance to bother you with it. She is one of the Sanitary Commission’s nurses, and merely wants to see about some supplies for the smallpox hospital where she is on duty. I’ll send her in at once.”

“You need not mind,” said the general, moving on; “I dare say Lawson will attend to the matter.”

Ah, the gallant general! how little I thought, as I looked after his retreating figure and laughed at the success of my ruse, that within the week he would be “dead on the field of honor!” Nor was he the only one of our little military household above whom gloomed the shadow of the death angel, and who might almost have heard “the beating of his wings.” On that bleak December morning a few days later, when from an hour before dawn until ten o’clock we sat on horseback on those icy hills, waiting for General Smith to open the battle miles away to the right, there were eight of us. At the close of the fighting there were three. There is now one. Bear with him yet a little while, oh, thrifty generation; he is but one of the horrors of war strayed from his era into yours. He is only the harmless skeleton at your feast and peace-dance, responding to your laughter and your footing it featly, with rattling fingers and bobbing skull — albeit upon suitable occasion, with a partner of his choosing, he might do his little dance with the best of you.

As we entered the adjutant-general’s office we observed that the entire staff was there. The adjutant-general himself was exceedingly busy at his desk. The commissary of subsistence played cards with the surgeon in a bay window. The rest were in several parts of the room, reading or conversing in low tones. On a sofa in a half lighted nook of the room, at some distance from any of the groups, sat the "lady," closely veiled, her eyes modestly fixed upon her toes.

"Madam," I said, advancing with Haberton, "this officer will be pleased to serve you if it is in his power. I trust that it is."

With a bow I retired to the farther corner of the room and took part in a conversation going on there, though I had not the faintest notion what it was about, and my remarks had no relevancy to anything under the heavens. A close observer would have noticed that we were all intently watching Haberton and only "making believe" to do anything else.

He was worth watching, too; the fellow was simply an *édition de luxe* of "Turveydrop on Deportment." As the "lady" slowly unfolded her tale of grievances against our lawless soldiery and mentioned certain instances of wanton disregard of property rights — among them, as to the imminent peril of bursting our sides we partly overheard, the looting of her own wardrobe — the look of sympathetic agony in Haberton's handsome face was the very flower and fruit of histrionic art. His deferential and assenting nods at her several statements were so exquisitely performed that one could not help regretting their unsubstantial nature and the impossibility of preserving them under glass for instruction and delight of posterity. And all the time the wretch was drawing his chair nearer and nearer. Once or twice he looked about to see if we were observing, but we were in appearance blankly oblivious to all but one another and our several diversions. The low hum of our conversation, the gentle tap-tap of the cards as they fell in play and the furious scratching of the adjutant-general's pen as he turned off countless pages of words without sense were the only sounds heard. No — there was another: at long intervals the distant boom of a heavy gun, followed by the approaching rush of the shot. The enemy was amusing himself.

On these occasions the lady was perhaps not the only member of that company who was startled, but she was startled more than the others, sometimes rising from the sofa and standing with clasped hands, the authentic portrait of terror and irresolution. It was no more than natural that Haberton should at these times reseat her with infinite tenderness, assuring her of her safety and regretting her peril in the same breath. It was perhaps right that he should finally possess himself of her gloved hand and a seat beside her on the sofa; but it certainly was highly improper for him to be in the very act of possessing himself of *both* hands when — boom, *whiz*, BANG!

We all sprang to our feet. A shell had crashed into the house and exploded in the room above us. Bushels of plaster fell among us. That modest and murmurous young lady sprang erect.

“Jumping Jee-rusalem!” she cried.

Haberton, who had also risen, stood as one petrified — as a statue of himself erected on the site of his assassination. He neither spoke, nor moved, nor once took his eyes off the face of Orderly Arman, who was now flinging his girl-gear right and left, exposing his charms in the most shameless way; while out upon the night and away over the lighted camps into the black spaces between the hostile lines rolled the billows of our inexhaustible laughter! Ah, what a merry life it was in the old heroic days when men had not forgotten how to laugh!

Haberton slowly came to himself. He looked about the room less blankly; then by degrees fashioned his visage into the sickliest grin that ever libeled all smiling. He shook his head and looked knowing.

“You can’t fool *me*!” he said.

Curried Cow

My Aunt Patience, who tilled a small farm in the state of Michigan, had a favorite cow. This creature was not a good cow, nor a profitable one, for instead of devoting a part of her leisure to secretion of milk and production of veal she concentrated all her faculties on the study of kicking. She would kick all day and get up in the middle of the night to kick. She would kick at anything — hens, pigs, posts, loose stones, birds in the air and fish leaping out of the water; to this impartial and catholic-minded beef, all were equal — all similarly undeserving. Like old Timotheus, who "raised a mortal to the skies," was my Aunt Patience's cow; though, in the words of a later poet than Dryden, she did it "more harder and more frequently." It was pleasing to see her open a passage for herself through a populous barnyard. She would flash out, right and left, first with one hind-leg and then with the other, and would sometimes, under favoring conditions, have a considerable number of domestic animals in the air at once.

Her kicks, too, were as admirable in quality as inexhaustible in quantity. They were incomparably superior to those of the untutored kine that had not made the art a life study — mere amateurs that kicked "by ear," as they say in music. I saw her once standing in the road, professedly fast asleep, and mechanically munching her cud with a sort of Sunday morning lassitude, as one munches one's cud in a dream. Snouting about at her side, blissfully unconscious of impending danger and wrapped up in thoughts of his sweetheart, was a gigantic black hog — a hog of about the size and general appearance of a yearling rhinoceros. Suddenly, while I looked — without a visible movement on the part of the cow — with never a perceptible tremor of her frame, nor a lapse in the placid regularity of her chewing — that hog had gone away from there — had utterly taken his leave. But away toward the pale horizon a minute black speck was traversing the empyrean with the speed of a meteor, and in a moment had disappeared, without audible report, beyond the distant hills. It may have been that hog.

Currying cows is not, I think, a common practice, even in Michigan; but as this one had never needed milking, of course she had to be subjected to some equivalent form of persecution; and irritating her skin with a currycomb was thought as disagreeable an attention as a thoughtful affection could devise. At least she thought it so; though I suspect her mistress really meant it for the good creature's temporal advantage. Anyhow my aunt always made it a condition to the employment of a farm-servant that he should curry the cow every morning; but after just enough trials to convince himself that it was not a sudden spasm, nor a mere local disturbance, the man would always give notice of an intention to quit, by pounding the beast half-dead with some foreign body and then limping home to his couch. I don't know how many men the creature removed from my aunt's employ in this way, but judging from the number of lame persons in that part of the country, I should say a good many; though some of the lameness may have been taken at second-hand from the original sufferers by their descendants, and some may have come by contagion.

I think my aunt's was a faulty system of agriculture. It is true her farm labor cost her nothing, for the laborers all left her service before any salary had accrued; but as the cow's fame spread abroad through the several States and Territories, it became increasingly difficult to obtain hands; and, after all, the favorite was imperfectly curried. It was currently remarked that the cow had kicked the farm to pieces — a rude metaphor, implying that the land was not properly cultivated, nor the buildings and fences kept in adequate repair.

It was useless to remonstrate with my aunt: she would concede everything, amending nothing. Her late husband had attempted to reform the abuse in this manner, and had had the argument all his own way until he had remonstrated himself into an early grave; and the funeral was delayed all day, until a fresh undertaker could be procured, the one originally engaged having confidingly undertaken to curry the cow at the request of the widow.

Since that time my Aunt Patience had not been in the matrimonial market; the love of that cow had usurped in her heart the place of a more natural and profitable affection. But when she saw her seeds unsown, her harvests ungarnered, her fences overtopped with rank brambles and her meadows gorgeous with the towering Canada thistle she thought it best to take a partner.

When it transpired that my Aunt Patience intended wedlock there was intense popular excitement. Every adult single male became at once a marrying man. The criminal statistics of Badger county show that in that single year more marriages occurred than in any decade before or since. But none of them was my aunt's. Men married their cooks, their laundresses, their deceased wives' mothers, their enemies' sisters — married whomsoever would wed; and any man who, by fair means or courtship, could not obtain a wife went before a justice of the peace and made an affidavit that he had some wives in Indiana. Such was the fear of being married alive by my Aunt Patience.

Now, where my aunt's affection was concerned she was, as the reader will have already surmised, a rather determined woman; and the extraordinary marrying epidemic having left but one eligible male in all that county, she had set her heart upon that one eligible male; then she went and carted him to her home. He turned out to be a long Methodist parson, named Huggins.

Aside from his unconscionable length, the Rev. Berosus Huggins was not so bad a fellow, and was nobody's fool. He was, I suppose, the most ill-favored mortal, however, in the whole northern half of America — thin, angular, cadaverous of visage and solemn out of all reason. He commonly wore a low-crowned black hat, set so far down upon his head as partly to eclipse his eyes and wholly obscure the ample glory of his ears. The only other visible article of his attire (except a brace of wrinkled cowskin boots, by which the word "polish" would have been considered the meaningless fragment of a lost language) was a tight-fitting black frock-coat, preternaturally long in the waist, the skirts of which fell about his heels, sopping up the dew. This he always wore snugly buttoned from the throat downward. In this attire he cut a tolerably spectral figure. His aspect was so conspicuously unnatural and inhuman that whenever he went into a cornfield, the predatory crows would temporarily forsake their business to settle upon him in swarms, fighting for the best seats upon his person, by way of testifying their contempt for the weak inventions of the husbandman.

The day after the wedding my Aunt Patience summoned the Rev. Berosus to the council chamber, and uttered her mind to the following intent:

"Now, Huggy, dear, I'll tell you what there is to do about the place. First, you must repair all the fences, clearing out the weeds and repressing the brambles with a strong hand. Then you will have to exterminate the Canadian thistles, mend the wagon, rig up a plow or two, and get things into ship-shape generally. This will keep you out of mischief for the better part of two years; of course you will have to give up preaching, for the present. As soon as you have — O! I forgot poor Phœbe. She" ——

"Mrs. Huggins," interrupted her solemn spouse, "I shall hope to be the means, under Providence, of effecting all needful reforms in the husbandry of this farm. But the sister you mention (I trust she is not of the world's people) — have I the pleasure of knowing her? The name, indeed, sounds familiar, but" ——

"Not know Phœbe!" cried my aunt, with unfeigned astonishment; "I thought everybody in Badger knew Phœbe. Why, you will have to scratch her legs, every blessed morning of your natural life!"

"I assure you, madam," rejoined the Rev. Berosus, with dignity, "it would yield me a hallowed pleasure to minister to the spiritual needs of sister Phœbe, to the extent of my feeble and unworthy ability; but, really, I fear the merely secular ministration of which you speak must be entrusted to abler and, I would respectfully suggest, female hands."

“Whyyy, youuu ooold, foooool!” replied my aunt, spreading her eyes with unbounded amazement, “Phœbe is a *cow*!”

“In that case,” said the husband, with unruffled composure, “it will, of course, devolve upon me to see that her carnal welfare is properly attended to; and I shall be happy to bestow upon her legs such time as I may, without sin, snatch from my strife with Satan and the Canadian thistles.”

With that the Rev. Mr. Huggins crowded his hat upon his shoulders, pronounced a brief benediction upon his bride, and betook himself to the barnyard.

Now, it is necessary to explain that he had known from the first who Phœbe was, and was familiar, from hearsay, with all her sinful traits. Moreover, he had already done himself the honor of making her a visit, remaining in the vicinity of her person, just out of range, for more than an hour and permitting her to survey him at her leisure from every point of the compass. In short, he and Phœbe had mutually reconnoitered and prepared for action.

Amongst the articles of comfort and luxury which went to make up the good parson’s *dot*, and which his wife had already caused to be conveyed to his new home, was a patent cast-iron pump, about seven feet high. This had been deposited near the barnyard, preparatory to being set up on the planks above the barnyard well. Mr. Huggins now sought out this invention and conveying it to its destination put it into position, screwing it firmly to the planks. He next divested himself of his long gaberdine and his hat, buttoning the former loosely about the pump, which it almost concealed, and hanging the latter upon the summit of the structure. The handle of the pump, when depressed, curved outwardly between the coat-skirts, singularly like a tail, but with this inconspicuous exception, any unprejudiced observer would have pronounced the thing Mr. Huggins, looking uncommonly well.

The preliminaries completed, the good man carefully closed the gate of the barnyard, knowing that as soon as Phœbe, who was campaigning in the kitchen garden, should note the precaution she would come and jump in to frustrate it, which eventually she did. Her master, meanwhile, had laid himself, coatless and hatless, along the outside of the close board fence, where he put in the time pleasantly, catching his death of cold and peering through a knot-hole.

At first, and for some time, the animal pretended not to see the figure on the platform. Indeed she had turned her back upon it directly she arrived, affecting a light sleep. Finding that this stratagem did not achieve the success that she had expected, she abandoned it and stood for several minutes irresolute, munching her cud in a half-hearted way, but obviously thinking very hard. Then she began nosing along the ground as if wholly absorbed in a search for something that she had lost, tacking about hither and thither, but all the time drawing nearer to the object of her wicked intention. Arrived within speaking distance, she stood for a little while confronting the fraudful figure, then put out her nose toward it, as if to be caressed, trying to create the impression that fondling and dalliance were more to her than wealth, power and the plaudits of the populace — that she had been accustomed to them all her sweet young life and could not get on without them. Then she approached a little nearer, as if to shake hands, all the while maintaining the most amiable expression of countenance and executing all manner of seductive nods and winks and smiles. Suddenly she wheeled about and with the rapidity of lightning dealt out a terrible kick — a kick of inconceivable force and fury, comparable to nothing in nature but a stroke of paralysis out of a clear sky!

The effect was magical! Cows kick, not backward but sidewise. The impact which was intended to project the counterfeit theologian into the middle of the succeeding conference week reacted upon the animal herself, and it and the pain together set her spinning like a top. Such was the velocity of her revolution that she looked like a dim, circular cow, surrounded by a continuous ring like that of the planet Saturn — the white tuft at the extremity of her sweeping tail! Presently, as the sustaining centrifugal force lessened and failed, she began to sway and wabble from side to side, and finally, toppling over on her side, rolled convulsively on her back and lay motionless with all her feet in the air, honestly believing that the world had somehow got atop of her and she was supporting it at a great sacrifice of personal comfort. Then she fainted.

How long she lay unconscious she knew not, but at last she unclosed her eyes, and catching sight of the open door of her stall, “more sweet than all the landscape smiling near,” she struggled up, stood wavering upon three legs, rubbed her eyes, and was visibly bewildered as to the points of the compass. Observing the iron clergyman standing fast by its faith, she threw it a look of grieved reproach and hobbled heart-broken into her humble habitation, a subjugated cow.

For several weeks Phœbe’s right hind leg was swollen to a monstrous growth, but by a season of judicious nursing she was “brought round all right,” as her sympathetic and puzzled mistress phrased it, or “made whole,” as the reticent man of God preferred to say. She was now as tractable and inoffensive “in her daily walk and conversation” (Huggins) as a little child. Her new master used to take her ailing leg trustfully into his lap, and for that matter, might have taken it into his mouth if he had so desired. Her entire character appeared to be radically changed — so altered that one day my Aunt Patience, who, fondly as she loved her, had never before so much as ventured to touch the hem of her garment, as it were, went confidently up to her to soothe her with a pan of turnips. Gad! how thinly she spread out that good old lady upon the face of an adjacent stone wall! You could not have done it so evenly with a trowel.

A Revolt of the Gods

My father was a deodorizer of dead dogs, my mother kept the only shop for the sale of cats'-meat in my native city. They did not live happily; the difference in social rank was a chasm which could not be bridged by the vows of marriage. It was indeed an ill-assorted and most unlucky alliance; and as might have been foreseen it ended in disaster. One morning after the customary squabbles at breakfast, my father rose from the table, quivering and pale with wrath, and proceeding to the parsonage thrashed the clergyman who had performed the marriage ceremony. The act was generally condemned and public feeling ran so high against the offender that people would permit dead dogs to lie on their property until the fragrance was deafening rather than employ him; and the municipal authorities suffered one bloated old mastiff to utter itself from a public square in so clamorous an exhalation that passing strangers supposed themselves to be in the vicinity of a saw-mill. My father was indeed unpopular. During these dark days the family's sole dependence was on my mother's emporium for cats'-meat.

The business was profitable. In that city, which was the oldest in the world, the cat was an object of veneration. Its worship was the religion of the country. The multiplication and addition of cats were a perpetual instruction in arithmetic. Naturally, any inattention to the wants of a cat was punished with great severity in this world and the next; so my good mother numbered her patrons by the hundred. Still, with an unproductive husband and seventeen children she had some difficulty in making both ends cats'-meat; and at last the necessity of increasing the discrepancy between the cost price and the selling price of her carnal wares drove her to an expedient which proved eminently disastrous: she conceived the unlucky notion of retaliating by refusing to sell cats'-meat until the boycott was taken off her husband.

On the day when she put this resolution into practice the shop was thronged with excited customers, and others extended in turbulent and restless masses up four streets, out of sight. Inside there was nothing but cursing, crowding, shouting and menace. Intimidation was freely resorted to — several of my younger brothers and sisters being threatened with cutting up for the cats — but my mother was as firm as a rock, and the day was a black one for Sardasa, the ancient and sacred city that was the scene of these events. The lock-out was vigorously maintained, and seven hundred and fifty thousand cats went to bed hungry!

The next morning the city was found to have been placarded during the night with a proclamation of the Federated Union of Old Maids. This ancient and powerful order averred through its Supreme Executive Head that the boycotting of my father and the retaliatory lock-out of my mother were seriously imperiling the interests of religion. The proclamation went on to state that if arbitration were not adopted by noon that day all the old maids of the federation would strike — and strike they did.

The next act of this unhappy drama was an insurrection of cats. These sacred animals, seeing themselves doomed to starvation, held a mass-meeting and marched in procession through the streets, swearing and spitting like fiends. This revolt of the gods produced such consternation that many pious persons died of fright and all business was suspended to bury them and pass terrifying resolutions.

Matters were now about as bad as it seemed possible for them to be. Meetings among representatives of the hostile interests were held, but no understanding was arrived at that would hold. Every agreement was broken as soon as made, and each element of the discord was frantically appealing to the people. A new horror was in store.

It will be remembered that my father was a deodorizer of dead dogs, but was unable to practice his useful and humble profession because no one would employ him. The dead dogs in consequence reeked rascally. Then they struck! From every vacant lot and public dumping ground, from every hedge and ditch and gutter and cistern, every crystal rill and the clabbered waters of all the canals and estuaries — from all the places, in short, which from time immemorial have been preëmpted by dead dogs and consecrated to the uses of them and their heirs and successors forever — they trooped innumerous, a ghastly crew! Their procession was a mile in length. Midway of the town it met the procession of cats in full song. The cats instantly exalted their backs and magnified their tails; the dead dogs uncovered their teeth as in life, and erected such of their bristles as still adhered to the skin.

The carnage that ensued was too awful for relation! The light of the sun was obscured by flying fur, and the battle was waged in the darkness, blindly and regardless. The swearing of the cats was audible miles away, while the fragrance of the dead dogs desolated seven provinces.

How the battle might have resulted it is impossible to say, but when it was at its fiercest the Federated Union of Old Maids came running down a side street and sprang into the thickest of the fray. A moment later my mother herself bore down upon the warring hosts, brandishing a cleaver, and laid about her with great freedom and impartiality. My father joined the fight, the municipal authorities engaged, and the general public, converging on the battle-field from all points of the compass, consumed itself in the center as it pressed in from the circumference. Last of all, the dead held a meeting in the cemetery and resolving on a general strike, began to destroy vaults, tombs, monuments, headstones, willows, angels and young sheep in marble — everything they could lay their hands on. By nightfall the living and the dead were alike exterminated, and where the ancient and sacred city of Sardasa had stood nothing remained but an excavation filled with dead bodies and building materials, shreds of cat and blue patches of decayed dog. The place is now a vast pool of stagnant water in the center of a desert.

The stirring events of those few days constituted my industrial education, and so well have I improved my advantages that I am now Chief of Misrule to the Dukes of Disorder, an organization numbering thirteen million American workingmen.

The Baptism of Dobsho

It was a wicked thing to do, certainly. I have often regretted it since, and if the opportunity of doing so again were presented I should hesitate a long time before embracing it. But I was young then, and cherished a species of humor which I have since abjured. Still, when I remember the character of the people who were burlesquing and bringing into disrepute the letter and spirit of our holy religion I feel a certain satisfaction in having contributed one feeble effort toward making them ridiculous. In consideration of the little good I may have done in that way, I beg the reader to judge my conceded error as leniently as possible. This is the story.

Some years ago the town of Harding, in Illinois, experienced "a revival of religion," as the people called it. It would have been more accurate and less profane to term it a revival of Rampageanism, for the craze originated in, and was disseminated by, the sect which I will call the Rampagean communion; and most of the leaping and howling was done in that interest. Amongst those who yielded to the influence was my friend Thomas Dobsho. Tom had been a pretty bad sinner in a small way, but he went into this new thing heart and soul. At one of the meetings he made a public confession of more sins than he ever was, or ever could have been guilty of; stopping just short of statutory crimes, and even hinting, significantly, that he could tell a good deal more if he were pressed. He wanted to join the absurd communion the very evening of his conversion. He wanted to join two or three communions. In fact, he was so carried away with his zeal that some of the brethren gave me a hint to take him home; he and I occupied adjoining apartments in the Elephant Hotel.

Tom's fervor, as it happened, came near defeating its own purpose; instead of taking him at once into the fold without reference or "character," which was their usual way, the brethren remembered against him his awful confessions and put him on probation. But after a few weeks, during which he conducted himself like a decent lunatic, it was decided to baptise him along with a dozen other pretty hard cases who had been converted more recently. This sacrilegious ceremony I persuaded myself it was my duty to prevent, though I think now I erred as to the means adopted. It was to take place on a Sunday, and on the preceding Saturday I called on the head revivalist, the Rev. Mr. Swin, and craved an interview.

"I come," said I, with simulated reluctance and embarrassment, "in behalf of my friend, Brother Dobsho, to make a very delicate and unusual request. You are, I think, going to baptise him to-morrow, and I trust it will be to him the beginning of a new and better life. But I don't know if you are aware that his family are all Plungers, and that he is himself tainted with the wicked heresy of that sect. So it is. He is, as one might say in secular metaphor, 'on the fence' between their grievous error and the pure faith of your church. It would be most melancholy if he should get down on the wrong side. Although I confess with shame I have not myself embraced the truth, I hope I am not too blind to see where it lies."

"The calamity that you apprehend," said the reverend lout, after solemn reflection, "would indeed seriously affect our friend's interest and endanger his soul. I had not expected Brother Dobsho so soon to give up the good fight."

"I think sir," I replied reflectively, "there is no fear of that if the matter is skilfully managed. He is heartily with you — might I venture to say with *us* — on every point but one. He favors immersion! He has been so vile a sinner that he foolishly fears the more simple rite of your church will not make him wet enough. Would you believe it? his uninstructed scruples on the point are so gross and materialistic that he actually suggested soaping himself as a preparatory ceremony! I believe, however, if instead of sprinkling my friend, you would pour a generous basinful of water on his head — but now that I think of it in your enlightening presence I see that such a proceeding is quite out of the question. I fear we must let matters take the usual course, trusting to our later efforts to prevent the backsliding which may result."

The parson rose and paced the floor a moment, then suggested that he'd better see Brother Dobsho, and labor to remove his error. I told him I thought not; I was sure it would not be best. Argument would only confirm him in his prejudices. So it was settled that the subject should not be broached in that quarter. It would have been bad for me if it had been.

When I reflect now upon the guile of that conversation, the falsehood of my representations and the wickedness of my motive I am almost ashamed to proceed with my narrative. Had the minister been other than an arrant humbug, I hope I should never have suffered myself to make him the dupe of a scheme so sacrilegious in itself, and prosecuted with so sinful a disregard of honor.

The memorable Sabbath dawned bright and beautiful. About nine o'clock the cracked old bell, rigged up on struts before the "meeting-house," began to clamor its call to service, and nearly the whole population of Harding took its way to the performance. I had taken the precaution to set my watch fifteen minutes fast. Tom was nervously preparing himself for the ordeal. He fidgeted himself into his best suit an hour before the time, carried his hat about the room in the most aimless and demented way and consulted his watch a hundred times. I was to accompany him to church, and I spent the time fussing about the room, doing the most extraordinary things in the most exasperating manner — in short, keeping up Tom's feverish excitement by every wicked device I could think of. Within a half hour of the real time for service I suddenly yelled out —

"O, I say, Tom; pardon me, but that head of yours is just frightful! Please *do* let me brush it up a bit!"

Seizing him by the shoulders I thrust him into a chair with his face to the wall, laid hold of his comb and brush, got behind him and went to work. He was trembling like a child, and knew no more what I was doing than if he had been brained. Now, Tom's head was a curiosity. His hair, which was remarkably thick, was like wire. Being cut rather short it stood out all over his scalp like the spines on a porcupine. It had been a favorite complaint of Tom's that he never could do anything to that head. I found no difficulty — I did something to it, though I blush to think what it was. I did something which I feared he might discover if he looked in the mirror, so I carelessly pulled out my watch, sprung it open, gave a start and shouted —

"By Jove! Thomas — pardon the oath — but we're late. Your watch is all wrong; look at mine! Here's your hat, old fellow; come along. There's not a moment to lose!"

Clapping his hat on his head, I pulled him out of the house, with actual violence. In five minutes more we were in the meeting-house with ever so much time to spare.

The services that day, I am told, were specially interesting and impressive, but I had a good deal else on my mind — was preoccupied, absent, inattentive. They might have varied from the usual profane exhibition in any respect and to any extent, and I should not have observed it. The first thing I clearly perceived was a rank of "converts" kneeling before the "altar," Tom at the left of the line. Then the Rev. Mr. Swin approached him, thoughtfully dipping his fingers into a small earthern bowl of water as if he had just finished dining. I was much affected: I could see nothing distinctly for my tears. My handkerchief was at my face — most of it inside. I was observed to sob spasmodically, and I am abashed to think how many sincere persons mistakenly followed my example.

With some solemn words, the purport of which I did not quite make out, except that they sounded like swearing, the minister stood before Thomas, gave me a glance of intelligence and then with an innocent expression of face, the recollection of which to this day fills me with remorse, spilled, as if by accident, the entire contents of the bowl on the head of my poor friend — that head into the hair of which I had sifted a prodigal profusion of Seidlitz-powders!

I confess it, the effect was magical — anyone who was present would tell you that. Tom’s pow simmered — it seethed — it foamed yeastily, and slavered like a mad dog! It steamed and hissed, with angry spurts and flashes! In a second it had grown bigger than a small snowbank, and whiter. It surged, and boiled, and walloped, and overflowed, and sputtered — sent off feathery flakes like down from a shot swan! The froth poured creaming over his face, and got into his eyes. It was the most sinful shampooing of the season!

I cannot relate the commotion this produced, nor would I if I could. As to Tom, he sprang to his feet and staggered out of the house, groping his way between the pews, sputtering strangled profanity and gasping like a stranded fish. The other candidates for baptism rose also, shaking their pates as if to say, “No you don’t, my hearty,” and left the house in a body. Amidst unbroken silence the minister reascended the pulpit with the empty bowl in his hand, and was first to speak:

“Brethren and sisters,” said he with calm, deliberate evenness of tone, “I have held forth in this tabernacle for many more years than I have got fingers and toes, and during that time I have known not guile, nor anger, nor any uncharitableness. As to Henry Barber, who put up this job on me, I judge him not lest I be judged. Let him take *that* and sin no more!” — and he flung the earthern bowl with so true an aim that it was shattered against my skull. The rebuke was not undeserved, I confess, and I trust I have profited by it.

The Race at Left Bower

"It's all very well fer you Britishers to go assin' about the country tryin' to strike the trail o' the mines you've salted down yer loose carpital in," said Colonel Jackhigh, setting his empty glass on the counter and wiping his lips with his coat sleeve; "but w'en it comes to hoss racin', w'y I've got a cayuse ken lay over all the thurrerbreds yer little mantel-ornyment of a island ever panned out — bet yer britches I have! Talk about yer Durby winners — w'y this pisen little beast o' mine'll take the bit in her teeth and show 'em the way to the horizon like she was takin' her mornin' stroll and they was tryin' to keep an eye on her to see she didn't do herself an injury — that's w'at she would! And she haint never run a race with anything spryer'n an Injun in all her life; she's a green amatoor, *she* is!"

"Oh, very well," said the Englishman with a quiet smile; "it is easy enough to settle the matter. My animal is in tolerably good condition, and if yours is in town we can have the race to-morrow for any stake you like, up to a hundred dollars.

"That's jest the figger," said the colonel; "dot it down, barkeep. But it's like slarterin' the innocents," he added, half-remorsefully, as he turned to leave; "it's bettin' on a dead sure thing — that's what it is! If my cayuse knew wa't I was about she'd go and break a laig to make the race a fair one."

So it was arranged that the race was to come off at three o'clock the next day, on the *mesa*, some distance from town. As soon as the news got abroad, the whole population of Left Bower and vicinity knocked off work and assembled in the various bars to discuss it. The Englishman and his horse were general favorites, and aside from the unpopularity of the colonel, nobody had ever seen his "cayuse." Still the element of patriotism came in, making the betting very nearly even.

A race-course was marked off on the *mesa* and at the appointed hour every one was there except the colonel. It was arranged that each man should ride his own horse, and the Englishman, who had acquired something of the free-and-easy bearing that distinguishes the "mining sharp," was already atop of his magnificent animal, with one leg thrown carelessly across the pommel of his Mexican saddle, as he puffed his cigar with calm confidence in the result of the race. He was conscious, too, that he possessed the secret sympathy of all, even of those who had felt it their duty to bet against him. The judge, watch in hand, was growing impatient, when the colonel appeared about a half-mile away, and bore down upon the crowd. Everyone was eager to inspect his mount; and such a mount as it proved to be was never before seen, even in Left Bower!

You have seen “perfect skeletons” of horses often enough, no doubt, but this animal was not even a perfect skeleton; there were bones missing here and there which you would not have believed the beast could have spared. “Little” the colonel had called her! She was not an inch less than eighteen hands high, and long out of all reasonable proportion. She was so hollow in the back that she seemed to have been bent in a machine. She had neither tail nor mane, and her neck, as long as a man, stuck straight up into the air, supporting a head without ears. Her eyes had an expression in them of downright insanity, and the muscles of her face were afflicted with periodical convulsions that drew back the corners of the mouth and wrinkled the upper lip so as to produce a ghastly grin every two or three seconds. In color she was “claybank,” with great blotches of white, as if she had been pelted with small bags of flour. The crookedness of her legs was beyond all comparison, and as to her gait it was that of a blind camel walking diagonally across innumerable deep ditches. Altogether she looked like the crude result of Nature’s first experiment in equifaction.

As this libel on all horses shambled up to the starting post there was a general shout; the sympathies of the crowd changed in the twinkling of an eye! Everyone wanted to bet on her, and the Englishman himself was only restrained from doing so by a sense of honor. It was growing late, however, and the judge insisted on starting them. They got off very well together, and seeing the mare was unconscionably slow the Englishman soon pulled his animal in and permitted the ugly thing to pass him, so as to enjoy a back view of her. That sealed his fate. The course had been marked off in a circle of two miles in circumference and some twenty feet wide, the limits plainly defined by little furrows. Before the animals had gone a half mile both had been permitted to settle down into a comfortable walk, in which they continued three-fourths of the way round the ring. Then the Englishman thought it time to whip up and canter in.

But he didn’t. As he came up alongside the “Lightning Express,” as the crowd had begun to call her, that creature turned her head diagonally backward and let fall a smile. The encroaching beast stopped as if he had been shot! His rider plied whip, and forced him again forward upon the track of the equine hag, but with the same result.

The Englishman was now alarmed; he struggled manfully with rein and whip and shout, amidst the tremendous cheering and inextinguishable laughter of the crowd, to force his animal past, now on this side, now on that, but it would not do. Prompted by the fiend in the concavity of her back, the unthinkable quadruped dropped her grins right and left with such seasonable accuracy that again and again the competing beast was struck “all of a heap” just at the moment of seeming success. And, finally, when by a tremendous spurt his rider endeavored to thrust him by, within half a dozen lengths of the winning post, the incarnate nightmare turned squarely about and fixed upon him a portentous stare — delivering at the same time a grimace of such prodigious ghastliness that the poor thoroughbred, with an almost human scream of terror, wheeled about, and tore away to the rear with the speed of the wind, leaving the colonel an easy winner in twenty minutes and ten seconds.

The Failure of Hope & Wandel

From Mr. Jabez Hope, in Chicago, to Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, December 2, 1877.

I will not bore you, my dear fellow, with a narrative of my journey from New Orleans to this polar region. It is cold in Chicago, believe me, and the Southron who comes here, as I did, without a relay of noses and ears will have reason to regret his mistaken economy in arranging his outfit.

To business. Lake Michigan is frozen stiff. Fancy, O child of a torrid clime, a sheet of anybody's ice, three hundred miles long, forty broad, and six feet thick! It sounds like a lie, Pikey dear, but your partner in the firm of Hope & Wandel, Wholesale Boots and Shoes, New Orleans, is never known to fib. My plan is to collar that ice. Wind up the present business and send on the money at once. I'll put up a warehouse as big as the Capitol at Washington, store it full and ship to your orders as the Southern market may require. I can send it in planks for skating floors, in statuettes for the mantel, in shavings for juleps, or in solution for ice cream and general purposes. It is a big thing!

I inclose a thin slip as a sample. Did you ever see such charming ice?

From Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, to Mr. Jabez Hope, in Chicago, December 24, 1877.

Your letter was so abominably defaced by blotting and blurring that it was entirely illegible. It must have come all the way by water. By the aid of chemicals and photography, however, I have made it out. But you forgot to inclose the sample of ice.

I have sold off everything (at an alarming sacrifice, I am sorry to say) and inclose draft for net amount. Shall begin to spar for orders at once. I trust everything to you — but, I say, has anybody tried to grow ice in *this* vicinity? There is Lake Ponchartrain, you know.

From Mr. Jabez Hope, in Chicago, to Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, February 27, 1878.

Wannie dear, it would do you good to see our new warehouse for the ice. Though made of boards, and run up rather hastily, it is as pretty as a picture, and cost a deal of money, though I pay no ground rent. It is about as big as the Capitol at Washington. Do you think it ought to have a steeple? I have it nearly filled — fifty men cutting and storing, day and night — awful cold work! By the way, the ice, which when I wrote you last was ten feet thick, is now thinner. But don’t you worry; there is plenty.

Our warehouse is eight or ten miles out of town, so I am not much bothered by visitors, which is a relief. Such a giggling, sniggering lot you never saw!

It seems almost too absurdly incredible, Wannie, but do you know I believe this ice of ours gains in coldness as the warm weather comes on! I do, indeed, and you may mention the fact in the advertisements.

From Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, to Mr. Jabez Hope, in Chicago, March 7, 1878.

All goes well. I get hundreds of orders. We shall do a roaring trade as “The New Orleans and Chicago Semperfrigid Ice Company.” But you have not told me whether the ice is fresh or salt. If it is fresh it won’t do for cooking, and if it is salt it will spoil the mint juleps.

Is it as cold in the middle as the outside cuts are?

From Mr. Jebez Hope, from Chicago, to Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, April 3, 1878.

Navigation on the Lakes is now open, and ships are thick as ducks. I’m afloat, *en route* for Buffalo, with the assets of the New Orleans and Chicago Semperfrigid Ice Company in my vest pocket. We are busted out, my poor Pikey — we are to fortune and to fame unknown. Arrange a meeting of the creditors and don’t attend.

Last night a schooner from Milwaukee was smashed into match-wood on an enormous mass of floating ice — the first berg ever seen in these waters. It is described by the survivors as being about as big as the Capital at Washington. One-half of that iceberg belongs to you, Pikey.

The melancholy fact is, I built our warehouse on an unfavorable site, about a mile out from the shore (on the ice, you understand), and when the thaw came — O my God, Wannie, it was the saddest thing you ever saw in all your life! You will be *so* glad to know I was not in it at the time.

What a ridiculous question you ask me. My poor partner, you don’t seem to know very much about the ice business.

Perry Chumly’s Eclipse

The spectroscope is a singularly beautiful and delicate instrument, consisting, essentially, of a prism of glass, which, decomposing the light of any heavenly body to which the instrument is directed, presents a spectrum, or long bar of color. Crossing this are narrow, dark and bright lines produced by the gases of metals in combustion, whereby the celestial orb’s light is generated. From these dark and bright lines, therefore, we ascertain all that is worth knowing about the composition of the sun and stars.

Now Ben had made some striking discoveries in spectroscopic analysis at his private garden observatory, and had also an instrument of superior power and capacity, invented, or at least much improved, by himself; and this instrument it was that he and I were arranging for an examination of the comet then flaming in the heavens. William sat by apparently uninterested. Finally we had our arrangements for an observation completed, and Ben said: “Now turn her on.”

“That reminds me,” said William, “of a little story about Perry Chumly, who —”

“For the sake of science, William,” I interrupted, laying a hand on his arm, “I must beg you not to relate it. The comet will in a few minutes be behind the roof of yonder lodging house. We really have no time for the story.”

“No,” said Ben, “time presses; and, anyhow, I’ve heard it before.”

“This Perry Chumly,” resumed William, “believed himself a born astronomer, and always kept a bit of smoked glass. He was particularly great on solar eclipses. I have known him to sit up all night looking out for one.”

Ben had now got the spectroscope trained skyward to suit him, and in order to exclude all irrelevant light had let down the window-blind on the tube of it. The spectrum of the comet came out beautifully — a long bar of color crossed with a lovely ruling of thin dark and bright lines, the sight of which elicited from us an exclamation of satisfaction.

“One day,” continued William from his seat at another window, “some one told Perry Chumly there would be an eclipse of the sun that afternoon at three o’clock. Now Perry had recently read a story about some men who in exploring a deep cañon in the mountains had looked up from the bottom and seen the stars shining at midday. It occurred to him that this knowledge might be so utilized as to give him a fine view of the eclipse, and enable him at the same time to see what the stars would appear to think about it.”

“*This*,” said Ben, pointing to one of the dark lines in the cometic spectrum, “*this* is produced by the vapor of carbon in the nucleus of the heavenly visitant. You will observe that it differs but slightly from the lines that come of volatilized iron. Examined with this magnifying glass” — adjusting that instrument to his eye—”it will probably show — by Jove!” he ejaculated, after a nearer view, “it isn’t carbon at all. *It is* MEAT!”

“Of course,” proceeded William, “of course Perry Chumly did not have any cañon, so what did the fellow do but let himself down with his arms and legs to the bottom of an old well, about thirty feet deep! And, with the cold water up to his middle, and the frogs, pollywogs and aquatic lizards quarreling for the cosy corners of his pockets, there he stood, waiting for the sun to appear in the field of his ‘instrument’ and be eclipsed.”

“Ben, you are joking,” I remarked with some asperity; “you are taking liberties with science, Benjamin. It *can’t* be meat, you know.”

“I tell you it *is* though,” was his excited reply; “it is just *meat*, I tell you! And this other line, which at first I took for sodium, is *bone* — bone, sir, or I’m an asteroid! I never saw the like; that comet must be densely peopled with butchers and horse-knackers!”

“When Perry Chumly had waited a long time,” William went on to say, “looking up and expecting every minute to see the sun, it began to get into his mind, somehow, that the bright, circular opening above his head — the mouth of the well — *was* the sun, and that the black disk of the moon was all that was needed to complete the expected phenomenon. The notion soon took complete possession of his brain, so that he forgot where he was and imagined himself standing on the surface of the earth.”

I was now scrutinizing the cometic spectrum very closely, being particularly attracted by a thin, faint line, which I thought Ben had overlooked.

“Oh, that is nothing,” he explained; “that’s a mere local fault arising from conditions peculiar to the medium through which the light is transmitted — the atmosphere of this neighborhood. It is whisky. This other line, though, shows the faintest imaginable trace of soap; and these uncertain, wavering ones are caused by some effluvium not in the comet itself, but in the region beyond it. I am compelled to pronounce it tobacco smoke. I will now tilt the instrument so as to get the spectrum of the celestial wanderer’s tail. Ah! there we have it. Splendid!”

“Now this old well,” said William, “was near a road, along which was traveling a big and particularly hideous nigger.”

“See here, Thomas,” exclaimed Ben, removing the magnifying glass from his eye and looking me earnestly in the face, “if I were to tell you that the *coma* of this eccentric heavenly body is really hair, as its name implies, would you believe it?"

"No, Ben, I certainly should not."

"Well, I won't argue the matter; there are the lines — they speak for themselves. But now that I look again, you are not entirely wrong: there is a considerable admixture of jute, moss, and I think tallow. It certainly is most remarkable! Sir Isaac Newton—"

"That big nigger," drawled William, "felt thirsty, and seeing the mouth of the well thought there was perhaps a bucket in it. So he ventured to creep forward on his hands and knees and look in over the edge."

Suddenly our spectrum vanished, and a very singular one of a quite different appearance presented itself in the same place. It was a dim spectrum, crossed by a single broad bar of pale yellow.

"Ah!" said Ben, "our waif of the upper deep is obscured by a cloud; let us see what the misty veil is made of."

He took a look at the spectrum with his magnifying glass, started back, and muttered: "Brown linen, by thunder!"

"You can imagine the rapture of Perry Chumly," pursued the indefatigable William, "when he saw, as he supposed, the moon's black disk encroaching upon the body of the luminary that had so long riveted his gaze. But when that obscuring satellite had thrust herself so far forward that the eclipse became almost annular, and he saw her staring down upon a darkened world with glittering white eyes and a double row of flashing teeth, it is perhaps not surprising that he vented a scream of terror, fainted and collapsed among his frogs! As for the big nigger, almost equally terrified by this shriek from the abyss, he executed a precipitate movement which only the breaking of his neck prevented from being a double back-somersault, and lay dead in the weeds with his tongue out and his face the color of a cometic spectrum. We laid them in the same grave, poor fellows, and on many a still summer evening afterward I strayed to the lonely little church-yard to listen to the smothered requiem chanted by the frogs that we had neglected to remove from the pockets of the lamented astronomer.

"And, now," added William, taking his heels from the window, "as you can not immediately resume your spectroscopic observations on that red-haired chamber-maid in the dormer-window, who pulled down the blind when I made a mouth at her, I move that we adjourn."

A Providential Intimation

Mr. Algernon Jarvis, of San Francisco, got up cross. The world of Mr. Jarvis had gone wrong with him overnight, as one’s world is likely to do when one sits up till morning with jovial friends, to watch it, and he was prone to resentment. No sooner, therefore, had he got himself into a neat, fashionable suit of clothing than he selected his morning walking-stick and sallied out upon the town with a vague general determination to attack something. His first victim would naturally have been his breakfast; but singularly enough, he fell upon this with so feeble an energy that he was himself beaten — to the grieved astonishment of the worthy *rôtisseur*, who had to record his hitherto puissant patron’s maiden defeat. Three or four cups of *café noir* were the only captives that graced Mr. Jarvis’ gastric chariot-wheels that morning.

He lit a long cigar and sauntered moodily down the street, so occupied with schemes of universal retaliation that his feet had it all their own way; in consequence of which, their owner soon found himself in the billiard-room of the Occidental Hotel. Nobody was there, but Mr. Jarvis was a privileged person; so, going to the marker’s desk, he took out a little box of ivory balls, spilled them carelessly over a table and languidly assailed them with a long stick.

Presently, by the merest chance, he executed a marvelous stroke. Waiting till the astonished balls had resumed their composure, he gathered them up, replacing them in their former position. He tried the stroke again, and, naturally, did not make it. Again he placed the balls, and again he badly failed. With a vexed and humilated air he once more put the indocile globes into position, leaned over the table and was upon the point of striking, when there sounded a solemn voice from behind:

“Bet you two bits you don’t make it!”

Mr. Jarvis erected himself; he turned about and looked at the speaker, whom he found to be a stranger — one that most persons would prefer should remain a stranger. Mr. Jarvis made no reply. In the first place, he was a man of aristocratic taste, to whom a wager of “two bits” was simply vulgar. Secondly, the man who had proffered it evidently had not the money. Still it is annoying to have one’s skill questioned by one’s social inferiors, particularly when one has doubts of it oneself, and is otherwise ill-tempered. So Mr. Jarvis stood his cue against the table, laid off his fashionable morning-coat, resumed his stick, spread his fine figure upon the table with his back to the ceiling and took deliberate aim.

At this point Mr. Jarvis drops out of this history, and is seen no more forever. Persons of the class to which he adds lustre are sacred from the pen of the humorist; they are ridiculous but not amusing. So now we will dismiss this uninteresting young aristocrat, retaining merely his outer shell, the fashionable morning-coat, which Mr. Stenner, the gentleman, who had offered the wager, has quietly thrown across his arm and is conveying away for his own advantage.

An hour later Mr. Stenner sat in his humble lodgings at North Beach, with the pilfered garment upon his knees. He had already taken the opinion of an eminent pawnbroker on its value, and it only remained to search the pockets. Mr. Stenner's notions concerning gentlemen's coats were not so clear as they might have been. Broadly stated, they were that these garments abounded in secret pockets crowded with a wealth of bank notes interspersed with gold coins. He was therefore disappointed when his careful quest was rewarded with only a delicately perfumed handkerchief, upon which he could not hope to obtain a loan of more than ten cents; a pair of gloves too small for use and a bit of paper that was not a cheque. A second look at this, however, inspired hope. It was about the size of a flounder, ruled in wide lines, and bore in conspicuous characters the words, "Western Union Telegraph Company." Immediately below this interesting legend was much other printed matter, the purport of which was that the company did not hold itself responsible for the verbal accuracy of "the following message," and did not consider itself either morally or legally bound to forward or deliver it, nor, in short, to render any kind of service for the money paid by the sender.

Unfamiliar with telegraphy, Mr. Stenner naturally supposed that a message subject to these hard conditions must be one of not only grave importance, but questionable character. So he determined to decipher it at that time and place. In the course of the day he succeeded in so doing. It ran as follows, omitting the date and the names of persons and places, which were, of course, quite illegible:

"Buy Sally Meeker!"

Had the full force of this remarkable adjuration burst upon Mr. Stenner all at once it might have carried him away, which would not have been so bad a thing for San Francisco; but as the meaning had to percolate slowly through a dense dyke of ignorance, it produced no other immediate effect than the exclamation, "Well, I'll be bust!"

In the mouths of some persons this form of expression means a great deal. On the Stenner tongue it signified the hopeless nature of the Stenner mental confusion.

It must be confessed — by persons outside a certain limited and sordid circle — that the message lacks amplification and elaboration; in its terse, bald diction there is a ghastly suggestion of traffic in human flesh, for which in California there is no market since the abolition of slavery and the importation of thoroughbred beeves. If woman suffrage had been established all would have been clear; Mr. Stenner would at once have understood the kind of purchase advised; for in political transactions he had very often changed hands himself. But it was all a muddle, and resolving to dismiss the matter from his thoughts, he went to bed thinking of nothing else; for many hours his excited imagination would do nothing but purchase slightly damaged Sally Meekers by the bale, and retail them to itself at an enormous profit.

Next day, it flashed upon his memory who Sally Meeker was — a racing mare! At this entirely obvious solution of the problem he was overcome with amazement at his own sagacity. Rushing into the street he purchased, not Sally Meeker, but a sporting paper — and in it found the notice of a race which was to come off the following week; and, sure enough, there it was:

“Budd Doble enters g.g. Clipper; Bob Scotty enters b.g. Lightnin’; Staley Tupper enters s.s. Upandust; Sim Salper enters b.m. Sally Meeker.”

It was clear now; the sender of the dispatch was “in the know.” Sally Meeker was to win, and her owner, who did not know it, had offered her for sale. At that supreme moment Mr. Stenner would willingly have been a rich man! In fact he resolved to be. He at once betook him to Vallejo, where he had lived until invited away by some influential citizens of the place. There he immediately sought out an industrious friend who had an amiable weakness for draw poker, and in whom Mr. Stenner regularly encouraged that passion by going up against him every payday and despoiling him of his hard earnings. He did so this time, to the sum of one hundred dollars.

No sooner had he raked in his last pool and refused his friend’s appeal for a trifling loan wherewith to pay for breakfast than he bought a check on the Bank of California, enclosed it in a letter containing merely the words “Bi Saly Meker,” and dispatched it by mail to the only clergyman in San Francisco whose name he knew. Mr. Stenner had a vague notion that all kinds of business requiring strict honesty and fidelity might be profitably intrusted to the clergy; otherwise what was the use of religion? I hope I shall not be accused of disrespect to the cloth in thus bluntly setting forth Mr. Stenner’s estimate of the parsons, inasmuch as I do not share it.

This business off his mind, Mr. Stenner unbent in a week’s revelry; at the end of which he worked his passage down to San Francisco to secure his winnings on the race, and take charge of his peerless mare. It will be observed that his notions concerning races were somewhat confused; his experience of them had hitherto been confined to that branch of the business requiring, not technical knowledge but manual dexterity. In short, he had done no more than pick the pockets of the spectators. Arrived at San Francisco he was hastening to the dwelling of his clerical agent, when he met an acquaintance, to whom he put the triumphant question, “How about Sally Meeker?”

“Sally Meeker? Sally Meeker?” was the reply. “Oh, you mean the hoss? Why she’s gone up the flume. Broke her neck the first heat. But ole Sim Salper is never a-goin’ to fret hisself to a shadder about it. He struck it pizen in the mine she was named a’ter and the stock’s gone up from nothin’ out o’ sight. You couldn’t tech that stock with a ten-foot pole!”

Which was a blow to Mr. Stenner. He saw his error; the message in the coat had evidently been sent to a broker, and referred to the stock of the “Sally Meeker” mine. And he, Stenner, was a ruined man!

Suddenly a great, monstrous, misbegotten and unmentionable oath rolled from Mr. Stenner’s tongue like a cannon shot hurled along an uneven floor! Might it not be that the Rev. Mr. Boltright had also misunderstood the message, and had bought, not the mare, but the stock? The thought was electrical: Mr. Stenner ran — he flew! He tarried not at walls and the smaller sort of houses, but went through or over them! In five minutes he stood before the good clergyman — and in one more had asked, in a hoarse whisper, if he had bought any “Sally Meeker.”

“My good friend,” was the bland reply—”my fellow traveler to the bar of God, it would better comport with your spiritual needs to inquire what you should do to be saved. But since you ask me, I will confess that having received what I am compelled to regard as a Providential intimation, accompanied with the secular means of obedience, I did put up a small margin and purchase largely of the stock you mention. The venture, I am constrained to state, was not wholly unprofitable.”

Unprofitable? The good man had made a square twenty-five thousand dollars on that small margin! To conclude — he has it yet.

Mr. Swiddler’s Flip-Flap

Jerome Bowles (said the gentleman called Swiddler) was to be hanged on Friday, the ninth of November, at five o’clock in the afternoon. This was to occur at the town of Flatbroke, where he was then in prison. Jerome was my friend, and naturally I differed with the jury that had convicted him as to the degree of guilt implied by the conceded fact that he had shot an Indian without direct provocation. Ever since his trial I had been endeavoring to influence the Governor of the State to grant a pardon; but public sentiment was against me, a fact which I attributed partly to the innate pigheadness of the people, and partly to the recent establishment of churches and schools which had corrupted the primitive notions of a frontier community. But I labored hard and unremittingly by all manner of direct and indirect means during the whole period in which Jerome lay under sentence of death; and on the very morning of the day set for the execution, the Governor sent for me, and saying “he did not purpose being worried by my importunities all winter,” handed me the document which he had so often refused.

Armed with the precious paper, I flew to the telegraph office to send a dispatch to the Sheriff at Flatbroke. I found the operator locking the door of the office and putting up the shutters. I pleaded in vain; he said he was going to see the hanging, and really had no time to send my message. I must explain that Flatbroke was fifteen miles away; I was then at Swan Creek, the State capital.

The operator being inexorable, I ran to the railroad station to see how soon there would be a train for Flatbroke. The station man, with cool and polite malice, informed me that all the employees of the road had been given a holiday to see Jerome Bowles hanged, and had already gone by an early train; that there would be no other train till the next day.

I was now furious, but the station man quietly turned me out, locking the gates. Dashing to the nearest livery stable, I ordered a horse. Why prolong the record of my disappointment? Not a horse could I get in that town; all had been engaged weeks before to take people to the hanging. So everybody said, at least, though I now know there was a rascally conspiracy to defeat the ends of mercy, for the story of the pardon had got abroad.

It was now ten o’clock. I had only seven hours in which to do my fifteen miles afoot; but I was an excellent walker and thoroughly angry; there was no doubt of my ability to make the distance, with an hour to spare. The railway offered the best chance; it ran straight as a string across a level, treeless prairie, whereas the highway made a wide detour by way of another town.

I took to the track like a Modoc on the war path. Before I had gone a half-mile I was overtaken by “That Jim Peasley,” as he was called in Swan Creek, an incurable practical joker, loved and shunned by all who knew him. He asked me as he came up if I were “going to the show.” Thinking it was best to dissemble, I told him I was, but said nothing of my intention to stop the performance; I thought it would be a lesson to That Jim to let him walk fifteen miles for nothing, for it was clear that he was going, too. Still, I wished he would go on ahead or drop behind. But he could not very well do the former, and would not do the latter; so we trudged on together. It was a cloudy day and very sultry for that time of the year. The railway stretched away before us, between its double row of telegraph poles, in rigid sameness, terminating in a point at the horizon. On either hand the disheartening monotony of the prairie was unbroken.

I thought little of these things, however, for my mental exaltation was proof against the depressing influence of the scene. I was about to save the life of my friend — to restore a crack shot to society. Indeed I scarcely thought of That Jim, whose heels were grinding the hard gravel close behind me, except when he saw fit occasionally to propound the sententious, and I thought derisive, query, “Tired?” Of course I was, but I would have died rather than confess it.

We had gone in this way, about half the distance, probably, in much less than half the seven hours, and I was getting my second wind, when That Jim again broke the silence.

“Used to bounce in a circus, didn’t you?”

This was quite true! in a season of pecuniary depression I had once put my legs into my stomach — had turned my athletic accomplishments to financial advantage. It was not a pleasant topic, and I said nothing. That Jim persisted.

“Wouldn’t like to do a feller a somersault now, eh?”

The mocking tongue of this jeer was intolerable; the fellow evidently considered me “done up,” so taking a short run I clapped my hands to my thighs and executed as pretty a flip-flap as ever was made without a springboard! At the moment I came erect with my head still spinning, I felt That Jim crowd past me, giving me a twirl that almost sent me off the track. A moment later he had dashed ahead at a tremendous pace, laughing derisively over his shoulder as if he had done a remarkably clever thing to gain the lead.

I was on the heels of him in less than ten minutes, though I must confess the fellow could walk amazingly. In half an hour I had run past him, and at the end of the hour, such was my slashing gait, he was a mere black dot in my rear, and appeared to be sitting on one of the rails, thoroughly used up.

Relieved of Mr. Peasley, I naturally began thinking of my poor friend in the Flatbroke jail, and it occurred to me that something might happen to hasten the execution. I knew the feeling of the country against him, and that many would be there from a distance who would naturally wish to get home before nightfall. Nor could I help admitting to myself that five o'clock was an unreasonably late hour for a hanging. Tortured with these fears, I unconsciously increased my pace with every step, until it was almost a run. I stripped off my coat and flung it away, opened my collar, and unbuttoned my waistcoat. And at last, puffing and steaming like a locomotive engine, I burst into a thin crowd of idlers on the outskirts of the town, and flourished the pardon crazily above my head, yelling, "Cut him down! — cut him down!"

Then, as every one stared in blank amazement and nobody said anything, I found time to look about me, marveling at the oddly familiar appearance of the town. As I looked, the houses, streets, and everything seemed to undergo a sudden and mysterious transposition with reference to the points of the compass, as if swinging round on a pivot; and like one awakened from a dream I found myself among accustomed scenes. To be plain about it, I was back again in Swan Creek, as right as a trivet!

It was all the work of That Jim Peasley. The designing rascal had provoked me to throw a confusing somersault, then bumped against me, turning me half round, and started on the back track, thereby inciting me to hook it in the same direction. The cloudy day, the two lines of telegraph poles, one on each side of the track, the entire sameness of the landscape to the right and left — these had all conspired to prevent my observing that I had put about.

When the excursion train returned from Flatbroke that evening the passengers were told a little story at my expense. It was just what they needed to cheer them up a bit after what they had seen; for that flip-flap of mine had broken the neck of Jerome Bowles seven miles away!

The Little Story

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ — *A Supernumerary Editor. A Probationary Contributor*.

SCENE—”*The Expounder” Office*.

PROBATIONARY CONTRIBUTOR — Editor in?

SUPERNUMERARY EDITOR — Dead.

P.C. — The gods favor me. (*Produces roll of manuscript*.) Here is a little story, which I will read to you.

S.E. — O, O!

P.C. — (*Reads*.) “It was the last night of the year — a naughty, noxious, offensive night. In the principal street of San Francisco” —

S.E. — Confound San Francisco!

P.C. — It had to be somewhere. (*Reads*.)

“In the principal street of San Francisco stood a small female orphan, marking time like a volunteer. Her little bare feet imprinted cold kisses on the paving-stones as she put them down and drew them up alternately. The chilling rain was having a good time with her scalp, and toyed soppily with her hair — her own hair. The night-wind shrewdly searched her tattered garments, as if it had suspected her of smuggling. She saw crowds of determined-looking persons grimly ruining themselves in toys and confectionery for the dear ones at home, and she wished she was in a position to ruin a little — just a little. Then, as the happy throng sped by her with loads of things to make the children sick, she leaned against an iron lamp-post in front of a bake-shop and turned on the wicked envy. She thought, poor thing, she would like to be a cake — for this little girl was very hungry indeed. Then she tried again, and thought she would like to be a tart with smashed fruit inside; then she would be warmed over every day and nobody would eat her. For the child was cold as well as hungry. Finally, she tried quite hard, and thought she could be very well content as an oven; for then she would be kept always hot, and bakers would put all manner of good things into her with a long shovel."

S.E. — I've read that somewhere.

P.C. — Very likely. This little story has never been rejected by any paper to which I have offered it. It gets better, too, every time I write it. When it first appeared in *Veracity* the editor said it cost him a hundred subscribers. Just mark the improvement! (*Reads.*)

"The hours glided by — except a few that froze to the pavement — until midnight. The streets were now deserted, and the almanac having predicted a new moon about this time, the lamps had been conscientiously extinguished. Suddenly a great globe of sound fell from an adjacent church-tower, and exploded on the night with a deep metallic boom. Then all the clocks and bells began ringing-in the New Year — pounding and banging and yelling and finishing off all the nervous invalids left over from the preceding Sunday. The little orphan started from her dream, leaving a small patch of skin on the frosted lamp-post, clasped her thin blue hands and looked upward, 'with mad disquietude,'" —

S.E. — In *The Monitor* it was "with covetous eyes."

P.C. — I know it; hadn't read Byron then. Clever dog, Byron. (*Reads.*)

"Presently a cranberry tart dropped at her feet, apparently from the clouds."

S.E. — How about those angels?

P.C. — The editor of *Good Will* cut 'em out. He said San Francisco was no place for them; and I don't believe ——

S.E. — There, there! Never mind. Go on with the little story.

P.C. — (*Reads*.) “As she stooped to take up the tart a veal sandwich came whizzing down, and cuffed one of her ears. Next a wheaten loaf made her dodge nimbly, and then a broad ham fell flat-footed at her toes. A sack of flour burst in the middle of the street; a side of bacon impaled itself on an iron hitching-post. Pretty soon a chain of sausages fell in a circle around her, flattening out as if a road-roller had passed over them. Then there was a lull — nothing came down but dried fish, cold puddings and flannel under-clothing; but presently her wishes began to take effect again, and a quarter of beef descended with terrific momentum upon the top of the little orphan’s head.”

S.E. — How did the editor of *The Reasonable Virtues* like that quarter of beef?

P.C. — Oh, he swallowed it like a little man, and stuck in a few dressed pigs of his own. I’ve left them out, because I don’t want outsiders altering the Little Story. (*Reads*.)

“One would have thought that ought to suffice; but not so. Bedding, shoes, firkins of butter, mighty cheeses, ropes of onions, quantities of loose jam, kegs of oysters, titanic fowls, crates of crockery and glassware, assorted housekeeping things, cooking ranges, and tons of coal poured down in broad cataracts from a bounteous heaven, piling themselves above that infant to a depth of twenty feet. The weather was more than two hours in clearing up; and as late as half-past three a ponderous hogshead of sugar struck at the corner of Clay and Kearney Streets, with an impact that shook the peninsula like an earthquake and stopped every clock in town.

“At daybreak the good merchants arrived upon the scene with shovels and wheelbarrows, and before the sun of the new year was an hour old, they had provided for all of these provisions — had stowed them away in their cellars, and nicely arranged them on their shelves, ready for sale to the deserving poor.”

S.E. — And the little girl — what became of *her*?

P.C. — You musn’t get ahead of the Little Story. (*Reads*.)

“When they had got down to the wicked little orphan who had not been content with her lot some one brought a broom, and she was carefully swept and smoothed out. Then they lifted her tenderly, and carried her to the coroner. That functionary was standing in the door of his office, and with a deprecatory wave of his hand, he said to the man who was bearing her:

“‘There, go away, my good fellow; there was a man here three times yesterday trying to sell me just such a map.’”

THE PARENTICIDE CLUB

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My Favorite Murder

Having murdered my mother under circumstances of singular atrocity, I was arrested and put upon my trial, which lasted seven years. In charging the jury, the judge of the Court of Acquittal remarked that it was one of the most ghastly crimes that he had ever been called upon to explain away.

At this, my attorney rose and said:

“May it please your Honor, crimes are ghastly or agreeable only by comparison. If you were familiar with the details of my client’s previous murder of his uncle you would discern in his later offense (if offense it may be called) something in the nature of tender forbearance and filial consideration for the feelings of the victim. The appalling ferocity of the former assassination was indeed inconsistent with any hypothesis but that of guilt; and had it not been for the fact that the honorable judge before whom he was tried was the president of a life insurance company that took risks on hanging, and in which my client held a policy, it is hard to see how he could decently have been acquitted. If your Honor would like to hear about it for instruction and guidance of your Honor’s mind, this unfortunate man, my client, will consent to give himself the pain of relating it under oath.”

The district attorney said: “Your Honor, I object. Such a statement would be in the nature of evidence, and the testimony in this case is closed. The prisoner’s statement should have been introduced three years ago, in the spring of 1881.”

“In a statutory sense,” said the judge, “you are right, and in the Court of Objections and Technicalities you would get a ruling in your favor. But not in a Court of Acquittal. The objection is overruled.”

“I except,” said the district attorney.

“You cannot do that,” the judge said. “I must remind you that in order to take an exception you must first get this case transferred for a time to the Court of Exceptions on a formal motion duly supported by affidavits. A motion to that effect by your predecessor in office was denied by me during the first year of this trial. Mr. Clerk, swear the prisoner.”

The customary oath having been administered, I made the following statement, which impressed the judge with so strong a sense of the comparative triviality of the offense for which I was on trial that he made no further search for mitigating circumstances, but simply instructed the jury to acquit, and I left the court, without a stain upon my reputation:

“I was born in 1856 in Kalamakee, Mich., of honest and reputable parents, one of whom Heaven has mercifully spared to comfort me in my later years. In 1867 the family came to California and settled near Nigger Head, where my father opened a road agency and prospered beyond the dreams of avarice. He was a reticent, saturnine man then, though his increasing years have now somewhat relaxed the austerity of his disposition, and I believe that nothing but his memory of the sad event for which I am now on trial prevents him from manifesting a genuine hilarity.

“Four years after we had set up the road agency an itinerant preacher came along, and having no other way to pay for the night’s lodging that we gave him, favored us with an exhortation of such power that, praise God, we were all converted to religion. My father at once sent for his brother, the Hon. William Ridley of Stockton, and on his arrival turned over the agency to him, charging him nothing for the franchise nor plant — the latter consisting of a Winchester rifle, a sawed-off shotgun, and an assortment of masks made out of flour sacks. The family then moved to Ghost Rock and opened a dance house. It was called ‘The Saints’ Rest Hurdy-Gurdy,’ and the proceedings each night began with prayer. It was there that my now sainted mother, by her grace in the dance, acquired the *sobriquet* of ‘The Bucking Walrus.’

“In the fall of ‘75 I had occasion to visit Coyote, on the road to Mahala, and took the stage at Ghost Rock. There were four other passengers. About three miles beyond Nigger Head, persons whom I identified as my Uncle William and his two sons held up the stage. Finding nothing in the express box, they went through the passengers. I acted a most honorable part in the affair, placing myself in line with the others, holding up my hands and permitting myself to be deprived of forty dollars and a gold watch. From my behavior no one could have suspected that I knew the gentlemen who gave the entertainment. A few days later, when I went to Nigger Head and asked for the return of my money and watch my uncle and cousins swore they knew nothing of the matter, and they affected a belief that my father and I had done the job ourselves in dishonest violation of commercial good faith. Uncle William even threatened to retaliate by starting an opposition dance house at Ghost Rock. As ‘The Saints’ Rest’ had become rather unpopular, I saw that this would assuredly ruin it and prove a paying enterprise, so I told my uncle that I was willing to overlook the past if he would take me into the scheme and keep the partnership a secret from my father. This fair offer he rejected, and I then perceived that it would be better and more satisfactory if he were dead.

“My plans to that end were soon perfected, and communicating them to my dear parents I had the gratification of receiving their approval. My father said he was proud of me, and my mother promised that although her religion forbade her to assist in taking human life I should have the advantage of her prayers for my success. As a preliminary measure looking to my security in case of detection I made an application for membership in that powerful order, the Knights of Murder, and in due course was received as a member of the Ghost Rock commandery. On the day that my probation ended I was for the first time permitted to inspect the records of the order and learn who belonged to it — all the rites of initiation having been conducted in masks. Fancy my delight when, in looking over the roll of membership; I found the third name to be that of my uncle, who indeed was junior vice-chancellor of the order! Here was an opportunity exceeding my wildest dreams — to murder I could add insubordination and treachery. It was what my good mother would have called 'a special Providence.'

"At about this time something occurred which caused my cup of joy, already full, to overflow on all sides, a circular cataract of bliss. Three men, strangers in that locality, were arrested for the stage robbery in which I had lost my money and watch. They were brought to trial and, despite my efforts to clear them and fasten the guilt upon three of the most respectable and worthy citizens of Ghost Rock, convicted on the clearest proof. The murder would now be as wanton and reasonless as I could wish.

"One morning I shouldered my Winchester rifle, and going over to my uncle's house, near Nigger Head, asked my Aunt Mary, his wife, if he were at home, adding that I had come to kill him. My aunt replied with her peculiar smile that so many gentleman called on that errand and were afterward carried away without having performed it that I must excuse her for doubting my good faith in the matter. She said I did not look as if I would kill anybody, so, as a proof of good faith I leveled my rifle and wounded a Chinaman who happened to be passing the house. She said she knew whole families that could do a thing of that kind, but Bill Ridley was a horse of another color. She said, however, that I would find him over on the other side of the creek in the sheep lot; and she added that she hoped the best man would win.

"My Aunt Mary was one of the most fair-minded women that I have ever met.

"I found my uncle down on his knees engaged in skinning a sheep. Seeing that he had neither gun nor pistol handy I had not the heart to shoot him, so I approached him, greeted him pleasantly and struck him a powerful blow on the head with the butt of my rifle. I have a very good delivery and Uncle William lay down on his side, then rolled over on his back, spread out his fingers and shivered. Before he could recover the use of his limbs I seized the knife that he had been using and cut his hamstrings. You know, doubtless, that when you sever the *tendo Achillis* the patient has no further use of his leg; it is just the same as if he had no leg. Well, I parted them both, and when he revived he was at my service. As soon as he comprehended the situation, he said:

"'Samuel, you have got the drop on me and can afford to be generous. I have only one thing to ask of you, and that is that you carry me to the house and finish me in the bosom of my family.'

"I told him I thought that a pretty reasonable request and I would do so if he would let me put him into a wheat sack; he would be easier to carry that way and if we were seen by the neighbors *en route* it would cause less remark. He agreed to that, and going to the barn I got a sack. This, however, did not fit him; it was too short and much wider than he; so I bent his legs, forced his knees up against his breast and got him into it that way, tying the sack above his head. He was a heavy man and I had all that I could do to get him on my back, but I staggered along for some distance until I came to a swing that some of the children had suspended to the branch of an oak. Here I laid him down and sat upon him to rest, and the sight of the rope gave me a happy inspiration. In twenty minutes my uncle, still in the sack, swung free to the sport of the wind.

"I had taken down the rope, tied one end tightly about the mouth of the bag, thrown the other across the limb and hauled him up about five feet from the ground. Fastening the other end of the rope also about the mouth of the sack, I had the satisfaction to see my uncle converted into a large, fine pendulum. I must add that he was not himself entirely aware of the nature of the change that he had undergone in his relation to the exterior world, though in justice to a good man's memory I ought to say that I do not think he would in any case have wasted much of my time in vain remonstrance.

"Uncle William had a ram that was famous in all that region as a fighter. It was in a state of chronic constitutional indignation. Some deep disappointment in early life had soured its disposition and it had declared war upon the whole world. To say that it would butt anything accessible is but faintly to express the nature and scope of its military activity: the universe was its antagonist; its methods that of a projectile. It fought like the angels and devils, in mid-air, cleaving the atmosphere like a bird, describing a parabolic curve and descending upon its victim at just the exact angle of incidence to make the most of its velocity and weight. Its momentum, calculated in foot-tons, was something incredible. It had been seen to destroy a four year old bull by a single impact upon that animal's gnarly forehead. No stone wall had ever been known to resist its downward swoop; there were no trees tough enough to stay it; it would splinter them into matchwood and defile their leafy honors in the dust. This irascible and implacable brute — this incarnate thunderbolt — this monster of the upper deep, I had seen reposing in the shade of an adjacent tree, dreaming dreams of conquest and glory. It was with a view to summoning it forth to the field of honor that I suspended its master in the manner described.

"Having completed my preparations, I imparted to the avuncular pendulum a gentle oscillation, and retiring to cover behind a contiguous rock, lifted up my voice in a long rasping cry whose diminishing final note was drowned in a noise like that of a swearing cat, which emanated from the sack. Instantly that formidable sheep was upon its feet and had taken in the military situation at a glance. In a few moments it had approached, stamping, to within fifty yards of the swinging foeman, who, now retreating and anon advancing, seemed to invite the fray. Suddenly I saw the beast's head drop earthward as if depressed by the weight of its enormous horns; then a dim, white, wavy streak of sheep prolonged itself from that spot in a generally horizontal direction to within about four yards of a point immediately beneath the enemy. There it struck sharply upward, and before it had faded from my gaze at the place whence it had set out I heard a horrid thump and a piercing scream, and my poor uncle shot forward, with a slack rope higher than the limb to which he was attached. Here the rope tautened with a jerk, arresting his flight, and back he swung in a breathless curve to the other end of his arc. The ram had fallen, a heap of indistinguishable legs, wool and horns, but pulling itself together and dodging as its antagonist swept downward it retired at random, alternately shaking its head and stamping its fore-feet. When it had backed about the same distance as that from which it had delivered the assault it paused again, bowed its head as if in prayer for victory and again shot forward, dimly visible as before — a prolonging white streak with monstrous undulations, ending with a sharp ascension. Its course this time was at a right angle to its former one, and its impatience so great that it struck the enemy before he had nearly reached the lowest point of his arc. In consequence he went flying round and round in a horizontal circle whose radius was about equal to half the length of the rope, which I forgot to say was nearly twenty feet long. His shrieks, *crescendo* in approach and *diminuendo* in recession, made the rapidity of his revolution more obvious to the ear than to the eye. He had evidently not yet been struck in a vital spot. His posture in the sack and the distance from the ground at which he hung compelled the ram to operate upon his lower extremities and the end of his back. Like a plant that has struck its root into some poisonous mineral, my poor uncle was dying slowly upward.

"After delivering its second blow the ram had not again retired. The fever of battle burned hot in its heart; its brain was intoxicated with the wine of strife. Like a pugilist who in his rage forgets his skill and fights ineffectively at half-arm's length, the angry beast endeavored to reach its fleeting foe by awkward vertical leaps as he passed overhead, sometimes, indeed, succeeding in striking him feebly, but more frequently overthrown by its own misguided eagerness. But as the impetus was exhausted and the man's circles narrowed in scope and diminished in speed, bringing him nearer to the ground, these tactics produced better results, eliciting a superior quality of screams, which I greatly enjoyed.

"Suddenly, as if the bugles had sung truce, the ram suspended hostilities and walked away, thoughtfully wrinkling and smoothing its great aquiline nose, and occasionally cropping a bunch of grass and slowly munching it. It seemed to have tired of war's alarms and resolved to beat the sword into a plowshare and cultivate the arts of peace. Steadily it held its course away from the field of fame until it had gained a distance of nearly a quarter of a mile. There it stopped and stood with its rear to the foe, chewing its cud and apparently half asleep. I observed, however, an occasional slight turn of its head, as if its apathy were more affected than real.

"Meantime Uncle William's shrieks had abated with his motion, and nothing was heard from him but long, low moans, and at long intervals my name, uttered in pleading tones exceedingly grateful to my ear. Evidently the man had not the faintest notion of what was being done to him, and was inexpressibly terrified. When Death comes cloaked in mystery he is terrible indeed. Little by little my uncle's oscillations diminished, and finally he hung motionless. I went to him and was about to give him the *coup de grâce*, when I heard and felt a succession of smart shocks which shook the ground like a series of light earthquakes, and turning in the direction of the ram, saw a long cloud of dust approaching me with inconceivable rapidity and alarming effect! At a distance of some thirty yards away it stopped short, and from the near end of it rose into the air what I at first thought a great white bird. Its ascent was so smooth and easy and regular that I could not realize its extraordinary celerity, and was lost in admiration of its grace. To this day the impression remains that it was a slow, deliberate movement, the ram — for it was that animal — being upborne by some power other than its own impetus, and supported through the successive stages of its flight with infinite tenderness and care. My eyes followed its progress through the air with unspeakable pleasure, all the greater by contrast with my former terror of its approach by land. Onward and upward the noble animal sailed, its head bent down almost between its knees, its fore-feet thrown back, its hinder legs trailing to rear like the legs of a soaring heron.

"At a height of forty or fifty feet, as fond recollection presents it to view, it attained its zenith and appeared to remain an instant stationary; then, tilting suddenly forward without altering the relative position of its parts, it shot downward on a steeper and steeper course with augmenting velocity, passed immediately above me with a noise like the rush of a cannon shot and struck my poor uncle almost squarely on the top of the head! So frightful was the impact that not only the man’s neck was broken, but the rope too; and the body of the deceased, forced against the earth, was crushed to pulp beneath the awful front of that meteoric sheep! The concussion stopped all the clocks between Lone Hand and Dutch Dan’s, and Professor Davidson, a distinguished authority in matters seismic, who happened to be in the vicinity, promptly explained that the vibrations were from north to southwest.

“Altogether, I cannot help thinking that in point of artistic atrocity my murder of Uncle William has seldom been excelled.”

Oil of Dog

My name is Boffer Bings. I was born of honest parents in one of the humbler walks of life, my father being a manufacturer of dog-oil and my mother having a small studio in the shadow of the village church, where she disposed of unwelcome babes. In my boyhood I was trained to habits of industry; I not only assisted my father in procuring dogs for his vats, but was frequently employed by my mother to carry away the debris of her work in the studio. In performance of this duty I sometimes had need of all my natural intelligence for all the law officers of the vicinity were opposed to my mother's business. They were not elected on an opposition ticket, and the matter had never been made a political issue; it just happened so. My father's business of making dog-oil was, naturally, less unpopular, though the owners of missing dogs sometimes regarded him with suspicion, which was reflected, to some extent, upon me. My father had, as silent partners, all the physicians of the town, who seldom wrote a prescription which did not contain what they were pleased to designate as *Ol. can*. It is really the most valuable medicine ever discovered. But most persons are unwilling to make personal sacrifices for the afflicted, and it was evident that many of the fattest dogs in town had been forbidden to play with me — a fact which pained my young sensibilities, and at one time came near driving me to become a pirate.

Looking back upon those days, I cannot but regret, at times, that by indirectly bringing my beloved parents to their death I was the author of misfortunes profoundly affecting my future.

One evening while passing my father's oil factory with the body of a foundling from my mother's studio I saw a constable who seemed to be closely watching my movements. Young as I was, I had learned that a constable's acts, of whatever apparent character, are prompted by the most reprehensible motives, and I avoided him by dodging into the oilery by a side door which happened to stand ajar. I locked it at once and was alone with my dead. My father had retired for the night. The only light in the place came from the furnace, which glowed a deep, rich crimson under one of the vats, casting ruddy reflections on the walls. Within the cauldron the oil still rolled in indolent ebullition, occasionally pushing to the surface a piece of dog. Seating myself to wait for the constable to go away, I held the naked body of the foundling in my lap and tenderly stroked its short, silken hair. Ah, how beautiful it was! Even at that early age I was passionately fond of children, and as I looked upon this cherub I could almost find it in my heart to wish that the small, red wound upon its breast — the work of my dear mother — had not been mortal.

It had been my custom to throw the babes into the river which nature had thoughtfully provided for the purpose, but that night I did not dare to leave the oilery for fear of the constable. “After all,” I said to myself, “it cannot greatly matter if I put it into this cauldron. My father will never know the bones from those of a puppy, and the few deaths which may result from administering another kind of oil for the incomparable *ol. can.* are not important in a population which increases so rapidly.” In short, I took the first step in crime and brought myself untold sorrow by casting the babe into the cauldron.

The next day, somewhat to my surprise, my father, rubbing his hands with satisfaction, informed me and my mother that he had obtained the finest quality of oil that was ever seen; that the physicians to whom he had shown samples had so pronounced it. He added that he had no knowledge as to how the result was obtained; the dogs had been treated in all respects as usual, and were of an ordinary breed. I deemed it my duty to explain — which I did, though palsied would have been my tongue if I could have foreseen the consequences. Bewailing their previous ignorance of the advantages of combining their industries, my parents at once took measures to repair the error. My mother removed her studio to a wing of the factory building and my duties in connection with the business ceased; I was no longer required to dispose of the bodies of the small superfluous, and there was no need of alluring dogs to their doom, for my father discarded them altogether, though they still had an honorable place in the name of the oil. So suddenly thrown into idleness, I might naturally have been expected to become vicious and dissolute, but I did not. The holy influence of my dear mother was ever about me to protect me from the temptations which beset youth, and my father was a deacon in a church. Alas, that through my fault these estimable persons should have come to so bad an end!

Finding a double profit in her business, my mother now devoted herself to it with a new assiduity. She removed not only superfluous and unwelcome babes to order, but went out into the highways and byways, gathering in children of a larger growth, and even such adults as she could entice to the oilery. My father, too, enamored of the superior quality of oil produced, purveyed for his vats with diligence and zeal. The conversion of their neighbors into dog-oil became, in short, the one passion of their lives — an absorbing and overwhelming greed took possession of their souls and served them in place of a hope in Heaven — by which, also, they were inspired.

So enterprising had they now become that a public meeting was held and resolutions passed severely censuring them. It was intimated by the chairman that any further raids upon the population would be met in a spirit of hostility. My poor parents left the meeting broken-hearted, desperate and, I believe, not altogether sane. Anyhow, I deemed it prudent not to enter the oilery with them that night, but slept outside in a stable.

At about midnight some mysterious impulse caused me to rise and peer through a window into the furnace-room, where I knew my father now slept. The fires were burning as brightly as if the following day's harvest had been expected to be abundant. One of the large cauldrons was slowly "walloping" with a mysterious appearance of self-restraint, as if it bided its time to put forth its full energy. My father was not in bed; he had risen in his nightclothes and was preparing a noose in a strong cord. From the looks which he cast at the door of my mother's bedroom I knew too well the purpose that he had in mind. Speechless and motionless with terror, I could do nothing in prevention or warning. Suddenly the door of my mother's apartment was opened, noiselessly, and the two confronted each other, both apparently surprised. The lady, also, was in her night clothes, and she held in her right hand the tool of her trade, a long, narrow-bladed dagger.

She, too, had been unable to deny herself the last profit which the unfriendly action of the citizens and my absence had left her. For one instant they looked into each other's blazing eyes and then sprang together with indescribable fury. Round and round the room they struggled, the man cursing, the woman shrieking, both fighting like demons — she to strike him with the dagger, he to strangle her with his great bare hands. I know not how long I had the unhappiness to observe this disagreeable instance of domestic infelicity, but at last, after a more than usually vigorous struggle, the combatants suddenly moved apart.

My father's breast and my mother's weapon showed evidences of contact. For another instant they glared at each other in the most unamiable way; then my poor, wounded father, feeling the hand of death upon him, leaped forward, unmindful of resistance, grasped my dear mother in his arms, dragged her to the side of the boiling cauldron, collected all his failing energies, and sprang in with her! In a moment, both had disappeared and were adding their oil to that of the committee of citizens who had called the day before with an invitation to the public meeting.

Convinced that these unhappy events closed to me every avenue to an honorable career in that town, I removed to the famous city of Otumwee, where these memoirs are written with a heart full of remorse for a heedless act entailing so dismal a commercial disaster.

An Imperfect Conflagration

Early one June morning in 1872 I murdered my father — an act which made a deep impression on me at the time. This was before my marriage, while I was living with my parents in Wisconsin. My father and I were in the library of our home, dividing the proceeds of a burglary which we had committed that night. These consisted of household goods mostly, and the task of equitable division was difficult. We got on very well with the napkins, towels and such things, and the silverware was parted pretty nearly equally, but you can see for yourself that when you try to divide a single music-box by two without a remainder you will have trouble. It was that music-box which brought disaster and disgrace upon our family. If we had left it my poor father might now be alive.

It was a most exquisite and beautiful piece of workmanship — inlaid with costly woods and carven very curiously. It would not only play a great variety of tunes, but would whistle like a quail, bark like a dog, crow every morning at daylight whether it was wound up or not, and break the Ten Commandments. It was this last mentioned accomplishment that won my father’s heart and caused him to commit the only dishonorable act of his life, though possibly he would have committed more if he had been spared: he tried to conceal that music-box from me, and declared upon his honor that he had not taken it, though I knew very well that, so far as he was concerned, the burglary had been undertaken chiefly for the purpose of obtaining it.

My father had the music-box hidden under his cloak; we had worn cloaks by way of disguise. He had solemnly assured me that he did not take it. I knew that he did, and knew something of which he was evidently ignorant; namely, that the box would crow at daylight and betray him if I could prolong the division of profits till that time. All occurred as I wished: as the gaslight began to pale in the library and the shape of the windows was seen dimly behind the curtains, a long cock-a-doodle-doo came from beneath the old gentleman’s cloak, followed by a few bars of an aria from *Tannhauser*, ending with a loud click. A small hand-axe, which we had used to break into the unlucky house, lay between us on the table; I picked it up. The old man seeing that further concealment was useless took the box from under his cloak and set it on the table. “Cut it in two if you prefer that plan,” said he; “I tried to save it from destruction.”

He was a passionate lover of music and could himself play the concertina with expression and feeling.

I said: “I do not question the purity of your motive: it would be presumptuous in me to sit in judgment on my father. But business is business, and with this axe I am going to effect a dissolution of our partnership unless you will consent in all future burglaries to wear a bell-punch.”

“No,” he said, after some reflection, “no, I could not do that; it would look like a confession of dishonesty. People would say that you distrusted me.”

I could not help admiring his spirit and sensitiveness; for a moment I was proud of him and disposed to overlook his fault, but a glance at the richly jeweled music-box decided me, and, as I said, I removed the old man from this vale of tears. Having done so, I was a trifle uneasy. Not only was he my father — the author of my being — but the body would be certainly discovered. It was now broad daylight and my mother was likely to enter the library at any moment. Under the circumstances, I thought it expedient to remove her also, which I did. Then I paid off all the servants and discharged them.

That afternoon I went to the chief of police, told him what I had done and asked his advice. It would be very painful to me if the facts became publicly known. My conduct would be generally condemned; the newspapers would bring it up against me if ever I should run for office. The chief saw the force of these considerations; he was himself an assassin of wide experience. After consulting with the presiding judge of the Court of Variable Jurisdiction he advised me to conceal the bodies in one of the bookcases, get a heavy insurance on the house and burn it down. This I proceeded to do.

In the library was a bookcase which my father had recently purchased of some cranky inventor and had not filled. It was in shape and size something like the old-fashioned “wardrobes” which one sees in bed-rooms without closets, but opened all the way down, like a woman’s night-dress. It had glass doors. I had recently laid out my parents and they were now rigid enough to stand erect; so I stood them in this bookcase, from which I had removed the shelves. I locked them in and tacked some curtains over the glass doors. The inspector from the insurance office passed a half-dozen times before the case without suspicion.

That night, after getting my policy, I set fire to the house and started through the woods to town, two miles away, where I managed to be found about the time the excitement was at its height. With cries of apprehension for the fate of my parents, I joined the rush and arrived at the fire some two hours after I had kindled it. The whole town was there as I dashed up. The house was entirely consumed, but in one end of the level bed of glowing embers, bolt upright and uninjured, was that bookcase! The curtains had burned away, exposing the glass-doors, through which the fierce, red light illuminated the interior. There stood my dear father “in his habit as he lived,” and at his side the partner of his joys and sorrows. Not a hair of them was singed, their clothing was intact. On their heads and throats the injuries which in the accomplishment of my designs I had been compelled to inflict were conspicuous. As in the presence of a miracle, the people were silent; awe and terror had stilled every tongue. I was myself greatly affected.

Some three years later, when the events herein related had nearly faded from my memory, I went to New York to assist in passing some counterfeit United States bonds. Carelessly looking into a furniture store one day, I saw the exact counterpart of that bookcase. “I bought it for a trifle from a reformed inventor,” the dealer explained. “He said it was fireproof, the pores of the wood being filled with alum under hydraulic pressure and the glass made of asbestos. I don’t suppose it is really fireproof — you can have it at the price of an ordinary bookcase.”

“No,” I said, “if you cannot warrant it fireproof I won’t take it” — and I bade him good morning.

I would not have had it at any price: it revived memories that were exceedingly disagreeable.

The Hypnotist

By those of my friends who happen to know that I sometimes amuse myself with hypnotism, mind reading and kindred phenomena, I am frequently asked if I have a clear conception of the nature of whatever principle underlies them. To this question I always reply that I neither have nor desire to have. I am no investigator with an ear at the key-hole of Nature's workshop, trying with vulgar curiosity to steal the secrets of her trade. The interests of science are as little to me as mine seem to have been to science.

Doubtless the phenomena in question are simple enough, and in no way transcend our powers of comprehension if only we could find the clew; but for my part I prefer not to find it, for I am of a singularly romantic disposition, deriving more gratification from mystery than from knowledge. It was commonly remarked of me when I was a child that my big blue eyes appeared to have been made rather to look into than look out of — such was their dreamful beauty, and in my frequent periods of abstraction, their indifference to what was going on. In those peculiarities they resembled, I venture to think, the soul which lies behind them, always more intent upon some lovely conception which it has created in its own image than concerned about the laws of nature and the material frame of things. All this, irrelevant and egotistic as it may seem, is related by way of accounting for the meagreness of the light that I am able to throw upon a subject that has engaged so much of my attention, and concerning which there is so keen and general a curiosity. With my powers and opportunities, another person might doubtless have an explanation for much of what I present simply as narrative.

My first knowledge that I possessed unusual powers came to me in my fourteenth year, when at school. Happening one day to have forgotten to bring my noon-day luncheon, I gazed longingly at that of a small girl who was preparing to eat hers. Looking up, her eyes met mine and she seemed unable to withdraw them. After a moment of hesitancy she came forward in an absent kind of way and without a word surrendered her little basket with its tempting contents and walked away. Inexpressibly pleased, I relieved my hunger and destroyed the basket. After that I had not the trouble to bring a luncheon for myself: that little girl was my daily purveyor; and not infrequently in satisfying my simple need from her frugal store I combined pleasure and profit by constraining her attendance at the feast and making misleading proffer of the viands, which eventually I consumed to the last fragment. The girl was always persuaded that she had eaten all herself; and later in the day her tearful complaints of hunger surprised the teacher, entertained the pupils, earned for her the sobriquet of Greedy-Gut and filled me with a peace past understanding.

A disagreeable feature of this otherwise satisfactory condition of things was the necessary secrecy: the transfer of the luncheon, for example, had to be made at some distance from the madding crowd, in a wood; and I blush to think of the many other unworthy subterfuges entailed by the situation. As I was (and am) naturally of a frank and open disposition, these became more and more irksome, and but for the reluctance of my parents to renounce the obvious advantages of the new *régime* I would gladly have reverted to the old. The plan that I finally adopted to free myself from the consequences of my own powers excited a wide and keen interest at the time, and that part of it which consisted in the death of the girl was severely condemned, but it is hardly pertinent to the scope of this narrative.

For some years afterward I had little opportunity to practice hypnotism; such small essays as I made at it were commonly barren of other recognition than solitary confinement on a bread-and-water diet; sometimes, indeed, they elicited nothing better than the cat-o’-nine-tails. It was when I was about to leave the scene of these small disappointments that my one really important feat was performed.

I had been called into the warden’s office and given a suit of civilian’s clothing, a trifling sum of money and a great deal of advice, which I am bound to confess was of a much better quality than the clothing. As I was passing out of the gate into the light of freedom I suddenly turned and looking the warden gravely in the eye, soon had him in control.

“You are an ostrich,” I said.

At the post-mortem examination the stomach was found to contain a great quantity of indigestible articles mostly of wood or metal. Stuck fast in the œsophagus and constituting, according to the Coroner’s jury, the immediate cause of death, one door-knob.

I was by nature a good and affectionate son, but as I took my way into the great world from which I had been so long secluded I could not help remembering that all my misfortunes had flowed like a stream from the niggard economy of my parents in the matter of school luncheons; and I knew of no reason to think they had reformed.

On the road between Succotash Hill and South Asphyxia is a little open field which once contained a shanty known as Pete Gilstrap’s Place, where that gentleman used to murder travelers for a living. The death of Mr. Gilstrap and the diversion of nearly all the travel to another road occurred so nearly at the same time that no one has ever been able to say which was cause and which effect. Anyhow, the field was now a desolation and the Place had long been burned. It was while going afoot to South Asphyxia, the home of my childhood, that I found both my parents on their way to the Hill. They had hitched their team and were eating luncheon under an oak tree in the center of the field. The sight of the luncheon called up painful memories of my school days and roused the sleeping lion in my breast. Approaching the guilty couple, who at once recognized me, I ventured to suggest that I share their hospitality.

"Of this cheer, my son," said the author of my being, with characteristic pomposity, which age had not withered, "there is sufficient for but two. I am not, I hope, insensible to the hunger-light in your eyes, but—"

My father has never completed that sentence; what he mistook for hunger-light was simply the earnest gaze of the hypnotist. In a few seconds he was at my service. A few more sufficed for the lady, and the dictates of a just resentment could be carried into effect. "My former father," I said, "I presume that it is known to you that you and this lady are no longer what you were?"

"I have observed a certain subtle change," was the rather dubious reply of the old gentleman; "it is perhaps attributable to age."

"It is more than that," I explained; "it goes to character — to species. You and the lady here are, in truth, two *broncos* — wild stallions both, and unfriendly."

"Why, John," exclaimed my dear mother, "you don't mean to say that I am—"

"Madam," I replied, solemnly, fixing my eyes again upon hers, "you are."

Scarcely had the words fallen from my lips when she dropped upon her hands and knees, and backing up to the old man squealed like a demon and delivered a vicious kick upon his shin! An instant later he was himself down on all-fours, headed away from her and flinging his feet at her simultaneously and successively. With equal earnestness but inferior agility, because of her hampering body-gear, she plied her own. Their flying legs crossed and mingled in the most bewildering way; their feet sometimes meeting squarely in midair, their bodies thrust forward, falling flat upon the ground and for a moment helpless. On recovering themselves they would resume the combat, uttering their frenzy in the nameless sounds of the furious brutes which they believed themselves to be — the whole region rang with their clamor! Round and round they wheeled, the blows of their feet falling "like lightnings from the mountain cloud." They plunged and reared backward upon their knees, struck savagely at each other with awkward descending blows of both fists at once, and dropped again upon their hands as if unable to maintain the upright position of the body. Grass and pebbles were torn from the soil by hands and feet; clothing, hair, faces inexpressibly defiled with dust and blood. Wild, inarticulate screams of rage attested the delivery of the blows; groans, grunts and gasps their receipt. Nothing more truly military was ever seen at Gettysburg or Waterloo: the valor of my dear parents in the hour of danger can never cease to be to me a source of pride and gratification. At the end of it all two battered, tattered, bloody and fragmentary vestiges of mortality attested the solemn fact that the author of the strife was an orphan.

Arrested for provoking a breach of the peace, I was, and have ever since been, tried in the Court of Technicalities and Continuances whence, after fifteen years of proceedings, my attorney is moving heaven and earth to get the case taken to the Court of Remandment for New Trials.

Such are a few of my principal experiments in the mysterious force or agency known as hypnotic suggestion. Whether or not it could be employed by a bad man for an unworthy purpose I am unable to say.

THE FOURTH ESTATE

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Mr. Masthead, Journalist

While I was in Kansas I purchased a weekly newspaper — the *Claybank Thundergust of Reform*. This paper had never paid its expenses; it had ruined four consecutive publishers; but my brother-in-law, Mr. Jefferson Scandril, of Weedhaven, was going to run for the Legislature, and I naturally desired his defeat; so it became necessary to have an organ in Claybank to assist in his political extinction. When the establishment came into my hands, the editor was a fellow who had "opinions," and him I at once discharged with an admonition. I had some difficulty in procuring a successor; every man in the county applied for the place. I could not appoint one without having to fight a majority of the others, and was eventually compelled to write to a friend at Warm Springs, in the adjoining State of Missouri, to send me an editor from abroad whose instalment at the helm of manifest destiny could have no local significance.

The man he sent me was a frowsy, seedy fellow, named Masthead — not larger, apparently, than a boy of sixteen years, though it was difficult to say from the outside how much of him was editor and how much cast-off clothing; for in the matter of apparel he had acted upon his favorite professional maxim, and "sunk the individual;" his attire — eminently eclectic, and in a sense international — quite overcame him at all points. However, as my friend had assured me he was "a graduate of one of the largest institutions in his native State," I took him in and bought a pen for him. My instructions to him were brief and simple.

"Mr. Masthead," said I, "it is the policy of the *Thundergust* first, last, and all the time, in this world and the next, to resent the intrusion of Mr. Jefferson Scandril into politics."

The first thing the little rascal did was to write a withering leader denouncing Mr. Scandril as a "demagogue, the degradation of whose political opinions was only equaled by the disgustfulness of the family connections of which those opinions were the spawn!"

I hastened to point out to Mr. Masthead that it had never been the policy of the *Thundergust* to attack the family relations of an offensive candidate, although this was not strictly true.

"I am very sorry," he replied, running his head up out of his clothes till it towered as much as six inches above the table at which he sat; "no offense, I hope."

“Oh, none in the world,” said I, as carelessly as I could manage it; “only I don’t think it a legitimate — that is, an effective, method of attack.”

“Mr. Johnson,” said he — I was passing as Johnson at that time, I remember —”Mr. Johnson, I think it *is* an effective method. Personally I might perhaps prefer another line of argument in this particular case, and personally perhaps you might; but in our profession personal considerations must be blown to the winds of the horizon; we must sink the individual. In opposing the election of your relative, sir, you have set the seal of your heavy displeasure upon the sin of nepotism, and for this I respect you; nepotism must be got under! But in the display of Roman virtues, sir, we must go the whole hog. When in the interest of public morality” — Mr. Masthead was now gesticulating earnestly with the sleeves of his coat—”Virginius stabbed his daughter, was he influenced by personal considerations? When Curtius leaped into the yawning gulf, did he not sink the individual?”

I admitted that he did, but feeling in a contentious mood, prolonged the discussion by leisurely loading and capping a revolver; but, prescient of my argument, Mr. Masthead avoided refutation by hastily adjourning the debate. I sent him a note that evening, filling-in a few of the details of the policy that I had before sketched in outline. Amongst other things I submitted that it would be better for us to exalt Mr. Scandril’s opponent than to degrade himself. To this Mr. Masthead reluctantly assented—”sinking the individual,” he reproachfully explained, “in the dependent employee — the powerless bondsman!” The next issue of the *Thundergust* contained, under the heading, “Invigorating Zephyrs,” the following editorial article:

“Last week we declared our unalterable opposition to the candidacy of Mr. Jefferson Scandril, and gave reasons for the faith that is in us. For the first time in its history this paper made a clear, thoughtful, and adequate avowal and exposition of eternal principle! Abandoning for the present the stand we then took, let us trace the antecedents of Mr. Scandril’s opponent up to their source. It has been urged against Mr. Broskin that he spent some years of his life in the lunatic asylum at Warm Springs, in the adjoining commonwealth of Missouri. This cuckoo cry — raised though it is by dogs of political darkness — we shall not stoop to controvert, for it is accidentally true; but next week we shall show, as by the stroke of an enchanter’s wand, that this great statesman’s detractors would probably not derive any benefits from a residence in the same institution, their mental aberration being rottenly incurable!”

I thought this rather strong and not quite to the point; but Masthead said it was a fact that our candidate, who was very little known in Claybank, had “served a term” in the Warm Springs asylum, and the issue must be boldly met — that evasion and denial were but forms of prostration beneath the iron wheels of Truth! As he said this he seemed to inflate and expand so as almost to fill his clothes, and the fire of his eye somehow burned into me an impression — since effaced — that a just cause is not imperiled by a trifling concession to fact. So, leaving the matter quite in my editor's hands I went away to keep some important engagements, the paragraph having involved me in several duels with the friends of Mr. Broskin. I thought it rather hard that I should have to defend my new editor's policy against the supporters of my own candidate, particularly as I was clearly in the right and they knew nothing whatever about the matter in dispute, not one of them having ever before so much as heard of the now famous Warm Springs asylum. But I would not shirk even the humblest journalistic duty; I fought these fellows and acquitted myself as became a man of letters and a politician. The hurts I got were some time healing, and in the interval every prominent member of my party who came to Claybank to speak to the people regarded it as a simple duty to call first at my house, make a tender inquiry as to the progress of my recovery and leave a challenge. My physician forbade me to read a line of anything; the consequence was that Masthead had it all his own way with the paper. In looking over the old files now, I find that he devoted his entire talent and all the space of the paper, including what had been the advertising columns, to confessing that our candidate had been an inmate of a lunatic asylum, and contemptuously asking the opposing party what they were going to do about it.

All this time Mr. Broskin made no sign; but when the challenges became intolerable I indignantly instructed Mr. Masthead to whip round to the other side and support my brother-in-law. Masthead "sank the individual," and duly announced, with his accustomed frankness, our change of policy. Then Mr. Broskin came down to Claybank — to thank me! He was a fine, respectable-looking gentleman, and impressed me very favorably. But Masthead was in when he called, and the effect upon *him* was different. He shrank into a mere heap of old clothes, turned white, and chattered his teeth. Noting this extraordinary behavior, I at once sought an explanation.

"Mr. Broskin," said I, with a meaning glance at the trembling editor, "from certain indications I am led to fear that owing to some mistake we may have been doing you an injustice. May I ask you if you were really ever in the Lunatic asylum at Warm Springs, Missouri?"

"For three years," he replied, quietly, "I was the physician in charge of that institution. Your son" — turning to Masthead, who was flying all sorts of colors —"was, if I mistake not, one of my patients. I learn that a few weeks ago a friend of yours, named Norton, secured the young man's release upon your promise to take care of him yourself in future. I hope that home associations have improved the poor fellow. It’s very sad!”

It was indeed. Norton was the name of the man to whom I had written for an editor, and who had sent me one! Norton was ever an obliging fellow.

Why I Am Not Editing “The Stinger”

J. Munniglut, Proprietor, to Peter Pitchin, Editor.

“STINGER” OFFICE, Monday, 9 A.M.

A man has called to ask “who wrote that article about Mr. Muskler.” I told him to find out, and he says that is what he means to do. He has consented to amuse himself with the exchanges while I ask you. I don’t approve the article.

Peter Pitchin, Editor, to J. Munniglut, Proprietor.

13 LOFER STREET, Monday, 10 A.M.

Do you happen to remember how Dacier translates *Difficile est proprie communia dicere*? I’ve made a note of it somewhere, but can’t find it. If you remember please leave a memorandum of it on your table, and I’ll get it when I come down this afternoon.

P.S. — Tell the man to go away; we can’t be bothered about that fellow Muskler.

J. Munniglut, Proprietor, to Peter Pitchin, Editor.

“STINGER” OFFICE, Monday, 11:30 A.M.

I can’t be impolite to a stranger, you know; I must tell him *somebody* wrote it. He has finished the exchanges, and is drumming on the floor with the end of his stick; I fear the people in the shop below won’t like it. Besides, the foreman says it disturbs the compositors in the next room. Suppose you come down.

Peter Pitchin, Editor, to J. Munniglut, Proprietor.

13 LOFER STREET, Monday, 1 P.M.

I have found the note I made of that translation, but it is in French and I can’t make it out. Try the man with the dictionary and the “Books of Dates.” They ought to last him till it’s time to close the office. I shall be down early to-morrow morning.

P.S. — How big is he? Suggest a civil suit for libel.

J. Munniglut, Proprietor, to Peter Pitchin, Editor.

“STINGER” OFFICE, Monday, 3 P.M.

He looks larger than he was when he came in. I’ve offered him the dictionary; he says he has read it before. He is sitting on my table. Come at once!

Peter Pitchin, Editor, to J. Munniglut, Proprietor.

13 LOFER STREET, Monday, 5 P.M.

I don’t think I shall. I am doing an article for this week on “The Present Aspect of the Political Horizon.” Expect me *very* early to-morrow. You had better turn the man out and shut up the office.

Henry Inxling, Bookkeeper, to Peter Pitchin, Editor.

“STINGER” OFFICE, Tuesday, 8 A.M.

Mr. Munniglut has not arrived, but his friend, the large gentleman who was with him all day yesterday, is here again. He seems very desirous of seeing you, and says he will wait. Perhaps he is your cousin. I thought I would tell you he was here, so that you might hasten down.

Ought I to allow dogs in the office? The gentleman has a bull-dog.

Peter Pitchin, Editor, to Henry Inxling, Bookkeeper.

13 LOFER STREET, Tuesday, 9.30 A.M.

Certainly *not;* dogs have fleas. The man is an impostor. Oblige me by turning him out. I shall come down this afternoon — *early*.

P.S. — Don’t listen to the rascal’s entreaties; out with him!

Henry Inxling, Bookkeeper, to Peter Pitchin, Editor.

“STINGER” OFFICE, Tuesday, 12 M.

The gentleman carries a revolver. Would you mind coming down and reasoning with him? I have a wife and five children depending on me, and when I lose my temper I am likely to go too far. I would prefer that *you* should turn him out.

Peter Pitchin, Editor, to Henry Inxling, Bookkeeper.

13 LOFER STREET, Tuesday, 2 P.M.

Do you suppose I can leave my private correspondence to preserve you from the intrusion and importunities of beggars? Put the scoundrel out at once — neck and heels! I know him; he’s Muskler — don’t you remember? Muskler, the coward, who assaulted an old man; you’ll find the whole circumstances related in last Saturday’s issue. Out with him — the unmanly sneak!

Henry Inxling, Bookkeeper, to Peter Pitchin, Editor.

“STINGER” OFFICE, Tuesday Evening.

I have told him to go, and he laughed. So did the bull-dog. But he is going. He is now making a bed for the pup in one corner of your room, with some rugs and old newspapers, and appears to be about to go to dinner. I have given him your address. The foreman wants some copy to go on with. I beg you will come at once if I am to be left alone with that dog.

Peter Pitchin, Editor, to Henry Inxling, Bookkeeper.

40 DUNTIONER’S ALLEY, Wednesday, 10 A.M.

I should have come down to the office last evening, but you see I have been moving. My landlady was too filthy dirty for anything! I stood it as long as I could; then I left. I’m coming directly I get your answer to this; but I want to know, first, if my blotter has been changed and my ink-well refilled. This house is a good way out, but the boy can take the car at the corner of Cobble and Slush streets.

O! — about that *man*? Of course you have not seen him since.

William Quoin, Foreman, to Peter Pitchin, Editor.

“STINGER” OFFICE, Wednesday, 12 M.

I’ve got your note to Inxling; he ain’t come down this morning. I haven’t a line of copy on the hooks; the boys are all throwing in dead ads. There’s a man and a dog in the proprietor’s office; I don’t believe they ought to be there, all alone, but they were here all Monday and yesterday, and may be connected with the business management of the paper; so I don’t like to order them out. Perhaps you will come down and speak to them. We shall have to go away if you don’t send copy.

Peter Pitchin, Editor, to William Quoin, Foreman.

40 DUNTIONER’S ALLEY, Wednesday, 3 P.M.

Your note astonishes me. The man you describe is a notorious thief. Get the compositors all together, and make a rush at him. Don’t try to keep him, but hustle him out of town, and I’ll be down as soon as I can get a button sewn on my collar.

P.S. — Give it him good! — don’t mention my address and he can’t complain to me how you treat him. Bust his bugle!

J. Munniglut, Proprietor, to Peter Pitchin, Editor.

“STINGER” OFFICE, Friday, 2 P.M.

Business has detained me from the office until now, and what do I find? Not a soul about the place, no copy, not a stickful of live matter on the galleys! There can be no paper this week. What you have all done with yourselves I am sure I don’t know; one would suppose there had been smallpox about the place. You will please come down and explain this Hegira at once — at once, if you please!

P.S. — That troublesome Muskler — you may remember he dropped in on Monday to inquire about something or other — has taken a sort of shop exactly opposite here, and seems, at this distance, to be doing something to a shotgun. I presume he is a gunsmith. So we are precious well rid of *him*.

Peter Pitchin, Editor to J. Munniglut, Proprietor.

PIER NO. 3, Friday Evening.

Just a line or two to say I am suddenly called away to bury my sick mother. When that is off my mind I’ll write you what I know about the Hegira, the Flight into Egypt, the Retreat of the Ten Thousand, and whatever else you would like to learn. There is nothing mean about *me!* I don’t think there has been any wilful desertion. You may engage an editor for, say, fifty years, with the privilege of keeping him regularly, if, at the end of that time, I should break my neck hastening back.

P.S. — I hope that poor fellow Muskier will make a fair profit in the gunsmithing line. Jump him for an ad!

Corrupting the Press

When Joel Bird was up for Governor of Missouri, Sam Henly was editing the Berrywood *Bugle*; and no sooner was the nomination made by the State Convention than he came out hot against the party. He was an able writer, was Sam, and the lies he invented about our candidate were shocking! That, however, we endured very well, but presently Sam turned squarely about and began telling the truth. *This* was a little too much; the County Committee held a hasty meeting, and decided that it must be stopped; so I, Henry Barber, was sent for to make arrangements to that end. I knew something of Sam: had purchased him several times, and I estimated his present value at about one thousand dollars. This seemed to the committee a reasonable figure, and on my mentioning it to Sam he said "he thought that about the fair thing; it should never be said that the *Bugle* was a hard paper to deal with." There was, however, some delay in raising the money; the candidates for the local offices had not disposed of their autumn hogs yet, and were in financial straits. Some of them contributed a pig each, one gave twenty bushels of corn, another a flock of chickens; and the man who aspired to the distinction of County Judge paid his assessment with a wagon. These things had to be converted into cash at a ruinous sacrifice, and in the meantime Sam kept pouring an incessant stream of hot shot into our political camp. Nothing I could say would make him stay his hand; he invariably replied that it was no bargain until he had the money. The committeemen were furious; it required all my eloquence to prevent their declaring the contract null and void; but at last a new, clean one thousand-dollar note was passed over to me, which in hot haste I transferred to Sam at his residence.

That evening there was a meeting of the committee: all seemed in high spirits again, except Hooker of Jayhawk. This old wretch sat back and shook his head during the entire session, and just before adjournment said, as he took his hat to go, that p'r'aps'twas orl right and on the squar'; maybe thar war'n't any shenannigan, but *he* war dubersome — yes, he war dubersome. The old curmudgeon repeated this until I was exasperated beyond restraint.

"Mr. Hooker," said I, "I've known Sam Henly ever since he was *so* high, and there isn't an honester man in old Missouri. Sam Henly's word is as good as his note! What's more, if any gentleman thinks he would enjoy a first-class funeral, and if he will supply the sable accessories, I'll supply the corpse. And he can take it home with him from this meeting."

At this point Mr. Hooker was troubled with leaving.

Having got this business off my conscience I slept late next day. When I stepped into the street I saw at once that something was "up." There were knots of people gathered at the corners, some reading eagerly that morning's issue of the *Bugle*, some gesticulating, and others stalking moodily about muttering curses, not loud but deep. Suddenly I heard an excited clamor — a confused roar of many lungs, and the trampling of innumerable feet. In this babel of noises I could distinguish the words "Kill him!" "Wa'm his hide!" and so forth; and, looking up the street, I saw what seemed to be the whole male population racing down it. I am very excitable, and, though I did not know whose hide was to be warmed, nor why anyone was to be killed, I shot off in front of the howling masses, shouting "Kill him!" and "Warm his hide!" as loudly as the loudest, all the time looking out for the victim. Down the street we flew like a storm; then I turned a corner, thinking the scoundrel must have gone up *that* street; then bolted through a public square; over a bridge; under an arch; finally back into the main street; yelling like a panther, and resolved to slaughter the first human being I should overtake. The crowd followed my lead, turning as I turned, shrieking as I shrieked, and — all at once it came to me that *I* was the man whose hide was to be warmed!

It is needless to dwell upon the sensation this discovery gave me; happily I was within a few yards of the committee-rooms, and into these I dashed, closing and bolting the doors behind me, and mounting the stairs like a flash. The committee was in solemn session, sitting in a nice, even row on the front benches, each man with his elbows on his knees, and his chin resting in the palms of his hands — thinking. At each man's feet lay a neglected copy of the *Bugle*. Every member fixed his eyes on me, but no one stirred, none uttered a sound. There was something awful in this preternatural silence, made more impressive by the hoarse murmur of the crowd outside, breaking down the door. I could endure it no longer, but strode forward and snatched up the paper lying at the feet of the chairman. At the head of the editorial columns, in letters half an inch long, were the following amazing head-lines:

"Dastardly Outrage! Corruption Rampant in Our Midst! The Vampires Foiled! Henry Barber at his Old Game! The Rat Gnaws a File! The Democratic Hordes Attempt to Ride Roughshod Over a Free People! Base Endeavor to Bribe the Editor of this Paper with *a Twenty-Dollar Note*! The Money Given to the Orphan Asylum."

I read no farther, but stood stockstill in the center of the floor, and fell into a reverie. Twenty dollars! Somehow it seemed a mere trifle. Nine hundred and eighty dollars! I did not know there was so much money in the world. Twenty — no, eighty — one thousand dollars! There were big, black figures floating all over the floor. Incessant cataracts of them poured down the walls, stopped, and shied off as I looked at them, and began to go it again when I lowered my eyes. Occasionally the figures 20 would take shape somewhere about the floor, and then the figures 980 would slide up and overlay them. Then, like the lean kine of Pharaoh's dream, they would all march away and devour the fat naughts of the number 1,000. And dancing like gnats in the air were myriads of little caduceus-like, phantoms, thus — $$$$$. I could not at all make it out, but began to comprehend my position directly Old Hooker, without moving from his seat, began to drown the noise of countless feet on the stairs by elevating his thin falsetto:

"P'r'aps, Mr. Cheerman, it's orl on the squar'. We know Mr. Henly can't tell a lie; but I'm powerful dubersome that thar's a balyance dyue this yer committee from the gent who hez the flo' — if he ain't done gone laid it yout fo' sable ac — ac — fo' fyirst-class funerals."

I felt at that moment as if I should like to play the leading character in a first-class funeral myself. I felt that every man in my position ought to have a nice, comfortable coffin, with a silver door-plate, a foot-warmer, and bay-windows for his ears. How do you suppose you would have felt?

My leap from the window of that committee room, my speed in streaking it for the adjacent forest, my self-denial in ever afterward resisting the impulse to return to Berrywood and look after my political and material interests there — these I have always considered things to be justly proud of, and I hope I am proud of them.

The Bubble Reputation

How Another Man's was Sought and Pricked

It was a stormy night in the autumn of 1930. The hour was about eleven. San Francisco lay in darkness, for the laborers at the gas works had struck and destroyed the company's property because a newspaper to which a cousin of the manager was a subscriber had censured the course of a potato merchant related by marriage to a member of the Knights of Leisure. Electric lights had not at that period been reinvented. The sky was filled with great masses of black cloud which, driven rapidly across the star-fields by winds unfelt on the earth and momentarily altering their fantastic forms, seemed instinct with a life and activity of their own and endowed with awful powers of evil, to the exercise of which they might at any time set their malignant will.

An observer standing, at this time, at the corner of Paradise avenue and Great White Throne walk in Sorrel Hill cemetery would have seen a human figure moving among the graves toward the Superintendent's residence. Dimly and fitfully visible in the intervals of thinner gloom, this figure had a most uncanny and disquieting aspect. A long black cloak shrouded it from neck to heel. Upon its head was a slouch hat, pulled down across the forehead and almost concealing the face, which was further hidden by a half-mask, only the beard being occasionally visible as the head was lifted partly above the collar of the cloak. The man wore upon his feet jack-boots whose wide, funnel-shaped legs had settled down in many a fold and crease about his ankles, as could be seen whenever accident parted the bottom of the cloak. His arms were concealed, but sometimes he stretched out the right to steady himself by a headstone as he crept stealthily but blindly over the uneven ground. At such times a close scrutiny of the hand would have disclosed in the palm the hilt of a poniard, the blade of which lay along the wrist, hidden in the sleeve. In short, the man's garb, his movements, the hour — everything proclaimed him a reporter.

But what did he there?

On the morning of that day the editor of the *Daily Malefactor* had touched the button of a bell numbered 216 and in response to the summons Mr. Longbo Spittleworth, reporter, had been shot into the room out of an inclined tube.

"I understand," said the editor, "that you are 216 — am I right?"

"That," said the reporter, catching his breath and adjusting his clothing, both somewhat disordered by the celerity of his flight through the tube—”that is my number.”

“Information has reached us,” continued the editor, “that the Superintendent of the Sorrel Hill cemetery — one Inhumio, whose very name suggests inhumanity — is guilty of the grossest outrages in the administration of the great trust confided to his hands by the sovereign people.”

“The cemetery is private property,” faintly suggested 216.

“It is alleged,” continued the great man, disdaining to notice the interruption, “that in violation of popular rights he refuses to permit his accounts to be inspected by representatives of the press.”

“Under the law, you know, he is responsible to the directors of the cemetery company,” the reporter ventured to interject.

“They say,” pursued the editor, heedless, “that the inmates are in many cases badly lodged and insufficiently clad, and that in consequence they are usually cold. It is asserted that they are never fed — except to the worms. Statements have been made to the effect that males and females are permitted to occupy the same quarters, to the incalculable detriment of public morality. Many clandestine villainies are alleged of this fiend in human shape, and it is desirable that his underground methods be unearthed in the *Malefactor*. If he resists we will drag his family skeleton from the privacy of his domestic closet. There is money in it for the paper, fame for you — are you ambitious, 216?”

“I am — bitious.”

“Go, then,” cried the editor, rising and waving his hand imperiously—”go and ‘seek the bubble reputation’.”

“The bubble shall be sought,” the young man replied, and leaping into a man-hole in the floor, disappeared. A moment later the editor, who after dismissing his subordinate, had stood motionless, as if lost in thought, sprang suddenly to the man-hole and shouted down it: “Hello, 216?”

“Aye, aye, sir,” came up a faint and far reply.

“About that ‘bubble reputation’ — you understand, I suppose, that the reputation which you are to seek is that of the other man.”

In the execution of his duty, in the hope of his employer’s approval, in the costume of his profession, Mr. Longbo Spittleworth, otherwise known as 216, has already occupied a place in the mind’s eye of the intelligent reader. Alas for poor Mr. Inhumio!

A few days after these events that fearless, independent and enterprising guardian and guide of the public, the San Francisco *Daily Malefactor*, contained a whole-page article whose headlines are here presented with some necessary typographical mitigation:

“Hell Upon Earth! Corruption Rampant in the Management of the Sorrel Hill Cemetery. The Sacred City of the Dead in the Leprous Clutches of a Demon in Human Form. Fiendish Atrocities Committed in ‘God’s Acre.’ The Holy Dead Thrown around Loose. Fragments of Mothers. Segregation of a Beautiful Young Lady Who in Life Was the Light of a Happy Household. A Superintendent Who Is an Ex-Convict. How He Murdered His Neighbor to Start the Cemetery. He Buries His Own Dead Elsewhere. Extraordinary Insolence to a Representative of the Public Press. Little Eliza’s Last Words: ‘Mamma, Feed Me to the Pigs.’ A Moonshiner Who Runs an Illicit Bone-Button Factory in One Corner of the Grounds. Buried Head Downward. Revolting Mausoleistic Orgies. Dancing on the Dead. Devilish Mutilation — a Pile of Late Lamented Noses and Sainted Ears. No Separation of the Sexes; Petitions for Chaperons Unheeded. ‘Veal’ as Supplied to the Superintendent’s Employees. A Miscreant’s Record from His Birth. Disgusting Subserviency of Our Contemporaries and Strong Indications of Collusion. Nameless Abnormalities. ‘Doubled Up Like a Nut-Cracker.’ ‘Wasn’t Planted White.’ Horribly Significant Reduction in the Price of Lard. The Question of the Hour: Whom Do You Fry Your Doughnuts In?”

THE OCEAN WAVE

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A Shipwreckollection

As I left the house she said I was a cruel old thing, and not a bit nice, and she hoped I never, never *would* come back. So I shipped as mate on the *Mudlark*, bound from London to wherever the captain might think it expedient to sail. It had not been thought advisable to hamper Captain Abersouth with orders, for when he could not have his own way, it had been observed, he would contrive in some ingenious way to make the voyage unprofitable. The owners of the *Mudlark* had grown wise in their generation, and now let him do pretty much as he pleased, carrying such cargoes as he fancied to ports where the nicest women were. On the voyage of which I write he had taken no cargo at all; he said it would only make the *Mudlark* heavy and slow. To hear this mariner talk one would have supposed he did not know very much about commerce.

We had a few passengers — not nearly so many as we had laid in basins and stewards for; for before coming off to the ship most of those who had bought tickets would inquire whither she was bound, and when not informed would go back to their hotels and send a bandit on board to remove their baggage. But there were enough left to be rather troublesome. They cultivated the rolling gait peculiar to sailors when drunk, and the upper deck was hardly wide enough for them to go from the forecastle to the binnacle to set their watches by the ship's compass. They were always petitioning Captain Abersouth to let the big anchor go, just to hear it plunge in the water, threatening in case of refusal to write to the newspapers. A favorite amusement with them was to sit in the lee of the bulwarks, relating their experiences in former voyages — voyages distinguished in every instance by two remarkable features, the frequency of unprecedented hurricanes and the entire immunity of the narrator from seasickness. It was very interesting to see them sitting in a row telling these things, each man with a basin between his legs.

One day there arose a great storm. The sea walked over the ship as if it had never seen a ship before and meant to enjoy it all it could. The *Mudlark* labored very much — far more, indeed, than the crew did; for these innocents had discovered in possession of one of their number a pair of leather-seated trousers, and would do nothing but sit and play cards for them; in a month from leaving port each sailor had owned them a dozen times. They were so worn by being pushed over to the winner that there was little but the seat remaining, and that immortal part the captain finally kicked overboard — not maliciously, nor in an unfriendly spirit, but because he had a habit of kicking the seats of trousers.

The storm increased in violence until it succeeded in so straining the *Mudlark* that she took in water like a teetotaler; then it appeared to get relief directly. This may be said in justice to a storm at sea: when it has broken off your masts, pulled out your rudder, carried away your boats and made a nice hole in some inaccessible part of your hull it will often go away in search of a fresh ship, leaving you to take such measures for your comfort as you may think fit. In our case the captain thought fit to sit on the taffrail reading a three-volume novel.

Seeing he had got about half way through the second volume, at which point the lovers would naturally be involved in the most hopeless and heart-rending difficulties, I thought he would be in a particularly cheerful humor, so I approached him and informed him the ship was going down.

“Well,” said he, closing the book, but keeping his forefinger between the pages to mark his place, “she never would be good for much after such a shaking-up as this. But, I say — I wish you would just send the bo’sn for’d there to break up that prayer-meeting. The *Mudlark* isn’t a seamen’s chapel, I suppose.”

“But,” I replied, impatiently, “can’t something be done to lighten the ship?”

“Well,” he drawled, reflectively, “seeing she hasn’t any masts left to cut away, nor any cargo to — stay, you might throw over some of the heaviest of the passengers if you think it would do any good.”

It was a happy thought — the intuition of genius. Walking rapidly forward to the foc’sle, which, being highest out of water, was crowded with passengers, I seized a stout old gentleman by the nape of the neck, pushed him up to the rail, and chucked him over. He did not touch the water: he fell on the apex of a cone of sharks which sprang up from the sea to meet him, their noses gathered to a point, their tails just clearing the surface. I think it unlikely that the old gentleman knew what disposition had been made of him. Next, I hurled over a woman and flung a fat baby to the wild winds. The former was sharked out of sight, the same as the old man; the latter divided amongst the gulls.

I am relating these things exactly as they occurred. It would be very easy to make a fine story out of all this material — to tell how that, while I was engaged in lightening the ship, I was touched by the self-sacrificing spirit of a beautiful young woman, who, to save the life of her lover, pushed her aged mother forward to where I was operating, imploring me to take the old lady, but spare, O, spare her dear Henry. I might go on to set forth how that I not only did take the old lady, as requested, but immediately seized dear Henry, and sent him flying as far as I could to leeward, having first broken his back across the rail and pulled a double-fistful of his curly hair out. I might proceed to state that, feeling appeased, I then stole the long boat and taking the beautiful maiden pulled away from the ill-fated ship to the church of St. Massaker, Fiji, where we were united by a knot which I afterward untied with my teeth by eating her. But, in truth, nothing of all this occurred, and I can not afford to be the first writer to tell a lie just to interest the reader. What really did occur is this: as I stood on the quarter-deck, heaving over the passengers, one after another, Captain Abersouth, having finished his novel, walked aft and quietly hove *me* over.

The sensations of a drowning man have been so often related that I shall only briefly explain that memory at once displayed her treasures: all the scenes of my eventful life crowded, though without confusion or fighting, into my mind. I saw my whole career spread out before me, like a map of Central Africa since the discovery of the gorilla. There were the cradle in which I had lain, as a child, stupefied with soothing syrups; the perambulator, seated in which and propelled from behind, I overthrew the schoolmaster, and in which my infantile spine received its curvature; the nursery-maid, surrendering her lips alternately to me and the gardener; the old home of my youth, with the ivy and the mortgage on it; my eldest brother, who by will succeeded to the family debts; my sister, who ran away with the Count von Pretzel, coachman to a most respectable New York family; my mother, standing in the attitude of a saint, pressing with both hands her prayer-book against the patent palpitators from Madame Fahertini’s; my venerable father, sitting in his chimney corner, his silvered head bowed upon his breast, his withered hands crossed patiently in his lap, waiting with Christian resignation for death, and drunk as a lord — all this, and much more, came before my mind’s eye, and there was no charge for admission to the show. Then there was a ringing sound in my ears, my senses swam better than I could, and as I sank down, down, through fathomless depths, the amber light falling through the water above my head failed and darkened into blackness. Suddenly my feet struck something firm — it was the bottom. Thank heaven, I was saved!

The Captain of “The Camel”

This ship was named the *Camel*. In some ways she was an extraordinary vessel. She measured six hundred tons; but when she had taken in enough ballast to keep her from upsetting like a shot duck, and was provisioned for a three months’ voyage, it was necessary to be mighty fastidious in the choice of freight and passengers. For illustration, as she was about to leave port a boat came alongside with two passengers, a man and his wife. They had booked the day before, but had remained ashore to get one more decent meal before committing themselves to the “briny cheap,” as the man called the ship’s fare. The woman came aboard, and the man was preparing to follow, when the captain leaned over the side and saw him.

“Well,” said the captain, “what do *you* want?”

“What do *I* want?” said the man, laying hold of the ladder. “I’m a-going to embark in this here ship — that’s what I want.”

“Not with all that fat on you,” roared the captain. “You don’t weigh an ounce less than eighteen stone, and I’ve got to have in my anchor yet. You wouldn’t have me leave the anchor, I suppose?”

The man said he did not care about the anchor — he was just as God had made him (he looked as if his cook had had something to do with it) and, sink or swim, he purposed embarking in that ship. A good deal of wrangling ensued, but one of the sailors finally threw the man a cork life-preserver, and the captain said that would lighten him and he might come abroad.

This was Captain Abersouth, formerly of the *Mudlark* — as good a seaman as ever sat on the taffrail reading a three volume novel. Nothing could equal this man’s passion for literature. For every voyage he laid in so many bales of novels that there was no stowage for the cargo. There were novels in the hold, and novels between-decks, and novels in the saloon, and in the passengers’ beds.

The *Camel* had been designed and built by her owner, an architect in the City, and she looked about as much like a ship as Noah’s Ark did. She had bay windows and a veranda; a cornice and doors at the water-line. These doors had knockers and servant’s bells. There had been a futile attempt at an area. The passenger saloon was on the upper deck, and had a tile roof. To this humplike structure the ship owed her name. Her designer had erected several churches — that of St. Ignotus is still used as a brewery in Hotbath Meadows — and, possessed of the ecclesiastic idea, had given the *Camel* a transept; but, finding this impeded her passage through the water, he had it removed. This weakened the vessel amidships. The mainmast was something like a steeple. It had a weathercock. From this spire the eye commanded one of the finest views in England.

Such was the *Camel* when I joined her in 1864 for a voyage of discovery to the South Pole. The expedition was under the “auspices” of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Fair Play. At a meeting of this excellent association, it had been “resolved” that the partiality of science for the North Pole was an invidious distinction between two objects equally meritorious; that Nature had marked her disapproval of it in the case of Sir John Franklin and many of his imitators; that it served them very well right; that this enterprise should be undertaken as a protest against the spirit of undue bias; and, finally, that no part of the responsibility or expense should devolve upon the society in its corporate character, but any individual member might contribute to the fund if he were fool enough. It is only common justice to say that none of them was. The *Camel* merely parted her cable one day while I happened to be on board — drifted out of the harbor southward, followed by the execrations of all who knew her, and could not get back. In two months she had crossed the equator, and the heat began to grow insupportable.

Suddenly we were becalmed. There had been a fine breeze up to three o’clock in the afternoon and the ship had made as much as two knots an hour when without a word of warning the sails began to belly the wrong way, owing to the impetus that the ship had acquired; and then, as this expired, they hung as limp and lifeless as the skirts of a clawhammer coat. The *Camel* not only stood stock still but moved a little backward toward England. Old Ben the boatswain said that he’d never knowed but one deader calm, and that, he explained, was when Preacher Jack, the reformed sailor, had got excited in a sermon in a seaman’s chapel and shouted that the Archangel Michael would chuck the Dragon into the brig and give him a taste of the rope’s -end, damn his eyes!

We lay in this woful state for the better part of a year, when, growing impatient, the crew deputed me to look up the captain and see if something could not be done about it. I found him in a remote cobwebby corner between-decks, with a book in his hand. On one side of him, the cords newly cut, were three bales of “Ouida”; on the other a mountain of Miss M.E. Braddon towered above his head. He had finished “Ouida” and was tackling Miss Braddon. He was greatly changed.

“Captain Abersouth,” said I, rising on tiptoe so as to overlook the lower slopes of Mrs. Braddon, “will you be good enough to tell me how long this thing is going on?”

“Can’t say, I’m sure,” he replied without pulling his eyes off the page. “They’ll probably make up about the middle of the book. In the meantime old Pondronummus will foul his top-hamper and take out his papers for Looney Haven, and young Monshure de Boojower will come in for a million. Then if the proud and fair Angelica doesn’t luff and come into his wake after pizening that sea lawyer, Thundermuzzle, I don’t know nothing about the deeps and shallers of the human heart.”

I could not take so hopeful a view of the situation, and went on deck, feeling very much discouraged. I had no sooner got my head out than I observed that the ship was moving at a high rate of speed!

We had on board a bullock and a Dutchman. The bullock was chained by the neck to the foremast, but the Dutchman was allowed a good deal of liberty, being shut up at night only. There was bad blood between the two — a feud of long standing, having its origin in the Dutchman’s appetite for milk and the bullock’s sense of personal dignity; the particular cause of offense it would be tedious to relate. Taking advantage of his enemy’s afternoon *siesta*, the Dutchman had now managed to sneak by him, and had gone out on the bowsprit to fish. When the animal waked and saw the other creature enjoying himself he straddled his chain, leveled his horns, got his hind feet against the mast and laid a course for the offender. The chain was strong, the mast firm, and the ship, as Byron says, “walked the water like a thing of course.”

After that we kept the Dutchman right where he was, night and day, the old *Camel* making better speed than she had ever done in the most favorable gale. We held due south.

We had now been a long time without sufficient food, particularly meat. We could spare neither the bullock nor the Dutchman; and the ship’s carpenter, that traditional first aid to the famished, was a mere bag of bones. The fish would neither bite nor be bitten. Most of the running-tackle of the ship had been used for macaroni soup; all the leather work, our shoes included, had been devoured in omelettes; with oakum and tar we had made fairly supportable salad. After a brief experimental career as tripe the sails had departed this life forever. Only two courses remained from which to choose; we could eat one another, as is the etiquette of the sea, or partake of Captain Abersouth’s novels. Dreadful alternative! — but a choice. And it is seldom, I think, that starving sailormen are offered a shipload of the best popular authors ready-roasted by the critics.

We ate that fiction. The works that the captain had thrown aside lasted six months, for most of them were by the best-selling authors and were pretty tough. After they were gone — of course some had to be given to the bullock and the Dutchman — we stood by the captain, taking the other books from his hands as he finished them. Sometimes, when we were apparently at our last gasp, he would skip a whole page of moralizing, or a bit of description; and always, as soon as he clearly foresaw the *dénoûement* — which he generally did at about the middle of the second volume — the work was handed over to us without a word of repining.

The effect of this diet was not unpleasant but remarkable. Physically, it sustained us; mentally, it exalted us; morally, it made us but a trifle worse than we were. We talked as no human beings ever talked before. Our wit was polished but without point. As in a stage broadsword combat, every cut has its parry, so in our conversation every remark suggested the reply, and this necessitated a certain rejoinder. The sequence once interrupted, the whole was bosh; when the thread was broken the beads were seen to be waxen and hollow.

We made love to one another, and plotted darkly in the deepest obscurity of the hold. Each set of conspirators had its proper listener at the hatch. These, leaning too far over would bump their heads together and fight. Occasionally there was confusion amongst them: two or more would assert a right to overhear the same plot. I remember at one time the cook, the carpenter, the second assistant-surgeon, and an able seaman contended with handspikes for the honor of betraying my confidence. Once there were three masked murderers of the second watch bending at the same instant over the sleeping form of a cabin-boy, who had been heard to mutter, a week previously, that he had “Gold! gold!” the accumulation of eighty — yes, eighty — years’ piracy on the high seas, while sitting as M.P. for the borough of Zaccheus-cum-Down, and attending church regularly. I saw the captain of the foretop surrounded by suitors for his hand, while he was himself fingering the edge of a packing-case, and singing an amorous ditty to a lady-love shaving at a mirror.

Our diction consisted, in about equal parts, of classical allusion, quotation from the stable, simper from the scullery, cant from the clubs, and the technical slang of heraldry. We boasted much of ancestry, and admired the whiteness of our hands whenever the skin was visible through a fault in the grease and tar. Next to love, the vegetable kingdom, murder, arson, adultery and ritual, we talked most of art. The wooden figure-head of the *Camel*, representing a Guinea nigger detecting a bad smell, and the monochrome picture of two back-broken dolphins on the stern, acquired a new importance. The Dutchman had destroyed the nose of the one by kicking his toes against it, and the other was nearly obliterated by the slops of the cook; but each had its daily pilgrimage, and each constantly developed occult beauties of design and subtle excellences of execution. On the whole we were greatly altered; and if the supply of contemporary fiction had been equal to the demand, the *Camel*, I fear, would not have been strong enough to contain the moral and æsthetic forces fired by the maceration of the brains of authors in the gastric juices of sailors.

Having now got the ship's literature off his mind into ours, the captain went on deck for the first time since leaving port. We were still steering the same course, and, taking his first observation of the sun, the captain discovered that we were in latitude 83° south. The heat was insufferable; the air was like the breath of a furnace within a furnace. The sea steamed like a boiling cauldron, and in the vapor our bodies were temptingly parboiled — our ultimate meal was preparing. Warped by the sun, the ship held both ends high out of the water; the deck of the forecastle was an inclined plane, on which the bullock labored at a disadvantage; but the bowsprit was now vertical and the Dutchman's tenure precarious. A thermometer hung against the mainmast, and we grouped ourselves about it as the captain went up to examine the register.

"One hundred and ninety degrees Fahrenheit!" he muttered in evident astonishment. "Impossible!" Turning sharply about, he ran his eyes over us, and inquired in a peremptory tone, "who's been in command while I was runnin' my eye over that book?"

"Well, captain," I replied, as respectfully as I knew how, "the fourth day out I had the unhappiness to be drawn into a dispute about a game of cards with your first and second officers. In the absence of those excellent seamen, sir, I thought it my duty to assume control of the ship."

"Killed 'em, hey?"

"Sir, they committed suicide by questioning the efficacy of four kings and an ace."

"Well, you lubber, what have you to say in defense of this extraordinary weather?"

"Sir, it is no fault of mine. We are far — very far south, and it is now the middle of July. The weather is uncomfortable, I admit; but considering the latitude and season, it is not, I protest, unseasonable."

"Latitude and season!" he shrieked, livid with rage—"latitude and season! Why, you junk-rigged, flat-bottomed, meadow lugger, don't you know any better than that? Didn't yer little baby brother ever tell ye that southern latitudes is colder than northern, and that July is the middle o' winter here? Go below, you son of a scullion, or I'll break your bones!"

"Oh! very well," I replied; "I'm not going to stay on deck and listen to such low language as that, I warn you. Have it your own way."

The words had no sooner left my lips, than a piercing cold wind caused me to cast my eye upon the thermometer. In the new régime of science the mercury was descending rapidly; but in a moment the instrument was obscured by a blinding fall of snow. Towering icebergs rose from the water on every side, hanging their jagged masses hundreds of feet above the masthead, and shutting us completely in. The ship twisted and writhed; her decks bulged upward, and every timber groaned and cracked like the report of a pistol. The *Camel* was frozen fast. The jerk of her sudden stopping snapped the bullock's chain, and sent both that animal and the Dutchman over the bows, to accomplish their warfare on the ice.

Elbowing my way forward to go below, as I had threatened, I saw the crew tumble to the deck on either hand like ten-pins. They were frozen stiff. Passing the captain, I asked him sneeringly how he liked the weather under the new régime. He replied with a vacant stare. The chill had penetrated to the brain, and affected his mind. He murmured:

"In this delightful spot, happy in the world's esteem, and surrounded by all that makes existence dear, they passed the remainder of their lives. The End."

His jaw dropped. The captain of the *Camel* was dead.

The Man Overboard

i

The good ship *Nupple-duck* was drifting rapidly upon a sunken coral reef, which seemed to extend a reasonless number of leagues to the right and left without a break, and I was reading Macaulay’s “Naseby Fight” to the man at the wheel. Everything was, in fact, going on as nicely as heart could wish, when Captain Abersouth, standing on the companion-stair, poked his head above deck and asked where we were. Pausing in my reading, I informed him that we had got as far as the disastrous repulse of Prince Rupert’s cavalry, adding that if he would have the goodness to hold his jaw we should be making it awkward for the wounded in about three minutes, and he might bear a hand at the pockets of the slain. Just then the ship struck heavily, and went down!

Calling another ship, I stepped aboard, and gave directions to be taken to No. 900 Tottenham Court Road, where I had an aunt; then, walking aft to the man at the wheel, asked him if he would like to hear me read “Naseby Fight.” He thought he would: he would like to hear that, and then I might pass on to something else — Kinglake’s “Crimean War,” the proceedings at the trial of Warren Hastings, or some such trifle, just to wile away the time till eight bells.

All this time heavy clouds had been gathering along the horizon directly in front of the ship, and a deputation of passengers now came to the man at the wheel to demand that she be put about, or she would run into them, which the spokesman explained would be unusual. I thought at the time that it certainly was not the regular thing to do, but, as I was myself only a passenger, did not deem it expedient to take a part in the heated discussion that ensued; and, after all, it did not seem likely that the weather in those clouds would be much worse than that in Tottenham Court Road, where I had an aunt.

It was finally decided to refer the matter to arbitration, and after many names had been submitted and rejected by both sides, it was agreed that the captain of the ship should act as arbitrator if his consent could be obtained, and I was delegated to conduct the negotiations to that end. With considerable difficulty, I persuaded him to accept the responsibility.

He was a feeble-minded sort of fellow named Troutbeck, who was always in a funk lest he should make enemies; never reflecting that most men would a little rather be his enemies than not. He had once been the ship’s cook, but had cooked so poisonously ill that he had been forcibly transferred from galley to quarter-deck by the dyspeptic survivors of his culinary career.

The little captain went aft with me to listen to arguments of the dissatisfied passengers and the obstinate steersman, as to whether we should take our chances in the clouds, or tail off and run for the opposite horizon; but on approaching the wheel, we found both helmsman and passengers in a condition of profound astonishment, rolling their eyes about towards every point of the compass, and shaking their heads in hopeless perplexity. It was rather remarkable, certainly: the bank of cloud which had worried the landsmen was now directly astern, and the ship was cutting along lively in her own wake, toward the point from which she had come, and straight away from Tottenham Court Road! Everybody declared it was a miracle; the chaplain was piped up for prayers, and the man at the wheel was as truly penitent as if he had been detected robbing an empty poor-box.

The explanation was simple enough, and dawned upon me the moment I saw how matters stood. During the dispute between the helmsman and the deputation, the former had renounced his wheel to gesticulate, and I, thinking no harm, had amused myself, during a rather tedious debate, by revolving the thing this way and that, and had unconsciously put the ship about. By a coincidence not unusual in low latitudes, the wind had effected a corresponding transposition at the same time, and was now bowling us as merrily back toward the place where I had embarked, as it had previously wafted us in the direction of Tottenham Court Road, where I had an aunt. I must here so far anticipate, as to explain that some years later these various incidents — particularly the reading of “Naseby Fight” — led to the adoption, in our mercantile marine, of a rule which I believe is still extant, to the effect that one must not speak to the man at the wheel unless the man at the wheel speaks first.

ii

It is only by inadvertence that I have omitted the information that the vessel in which I was now a pervading influence was the *Bonnyclabber* (Troutbeck, master), of Malvern Heights.

The *Bonnyclabber’s* reactionary course had now brought her to the spot at which I had taken passage. Passengers and crew, fatigued by their somewhat awkward attempts to manifest their gratitude for our miraculous deliverance from the cloud-bank, were snoring peacefully in unconsidered attitudes about the deck, when the lookout man, perched on the supreme extremity of the mainmast, consuming a cold sausage, began an apparently preconcerted series of extraordinary and unimaginable noises. He coughed, sneezed, and barked simultaneously — bleated in one breath, and cackled in the next — sputteringly shrieked, and chatteringly squealed, with a bass of suffocated roars. There were desolutory vocal explosions, tapering off in long wails, half smothered in unintelligible small-talk. He whistled, wheezed, and trumpeted; began to sharp, thought better of it and flatted; neighed like a horse, and then thundered like a drum! Through it all he continued making incomprehensible signals with one hand while clutching his throat with the other. Presently he gave it up, and silently descended to the deck.

By this time we were all attention; and no sooner had he set foot amongst us, than he was assailed with a tempest of questions which, had they been visible, would have resembled a flight of pigeons. He made no reply — not even by a look, but passed through our enclosing mass with a grim, defiant step, a face deathly white, and a set of the jaw as of one repressing an ambitious dinner, or ignoring a venomous toothache. For the poor man was choking!

Passing down the companion-way, the patient sought the surgeon’s cabin, with the ship’s company at his heels. The surgeon was fast asleep, the lark-like performance at the masthead having been inaudible in that lower region. While some of us were holding a whisky-bottle to the medical nose, in order to apprise the medical intelligence of the demand upon it, the patient seated himself in statuesque silence. By this time his pallor, which was but the mark of a determined mind, had given place to a fervent crimson, which visibly deepened into a pronounced purple, and was ultimately superseded by a clouded blue, shot through with opalescent gleams, and smitten with variable streaks of black. The face was swollen and shapeless, the neck puffy. The eyes protruded like pegs of a hat-stand.

Pretty soon the doctor was got awake, and after making a careful examination of his patient, remarking that it was a lovely case of *stopupagus œsophagi*, took a tool and set to work, producing with no difficulty a cold sausage of the size, figure, and general bearing of a somewhat self-important banana. The operation had been performed amid breathless silence, but the moment it was concluded the patient, whose neck and head had visibly collapsed, sprang to his feet and shouted:

“Man overboard!”

That is what he had been trying to say.

There was a confused rush to the upper deck, and everybody flung something over the ship’s side — a life-belt, a chicken-coop, a coil of rope, a spar, an old sail, a pocket handkerchief, an iron crowbar — any movable article which it was thought might be useful to a drowning man who had followed the vessel during the hour that had elapsed since the initial alarm at the masthead. In a few moments the ship was pretty nearly dismantled of everything that could be easily renounced, and some excitable passenger having cut away the boats there was nothing more that we could do, though the chaplain explained that if the ill-fated gentleman in the wet did not turn up after a while it was his intention to stand at the stern and read the burial service of the Church of England.

Presently it occurred to some ingenious person to inquire who had gone overboard, and all hands being mustered and the roll called, to our great chagrin every man answered to his name, passengers and all! Captain Troutbeck, however, held that in a matter of so great importance a simple roll-call was insufficient, and with an assertion of authority that was encouraging insisted that every person on board be separately sworn. The result was the same; nobody was missing and the captain, begging pardon for having doubted our veracity, retired to his cabin to avoid further responsibility, but expressed a hope that for the purpose of having everything properly recorded in the log-book we would apprise him of any further action that we might think it advisable to take. I smiled as I remembered that in the interest of the unknown gentleman whose peril we had overestimated I had flung the log-book over the ship's side.

Soon afterward I felt suddenly inspired with one of those great ideas that come to most men only once or twice in a lifetime, and to the ordinary story teller never. Hastily reconvening the ship's company I mounted the capstan and thus addressed them:

"Shipmates, there has been a mistake. In the fervor of an ill-considered compassion we have made pretty free with certain movable property of an eminent firm of shipowners of Malvern Heights. For this we shall undoubtedly be called to account if we are ever so fortunate as to drop anchor in Tottenham Court Road, where I have an aunt. It would add strength to our defence if we could show to the satisfaction of a jury of our peers that in heeding the sacred promptings of humanity we had acted with some small degree of common sense. If, for example, we could make it appear that there really was a man overboard, who might have been comforted and sustained by the material consolation that we so lavishly dispensed in the form of buoyant articles belonging to others, the British heart would find in that fact a mitigating circumstance pleading eloquently in our favor. Gentlemen and ship's officers, I venture to propose that we do now throw a man overboard."

The effect was electrical: the motion was carried by acclamation and there was a unanimous rush for the now wretched mariner whose false alarm at the masthead was the cause of our embarrassment, but on second thoughts it was decided to substitute Captain Troutbeck, as less generally useful and more undeviatingly in error. The sailor had made one mistake of considerable magnitude, but the captain's entire existence was a mistake altogether. He was fetched up from his cabin and chucked over.

At 900 Tottenham Road Court lived an aunt of mine — a good old lady who had brought me up by hand and taught me many wholesome lessons in morality, which in my later life have proved of extreme value. Foremost among these I may mention her solemn and oft-repeated injunction never to tell a lie without a definite and specific reason for doing so. Many years' experience in the violation of this principle enables me to speak with authority as to its general soundness. I have, therefore, much pleasure in making a slight correction in the preceding chapter of this tolerably true history. It was there affirmed that I threw the *Bonnyclabber's* log-book into the sea. The statement is entirely false, and I can discover no reason for having made it that will for a moment weigh against those I now have for the preservation of that log-book.

The progress of the story has developed new necessities, and I now find it convenient to quote from that book passages which it could not have contained if cast into the sea at the time stated; for if thrown upon the resources of my imagination I might find the temptation to exaggerate too strong to be resisted.

It is needless to worry the reader with those entries in the book referring to events already related. Our record will begin on the day of the captain's consignment to the deep, after which era I made the entries myself.

"June 22nd. — Not much doing in the way of gales, but heavy swells left over from some previous blow. Latitude and longitude not notably different from last observation. Ship laboring a trifle, owing to lack of top-hamper, everything of that kind having been cut away in consequence of Captain Troutbeck having accidently fallen overboard while fishing from the bowsprit. Also threw over cargo and everything that we could spare. Miss our sails rather, but if they save our dear captain, we shall be content. Weather flagrant.

"23d. — Nothing from Captain Troutbeck. Dead calm — also dead whale. The passengers having become preposterous in various ways, Mr. Martin, the chief officer, had three of the ringleaders tied up and rope's -ended. He thought it advisable also to flog an equal number of the crew, by way of being impartial. Weather ludicrous.

"24th. — Captain still prefers to stop away, and does not telegraph. The 'captain of the foretop' — there isn't any foretop now — was put in irons to-day by Mr. Martin for eating cold sausage while on lookout. Mr. Martin has flogged the steward, who had neglected to holy-stone the binnacle and paint the dead-lights. The steward is a good fellow all the same. Weather iniquitous.

"25th. — Can't think whatever has become of Captain Troutbeck. He must be getting hungry by this time; for although he has his fishing-tackle with him, he has no bait. Mr. Martin inspected the entries in this book to-day. He is a most excellent and humane officer. Weather inexcusable.

"26th. — All hope of hearing from the Captain has been abandoned. We have sacrificed everything to save him; but now, if we could procure the loan of a mast and some sails, we should proceed on our voyage. Mr. Martin has knocked the coxswain overboard for sneezing. He is an experienced seaman, a capable officer, and a Christian gentleman — damn his eyes! Weather tormenting.

"27th. — Another inspection of this book by Mr. Martin. Farewell, vain world! Break it gently to my aunt in Tottenham Court Road."

In the concluding sentences of this record, as it now lies before me, the handwriting is not very legible: they were penned under circumstances singularly unfavorable. Mr. Martin stood behind me with his eyes fixed on the page; and in order to secure a better view, had twisted the machinery of the engine he called his hand into the hair of my head, depressing that globe to such an extent that my nose was flattened against the surface of the table, and I had no small difficulty in discerning the lines through my eyebrows. I was not accustomed to writing in that position: it had not been taught in the only school that I ever attended. I therefore felt justified in bringing the record to a somewhat abrupt close, and immediately went on deck with Mr. Martin, he preceding me up the companion-stairs on foot, I following, not on horseback, but on my own, the connection between us being maintained without important alteration.

Arriving on deck, I thought it advisable, in the interest of peace and quietness, to pursue him in the same manner to the side of the ship, where I parted from him forever with many expressions of regret, which might have been heard at a considerable distance.

Of the subsequent fate of the *Bonnyclabber*, I can only say that the log-book from which I have quoted was found some years later in the stomach of a whale, along with some shreds of clothing, a few buttons and several decayed life-belts. It contained only one new entry, in a straggling handwriting, as if it had been penned in the dark:

"july2th foundered svivors rescude by wale wether stuffy no nues from capting trowtbeck Sammle martin cheef Ofcer."

Let us now take a retrospective glance at the situation. The ship *Nupple-duck*, (Abersouth, master) had, it will be remembered, gone down with all on board except me. I had escaped on the ship *Bonnyclabber* (Troutbeck) which I had quitted owing to a misunderstanding with the chief officer, and was now unattached. That is how matters stood when, rising on an unusually high wave, and casting my eye in the direction of Tottenham Court Road — that is, backward along the course pursued by the *Bonnyclabber* and toward the spot at which the *Nupple-duck* had been swallowed up — I saw a quantity of what appeared to be wreckage. It turned out to be some of the stuff that we had thrown overboard under a misapprehension. The several articles had been compiled and, so to speak, carefully edited. They were, in fact, lashed together, forming a raft. On a stool in the center of it — not, apparently navigating it, but rather with the subdued and dignified bearing of a passenger, sat Captain Abersouth, of the *Nupple-duck*, reading a novel.

Our meeting was not cordial. He remembered me as a man of literary taste superior to his own and harbored resentment, and although he made no opposition to my taking passage with him I could see that his acquiescence was due rather to his muscular inferiority than to the circumstance that I was damp and taking cold. Merely acknowledging his presence with a nod as I climbed abroad, I seated myself and inquired if he would care to hear the concluding stanzas of “Naseby Fight.”

“No,” he replied, looking up from his novel, “no, Claude Reginald Gump, writer of sea stories, I’ve done with you. When you sank the *Nupple-duck* some days ago you probably thought that you had made an end of me. That was clever of you, but I came to the surface and followed the other ship — the one on which you escaped. It was I that the sailor saw from the masthead. I saw him see me. It was for me that all that stuff was hove overboard. Good — I made it into this raft. It was, I think, the next day that I passed the floating body of a man whom I recognized as, my old friend Billy Troutbeck — he used to be a cook on a man-o’-war. It gives me pleasure to be the means of saving your life, but I eschew you. The moment that we reach port our paths part. You remember that in the very first sentence of this story you began to drive my ship, the *Nupple-duck*, on to a reef of coral.”

I was compelled to confess that this was true, and he continued his inhospitable reproaches:

“Before you had written half a column you sent her to the bottom, with me and the crew. But *you* — you escaped.”

“That is true,” I replied; “I cannot deny that the facts are correctly stated.”

“And in a story before that, you took me and my mates of the ship *Camel* into the heart of the South Polar Sea and left us frozen dead in the ice, like flies in amber. But you did not leave yourself there — you escaped.”

“Really, Captain,” I said, “your memory is singularly accurate, considering the many hardships that you have had to undergo; many a man would have gone mad.”

“And a long time before that,” Captain Abersouth resumed, after a pause, more, apparently, to con his memory than to enjoy my good opinion of it, “you lost me at sea — look here; I didn’t read anything but George Eliot at that time, but I’m *told* that you lost me at sea in the *Mudlark*. Have I been misinformed?”

I could not say he had been misinformed.

“You yourself escaped on that occasion, I think.”

It was true. Being usually the hero of my own stories, I commonly do manage to live through one, in order to figure to advantage in the next. It is from artistic necessity: no reader would take much interest in a hero who was dead before the beginning of the tale. I endeavored to explain this to Captain Abersouth. He shook his head.

“No,” said he, “it’s cowardly, that’s the way I look at it.”

Suddenly an effulgent idea began to dawn upon me, and I let it have its way until my mind was perfectly luminous. Then I rose from my seat, and frowning down into the upturned face of my accuser, spoke in severe and rasping accents thus:

“Captain Abersouth, in the various perils you and I have encountered together in the classical literature of the period, if I have always escaped and you have always perished; if I lost you at sea in the *Mudlark*, froze you into the ice at the South Pole in the *Camel* and drowned you in the *Nupple-duck*, pray be good enough to tell me whom I have the honor to address.”

It was a blow to the poor man: no one was ever so disconcerted. Flinging aside his novel, he put up his hands and began to scratch his head and think. It was beautiful to see him think, but it seemed to distress him and pointing significantly over the side of the raft I suggested as delicately as possible that it was time to act. He rose to his feet and fixing upon me a look of reproach which I shall remember as long as I can, cast himself into the deep. As to me — I escaped.

A Cargo of Cat

On the 16th day of June, 1874, the ship *Mary Jane* sailed from Malta, heavily laden with cat. This cargo gave us a good deal of trouble. It was not in bales, but had been dumped into the hold loose. Captain Doble, who had once commanded a ship that carried coals, said he had found that plan the best. When the hold was full of cat the hatch was battened down and we felt good. Unfortunately the mate, thinking the cats would be thirsty, introduced a hose into one of the hatches and pumped in a considerable quantity of water, and the cats of the lower levels were all drowned.

You have seen a dead cat in a pond: you remember its circumference at the waist. Water multiplies the magnitude of a dead cat by ten. On the first day out, it was observed that the ship was much strained. She was three feet wider than usual and as much as ten feet shorter. The convexity of her deck was visibly augmented fore and aft, but she turned up at both ends. Her rudder was clean out of water and she would answer the helm only when running directly against a strong breeze: the rudder, when perverted to one side, would rub against the wind and slew her around; and then she wouldn’t steer any more. Owing to the curvature of the keel, the masts came together at the top, and a sailor who had gone up the foremast got bewildered, came down the mizzenmast, looked out over the stern at the receding shores of Malta and shouted: “Land, ho!” The ship’s fastenings were all giving way; the water on each side was lashed into foam by the tempest of flying bolts that she shed at every pulsation of the cargo. She was quietly wrecking herself without assistance from wind or wave, by the sheer internal energy of feline expansion.

I went to the skipper about it. He was in his favorite position, sitting on the deck, supporting his back against the binnacle, making a V of his legs, and smoking.

“Captain Doble,” I said, respectfully touching my hat, which was really not worthy of respect, “this floating palace is afflicted with curvature of the spine and is likewise greatly swollen.”

Without raising his eyes he courteously acknowledged my presence by knocking the ashes from his pipe.

“Permit me, Captain,” I said, with simple dignity, “to repeat that this ship is much swollen.”

“If that is true,” said the gallant mariner, reaching for his tobacco pouch, “I think it would be as well to swab her down with liniment. There’s a bottle of it in my cabin. Better suggest it to the mate.”

“But, Captain, there is no time for empirical treatment; some of the planks at the water line have started.”

The skipper rose and looked out over the stern, toward the land; he fixed his eyes on the foaming wake; he gazed into the water to starboard and to port. Then he said:

“My friend, the whole darned thing has started.”

Sadly and silently I turned from that obdurate man and walked forward. Suddenly “there was a burst of thunder sound!” The hatch that had held down the cargo was flung whirling into space and sailed in the air like a blown leaf. Pushing upward through the hatchway was a smooth, square column of cat. Grandly and impressively it grew — slowly, serenely, majestically it rose toward the welkin, the relaxing keel parting the mastheads to give it a fair chance. I have stood at Naples and seen Vesuvius painting the town red — from Catania have marked afar, upon the flanks of Ætna, the lava’s awful pursuit of the astonished rooster and the despairing pig. The fiery flow from Kilauea’s crater, thrusting itself into the forests and licking the entire country clean, is as familiar to me as my mother-tongue. I have seen glaciers, a thousand years old and quite bald, heading for a valley full of tourists at the rate of an inch a month. I have seen a saturated solution of mining camp going down a mountain river, to make a sociable call on the valley farmers. I have stood behind a tree on the battle-field and seen a compact square mile of armed men moving with irresistible momentum to the rear. Whenever anything grand in magnitude or motion is billed to appear I commonly manage to beat my way into the show, and in reporting it I am a man of unscrupulous veracity; but I have seldom observed anything like that solid gray column of Maltese cat!

It is unnecessary to explain, I suppose, that each individual grimalkin in the outfit, with that readiness of resource which distinguishes the species, had grappled with tooth and nail as many others as it could hook on to. This preserved the formation. It made the column so stiff that when the ship rolled (and the *Mary Jane* was a devil to roll) it swayed from side to side like a mast, and the Mate said if it grew much taller he would have to order it cut away or it would capsize us.

Some of the sailors went to work at the pumps, but these discharged nothing but fur. Captain Doble raised his eyes from his toes and shouted: “Let go the anchor!” but being assured that nobody was touching it, apologized and resumed his revery. The chaplain said if there were no objections he would like to offer up a prayer, and a gambler from Chicago, producing a pack of cards, proposed to throw round for the first jack. The parson’s plan was adopted, and as he uttered the final “amen,” the cats struck up a hymn.

All the living ones were now above deck, and every mother’s son of them sang. Each had a pretty fair voice, but no ear. Nearly all their notes in the upper register were more or less cracked and disobedient. The remarkable thing about the voices was their range. In that crowd were cats of seventeen octaves, and the average could not have been less than twelve.

Number of cats, as per invoice	**127,000**
Estimated number dead swellers	**6,000**
———— ————	
Total songsters	**121,000**
Average number octaves per cat	**12**
———— ————	
Total octaves	**1,452,000**

It was a great concert. It lasted three days and nights, or, counting each night as seven days, twenty-four days altogether, and we could not go below for provisions. At the end of that time the cook came for’d shaking up some beans in a hat, and holding a large knife.

“Shipmates,” said he, “we have done all that mortals can do. Let us now draw lots.”

We were blindfolded in turn, and drew, but just as the cook was forcing the fatal black bean upon the fattest man, the concert closed with a suddenness that waked the man on the lookout. A moment later every grimalkin relaxed his hold on his neighbors, the column lost its cohesion and, with 121,000 dull, sickening thuds that beat as one, the whole business fell to the deck. Then with a wild farewell wail that feline host sprang spitting into the sea and struck out southward for the African shore!

The southern extension of Italy, as every schoolboy knows, resembles in shape an enormous boot. We had drifted within sight of it. The cats in the fabric had spied it, and their alert imaginations were instantly affected with a lively sense of the size, weight and probable momentum of its flung bootjack.

Epigrams

If every hypocrite in the United States were to break his leg to-day the country could be successfully invaded to-morrow by the warlike hypocrites of Canada.

To Dogmatism the Spirit of Inquiry is the same as the Spirit of Evil, and to pictures of the latter it appends a tail to represent the note of interrogation.

“Immoral” is the judgment of the stalled ox on the gamboling lamb.

In forgiving an injury be somewhat ceremonious, lest your magnanimity be construed as indifference.

True, man does not know woman. But neither does woman.

Age is provident because the less future we have the more we fear it.

Reason is fallible and virtue vincible; the winds vary and the needle forsakes the pole, but stupidity never errs and never intermits. Since it has been found that the axis of the earth wabbles, stupidity is indispensable as a standard of constancy.

In order that the list of able women may be memorized for use at meetings of the oppressed sex, Heaven has considerately made it brief.

Firmness is my persistency; obstinacy is yours.

A little heap of dust,
A little streak of rust,
A stone without a name —
Lo! hero, sword and fame.

Our vocabulary is defective; we give the same name to woman’s lack of temptation and man’s lack of opportunity.

“You scoundrel, you have wronged me,” hissed the philosopher. “May you live forever!”

The man who thinks that a garnet can be made a ruby by setting it in brass is writing “dialect” for publication.

“Who art thou, stranger, and what dost thou seek?”

“I am Generosity, and I seek a person named Gratitude.”

“Then thou dost not deserve to find her.”

“True. I will go about my business and think of her no more. But who art thou, to be so wise?”

“I am Gratitude — farewell forever.”

There was never a genius who was not thought a fool until he disclosed himself; whereas he is a fool then only.

The boundaries that Napoleon drew have been effaced; the kingdoms that he set up have disappeared. But all the armies and statecraft of Europe cannot unsay what you have said.

Strive not for singularity in dress;
Fools have the more and men of sense the less.
To look original is not worth while,
But be in mind a little out of style.

A conqueror arose from the dead. “Yesterday,” he said, “I ruled half the world.” “Please show me the half that you ruled,” said an angel, pointing out a wisp of glowing vapor floating in space. “That is the world.”

“Who art thou, shivering in thy furs?”

“My name is Avarice. What is thine?”

“Unselfishness.”

“Where is thy clothing, placid one?”

“Thou art wearing it.”

To be comic is merely to be playful, but wit is a serious matter. To laugh at it is to confess that you do not understand.

If you would be accounted great by your contemporaries, be not too much greater than they.

To have something that he will not desire, nor know that he has — such is the hope of him who seeks the admiration of posterity. The character of his work does not matter; he is a humorist.

Women and foxes, being weak, are distinguished by superior tact.

To fatten pigs, confine and feed them; to fatten rogues, cultivate a generous disposition.

Every heart is the lair of a ferocious animal. The greatest wrong that you can put upon a man is to provoke him to let out his beast.

When two irreconcilable propositions are presented for assent the safest way is to thank Heaven that we are not as the unreasoning brutes, and believe both.

Truth is more deceptive than falsehood, for it is more frequently presented by those from whom we do not expect it, and so has against it a numerical presumption.

A bad marriage is like an electrical thrilling machine: it makes you dance, but you can’t let go.

Meeting Merit on a street-crossing, Success stood still. Merit stepped off into the mud and went round him, bowing his apologies, which Success had the grace to accept.

“I think,” says the philosopher divine,
“Therefore I am.” Sir, here’s a surer sign:

We know we live, for with our every breath
We feel the fear and imminence of death.

The first man you meet is a fool. If you do not think so ask him and he will prove it.

He who would rather inflict injustice than suffer it will always have his choice, for no injustice can be done to him.

There are as many conceptions of a perfect happiness hereafter as there are minds that have marred their happiness here.

We yearn to be, not what we are, but what we are not. If we were immortal we should not crave immortality.

A rabbit’s foot may bring good luck to you, but it brought none to the rabbit.

Before praising the wisdom of the man who knows how to hold his tongue, ascertain if he knows how to hold his pen.

The most charming view in the world is obtained by introspection.

Love is unlike chess, in that the pieces are moved secretly and the player sees most of the game. But the looker-on has one incomparable advantage: he is not the stake.

It is not for nothing that tigers choose to hide in the jungle, for commerce and trade are carried on, mostly, in the open.

We say that we love, not whom we will, but whom we must. Our judgment need not, therefore, go to confession.

Of two kinds of temporary insanity, one ends in suicide, the other in marriage.

If you give alms from compassion, why require the beneficiary to be “a deserving object”? No other adversity is so sharp as destitution of merit.

Bereavement is the name that selfishness gives to a particular privation.

O proud philanthropist, your hope is vain
To get by giving what you lost by gain.
With every gift you do but swell the cloud
Of witnesses against you, swift and loud —
Accomplices who turn and swear you split
Your life: half robber and half hypocrite.
You’re least unsafe when most intact you hold
Your curst allotment of dishonest gold.

The highest and rarest form of contentment is approval of the success of another.

If Inclination challenge, stand and fight —
From Opportunity the wise take flight.

What a woman most admires in a man is distinction among men. What a man most admires in a woman is devotion to himself.

Those who most loudly invite God’s attention to themselves when in peril of death are those who should most fervently wish to escape his observation.

When you have made a catalogue of your friend’s faults it is only fair to supply him with a duplicate, so that he may know yours.

How fascinating is Antiquity! — in what a golden haze the ancients lived their lives! We, too, are ancients. Of our enchanting time Posterity’s great poets will sing immortal songs, and its archæologists will reverently uncover the foundations of our palaces and temples. Meantime we swap jack-knives.

Observe, my son, with how austere a virtue the man without a cent puts aside the temptation to manipulate the market or acquire a monopoly.

For study of the good and the bad in woman two women are a needless expense.

“There’s no free will,” says the philosopher;
  “To hang is most unjust.”
“There is no free will,” assents the officer;
  “We hang because we must.”

Hope is an explorer who surveys the country ahead. That is why we know so much about the Hereafter and so little about the Heretofore.

Remembering that it was a woman who lost the world, we should accept the act of cackling geese in saving Rome as partial reparation.

There are two classes of women who may do as they please; those who are rich and those who are poor. The former can count on assent, the latter on inattention.

When into the house of the heart Curiosity is admitted as the guest of Love she turns her host out of doors.

Happiness has not to all the same name: to Youth she is known as the Future; Age knows her as the Dream.

“Who art thou, there in the mire?”

“Intuition. I leaped all the way from where thou standest in fear on the brink of the bog.”

“A great feat, madam; accept the admiration of Reason, sometimes known as Dry-foot.”

In eradicating an evil, it makes a difference whether it is uprooted or rooted up. The difference is in the reformer.

The Audible Sisterhood rightly affirms the equality of the sexes: no man is so base but some woman is base enough to love him.

Having no eyes in the back of the head, we see ourselves on the verge of the outlook. Only he who has accomplished the notable feat of turning about knows himself the central figure in the universe.

Truth is so good a thing that falsehood can not afford to be without it.

If women did the writing of the world, instead of the talking, men would be regarded as the superior sex in beauty, grace and goodness.

Love is a delightful day’s journey. At the farther end kiss your companion and say farewell.

Let him who would wish to duplicate his every experience prate of the value of life.

The game of discontent has its rules, and he who disregards them cheats. It is not permitted to you to wish to add another’s advantages or possessions to your own; you are permitted only to wish to be another.

The creator and arbiter of beauty is the heart; to the male rattlesnake the female rattlesnake is the loveliest thing in nature.

Thought and emotion dwell apart. When the heart goes into the head there is no dissension; only an eviction.

If you want to read a perfect book there is only one way: write it.

“Where goest thou, Ignorance?”

“To fortify the mind of a maiden against a peril.”

“I am going thy way. My name is Knowledge.”

“Scoundrel! Thou art the peril.”

A prude is one who blushes modestly at the indelicacy of her thoughts and virtuously flies from the temptation of her desires.

The man who is always taking you by the hand is the same who if you were hungry would take you by the café.

When a certain sovereign wanted war he threw out a diplomatic intimation; when ready, a diplomat.

If public opinion were determined by a throw of the dice, it would in the long run be half the time right.

The gambling known as business looks with austere disfavor upon the business known as gambling.

A virtuous widow is the most loyal of mortals; she is faithful to that which is neither pleased nor profited by her fidelity.

Of one who was “foolish” the creators of our language said that he was “fond.” That we have not definitely reversed the meanings of the words should be set down to the credit of our courtesy.

Rioting gains its end by the power of numbers. To a believer in the wisdom and goodness of majorities it is not permitted to denounce a successful mob.

Artistically set to grace
The wall of a dissecting-place,

A human pericardium
Was fastened with a bit of gum,
While, simply underrunning it,
The one word, “Charity,” was writ
To show the student band that hovered
About it what it once had covered.

Virtue is not necessary to a good reputation, but a good reputation is helpful to virtue.

When lost in a forest go always down hill. When lost in a philosophy or doctrine go upward.

We submit to the majority because we have to. But we are not compelled to call our attitude of subjection a posture of respect.

Pascal says that an inch added to the length of Cleopatra’s nose would have changed the fortunes of the world. But having said this, he has said nothing, for all the forces of nature and all the power of dynasties could not have added an inch to the length of Cleopatra’s nose.

Our luxuries are always masquerading as necessaries. Woman is the only necessary having the boldness and address to compel recognition as a luxury.

“I am the seat of the affections,” said the heart.

“Thank you,” said the judgment, “you save my face.”

“Who art thou that weepest?”

“Man.”

“Nay, thou art Egotism. I am the Scheme of the Universe. Study me and learn that nothing matters.”

“Then how does it matter that I weep?”

A slight is less easily forgiven than an injury, because it implies something of contempt, indifference, an overlooking of our importance; whereas an injury presupposes some degree of consideration. “The black-guards!” said a traveler whom Sicilian brigands had released without ransom; “did they think me a person of no consequence?”

The people’s plaudits are unheard in hell.

Generosity to a fallen foe is a virtue that takes no chances.

If there was a world before this we must all have died impenitent.

We are what we laugh at. The stupid person is a poor joke, the clever, a good one.

If every man who resents being called a rogue resented being one this would be a world of wrath.

Force and charm are important elements of character, but it counts for little to be stronger than honey and sweeter than a lion.

Grief and discomfiture are coals that cool:
Why keep them glowing with thy sighs, poor fool?

A popular author is one who writes what the people think. Genius invites them to think something else.

Asked to describe the Deity, a donkey would represent him with long ears and a tail. Man’s conception is higher and truer: he thinks of him as somewhat resembling a man.

Christians and camels receive their burdens kneeling.

The sky is a concave mirror in which Man sees his own distorted image and seeks to propitiate it.

Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land, but do not hope that the life insurance companies will offer thee special rates.

Persons who are horrified by what they believe to be Darwin’s theory of the descent of Man from the Ape may find comfort in the hope of his return.

A strong mind is more easily impressed than a weak: you shall not so readily convince a fool that you are a philosopher as a philosopher that you are a fool.

A cheap and easy cynicism rails at everything. The master of the art accomplishes the formidable task of discrimination.

When publicly censured our first instinct is to make everybody a codefendant.

O lady fine, fear not to lead
  To Hymen’s shrine a clown:
Love cannot level up, indeed,
  But he can level down.

Men are polygamous by nature and monogamous for opportunity. It is a faithful man who is willing to be watched by a half-dozen wives.

The virtues chose Modesty to be their queen.

“I did not know that I was a virtue,” she said. “Why did you not choose Innocence?”

“Because of her ignorance,” they replied. “She knows nothing but that she is a virtue.”

It is a wise “man’s man” who knows what it is that he despises in a “ladies’ man.”

If the vices of women worshiped their creators men would boast of the adoration they inspire.

The only distinction that democracies reward is a high degree of conformity.

Slang is the speech of him who robs the literary garbage carts on their way to the dumps.

A woman died who had passed her life in affirming the superiority of her sex.

“At last,” she said, “I shall have rest and honors.”

“Enter,” said Saint Peter; “thou shalt wash the faces of the dear little cherubim.”

To woman a general truth has neither value nor interest unless she can make a particular application of it. And we say that women are not practical!

The ignorant know not the depth of their ignorance, but the learned know the shallowness of their learning.

He who relates his success in charming woman’s heart may be assured of his failure to charm man’s ear.

What poignant memories the shadows bring;
What songs of triumph in the dawning ring!
By night a coward and by day a king.

When among the graves of thy fellows, walk with circumspection; thine own is open at thy feet.

As the physiognomist takes his own face as the highest type and standard, so the critic’s theories are imposed by his own limitations.

“Heaven lies about us in our infancy,” and our neighbors take up the tale as we mature.

“My laws,” she said, “are of myself a part:
I read them by examining my heart.”
“True,” he replied; “like those to Moses known,
Thine also are engraven upon stone.”

Love is a distracted attention: from contemplation of one’s self one turns to consider one’s dream.

“Halt! — who goes there?”

“Death.”

“Advance, Death, and give the countersign.”

“How needless! I care not to enter thy camp to-night. Thou shalt enter mine.”

“What! I a deserter?”

“Nay, a great soldier. Thou shalt overcome all the enemies of mankind.”

“Who are they?”

“Life and the Fear of Death.”

The palmist looks at the wrinkles made by closing the hand and says they signify character. The philosopher reads character by what the hand most loves to close upon.

Ah, woe is his, with length of living cursed,
Who, nearing second childhood, had no first.
Behind, no glimmer, and before no ray —
A night at either end of his dark day.

A noble enthusiasm in praise of Woman is not incompatible with a spirited zeal in defamation of women.

The money-getter who pleads his love of work has a lame defense, for love of work at money-getting is a lower taste than love of money.

He who thinks that praise of mediocrity atones for disparagement of genius is like one who should plead robbery in excuse of theft.

The most disagreeable form of masculine hypocrisy is that which finds expression in pretended remorse for impossible gallantries.

Any one can say that which is new; any one that which is true. For that which is both new and true we must go duly accredited to the gods and await their pleasure.

The test of truth is Reason, not Faith; for to the court of Reason must be submitted even the claims of Faith.

“Whither goest thou?” said the angel.

“I know not.”

“And whence hast thou come?”

“I know not.”

“But who art thou?”

“I know not.”

“Then thou art Man. See that thou turn not back, but pass on to the place whence thou hast come.”

If Expediency and Righteousness are not father and son they are the most harmonious brothers that ever were seen.

Train the head, and the heart will take care of itself; a rascal is one who knows not how to think.

Do you to others as you would
   That others do to you;
But see that you no service good
Would have from others that they could
   Not rightly do.

Taunts are allowable in the case of an obstinate husband: balky horses may best be made to go by having their ears bitten.

Adam probably regarded Eve as the woman of his choice, and exacted a certain gratitude for the distinction of his preference.

A man is the sum of his ancestors; to reform him you must begin with a dead ape and work downward through a million graves. He is like the lower end of a suspended chain; you can sway him slightly to the right or the left, but remove your hand and he falls into line with the other links.

He who thinks with difficulty believes with alacrity. A fool is a natural proselyte, but he must be caught young, for his convictions, unlike those of the wise, harden with age.

These are the prerogatives of genius: To know without having learned; to draw just conclusions from unknown premises; to discern the soul of things.

Although one love a dozen times, yet will the latest love seem the first. He who says he has loved twice has not loved once.

Men who expect universal peace through invention of destructive weapons of war are no wiser than one who, noting the improvement of agricultural implements, should prophesy an end to the tilling of the soil.

To parents only, death brings an inconsolable sorrow. When the young die and the old live, nature’s machinery is working with the friction that we name grief.

Empty wine-bottles have a bad opinion of women.

Civilization is the child of human ignorance and conceit. If Man knew his insignificance in the scheme of things he would not think it worth while to rise from barbarity to enlightenment. But it is only through enlightenment that he can know.

Along the road of life are many pleasure resorts, but think not that by tarrying in them you will take more days to the journey. The day of your arrival is already recorded.

The most offensive egotist is he that fears to say “I” and “me.” “It will probably rain” — that is dogmatic. “I think it will rain” — that is natural and modest. Montaigne is the most delightful of essayists because so great is his humility that he does not think it important that we see not Montaigne. He so forgets himself that he employs no artifice to make us forget him.

On fair foundations Theocrats unwise
Rear superstructures that offend the skies.
“Behold,” they cry, “this pile so fair and tall!
Come dwell within it and be happy all.”
But they alone inhabit it, and find,
Poor fools, ‘tis but a prison for the mind.

If thou wilt not laugh at a rich man’s wit thou art an anarchist, and if thou take not his word thou shalt take nothing that he hath. Make haste, therefore, to be civil to thy betters, and so prosper, for prosperity is the foundation of the state.

Death is not the end; there remains the litigation over the estate.

When God makes a beautiful woman, the devil opens a new register.

When Eve first saw her reflection in a pool, she sought Adam and accused him of infidelity.

“Why dost thou weep?”

“For the death of my wife. Alas! I shall never again see her!”

“Thy wife will never again see thee, yet she does not weep.”

What theology is to religion and jurisprudence to justice, etiquette is to civility.

“Who art thou that despite the piercing cold and thy robe’s raggedness seemest to enjoy thyself?”

“Naught else is enjoyable — I am Contentment.”

“Ha! thine must be a magic shirt. Off with it! I shiver in my fine attire.”

“I have no shirt. Pass on, Success.”

Ignorance when inevitable is excusable. It may be harmless, even beneficial; but it is charming only to the unwise. To affect a spurious ignorance is to disclose a genuine.

Because you will not take by theft what you can have by cheating, think not yours is the only conscience in the world. Even he who permits you to cheat his neighbor will shrink from permitting you to cheat himself.

“God keep thee, stranger; what is thy name?”

“Wisdom. And thine?”

“Knowledge. How does it happen that we meet?”

“This is an intersection of our paths.”

“Will it ever be decreed that we travel always the same road?”

“We were well named if we knew.”

Nothing is more logical than persecution. Religious tolerance is a kind of infidelity.

Convictions are variable; to be always consistent is to be sometimes dishonest.

The philosopher’s profoundest conviction is that which he is most reluctant to express, lest he mislead.

When exchange of identities is possible, be careful; you may choose a person who is willing.

The most intolerant advocate is he who is trying to convince himself.

In the Parliament of Otumwee the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed a tax on fools.

“The right honorable and generous gentleman,” said a member, “forgets that we already have it in the poll tax.”

“Whose dead body is that?”

“Credulity’s.”

“By whom was he slain?”

“Credulity.”

“Ah, suicide.”

“No, surfeit. He dined at the table of Science, and swallowed all that was set before him.”

Don’t board with the devil if you wish to be fat.

Pray do not despise your delinquent debtor; his default is no proof of poverty.

Courage is the acceptance of the gambler’s chance: a brave man bets against the game of the gods.

“Who art thou?”

“A philanthropist. And thou?”

“A pauper.”

“Away! you have nothing to relieve my need.”

Youth looks forward, for nothing is behind; Age backward, for nothing is before.

Think not, O man, the world has any need
That thou canst truly serve by word or deed.
Serve thou thy better self, nor care to know
How God makes righteousness and roses grow.

In spiritual matters material aids are not to be despised: by the use of an organ and a painted window an artistic emotion can be made to seem a religious ecstasy.

The poor man’s price of admittance to the favor of the rich is his self-respect. It assures him a seat in the gallery.

One may know oneself ugly, but there is no mirror for the understanding.

If the righteous thought death what they think they think it they would search less diligently for divine ordinances against suicide.

Weep not for cruelty to rogues in jail:
Injustice can the just alone assail.

Deny compassion to the wretch who swerved,
Till all who, fainting, walked aright are served.

The artless woman may be known by her costume: her gown is trimmed with feathers of the white blackbird.

All are lunatics, but he who can analyze his delusion is called a philosopher.

Slang is a foul pool at which every dunce fills his bucket, and then sets up as a fountain.

The present is the frontier between the desert of the past and the garden of the future. It is redrawn every moment.

The virtue that is not automatic requires more attention than it is worth.

At sunset our shadows reach the stars, yet we are no greater at death than at the noon of life.

Experience is a revelation in the light of which we renounce the errors of youth for those of age.

From childhood to youth is eternity; from youth to manhood, a season. Age comes in a night and is incredible.

Avoid the disputatious. When you greet an acquaintance with “How are you?” and he replies: “On the contrary, how are *you*?” pass on.

If all thought were audible none would be deemed discreditable. We know, indeed, that bad thoughts are universal, but that is not the same thing as catching them at being so.

“All the souls in this place have been happy ever since you blundered into it,” said Satan, ejecting Hope. “You make trouble wherever you go.”

Our severest retorts are unanswerable because nobody is present to answer them.

The angels have good dreams and bad, and we are the dreams. When an angel wakes one of us dies.

The man of “honor” pays his bet
By saving on his lawful debt.
When he to Nature pays his dust
(Not for he would, but for he must)
Men say, “He settled that, ‘tis true,
But, faith, it long was overdue.”

Do not permit a woman to ask forgiveness, for that is only the first step. The second is justification of herself by accusation of you.

If we knew nothing was behind us we should discern our true relation to the universe.

Youth has the sun and the stars by which to determine his position on the sea of life; Age must sail by dead reckoning and knows not whither he is bound.

Happiness is lost by criticising it; sorrow by accepting it.

As Nature can not make us altogether wretched she resorts to the trick of contrast by making us sometimes almost happy.

When prosperous the fool trembles for the evil that is to come; in adversity the philosopher smiles for the good that he has had.

When God saw how faulty was man He tried again and made woman. As to why He then stopped there are two opinions. One of them is woman's.

She hated him because he discovered that her lark was a crow. He hated her because she unlocked the cage of his beast.

"Who art thou?"

"Friendship."

"I am Love; let us travel together."

"Yes — for a day's journey; then thou arrivest at thy grave."

"And thou?"

"I go as far as the grave of Advantage."

Look far enough ahead and always thou shalt see the domes and spires of the City of Contentment.

You would say of that old man: "He is bald and bent." No; in the presence of Death he uncovers and bows.

If you saw Love pictured as clad in furs you would smile. Yet every year has its winter.

You can not disprove the Great Pyramid by showing the impossibility of putting the stones in place.

Men were singing the praises of Justice.

"Not so loud," said an angel; "if you wake her she will put you all to death."

Age, with his eyes in the back of his head, thinks it wisdom to see the bogs through which he has floundered.

Wisdom is known only by contrasting it with folly; by shadow only we perceive that all visible objects are not flat. Yet Philanthropos would abolish evil!

One whose falsehoods no longer deceive has forfeited the right to speak truth.

Wisdom is a special knowledge in excess of all that is known.

To live is to believe. The most credulous of mortals is he who is persuaded of his incredulity.

In him who has never wronged another, revenge is a virtue.

That you can not serve God and Mammon is a poor excuse for not serving God.

A fool's tongue is not so noisy but the wise can hear his ear commanding them to silence.

If the Valley of Peace could be reached only by the path of love, it would be sparsely inhabited.

To the eye of failure success is an accident with a presumption of crime.

Wearing his eyes in his heart, the optimist falls over his own feet, and calls it Progress.

You can calculate your distance from Hell by the number of wayside roses. They are thickest at the hither end of the route.

The world was made a sphere in order that men should not push one another off, but the landowner smiles when he thinks of the sea.

Let not the night on thy resentment fall:
Strike when the wrong is fresh, or not at all.
The lion ceases if his first leap fail —
'Tis only dogs that nose a cooling trail.

Having given out all the virtues that He had made, God made another.

"Give us that also," said His children.

"Nay," He replied, "if I give you that you will slay one another till none is left. You shall have only its name, which is Justice."

"That is a good name," they said; "we will give it to a virtue of our own creation."

So they gave it to Revenge.

The sea-bird speeding from the realm of night
Dashes to death against the beacon-light.
Learn from its evil fate, ambitious soul,
The ministry of light is guide, not goal.

While you have a future do not live too much in contemplation of your past: unless you are content to walk backward the mirror is a poor guide.

"O dreadful Death, why veilest thou thy face?"
"To spare me thine impetuous embrace."

He who knows himself great accepts the truth in reverent silence, but he who only believes himself great has embraced a noisy faith.

Life is a little plot of light. We enter, clasp a hand or two, and go our several ways back into the darkness. The mystery is infinitely pathetic and picturesque.

Cheerfulness is the religion of the little. The low hills are a-smirk with flowers and greenery; the dominating peaks, austere and desolate, holding a prophecy of doom.

It is not to our credit that women like best the men who are not as other men, nor to theirs that they are not particular as to the nature of the difference.

In the journey of life when thy shadow falls to the westward stop until it falls to the eastward. Thou art then at thy destination.

Seek not for happiness—’tis known
To hope and memory alone;
At dawn — how bright the noon will be!
At eve — how fair it glowed, ah, me!

Brain was given to test the heart’s credibility as a witness, yet the philosopher’s lady is almost as fine as the clown’s wench.

“Who art thou, so sorrowful?”

“Ingratitude. It saddens me to look upon the devastations of Benevolence.”

“Then veil thine eyes, for I am Benevolence.”

“Wretch! thou art my father and my mother.”

Death is the only prosperity that we neither desire for ourselves nor resent in others.

To the small part of ignorance that we can arrange and classify we give the name Knowledge.

“I wish to enter,” said the soul of the voluptuary.

“I am told that all the beautiful women are here.”

“Enter,” said Satan, and the soul of the voluptuary passed in.

“They make the place what it is,” added Satan, as the gates clanged.

Woman would be more charming if one could fall into her arms without falling into her hands.

Think not to atone for wealth by apology: you must make restitution to the accuser.

Study good women and ignore the rest,
For he best knows the sex who knows the best.

Before undergoing a surgical operation arrange your temporal affairs. You may live.

Intolerance is natural and logical, for in every dissenting opinion lies an assumption of superior wisdom.

“Who art thou?” said Saint Peter at the Gate.

“I am known as Memory.”

“What presumption! — go back to Hell. And who, perspiring friend, art thou?”

“*My* name is Satan. I am looking for — —”

“Take your penal apparatus and be off.”

And Satan, laying hold of Memory, said: “Come along, you scoundrel! you make happiness wherever you are not.”

Women of genius commonly have masculine faces, figures and manners. In transplanting brains to an alien soil God leaves a little of the original earth clinging to the roots.

The heels of Detection are sore from the toes of Remorse.

Twice we see Paradise. In youth we name it Life; in age, Youth.

There are but ten Commandments, true,
But that's no hardship, friend, to you;
The sins whereof no line is writ
You're not commanded to commit.

Fear of the darkness is more than an inherited superstition — it is at night, mostly, that the king thinks.

"Who art thou?" said Mercy.

"Revenge, the father of Justice."

"Thou wearest thy son's clothing."

"One must be clad."

"Farewell — I go to attend thy son."

"Thou wilt find him hiding in yonder jungle."

Self-denial is indulgence of a propensity to forego.

Men talk of selecting a wife; horses, of selecting an owner.

You are not permitted to kill a woman who has wronged you, but nothing forbids you to reflect that she is growing older every minute. You are avenged fourteen hundred and forty times a day.

A sweetheart is a bottle of wine; a wife is a wine-bottle.

He gets on best with women who best knows how to get on without them.

"Who am I?" asked an awakened soul.

"That is the only knowledge that is denied to you here," answered a smiling angel; "this is Heaven."

Woman's courage is ignorance of danger; man's is hope of escape.

When God had finished this terrestrial frame
And all things else, with or without a name,
The Nothing that remained within His hand
Said: "Make me into something fine and grand,
Thine angels to amuse and entertain."
God heard and made it into human brain.

If you wish to slay your enemy make haste, O make haste, for already Nature's knife is at his throat and yours.

To most persons a sense of obligation is insupportable; beware upon whom you inflict it.

Bear me, good oceans, to some isle
  Where I may never fear
The snake alurk in woman's smile,
  The tiger in her tear.

Yet bear not with me her, O deeps,
Who never smiles and never weeps.

Life and Death threw dice for a child.

"I win!" cried Life.

"True," said Death, "but you need a nimbler tongue to proclaim your luck. The stake is already dead of age."

How blind is he who, powerless to discern
The glories that about his pathway burn,
Walks unaware the avenues of Dream,
Nor sees the domes of Paradise agleam!
O Golden Age, to him more nobly planned
Thy light lies ever upon sea and land.
From sordid scenes he lifts his eyes at will,
And sees a Grecian god on every hill!

In childhood we expect, in youth demand, in manhood hope, and in age beseech.

A violet softly sighed,
  A hollyhock shouted above.
In the heart of the violet, pride;
  In the heart of the hollyhock, love.

If women knew themselves the fact that men do not know them would flatter them less and content them more.

The angel with a flaming sword slept at his post, and Eve slipped back into the Garden. "Thank Heaven! I am again in Paradise," said Adam.

KINGS OF BEASTS

BY
LITTLE JOHNNY

Edited to a Low and Variable Degree of Intelligibility by the Author's Uncle Edward.

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THE RAT

RATS is radiants and the little ones is a mouse, and thats the feller which pursues the women folks up into a high tree and blankets on her blood I.But the old he rat eats bread and cheese like a thing of life.

One day my mother she baited a trap with Dutch cheese, for to catch a rat. My father he looked on a while, and then he said, my father did: “I guess there isnt any doubt about the rat finding that deadly invention if he follers his nose, and I foresee his finish, but what is the trap for?”

Rats is two kinds, the common and the mush. The common is the scourge of the world, but the mush he lives in the water and is highly respected. The fur of the mush is a article of commerce and keeps your hands warm when winter stalks abroad like a devouring kangaroon. If I was a mush I would keep my fur for my own self and say: “You fool humans can stay in the house and stand by the fire.” But Uncle Ned he says that would be bad for athletical sports, why not let them go out of doors, but keep their hands in one a others pockets as usual?

He says one time in Arizona there was a show, and the show man he stood in the door of his tent and hollored: “Walk up, walk up, ladies and gents, and see the fierce Canadian beaver, which is the 8th wonder of the world and the anchor of hope to them which is afflicted with the dumps. He roams the rivers of the frozen north, from Dan Couvers island to Sammy Quoddys bay in the state of Maine, and his voice is ever for war. When he throws his eye upon a tree the doom of that monarch of the forest primeval is sealed, its caroar at a end and its name a by word in the mouths of men, for he ganaws it down while you wait, and as it thunders to earth he raises the song of triump and lashes the air to foam! His house is fathoms five under the glad waters of the deep blue sea, and the steam boats pass above him as he pursues the evil tenor of his way, in maiden meditation, fancy free. At midnights holy hour he arises to the surface for to communicate with his kindreds in a far country, and the slap of his powerful tail is heard around the world. The dams which he builds with his teeths and feets turns aside the Father of Waters, and mighty cities are with the eternal past! Yet this wonder worker is endowered with a domestical mind and a sociable dispusition, and he is never so happy as when surounded by such friendly and congenual spirits as I see before me, generously eager for to cheer him in his campaign of education. Walk up, walk up, only fifty cents for to bring the balm of Gulliad to this lonely exiles heart.”

I asked Uncle Ned was it a mush rat, and he said, Uncle Ned did: “I dont know, Johnny, I dont know. I hadnt time to go in and cheer up the lonely exile, for having the misfortune to wear a stopipe hat and look like maybe I would steal horses, I feared that if I went in the show I might be too much absorbed in admiration to the beaver to mark the laps of time, and would be late at the boundry.”

Beavers is mammals, but the mush is amfabulous and lays eggs. And thats why I say every feller to his own taste and the tiger for us all.

The mush he lives in the river, and when he is attempted to be caught he swims across and whisks his tail, real contemptible, much as to say; “No you dont.”

But if you have a gun you do.

Injins eats the mush every little tiny bit up, fur and all, and, then the white man he says: “You uncivilize galoot, aint you a shamed of yourself for to be so filthy, why dont you eat oysters, like you was folks?”

But, if I was Injins I wouldnt care what I et, just so it was pizen. Franky, thats the baby, he eats everything which is in the world and is made sick. One time Mary, thats the house maid, she come to my mother ablubberin like she had been licked, and she said, Mary did: “O, if you please, mum, I gave Franky his fathers pocket knife for to play with, and Ime afraid he will make a improper use of it.”

Mother she said: “Go and take it away from him this minute!”

But Mary she only just cried harder and said: “He won’t give it up, for he has swollered it.”

Girls is fools, but Billy, thats my brother, he can stand on his head, and Jack Brily, which is the wicked sailor, he can climb the mast and fling defiance into the teeths of the storm!

Jack says one time a other sailor hired out as mate of a ship which the captain of had a pet kangaroon. One day fore the ship sailed the mate was lyin in his bunk, and the kang it come in and looked around the room, but the mate he let on for to be asleep. So the kang it stole a shirt and stuffed it in the pouch on the stomach of its belly. Then it took a comb and a hair brush and put them in too. Bime by it see the mate’s new shoes, and his toothbrush and a railroad guide and took them all. Then the roon it hopped away.

The mate he got up and went to the captain and sed, the mate did: “If you are willing, sir, Ide like to be set ashore to once, cause we are doomed for to sink in the bowel of the sea.”

The captain said how did he know, and the mate said: “By a infaluble sign. I seen that big French rat of yourn a packin up for to forsake the ship.”

Rats is every where, but the kang is a native of Illinoy and leaps from crag to crag!

My sisters young man he says the women has rats in their hair, so you better keep away from them, but my sister says why dont he?

When he comes to see her he asks how I am gettin on with my natural histry, and then he tells me things which I am welcome for to put into it, but she says what a fib, and I must not believe a word which he says, and looks right in his eyes with hern, real reproachy, but he isnt a bit afraid. Hern are brown, but hisn is gray.

Rats is bipeds, but the hi potamus has got hair on its teeths and can swoller a native nigger like he was a capsule. And that is why I say do into others the same as you would be done to by them your own self.

BUTTYGOATS

THERE is billygoats and nannygoats and they are all butty if you dont look out, for when they are made fun of they will act in the most responsible manner.

Uncle Ned he says one time there was a little boy which was a havin his own fun with a goat, by gettin down on his all 4s and stampin his hands and shakin his head like it was the goat's head, but the goat it didnt seem for to mind, but went round behind him, like it said: "I wont have nothing to do with this business."

But when it got to where it wanted to be it let drive, real cruel, where the boy sat down. The boy he lit in the open door of a house, and a old man come out and saw the boy, and then he looked all around, but didnt see nobody else, and then he looked up to the sky and said: "Heaven be praised, which has sent us a son!"

But I guess he knew.

The Bible it says for to be frightful and multiply.

When he was movin out of the other house into this one, Billy, thats my brother, had took a big lookin glass to the wagon and stood it up against a wheel, and a goat he see himself in the glass, and that was more than he would stand, so he backed off and took a run and jump with his head down, like it was a cow catcher on a engine. The glass it was smashed, but the goat was catched between the spokes of the wheel and held fast a long time. When he got out he run round to the other side of the wagon and viewed the land scape oer, and shook his head mighty brave, like saying: "Well, you got away this time, you ugly feller, but you wouldnt if it hadnt been for that wagon in the way, and you better not let me see you in this part of the country again, mister!"

Goats is mollusks, but the centipede is infantry. The pede is found in the torpid zone, but the rhi nupple dinkey is a three legger and makes the welkin ring! Jack Brily, which is the wicked sailor, swears and chews tobacco, and every thing, says the dink is the gem of the ocean and can swaller 2 men to once. One day Jack seen a dink a follering the ship which he worked on, and he told the captain. The captain he said: "That is mighty mournful, cause the dinky is bad luck unless he is fed a sailor every day. We are 6 days from the port where we are bound for, and there is just seven of us. The way I figure it out I shall have to take this ship into port pretty short handed. Go forwerd and unship the cook."

Jack he said: “I, I, sir,” and went and flang the cook over board and the dink et the cook.

Next day the captain made Jack thro over the mate, and next day the carpenter, and the dink et both. Jack he begun for to be mighty nervous, but on the 4th day, as he was about to heave a able bodied seaman into the ragin deeps, they sighted a wreck and rescued the crew. That enabled them for to give the dink 2 men a day and save 4 human lifes.

Billy says there isnt any such thing as a rhi nupple dinky, but Jack he says Billy is prejudiced cause Jacks father is nothing only but just a humble butcher, but ourn wears a stopipe hat.

Jack says he pines like a caged eagle on this dull, unchangin shore, but my sisters young man he says that the briny deep which Jack knows most about is his fathers barrel of pickled pork. But I know Jack was one time a pirate, for his arm is tattered red and blue with a picture of a angel and a labm.

Jakey Epstein, which is the curly headed Jew, he says pork is pizen, and one day when my sisters young man was eatin a sausage Jakey’s father he spoke up and sed: “I rather die than eat that.”

My sisters young man stopt eatin awhile, and looked at him sollem out of his eyes, and bime by he said: “Ide rather you would.” But it is wicked to sass back, for the Bible it says a soft answer turneth away rats.

Uncle Ned he said: “Johnny, did I ever tell you about the buttigoat which had never saw a mule? One day it saw one a standin in the sun, like it was asleep. The butty it looked awhile and then it walked around to the last part of the mule, a lookin mighty sly, much as to say: ‘When he cant see me I’ll sock it to him good and plenty.’

“But the mule knew what was doing, and when the butty tried to sock it to him he kicked him in the forehead real cruel, and the butty turned a flip flop and lit on his back with his feets in the air. Bime by he got up and shook his self, and stomped the ground, and looked at the mule a long time, which was a chewin his cud real peaceful. After a while the butty he said to his self: ‘Ide like for to know which end that feller buts with. I know which I do by the ache.’”

The horse is the noblest animal which scours the plain, but the buttigoat can knock out a dog like the dog hadnt been there, for the butty was give dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the birds of the foul air and everything that is born of woman.

CATS

A FELLER which had took a unfurnished bed room in a lodgin’ house, he said one evening to a friend which had called on him: “Now I got my room, and I have bought this bed and chair, but my money has give out, wot am I to do for a water pitcher, and a lamp, and a hair brush, and other little articles of luxury such as a man of refined taste likes to see about him?”

Then his friend he spoke up and said: “Just give me that old cat and come along o me, and we will get all them things mighty quick.”

So they took the cat into the back yard of a other house and pinned her tail to a does line, where she swung free to the sport of the wind and owled awful! Then the fellers friend he said: “Now we will get plenty water jugs, and lamps, and hair brushes, and old shoes, and all things which is nice. All we got to do is just hide ourselfs till they come down like manna from Heaven.”

They stayed all night till the cat had singed herself into the better land and they was most froze, and no manna. While they was a lookin up to a window a feller in his night shirt opened the window and looked out for to see the sun rise. Then one of them said to the shirt feller: “It is a nice mornin, gum dast you!” But the man at the window he didnt say nothing. So the other feller he hollered: “How do you like music, old stick-in-the-mud?” but the man didn’t say nothin a other time. Then the feller which the cat was hisn he shook his two fists real terible and hollered: “He get even on you for this, you darned thief!”

The man in the house took notice and went away from the window, but pretty soon come back with a enormous ear trumpet, which he stuck in his ear and leaned out and shouted: “What?”

Old Gaffer Peters, which has got the bald head, he had a big Maltese cat, and the cat had a hole in its ear. One day it come in to Mister Brilys meat shop, which is the fat butcher, and Jack Brily, he catched it and shut it up. But first he cut off its ear which had the hole in it. Bime by Missis Doppy, which is old Gaffer’s daughter and has a red head, she come in for to buy sausage meat. Jack he sneaked the cat ear into the sausage meat and Missis Doppy she took the meat home, but Jack he said, just as she left the shop:

“That is the dandiest sausage meat which we have ever made, you look at it when you get home, and see if it aint.”

When she was gone Jack he shut the cat up in the box which catches the ground up meat as it comes out of the machine, and waited. Pretty soon Missis

Doppy she come boilin in, real furious, and handed back the meat and showed Jack the cat ear with the hole in it and said: “Young man, do you know what that is?”

Jack he looked at it a long time, and then he said: “Looks like it might maybe be a washer off of some kind of machine. Where did you get it?”

Missis Doppy said: “I got it out of that meat. You made our cat in to sausage, you wicked thief!”

Just then old Mister Brily come in and asked what was up, and while Missis Doppy was a weepin and sayin what a mean man he was Jack said: “I dont see how that cat could get in the machine without our guilty knowledge, lets see if we can find the other ear.”

So he flang open the box of the grinder and the cat jumped out, and made a dash for the door and most knocked Missis Doppy down and busted out of the shop like it was a whirl wind, and scampered up the street, toward home, you never have see such a circus! Missis Doppy she fainted dead away and Mister Brily he hurled a beef bone at Jack, which dodged and walked away, a singin about war with its wide dissolution.

But Mister Pitchel, thats the preacher, he says it is wicked for to poke fun at the women, cause they cant poke back. Mister Pitchel he can pray real fine, but if me and Billy was preachers I rather be a pirate like Rinard the Red Revenger, which declaimed war with the whole world and had ships and a castle and no goin to school.

When cats is roarin like distant thunder it makes a feller awful fraid unless he is a sleepin with his sister.

The pig it is a native of the Holy Land, and dogs is French, but cats is known from the earliest times and can pur. Missis Dumberly, which has eleven children, she was to our house, and she said, Missis Dumberly did, that she just couldnt bear cats. Then Uncle Ned he spoke up and said: “ That is mighty lucky for the mice.”

Missy, thats my sister, she doesnt like cats too, but girls is quadderpeds and cant climb trees, and when they are mad they spit and swear and hunch their backs up like they was camomiles.

Cats and taggers is the same thing, only the tagger he is bigger and can thrash the lion, and is the king of the jingle. If I was a tag Ide rather be a rhi nosey rose, for the rhi it has got a sticker, and when it fights the ephalent it jabs its sticker in to the stomach of the ephs belly. And that is why the cracky dile says: “Suffer little children to come into me.”

Ephalents was one time used in battle, but once when the king of Rome was a chargin with ten thousand hundred ephs the enemies they turned loose a ton of rats, and the ephs all fled amain as one man! The king of Romes neck was broke and ephalents have ever since pursued the arts of peace and eats pea nuts. Mister Jonnice, which has the wood laig, he was one time a soldier in the war, and thats the way he got it, cause the enemies they shot it off with cannons for to keep him from runnin away. But he says he done some mighty good hoppin.

Mose, which is the cat, and Bildad, thats the new dog, they are good friends, but when Mose is give a saucer of milk Bildad he jumps in and swallers it in 3 or 4 gulps. Then he looks around at Mose, like he was astonished, and shakes his head, much as to say: “Well, well, if I had knew there wasnt no milk in that saucer I wouldnt have took the trouble for to come and see.”

Bildad has got a bushy tail, and Mose he can blow hisn up like a balloon wen he is mad, but the Manx cat it hasnt got any. And that proves that all is for the best, cause man was made in six days and rested on the 7th and went a fishin.

When cats fight they spit fire and sword! One night 2 tom cats was fightin and a woman she put her head out of the window and said to a police man: “Poor things, why dont you part them, you wicked man?”

The police man he spoke up and said, the police man did: “I thought of that, mum, but I guess it aint worth while, cause it looks to me like they would part one a other.”

I think he was afraid, but it is nice for to be brave like Billy, which says if there wasnt any soldiers the Millennium would be upon to us and we would all have to flee to the mountains!

My sisters young man says that once there was a cat, and there was a dog, and there was a lamb, and there was a ox. The dog it said to the ox: “Thats a mighty long tail you got there, mister, with a nice duster to the end of it, but you cant waggle it when you meet your master carryin a beef steak.”

Then the cat it said to the ox, too: “No, indeed, and you cant blow it up and spit fire wen you meet a other ox.”

The lamb it said: “And you aint able for to twinkle it when you think of some thing funny.”

The ox he thought awhile and then he said: “I played hookey when I was a little boy so much that I didnt learn them vain acomplishments, thats a fact, but I have got a tolerbly fair business education, and I guess maybe you fellers would have to come to me for to help you out if you had to fill a order for ox tail soup.”

Mary, thats the house maid, she has wrote some poetry about cats, which my mother says is mighty fine. Here it is:

The cat it has 4 feet, And it has got a tail, And purs when you stroke it the right way, But beware its toe nail!

There is nothing beautifuller than cats When they are little kits, But some day they grow up to be big toms And hunches up their backs and spits.

Cats catches mice, which if they wasn't caught Would be drownded in the honey, And the preserves, and the jams, and the jellies, And maybe poison Billy and Johnny.

I never have saw such rot, but Uncle Ned he says: "I beg for to remind you, fair youth, that you have yet to peruse the work of Ella Wheeler Wilcox."

If I was a poet I would not write about spitcats, no, indeed, it would be all about the eagle, which is the king of beasts and fixes its eye on to the sun, and soars aloof into the blue imperial, and defies the lion and her welps!

Once there was a eagle which was a show, and a man which was to the show dropped a twenty dollar gold piece and it rolled into the eagles cage. The eagle it looked at it a while, and called his wife and said, the eag did: "That feller threw his poker check in here, and I guess he thought I would swaller it cause it has a chicken on one side, but Ide blush for to have such a nasty lookin rooster cut out of my craw."

My sisters young man he says when he was a boy and went to school him and a other boy had a readin lesson about animals. The teacher, which was near sighted, he had lost his spettacles and couldnt tell one word from a other, and they knew it. So when they stood up for to read, my sisters young man he begun and said: "The cat is the loftiest centipede which sweeps the horizon and scowers the plain."

The teacher he said: "What's that, whats that?"

Then my sisters young man he looked at the book, real atentive and said it again. The teacher he said: "Lemmy see that book, youngster, just lemmy see it."

When he got the book he poked his long nose in it and pretended for to read, and then he scratched his head where it didn't itch and told the other boy to go on and read too. The other boy he looked at the book and said, like he was readin: "The cat is found in every country of the globe, but it likes republics the best, and when it soars aloft the nations of the earth tremble so that you can see them shake."

The teacher looked at the book a other time, close to, but bime by he give it back and said, the teacher did: "Young men, that readin lesson looks to the yuman eye jest like it has looked for twenty years, but I guess I have got to get some spettacles for my ears." But the ears of the jackus are a spettacle their selves, for the jack he is a bird of bray.

THE CRANE

I ASKED Uncle Ned what makes the crane stand on one foot for to sleep, and he spoke up and said: “Johnny, you have opened the door of optunity to my waitin soul and I will come out into the light and make everything clear. c< One day in the Garden of Eden Adam he see a lot of animals playin. There was all your old friends, the ephalent, the lion, the tagger, the hi potamus, the giraft, the kangaroon, the rhi naughty furious and some of the little fellers. Adam he looked on a while, real sad, for he knew, Adam did, that some day they would be tearin one a other to rags and sheddin gore excessive, such being the ordained consquences of his own sins. Bime by he flang away his gloomy reflections and said: ‘You fellers is mighty playful, but you are terible clumsy. I bet there isn’t one of you which can stand on one laig.’

“They all tried, but they fell every time. Then the crane, which was a standin by a pond a little way off, talkin to a frog, he tossed his bill up, real contemptible, and strutted in to their midst, and liftin up one leg stood on the other like a statute.

“Adam he looked a while and then he said: ‘Impudence is the king of badfulness. The athletical test which I proposed was for quadpeds, and any gam doodled creepin thing which butts in takes his life in his hand, for I am give dominion over all the beasts of the field, and all the fishes of the sea, and all the birds of the foul air, and every thing which was made in 6 days.’

“The crane tossed his head scornful and said: ‘We have had all that before; give us a rest.’

“Adam he said: ‘Motion is the mother of fatigue. You jest stand like you are till tomorrow morning and maybe you will be rested.’

“So the crane he had to do it, and it made him so tired out that to this day he sleeps frequent, and he always has to do it on one laig. And that ought to teach little boys for to not butt in.”

When Uncle Ned had told me a bout the crane I asked him did he know what makes the loon laugh.

He said: “Yes, indeed, Ime jest the feller which can whack up the desired infmation, to the queens taste. Most peoples they think it is because he has a comical disposition, but they are mistook, for generally speakin he is the solemest aquatical bird which sails the seas over, but he is cursed with a fatal memory.

"One time, a little while after the world was made, Adam and Eve was a sittin by the side of a lake, and there was a loon hid in the reeds which grew in the water. Adam he held Eves hand, and stroked it, and patted her on the shoulder, and ran his fingers through her hair, and done all them things which crazy folks do and sensible fellers like me and you dont understand. Bime by Eve she up and said: 'Adam, do you love me?' "Adam he said, Adam did: 'How couldnt I, when you are the sweetest woman in the world?'

"Eve she smiled real bright, and after a while she said a other time: 'Forgive me, dearest, if I pain you, but I have been worryin so much about some thing. Was you ever in love before?'

"Adam he look at her real solem out of his eyes, and then he rose his right hand up and said: 'No, darling, I swear it, never till I met you.'

"Then Eve she snuggled down close to him and murmured: 'O Adam, it gives me such joy for to hear you say thatl'

"It give the loon joy too, and his laughture rang out over the waters, loud and shrill and echo answered from the hill. And to this day he laughs whenever he thinks of the women folks."

But if me and Billy had been there we would have ringed the loons neck, cause the Bible it says that scoffers shall be casted into Abrahams bosom. Loons is mammals, and the walrus is poultry, and cracky diles is ally gaters, and the camel is the sheep of the desert and is hunted for its plumes. And thats why I say how wonderful is the works of Man!

THE SNAKE

THE fish is a animal and the bird is a beast, but snakes is a fo to man. The snake he is the same as serpents, only he hasnt no feets, and that makes him mad and he bites every thing which is in the world. Snakes is pizen, but the hog he says: “I dont care, it wont do you any good for to bite me.”

Then the snake he says: “It dont do me no good for to bite any kind of feller, that aint why I do it, I aint selfish.”

So he whacks away at the hog and hollers hooray! But the hog he catches him by the middle and makes 2 snakes of him in a minute and says: “I’m pretty bitey my self, thank you.”

Hogs is pork, but Jakey Epstein he says he would rather be one than eat one. But give me a sucker nice roasted, with plenty mashed potatoes, and apple sauce, and pickles, and hot cakes, and mince pie, and walnuts, and you will see a boy which knows his own mind. Hogs is bristly, but the ally gater has notches in the spine of his back and eats niggers.

Uncle Ned, which has been in Indy and every where, he says the Gangee river is over flowin with gaters, and one time he see a gater a lyin on the bank asleep, and he told his servant, which was a natif nigger: “Take a ax and chop up that dead tree into stove wood,” cause thats what Uncle Ned thought it was. The servant he thought so too and said: “Yessir,” and Uncle Ned he went away to shoot rabbits in the jingle. When he come back he went in the bungaloo and found the servant covered up nice and warm in bed. Uncle Ned said: “You lazy feller, did you chop up that log, like I told you?”

The feller he said: “I tried to, sir, but it come to life.” — .

Uncle Ned he spoke up, real sarcastical, and said: “O sure, and I suppose it put forth some limbs, didnt it?”

The feller said: “Yessir, it put forth some on each side.”

Uncle Ned said a other time: “It blossomed too, maybe.”

The nigger feller said: “Yessir, bout 3 féet wide, you ought to have saw it open like it was a morning glory !”

Then Uncle Ned, which was still ironical, he said: “Did it take root?”

The nigger feller thought a while and then he said: “I was a bit upset and can’t recollect that it took any thing only but jest my laig.”

But if a gater wanted Billys laig he would cut its head off with a long sword and say: “That will teach you for to not ask for it, cause I want it to go to school with.” Billy is the bravest boy he ever saw, and licks Sammy Doppy every little while.

A other time in Indy Uncle Ned was a walkin in the jingle and a long slender snake jumped at him and bit him on the hand and ran away. Then Uncle Ned he run as hard as he could for to get home and die in the bosom of his club. While he was a runnin and a prayin for his sins to be forgave he see a natif nigger a sittin by the road side, and the natif nigger had three jest such snakes twisted all round his naked arms and bitin, real cruel, but he had got all their tails into one hand.

Then Uncle Ned he stopped and said: “Poor feller, I have been bit too. As there isnt any hope for us now, we will sell our lifes as dear as we can to them deadly cobrys.”

So he threw off his coat and pitched in and grabbed the snakes tails too. Then the native nigger he sed: “Thankee, sir, I guess we will be able for to manage them now. There is to be a party tonight, and I have been tryin for more than half a hour to braid these fellers into a necklace for the stomach of my wife’s belly, but they are so squirmy I thought I would have to give it up.”

Uncle Ned he was a stonished, and he said: “What! isnt them reptiles pizen?”

The natif nigger he said: “How can I know? Do you suppose I ever et one?”

One day my father he spoke up and said: “Johnny, did you ever hear about the good man which found a frozen snake and warmed it in his bosom, and when the snake got nice and comftable it bit him?”

I said: “Yessir, every fool has heard about that.”

Then my father he said: “My boy, the goodness isnt all on one side, for one time a snake found a man which was cold, and the snake warmed the man in its bosom too.” Then I said: “What did the man do when he had got the chill off him?”

My father he said: “Well, Johnny, he digested.”

Once there was a big snake which was a show, and the show man he put a dog in the cage for the snakes dinner. The dog he looked at the snake a while, and then he said: “That is the biggest sausage that I ever saw. I dont believe it could be et all to one meal by any dog which roams the palmy plain.”

But bime by he was et his own self, and when he was nice swallered the snake he wank his eye, and said to his self: “The man which invented self stuffin sausages wasnt no friend to dogs.”

A other snake which was a show swallered its blanket, and when the show man missed it he said, the show man did: “Ide jest like to catch the gum dasted thief which steals folkses bed clothes!”

He give the snake a other blanket, but watched for to catch the thief. When he see the snake a swollerin that one he went and fetched a pillow and threw it to the snake and said: “If you are makin up your bed for to sleep in side your self you will need this, and when you have turned in I will pass down a hot water bottle for your feets, and make you comftable. What time would you like to be woke in the mornin?”

Snakes eats hop toads and snaps at the hand which feeds it, but dogs is all rite. Snakes skins their selfs once a year, and one time me and Mister Brily, thats the fat butcher, we see one do it. When it was all done Mister Brily he said to the snake, Mister Brily did: “So far, so good, my fine feller, but how are you goin to get your innards out unless you got a knife?”

The boa conscripter is a snake, but the rattler he makes the welkin ring! I asked Uncle Ned what was snakes made for, and he said: “I dont know, Johnny, honest, I didnt have nothing to do with it, but bein a mighty eloquent speecher I flatter my self I have made a shoreless sea of Demcrats. Your honorable father, which is a Repubcan, like you, he says that is about the same thing, but he is a child of darkness and disdain. I can tell you, though, about the snakes in the Garden of Eden, all exceptin the one which was tempted by Eve. When they had all been made, Adam he called them together and give them their names, and then he waved his arms and said: ‘Now go 4th into all the waste places of the earth and multiply.’

“They all slided away only but jest one, which lay still and shook its head, real sad. Then Adam he said: ‘Why dont you do as I said? Off with you to once!’

“But the snake, it spoke up and sed, the snake did: ‘If you please, sir, Ime willing to go 4th, but I cant multiply. Ime a adder. You told me so your self.’”

I asked Uncle Ned what makes the rattler have rattles, and he said: “Johnny, he doesnt. That is a optical delusion due to idleness in the observer. What they mistake for rattles is the last joints of the spine of his back bone, and it come about this way. The rattler he was created so ugly that it strangled him for to look at his self, and when he drew near any thing for to be sociable it fled amain. Well, one day in the Garden of Eden, he shedded his skin like all snakes had been told to do, and a other snake it shedded its skin too. So the rattler he backed into the other snakes skin for to hide his ugly, but it was too short, so the rattler bit off a inch or two and let a few joints of the spine of his back stick out, and they rattle when he shakes with fright, which is frequent. What scares him the worst is when a boy is about to step on him with bare feets. Johnny, you should be kind to the poor rattler and not step on it if there is plenty of room.

“And now, my lad, I will tell you about a feller which drinked whiskey, which is equal bad. Me and the feller and a doctor was a campin in the forest, and the doctor had brought along a jug of whisky for to cure snake bites. One day him and me went out for to shoot bears, and when we come home to camp the feller he was lyin down in the tent, so dead drunk that he didnt know a thing and was to the point of death! Johnny, it is awful to see a drinkard when he is himself, so I tore my hair and bewailed loud and shrill, but the doctor he sat down for to think, and bime be he said: ‘I got it, I got it!’

“Then he rushed away into the jingle, and pretty soon he come back with a rattler in the end of a long split stick, which he poked at the feller and it bit him many a time and oft. Johnny, it sounds like a mystery, and I wouldn’t ask you to believe it if I didnt tell it myself, but them snake bites they beat the fell intent of that whisky, for the feller he sprang up and evanished into the bosky fastness, and is now holdin a office of trust and profit in Kansas.”

I asked Uncle Ned what became of the rattler, and he said, Uncle Ned did: “Thats a mighty sad story, Johnny, and I don’t like to dwell up on it. We took the snake outside the tent and let it go, and the first thing it done was to tie itself in a double bow knot and stick the ends through. Then it raveled it self out, and stood on its head, and waved its tail in air, and said it was the Queen of Sheby.”

Injins eats snakes, but give me a pie, with lots of spice, and a apple dumplin, and some stewed squash, and plenty spunge cake, and a lot of sossage, and some more spunge cake, and some pickles, and all I can eat of chicken gizards, which is the stuff of lifel

FROGS

FROGS was one time catter pillers. When you have et a catter in your salad it would have been a frog if you didnt. A feller named Esop says there was a ox which tried for to be a frog and busted. If it didnt bust it would have et hay and hooked and give milk. The best place to find frogs is after a rain, but they jump before you can get your hands on them, and them which dont will slip through your fingers like they was buttered, but when they fall on the ground you can see their white bellies if you look real quick.

One night there was a lot of frogs in a lake, and there was a fire on the shore, and they all stuck their heads up for to see the fire, and the water froze, and when they tried to take their heads in they couldnt. So they held a council, and each laid his views before the king frog, which was in the middle, and there was jest as many plans for freein the whole lot as there was frogs which couldnt move a inch. The king he didnt say nothing, but looked mighty wise. When the sun melted them out in the mornin they said: “ What a good and wise king we have, for to get us out of trouble! Let us go and thank him.”

But when they went to thank him they couldnt find nothing to thank, only but jest his head, for a cat fish had bit off the king’s body early in the session. Then they said the king had died for his peoples.

Uncle Ned he said, Uncle Ned did: “Johnny, frogs is fine and gay, but the batrakian is a monster of the ocean blue. He has a mouth like a cavern in a hill, and a eye accordin. He is green as a meadow in spring time, exceptin the stomach of his belly, which is as the winter land scope. His voice is like the music of a saw mill and nations hear entranced. When he arises in his wrath his course is as the eagles flight, and when he revisits the earth whence he sprang from, the waters receive him with a roar which makes the heavens be mute!”

Then I spoke up and said: “Thats what a frog does too.”

Uncle Ned he said: “All animated nature has points of resemble. The postage stamp is like the sword fish, cause it is a sticker, the polly wog is like the feller which writes short stories, cause his tail is not to be continued, and the wife is like the tagger, cause she roars like distant thunder. I forgot to tell you that the batrakian is a hunch back, but it isn’t good luck for to touch his hunch, for you will get your feets wet if you try to, for he is the slickest citizen you ever seen and departs this life for a other and wetter world at a moments notice, automatical.”

I — said: “Thats like frogs too.”

Uncle Ned he looked mighty hurt and shook his head, and bime by said: “Johnny, you got a bad habit of interruptin for to say some fool thing just as a feller is gettin truly eloquent, but since you mention frogs I will tell you a story.

“One time a feller from Kansas was casted away on the coast of New Jersey and was a starvin, when he found a bushel of oysters and sat down for to eat them every little bit up. Then he see a native nigger a little way off, a sittin by a fire, and went to him for to be sociable, takin the oysters along. The native nigger was cookin frogs, and he said, real polite: ‘Have some.’

“The Kansas feller he said: ‘What! are you going to eat them gum dasted reptiles?’

“The native nigger said: ‘Pardon me, they are very good, what are you eatin your self?’

“The feller pointed to the oysters, and the nig turned white like he was a sheet and said:

“O Lordy, take them nasty things out of my sight, or I shall die of the flops!’

“Then the Kansas feller he said: ‘I cant take them away, nor eat them either, cause the sight of your diet has give me the colly wobbles in my lap!’

“In a low green valley where the jay bird sings his requiem by the sad sea waves 2 grassy mounds mark the spot where these beautiful youths perished in their prides, each poisoned by the vituals that he didnt eat. Let it teach you, my boy, for to not despise any food which a bountiful Providence has supplied for to sustain the lifes of his meanest cretures.”

But if it was me and Billy we would ct the oysters and give the frogs to the poor, cause frogs is fossils, but oysters is pork and makes the face of man to shine!

Oysters is natives of the tropics, and is found only in high latitudes, but the rhi nosey rose is a brother to the ox.

Mister Brily, which is the fat butcher, he can slaughter a ox real fine, and his son Jack, which is the wicked sailor, says it was the sight of the beautiful blood that made him be a pirate. If I had saw Jack a piratin I would rang out my voice across the billows and said: “Heave too, you naughty man, or I will belch 4th a broad side this minute!”

Then Jack would come to my ship, mighty pale and trembly, and I would embrue my hands in his gore!

I asked Uncle Ned what for the bull frog had sech a horse voice and he said: “One day in the Garden of Eden, when Adam was passin by a pond, he heard a voice a singin sweet and clear, like a lark at the dawning of the day. He looked a long time, and bime by he seen the bull frogs head stickin out of the pond, and it was it singin. But Adam he said: ‘Here, you, what for did you play truant wen I was naming all the animals? You come right out of that and be give a name.’

“So the singster come out on the bank and Adam named it bulbul frog, cause bulbul means nightingale, and then Adam said: *i* I cant deny my self the happiness to hear you sing some more.’

“The bulbul frog it started for to sing again, but it couldnt utter a note, only but jest a harsh croak, for it had took cold by comin out of the water in to the sun shine. Then Adam said: ‘I was mistook. I thought it was you which I heard singin before. Ime sorry I give you that name, or named you at all, for not any name is bad enough for a feller with a voice like that.’

“So Adam he kicked it clear into the middle of the pond, but it has the cold to this day.”

DOGS

DOGS is many kinds, but the Newfoundlin feller is the king of the ocean and saves babies from bein drowned in the briny deeps. The spotty one which has the swear name he trots along under his masters coach, and when a man is run over he finishes him. The dog is called a quinine for to distinguish him from the fox, which is a squid. Dogs is desiduous, for they have got 4 feets and leaps from crag to crag. When some feller is a dyin the dog howls mornful, but the under taker he says the doctrin of mortality is a sublime faith.

One time there was a dog which hadnt any tail, cause it was cut off, but its naughty for to cut them off, for the Bible it says: “Him that sheddeth his brothers bleed his own bleed shall be sheddeth.” There was a other dog which had a long slick tail, like a whip lash, and thems the jockies for me. The dog which had a tail it said to the dog which didnt: “When your master gives you a bone what do you waggle?”

The other one he said: “I waggle the bone.”

Then the tail feller said: “When he kicks you for bein so ugly what have you for to put between your legs to show that your feel is hurt?”

The bob feller said: “I put half a mile between my legs and hisn, what more could I want, exceptin, maybe, the other half of the mile?”

The dog which had the tail it thought a while and then it wiggled its ear; much as to say: “This cripple hasnt any tail, but he has got a head thats no mere toy.” But pretty soon he began for to smile, and bime by said: “What have you for the boys to tie a tin can onto?”

Then the other one shook his head, real sad and said: “You got the advantage of me there, thats a fact. This no tail of mine is jest as good as any for business, but in matters of pleasure and sociableness it fails lamentable!”

One time in Mexico, where the dogs dont have no hair, there was a traveler, and he called his man and said: “James,” for that was his mans name, “Ime going for to adopt the fashion of the country. You take my dog and shave it all over, every little bit of hair off.”

James said he would, but he was afraid the dog would bite him, so he swopped it off for a Mexican dog, same size, and took that one to his master, which said: “What a difference that makes! It looks almost like a other dog.”

Pretty soon after, the traveler took a walk down town, mighty proud of his fashionble dog, which James led with a string. Bime by they come to a Mexican man sittin in a open door hollerin: “Walk up, gents, walk up, only ten cents for to see the show, walk up!”

When the new dog heard the show, man it busted away from James, like it was shot out of a cannon, and jumped right onto the show man, tickled most to death to see him, cause he was its old master. The show man he hollered wild and shouted: “Outch, outch! Your savage dog has bit me cruel, and I got a large family to suport!”

The traveler said to James: “Take the dog home this minute, shavin has spoiled its temper.”

When the dog had gone he said to the man which had the big, helpless family: “Dont cry, my good feller, heres 10 dollars for you, what have you got in your show?”

The show man he said: “Walk right in and see, sir, you are on the free list cause you paid me for my awful pain.”

The traveler he went in the show, and there wasnt any thing to see only but jest his old dog, which was in a cage, and there was a sign board which said in big black letters:

The Wonderful Canine Miracle!

Exibited before the Queen of England and all the Principal Nobobs.

Native of Japan, Where It was Brought From in 2 Ships by The Empror Maximilian.

The only Dog in the World which has got Hair!

Mister Gipple he says that one time he had a mighty homely dog and the dogs name was Calamity. One day Mister Gipple was took sick and sent for the doctor and when the doctor had come in and said “Good mornin, I hope you are well,” Calamity came in too. Mister Gipple, for to be playful, said: “Doctor, what will you give me for my dog?”

The doctor he looked at Calamity a while, real thoughtful, and then he said: “I will give you some thing for your leprosy if you have it, but I dont think I have any medicine strong enough to cure you of that dog. I am a old doctor, but I never have seen such awful symptoms.”

My father, which is absent minded and cant see very well when he has left his spettacles in his other coat, he was a walkin, my father was, and there was a big dog which he was acquainted with. It was chewin a short stick, which was in the corner of its mouth, like it was a cigar. When my father see the stick in the dogs mouth he took the cigar that he was smokin his self, and knocked off the ashes with his little finger, and held it down to the dog and said: “Have a light?”

But when the dog didnt do any thing my father seen what a jackus he had made of his self, and he got red in the face like he was a rose, and made a bow and said: “O, I beg your pardon.”

My father he is a Repubcan, jest like me, but Uncle Ned says Repubcans is engaged in a nofarious conspuracy for to over throw the liberty of the peoples and prevent him bein a post master.

One day my sisters young man, vvich hates dogs, he was goin along the street, and there was a woman and a little wooly dog. When he come up behind for to pass them the dog it dropped back and made a face at him, which made him awful mad, so he kicked it way up in the air, like it was a bird, and it sang like eagles as it flew. The woman surveyed its flight with horrify, and when it come down on the other side the street she turned around for to sass some body, but my sisters young man he was mighty absorbed in a news paper. But the woman she said: “You aint no gentle man!”

He looked up, awful innocent and real hurt, and said: “Why not?”

Then the woman she hestated and stamered and blushed, but bime by said: “Because you read news papers in the public street, and that isnt good manners.”

So he folded the paper real careful up and put it in his pocket and said: “I beg your pardon, madam, I was only but jest glancin at the semi annual report of the Society for Entertainin Heavenly Visitants When They Light on this Mundane Sphere, cause I am the presider of it. I think I jest now saw one of them fellers light right over there. I go for to seek my duty.”

Then he crossed to the other side of the street, where the wooly dog had come down in the weeds and was lost to view, and the woman she said she never in all her life!

But if he would kick Bildad, thats our new dog, Bildad would rend him limb from limb, for Bil he is the king of beasts, and is give dominion over every creepy thing.

Dogs live to a green old age and are much esteemed, but hogs waller, and Mister Pitchel, which is the preacher, he prays and takes up a colection. And thats why the Bible it says be of good cheer, for ye shall all be casted into the lake of fire and brim stone.

One day a womans dog it bit a tramp and she said: “Poor feller, Ime so sorry my dog et you.”

The tramp he said: “Thats all right, lady, I et his brother.”

When a dog waggles his tail, that makes him happy, but when a man is happy he shakes hands and stomps on his hat. Every boy ought to have a dog, cause boys are masculine, but girls are efemeral.

There was a man had a dog which was a biter, the dog was, and one day it bit the butcher which brought the meat. So when the butcher come with the meat next day he brought along a ox liver and threw it to the dog and said: “You eat that and let honest folks be.”

But the liver was so bad the dog wouldnt eat it and slank into its kennel and the butch he went away. Bime by the man which had the dogs wife she come out for to feed the chickens and she see the liver. So she called the man which had the dog, and rang her hands and said: “O Jacob, some thing awful has happened!”

The man which had the dog he could smell the liver, and he said: “It is a happenin now.”

But his wife she weeped and said the dog had tore the butcher every little tiny bit up. Then the dog sticked its head out of the kennel and waggled its ear, much as to say: “You dont see no signs of a streggle, do you?”

Then the butch he come back along the road, and the woman she see him. She was furious mad and she said to her husband: “Jacob Brown, if you cant think of nuthing better to do than harrow your wifes feelins up mornin, noon and night, jest for to go and tell it to your low drinkard friends, I am a goin home to my mother.”

Uncle Ned he says they are all jest like that, but my sisters young man says she is different. He says the yuman eye is the mirror of the soul and when he looks in to hern he sees a holy angel. Then she is happy.

The colly is a dog of great inteligence and folds up the sheeps, but when the ole ram shakes his head and stomps his feets the colly says: “I guess I will knock off work now, for I have got the wobbles real bad.”

Then the sheepherd he kicks the colly, and the ole ram he buts the sheepherd, and the little labms they gambol on the game.

A man in Indy he lived in a lonely cabin in the jingle, and one dark night he was woke up by a awful poundin on his door and loud calls for help. When he opened the door a feller he jumped in and closed it and held it fast and hollered: “Keep him out, keep him out!”

The house man he lit a candle, and said what under the sun, and goodness gracious, and for the lands sake, (and whats up?

The scary feller he said: “Its a tagger, thats whats up! He was a lurkin around your door, and spranged at my throat, but I clutchcd him and flang him afar. Jest look at the fur which I tored out of him!”

The house feller he looked real close, and then he said, the house feller did: “My friend, that is wool off of my pet lam.”

The other chap spoke up and said: “Thats jest it, thats jest it! I renched it out of the taggers teeths. You better go out to once and rub some hair restorer on to your gum dasted lam."

Then he said good night and went away fearless in to the jingle.

Mister Pitchel, thats the preacher, he says a naughty boy tied a tin can to a dogs tail and the dog it ran through a Sunday school, in at one door and out at a other, howlin like its heart was broke, and the boys all jumped up and hollered hooray! Then Mister Pitchel he spoke up and said: "My children, it is wicked for to cheer, cause the boy which done that will come to a bad end."

Then a old deacon he said: "I guess thats so, but it looks like the dog would get there first."

Uncle Ned he said: "Johnny, when the dox hoond was created it was a roly poly feller, like a foot ball. One day Adam he told it for to go and round up the rhi nosey rose, and the hi potamus, and the beasts of the field, and the fools of the air, and the fishes of the sea, and bring them in for to be give their names. And Adam he added: 'Dont be long about it.'

"But the dox, which was lazy, said to itself: 'lie be as long as I please.'

"Adam over heard it, and called the dox back and said: 'On the contrary, you will be as long as I please.'

"Then the dox hoond it begun for to shrink at the equater and grow at the poles, and bime by it was as it is saw to-day, a towerin horizontle monument to the sin of dissobedience."

Mister Gipple he was a missionnary preacher in Madgigasker, and one time it was Sunday. Mister Gipple is a good man and he said he would go to church. So he went, and there was ten thousand hundred natif niggers, all worshipin a big wood idol, which was the ugliest thing he ever seen. Mister Gipple he was just a goin for to tell them it was wicked to worship sech a homely god, when he see his big yellow stump tail bull dog walk into the church and sit down longside the idol and look his worst. Then the king of the natif niggers he come over to Mister Gipple and nudged him and said: "See here, you ungrateful feller, I been mighty nice to you, and give you a dozen wives, and made you a duke, and let you wear a pecox feather, and havnt threw up your color to you, nor et you. But there cant be only but jest one religion here, and if you dont take that gum dasted god of yourn out of this diocese lie cut his ears off!"

I asked Uncle Ned why dogs has a tail, and he said, Uncle Ned did: "The first one, which was created in six days, hadnt one. It was a bull dog, like the one that Mister Gipple has told you of. One day Adam met the bull dog and said, mighty polite; 'Good mornm.'

"The bull said: 'Good mornin your self, I am glad to see you.'

"Adam said: 'You dont look it, you are the maddest lookin feller which I ever met. Why dont you smile?'

"So the bull dog braced his self against a tree and drew a deep breathe and smiled. Johnny, if you have ever had the bad luck for to see a bull dog smile I neednt dwell on that painful perform. Adam he jumped back out of range and said: 'Is that the best that you can do?'

"The bull he answered: 'Yessir, but I could do better if I had more teeths.'

"Adam said: 'I guess there aint any more.'

"Then he thought a while, and bime by said: 'Ole man, if you will promise not to smile any more only but jest when you are furious mad I will give you some thing for to xpress your lighter emotions with and draw the observers atention away from where you look like you have a grouch.'

"The dog said it was a whack and Adam give him a tail for to waggle when feelin good. But mostly man kind believes the tail is lying, and cuts it off."

Taggers is cats and birds is reptiles, but the dog is a manual and brings forth his young alive.

THE PIG

PIGS is from ancient times. When a pig is fed it slobbers. But my father he says that when you are a going to be killed in the fall of the year whats the use of bein a gentleman jest for such a little time? Some pigs which go to fairs are so fat that you cant tell which is the head till you set down a bucket of slops, and then the end which swings around and points at it like a campus, that is it.

One time a feller was drivin a pig through our town with a string tied to one of its hind feets. The feller fastened the string to a telegraph pole and went in a saloon for to get some beer, and Jack Brily he let the pig loose and tied a smoked ham in its place. When the feller come out he untied the string from the telegraph pole and wound it around his wrist, and then he looked in the weeds for his pig. He looked at the ham, and then he looked up at the telgraph wire, and then he said: “Lectricity is gum dasted fire! Ide jest like to get my hands on to the man which sent that last dispatch!”

One day a boy which went in a butcher shop had busted a button off his jacket and was playin with it. He snapt it in some sossage meat and then he didnt dare to ask for it out. Next day the boys father was to the butchers house for dinner and they had sossage, cause the butcher he knew the boys father was crazy fond of it, but the boys father he got the brass button in his mouth. He took it out and looked at it a long time, and then he said: “Excuse me, but where did you get the pig which this sausage is made out of?”

The butch he said: *il* I disremember.” Then the man he weeped and said, a other time: “Excuse me, but I guess you got the wrong pig by the ear and have chopt up my little Charley.”

The butch he was astonish, but he thought the man was crazy and must be yumored, so he said, the butch did: ‘Thats a fact, but it was a mistake, and if you wont say nothing about it I will give you a other boy.”

The man he brightend up and said: “Thats pretty fair, but excuse me, fore we talk business I will jest help my self to a other plate of this one.”

Big pigs is hogs and the she one is a sow, but if I was a hog Ide look a little higher for a wife, cause the Bible it says they shall be one flesh.

Mister Gipple which was one time a missionary preacher in Afca, he said: “Johnny, di ever tell you about Mumboogla?”

I said no he didnt, and he said: “Mumboogla has ten thousand hundred folks and is noted for its king, which is the fattest and blackest in the world. When I went there for to spread the light the king he sent for me and said: (What new fangle religion is this which you are a preachin?’

“I xpounded the livin faith to him a long while and he listened mighty polite, but when I had got done he spoke up and said, the king did: ‘If you had come last week I would have made all my peoples be Christians, but it is too late, for the scales have fell from our eyes and we are now worshipers of the Ever Lastin Truth!’

“Then the king called his high priest and said: ‘Take this feller and show him the Ever Lastin Truth.’

“So the high he took me and shaved my head and washed me with rose water and anointed my whiskers with oil of hummin birds and put a nice new breech cloth on me and led me to the temple. Then he told me for to crawl on the stomach of my belly under a star spangle curtain, and there in the dim religious light of tallow candles held by 3 other priests was the Ever Lastin Truth! Johnny, it was jest a great big, shovel nose, screw tail, razor back Arkansaw hog!

“I never felt so insulted in my life, but the Bible it says blessed are the meek, for they shall inhabit the earth. I arose my self up to my full statute and said: ‘Is it possible that you heathens in your blindnesses worship that gum dasted reptile?’

“The high he said: ‘We sure do, cause it is a god.’

“I said how did he know it was, and he said: ‘Cause it is the only one which is in the world. One night last week it come ashore in the howlin of the storm and stampeeded a whole village. Then it put the kings army to flight and et a major general. Then it turned to and licked a rhi nosey rose, 3 taggers and a cracky dile, and after dessolatin 7 provinches with fire and sword, it moved on the capital with measured tread, and pausin a while for to scratch it self against the great Idol of Hope and Slaughter, it entered the Temple of Black Despair, and puttin both fore feets in the never failin fountain of maidens blood, drinked it every drop up. By all them signs, which my holy office enabled me to interpret, I knew it wasnt a yuman being, but a awful god, and the king done the rest.’

“Then, Johnny, I remembered that a ship from Peory, Illinoy, was over due at Mumbassy, 100 miles up the coast, and I knew that this monster was the sole surviver. But what was the use? What kind of a’ chance had Reason against Faith, in minds which had never knew the light of Revelation? So I felt called for to deliver some other land from errors chain, and buyin 9 camel loads of ephalents teeths with a pound of glass beads, I sailed for Indianas coral strand.”

But if Billy, thats my brother, had been there he would have slew the high priest and the fat king and weltered in their gore!

There was a pig and it was a rootin up a mans cabbage garden. The man which owned the cabbages he snook up behind the pig and catched it by its hind feets for to throw it over the fence. But the pig it got hold of a cabbage stalk with its mouth and wouldnt let go. The man which owned the cabbages said to his self: “What can I do? If I let go it will run over my flowers, and if I dont it will pull up the cabbage.”

Bime by the man which owned the cabbages wife she come out and see how things was, and women dont know nothing, so she got a bucket of scaldin hot water, and threw the water on the pig and the cabbage too, and it killed them both, they was so boiled. The man he let go and thought a while, and then he said to his wife: “Thank you, now jest bring the vinigar and mustard and help your self to what you see before you.”

I asked Uncle Ned if he knew what made pigs have a curly tail, and he said: “Its mighty singlar about that, Johnny, and I was jest a goin to tell you. One time in the Garden of Eden the pig it see a apple fall from a tree and made off for to eat it. But Adam he said: ‘Hold hard, there, my friend, apples is mighty bad medicine, cause I know how it is my self. If you eat it you will know good from bad, and your wife wont seem half so nice as she does now.’

“But the pig it wouldnt stop, so Adam catched it by the tail, but couldnt hold it, for the tail slicked out of his hand. So he twisted the tail round his finger and drew the pig back out of mortle peril, but when he pulled his finger out of the twist the tail stayed curly unto this day.

“And now, my boy, havin give you the sientificle explain of that phenomnon, I will tell you about the dove, cause doves is pigs too, when it comes to eatin. One day Adam was a walkin in the Garden and he see a dove sittin on a tree, a cooin real mornful, like it hadnt a friend in the world, and it hadnt, for there was lots of feathers under the tree, and Adam knew it had et its mate. But he said: ‘Poor little feller, where does it hurt you?’

“The dove it said: ‘I have lost my wife, thats where it hurts me.’

“Adam went on without sayin any more, but about a hour later he past that way again and seen the dove. It was all dubbled up, and its wings was crost on the stomach of its belly, mighty sick, and makin a doleful sounds, same as it did before. Adam he said: ‘What are you a grievin about now, have you lost your wife again?’

“The dove it said: ‘Worse than that. I have found her!’

“Then Adam he said: ‘You cantankrous little cuss! You shall moan and wail for ever and ever, particlarly when you are happy.’”

Doves is the symblem of peace cause they are fraid cats, and every livin thing can lick them easy. But the eagle he is a minister of the upper deep!

When the eag has et too much dove he has the colic too, and moans awful.

When Franky, thats the baby, has it mother gives him cat nip tea and ginger and pepmint and tobasco and pain killer and perry gorick and mustard and burnt brandy. Then the doctor he comes and gives him a emettic, real quick, and when it is all over he says: “Madam, your inteligence and promptness saved your childs life.”

And that is all which is known to sience about pigs.

KANGAROONS

THE wood chuck lives in a hole and is fat like he was butter, but the kangaroon leaps upon the fo and rends him lim from liml Chucks is mammals but the kang is a grass hopper and moves in a mysterious way. The she one has a pocket on her belly and puts every thing in it which dont belong to her. One time a kang which was a show she got out of the cage and stole some black smith tools and hid them in her pouch. When she was put back in the cage the black smith come and told the show man that some gum dasted thief had stole his kit. The show man he knew how it was, and went in the kangs cage and took out his knife and made believe to rip her open. Then he put his arm in her pouch and pulled out a hammer and a tongs and some other things, and said: “Is them youm?”

The black he was a stonish. He looked a while at the tools and then he looked a while at the kang, which was eatin a wisp of hay, real peaceful and happy, and then he looked at the show man, and bime be he said: “No, you gam doodled hipnotist, thems opticle ilusions, but mine was real, sure enough, flesh and blood tools.”

The show man he said: “Is that so? Then I guess we better go and open the ostridge.”

But the black he was mad and left the sceene with slow and stately tread.

Now lie tell you a other, which Uncle Ned told me. A scientificle feller went to the zoo and seen a kang which was out of doors. He looked at it a long time and then he said to a keeper, the scientificle feller did: “You got a jewel here, cause it is a xtinct specie, which I cant rightly name off hand. Of course it cant walk with such legs as them, and it may be what the Scriptures call a creepin thing.” The keeper he said: “Maybe it will help you identify him if I tell you his name is Rickoshay. Make a effort, Rick, and creep for the gentman.”

Then the show man he whacked the roon on the tail with his stick, and the roon it went away like it was shot out of a gun and in a half dozen leaps was lost to view in a long cloud of dust. Then the other feller he shooked his head, real wise, and said: “Once more has Science demstrated the falibility of the Scriptures and over threw Religion.”

A traveler in the torpid zone, where the kangaroon is to home, he see one sittin by the road side on its haunches, and its fore paws was hangin down on its breast like a little dogs which has been taught to beg. The traveler had a kind heart and he said: “Here you poor hungry thing, what ever you are, take a biscit.”

But when he threw the biscit the kang it jumpt like lightnin a awful distance, and when it had lit it looked back and twinkled its ears, much as to say: “Never touched me I”

The traveler he took out his note book and wrote: “This country is subject to great convulshions of nature, which cause some of the most sudden and remarkble up heavels known to science and baffles the generous instinckts of the yuman heart.”

But my sisters young man, which told me the story, he says the greatest up heavle known to science is when the hi potamus rises from his beauty sleep and salutes the dawn.

The old he kangaroon is a stag and the she feller is a duck bill and the little ones is katy dids, and thats why I say variety is the staff of life. The kangs tail is the biggest in the world and is highly respected for soup, but Jack Brily, which is the wicked sailor, says give him plum duff and a spankin breeze!

Jack says he was one time ship wreck on a island, and was caught by some native niggers which took him before their king and said: “If you please, here is one of them gods which is some times washed ashore when the wind is west.”

The king he loocked at Jack a while, and bime by he said: “Take him out and lick him till he gives us good weather for the coco nuts.”

Jack he spoke up and said, Jack did: “I aint that kind of god. The one which could rule the weather was et by a shark jest fore he reached the land. Ime the feller wihich bestows good government.”

The king said: “Then we havnt no use for you, cause we are mighty well off that way.”

But one of the natif niggers he said: “I dont know about that. I guess we better lick him any how and see what comes of it.”

Jack he said: “Never mind about the lickin, I will waive all pomp and ceremony and give you good govment any how if you do as I say, jest like they have in America, where I am worshipt the hardest. What kind of a king is that feller?”

The Prime Minister he said he was a mighty good one, cause he had been kingin all his life.

Jack he said: “Then what you need is rotasion in office. Turn him out to once and put in a new man which nearly one half the peoples have said they didnt want.”

The natifs said there wasnt any sech man, cause when ever a bad man was seen he was took up and skinned alive. Jack he thought a while, and bime by he said: “Got any of them skins?”

They said they guessed the last one took was in the rogues galery, and Jack said: “Stuff it and make it Presdent, and you will have liberty.”

A nigger he spoke up and said: “We have liberty, what is a Presdent?”

Jest then a other nigger come up, with a grip sack in his hand, and he said: “Where I — come from we have a Presdent, what is liberty?”

Then Jack walked over to that feller and shook his hand and said: “I am dog gone glad for to see you, old man, how was things goin when you left New York?”

Patrick Henry he said: “Give me liberty or treat me mighty well in jail,” but George Washington he waved his big sticker and shouted the bottle cry of fredoml

EPHALENTS

EPHALENTS is the biggest thing in the world, and it has got a proboscus with a hole through it. Some times the eph it gets its proboscus full of muddy water and blows it sky high and would put out a fire if there was one. The eph he has got a ear like the star spangle banner, but he cant wave it oer the home of the brave. Billy he says once a man put his head in a ephalents mouth, but their teeth is outside, so the feller which didnt was braver.

The ephs proboscus is its nose, and old Gaffer Peters has a long one too. One night old Gaffer was to our house and his shadow was on the wall, and Uncle Ned he said for him to sit still and he would draw his profile. So Uncle Ned drew it on the wall, and made the nose about a foot long, you never seen such a nose! My father he said: “What a strikin likeness, I would have knew it with my eyes shut,” but old Gaffer he didnt say nothing. But pretty soon he pulled out his hankchef and blew his nose, and said: “I got a mighty bad cold.”

Bime by he blew it again and said: “This cold of mine is a goin to carry me to my grave.”

After a while he blew it some more and said: “What a dredfull swell up nose a bad cold gives a man in this gum dasted climate !” Mister Gipple he says that one time in Mully Gatawny there was a battle be tween the wites and the natif niggers, and the wites licked. Then the wite general he said to his mahoot, which is the feller which rides a ephalent and jabs its ears: “Here, Kibosh, you take your quadped and ride over the battle field and count the slained and the wounded of the enemy, never mind ourn. I want to make a roarin good report to the Govment. You will have to be mighty careful or you will miss some of them.”

The mahoot he said: “Yessir, my eph is mighty sharp sighted with his feets.”

Late in the evenin the mahoot came a jabbin his eph up to head quarter, and the poor thing was so tired that it wobbled, and its feet and laigs was red, like they was painted. The gen he said: “Kibosh, I fear there was a accdent to some poor feller. Didnt I tell you that menaggery of yourn would have to be careful about steppin on the wounded?”

Ki he sed: “Yessir, so he was, sir, I dont think he missed a single nigger.”

The general, which was a good man, was awful shocked, and he wrote in his report: “I am sorry for to have to add that after the battle all of the wounded natifs, bein exposed to the open air, was atacked by a disease pecular to this climate, and phisicians was in vain. This scurge of the tropics is known as elphantiasis, or flatty degeneration of the chest. Make me a duke.”

But the Bible it says we are all worms of the dust where there is any dust for to be a worm of.

A other time Mister Gipple said: “Johnny, di ever tell you about the great king of Googum? I was in Googum when he died, and I asked the Prime Minister and the High Priest might I make a few remarks at the grave. The Prime said he guessed it would be all right if I wouldnt take up a colection, and the High said he would be mighty glad if I would relieve him of a sacred duty, cause he wanted to go a fishin. So on the day of the funeral I went to the grave. Johnny, you have frequent saw in the news papers a large audience discribed as ‘a sea of up turned faces.’ It was that way there. But, Johnny, the up turned faces was all detatched from their respective bodies!

“Bime by the Prime came. I swallered my feel as well as I could and said: *i* I spose this is the custom of the country.’. *a* The Prime he said: ‘Yes, when the king dies we try for to make it a occasion of public sorry.’

“Then I said: ‘Where is my audience?’ “The Prime he said: ‘Ime him.’

“I said: ‘How about the mourners?’

“The Prime he said: ‘All them which we could catch are here, exceptin the public executor, which is tired and has gone home lie fetch him if you would like to make his acquaint.’

“I thought a while, then I said: ‘No, dont deprive him of his much needed rest. I met him in Illinoy.’

“Then the Prime looked at his watch and said: *i* It is time for you to begin the remarks.’

“Then I rose my self up to my full highness and looked him in the eye, like I was a eagle, and said: ‘The only remarks which I feel inspired for to make is that of all the gum dastcd galoots and cantankers that I ever met you are the head center, the xtreme limit, the farthest north! If I had had you over in New Jersey, where your cries couldnt be heard up at the mercy seat, Ide lambaste you til your unbelievin soul would quit its tennement of mud and fly to evils that it knows not of!’

“Then, Johnny, I departed out of that place of wrath and tears by leaps and bounds and came back to the land of the free, where a feller which behaves hisself neednt hold his head on with both hands, where the Repubcan party scatters peace and plenty of offices oer a smilin land, and where if the Presdent was to die every day of his life a other would be elected without sacrificial rites.”

But if the public xecutor would come for to cut my head off cause the king died I would cleave him into twain!

THE TOOTSY WOOTSY

UNCLE NED he said: “Johnny, you have wrote about all the other quadpeds which roam the plain, but I guess you have forgot the tootsy wootsy.”

I said what was it like, and Uncle Ned he said, Uncle Ned did: “It isnt like any thing which is on the earth, or in the heavens under the earth, or in the whisky and water which is all over the earth, but jest get your pencil and write what I say about it, for I have been in Pattigony and seen it in its natif wild.”

So Uncle Ned he lit his pipe and laid the blazin match real careful on Mose which is the cats back, which springed away like he was shot out of a gun, and said, Uncle Ned did: “The tootsy wootsy is found in many lands, for it is mighty audible and you cant miss it.”

I said: “Is it a animal, or a bird, or a fish, or only jest a inseck?”

Uncle Ned he said: “It is in a class by it self, though it is some like all them fellers, and snakes too. The color of the tootsy is unknown to science, for, as Shakspeare says, it is subdude to what it works in, which is mostly dirt. When it is washed with hydrate of soap it is fire red from xertion and howl. It is a domesticle beast, same as the hi potamus, and roars like distant thunder. You will naturally want to know what it lives on, and that is the most singlar thing, cause it hasnt got much teeth, as a general rule, yet it is a beast of prey. Every thing which it can catch goes in to its mouth, and it is frequent pizened.

“The tootsy wootsy doesnt live to a great age, like the ephalent, the turtle and the testator, but when 3 or 4 summers has past over its head it changes from a quaderped into a brat.”

I said what was brats, and he said: *li A* brat, my boy, is the frog of which the tootsy is the tad pole, or polly wog.”

Then I asked him did the toot drop its tail, like the wog, and he said: “I cant jest recollect whether it has a tail or not, but if it has I guess it better drop it, cause when it becomes a brat its mother, which is a great imitator of yuman being’s will wear it off with her palm.”

Then I said: “If I met a tootsy wootsy I would draw my big sword and cut its head off, and smash the spine of its back, and holler hooray!”

Uncle Ned he said: “Yes, I know you would, cause you are brave like soldiers, but jest now I guess you better go and wipe Frankys nose and slick him up a bit, poor little feller, cause his father is a comin home pretty soon, and we will give him the supprise of his life.”

So I washed Franky up, real nice and white, which howled, and Uncle Ned corned his hair. Bime by my father he come in, and while he was a takin off his over coat he see Franky and stopped with it half off. He looked a while and then he took the over coat the other half off and hung it up and came back and said: “That child looks quite a little like our Franky, doesnt it, Edard? Whose is he?”

GRASS HOPPERS

MISTER GIPPLE he says in Africa the natif niggers eats nothing only but just grass hoppers, and one time a nig he see a hopper sittin on a stone, with its feets pulled in, all ready for to jump. The natif nigger he smiled sad, like a hi potamus, and said: “How mournful to think that fellers which is like 2 brothers should distrust one a other jest cause I am a nigger, which has a black skin, how can I help that?”

But the hopper it wiggled one whisker, much as to say: “It isnt the color of your skin, old man, but the un neighborly way which you have of tuckin it out.”

Bildad, thats the new dog, was sick one day and et a blade of grass for to make hisself throw it up, but there was a hopper on the grass and before Bildad chewed it he noticed that some thing was the matter and he opened his mouth again and stood real still for to see what would happen, but the hopper it kept a jumpin in Bildads mouth. Then he started in and shook his head so fast you couldnt see it, but it was no use. Pretty soon he stopped to see if it was all right, but it wasnt. Then he got down on his knees and rubbed his hed on the ground, first on one side and then on the other, and my father he spoke up and said, fore he thought: “Look at that dog a stroppin his razor!”

The Bible it says awful things will happen to them which eats grass like Nebbicudnezer. I asked Jack Brily, which is the wicked sailor, what was the awfulest thing which ever happened to him. Jack he thought a while and then he said, Jack did:

“Johnny, a feller which his life is on the ocean wave has a lot of blood cuddling adventers that he hasnt got time for to classify accordin to their awfulness, and maybe I am mistook in thinkin that the one which I am about to relate is the limit, but it made me stop follerin the sea and stay home for to help my father in the meat shop.

“One time I was on a ship which was casted away, and I was the only man which wasnt drownded, cause I had stole the boat. The wind it blew me right toward a great wall of rock where I knew I would be smashed to frogments, but Provdence, which watches over good men, directed the boat into a cave, where the water was smooth. I couldnt row out and if I stayed there I would starve, so I jest pulled further in. But the cave didnt have no end, and it was pitch dark. I kept on rowing for many days, maybe, till I see a light, and bime by I came out into a open sea again. The wall of rock was jest like it was on the other side where I went in, and seein that I couldnt climb it I steered for a island which I seen in the offing, and there I set my feets on tera firmly once more.

“After offerin up thanks to the god of that country and makin a bountiful repast off a dead fish which lay on the beach describin itself with great loquacity in the language of flowers, I started inland for to find the natif niggers, but pretty soon I seen a sailor which had sea weed in his hair and eyes like them of the fish which I had et. I said: ‘Hello, shipmate, what country is this?’

“The feller he stared at me a long time out of his fish eyes, real spooky, and bime by he said: ‘This is the Land of Drownded Sailors.’

“Then I seen about a thousand million drownded sailors which I hadnt noticed, some like him and some worse. They all had sea weed in their hair and eyes like hisn, but some was black and some was yellow and some was white and some was French, and they all wore the clothes they was drownded in. They didnt say much, but they spoke in every tongue which is known to man, and Dutch too. Some was a playin cards, and some was a splicin ropes, and some was makin believe to scrub the decks, and some was a tattooin the others arms, and some was a carvin pictures on walrus teeths, and some was a fightin mity solemn to inattentive audiences, and every thing which sailor men do for to pass the time. When they see me they all knocked off work and arose up as one man and crowded around me and pointed their fingers at me, unmovin, like I was a show! And that is the awfulest thing which has ever befel me except bein born.”

I asked Jack what did he do for to escape. Just then Uncle Ned, which had come in and heard the last part of the story, he spoke up and said, Uncle Ned did: “Johnny, you will have to excuse the witness, for he cant be compelled to say any thing which will disgrace him, so I will jest answer that question my own self. He escaped from them terrible fellers by lyin down and sleepin it off.”

DOMESTICAL HENS

HENS is good to eat, but not the old he ones, which is a fighter. They lay eggs and cackle. Some boys can cackle as good as a hen, but no eggs. Hens dont lay eggs on Sunday, but the minister he preaches. Billy says if the hens didnt lay eggs they would bust and if the minister didnt preach he would be sick. Our old hen she wanted for to set, but father he didnt, so he boiled a egg real hot and laid it in her nest. She went and straddled it and looked up at father like he was a fool. Then she shaked her self together and shut up her eyes and settled down to her work, much as to say: "You see I am a havin my way about this thing."

But pretty soon she gave a awful squok and jumped up and run round and round, like her head was cut off and she couldnt see her way. After that she was so afraid of eggs that when she couldnt help layin one she would run and fly, and some times the egg was lain in one place and some times it wasnt. One time she laid it on the roof of the church and it rolled off and busted on a toomb stone close to where my father stood a talkin to old Gaffer Peters. Old Gaffer he looked up to the weather cock on the steeple and shook his head and said: "Ive been agin that dam thing from the first." Mister Gipple he says a boy found some owl eggs and put them under a settin hen, cause they wasnt good for to suck. When they was hatched the old hen was mighty proud of them, like my mother is of Franky, thats the baby, but Mary, thats the house maid, she likes the butcher boy which brings the meat. One day the old rooster he said to the old hen: "Did you ever take notice what eyes them chicks of yourn has?"

The old hen she said: "Yes, they look so wise I am afraid they arent long for this world, poor darlings."

The old rooster he shook his head and went away, but a other day he come back and said: "Them gum dasted chickens of yourn, which aint long for this world, are playin the old Nick while they stay. They jest now piled on to the yellow leg pullet and et her up in a minute, poor darlings."

The hen she thought a while, and then she said: "Thats a mighty good disposition for them to have, for they will protect me from owls."

Then a other hen she spoke up and said: "Judgin from the looks of some folkses chicks I guess they aint so fraid of owls as they make believe."

But if I couldnt tell a better story than that I would teach school.

One day a feller a plantin potatoes see a hawk a sittin on a hens nest and there was lots of feathers around, like a pillow had broke open. The feller he looked at the hawk a while, and then he said: “Well, lie be gam doodled! You will make a nice mother for a brood of young chickens, wont you?” The hawk he said: “Well, what kind of a mother be you for a field of new potatoes?” Mister Jonnice, which has the wood leg, he says it was mighty thoughtful in the Creator to provide chickens for the hawks, but Uncle Ned he says it wasnt quite so thoughtful in him to provide hawks for the chickens. One night when Mister Jonnice stayed to our house he hung his wood leg on the knob of his bed room door, out side, for to have fun with Mary, thats the house maid, cause his wood leg looks just like it was a meat one, only whiter. In the morning Mary she came to my mother and said: “O, if you please, mam, I guess the gent which slept in the spare room cant get his door open, cause he is a comin out through the key hole.”

A other time when Mister Jonnice was to our house Missis Doppy was here too, which has got the red head, you never seen any thing so red. When she had gone home Mister Jonnice he said: “If I was that womans husband Ide use her head for the parlor fier.” Then Missy, thats my sister, she spoke up and said: “I suppose you would use your leg for a back log.”

One day Missis Doppy was here and stayed a long time, and bime by she went in my mothers bed room and was a combin her hair. Uncle Ned past the door and looked in, and then he came down stairs and said: “I guess she is a firin up to be off, I seen her a rakin out the cinders.”

Mister Pitchel, thats the preacher, he says it is wicked to make fun of folkses miss fortunes, cause it is all for some wise purpose, and Uncle Ned he says yes, and Missis Doppys head is a mighty conspicus instance and a shiny xample.

Hens is some time stole, and one time some wicked fellers which was in jail they kept a breakin out at night and stealin hens. So the man which kept the jail he said he would put a stop to that, and he had a other coat of paint put on the jail for to make it stronger. But the painter had put salt in the paint and the cows licked it off and the fellers broke out a again and stole more hens. That made the jail man mad and he said: “This aint no place for thiefs, and you fellers has got to behave your selfs or lie put you out of here and you will have to rustle round for your livin the best way you can.”

Roosters crow, but when there isnt any rooster the old hen she crows for to teach the little fellers how. But such crowinl — just like a sufferget hollerin hip, hip, hooray! My father he said to Mister Gipple, my father did: “I guess you and Johnnys Uncle Edard is mighty hard worked a tryin to see which can tell him the biggest lie. Maybe you better give your selfs a good long rest.” Mister Gipple he thought a while and then he said: “May I tell him jest one about my marriage in Africa, cause it is true?”

My father he said: “O, you be dratted, I have knew Missis Gip ever since she was a little feller, and I know you married her in Illinoy.”

Mister Gipple said: “I hope to die if it isnt so, jest as I said.”

Then my father he said: “All right, you may tell him, but I dont want to hear it, so lie read this news paper.”

So Mister Gipple told me for to come closer, so as not to interupt a man which was readin, and father he took out his spetacles and wiped them real careful, and put them on his nose, and begun for to read the paper just like he had never saw a other paper, only but just that one. Then Mister Gipple he said: *li* Johnny, one time while I was a missionary preacher in Africa I was mighty lonely and said to the king of the natif niggers: ‘All you fellers is married, but I havnt got any, cause she is in Illinoy. Spose you let me have a wife too.’

“The king he said: ‘You aint nothing but a gum dasted white man, but you have been pretty decent about givin me rum and tobacco and showin me how to save my soul, so lie give you all the wives that you can eat.’

“I thanked him and went to my shack and lay down for to dream of conjuggle happiness, but about mid night I was awoke by a awful yellin and hammerin on gongs, and when I looked out the whole horizon was lit up with bon fires and I could see all the natif niggers a dancin and a carryin on like they was crazy drunk.

“Next mornin I went to the king and asked him what was the trouble, and he said, the king did: ‘No trouble at all, the high priest he married you last night and my loyal subjects was a cellebratin the nupitals. Every thing has been done proper, acordin to your station in life and you now have wives enough for to last a long time if you are economicle. There they are.’ — .

“Johnny, that bad man pointed to a cage of monkeys! Yes, my boy, they had made a gam doodled poligamer of me by marryin me to a lot of long tail, rib nose, jabberin apes and baboons. And me a piller of the Methody church in good standin! Johnny, my domestical life was unhappy, for I dont like monkey any way which it can be cooked.”

Then my father he spoke up and said: “What did you do with them?”

Mister Gipple he said: “Hello! aint there any news in that paper? I thought you was a great reader, which makes a man mighty wise. But if you want to know, I got a divorce on the ground of failure to provide.”

But if me and Billy was married to monkeys we would cumber the earth with heaps of slain, for the Constution it says man and wife are one flesh, which is grass.

THE BUFLO

THE„buf is found in all the big eastern cities. The she ones is called a cow cause she bellows loud and shrill, but the little one he is a sucker. The buflo is a natif of Omaha, but the peoples there they said: “O, whats the use, for the mooley cow is more milky and cant gore.”

The buf has got a mane like a lions mane, but when he springs onto his prey and wrenches it from the earth the sheeps they laughf and say they could have done that thir own selfs.

One time some soldiers they lay down in the prairie for to sleep. Their guide was a young feller which wore 3 revolvers and a big boy knife and had long yellow hair. In the middle of the night he was heard to holler like he was cats, cause some bufs had strayed in to camp for to eat grass, and thats what made the guide wish his self back in Boston. The captain of the soldiers he asked him what was up, and the guide said: “Some bodys gum dasted cow took me by the hair and swang me round till it pulled out, thats whats up!”

The captain he said: “Well, what you kickin about? Animals which pulls up grass always has to shake the dirt off the roots, don’t they?”

My sisters young man he says once there was a buf in the Zoo, and a Tnjin came for to see him. The buf he looked at the Injin, too, and bime by he said, the buf did: “How is the dusky chieftain of the Galoots, and how does it feel to wear the stopipe hat and frock coat of the Paleface?”

The Injin he thought a while, and then he said: “If me and you was to home you would have some thing else to think about than the spring styles of gents does.”

The buf he sighed and said: “The words of the great Swaller-His-Blanket brings back the light of other days most peculiar, the days when we roamed the plain together and you was always a little ahead.”

The Injin spoke up and said: “Yes, events did move pretty rapid them days, but it wasnt real progress like 20 dollars a week, for to do a scalp dance in a show.”

The buf he wank his eye and said: “Ime fairly comfortable too, only but jest when I have a pain in the stomach of my belly from too much clover.”

But if I was a buflo I rather be a rain deer and gallop oer the snow beneath the aurory boryalis, hooray!

Uncle Ned he said:”Johnny, do you know how Mister Jonnice, which has the wood leg, lost his meat one?”

I — said: “Yessir, it was bit off by a cracky dile, and pulled out by a shark, and amptated for to cure the go out, and flang off when he ran after the fleein enemies at Gettysburg.” Uncle Ned he said: “My boy, you have been listenin to him instead of consultin the best authoritys. Mister Jonnice was one time huntin bufloes in Wyoming, and he had slottered so many he was tired, so he lay down on a rock for to rest. Pretty soon a kioty came along, and the ki showed his teeths and said, ironicle: ‘Lets hunt together.’

“Mister Jonnice said: ‘Ide like to, but the fact is Ime about to go away, a leavin you so far behind that we cant.’

“Then Mister Jonnice he departed, mighty awkward but surprisin fast, and disapeared over the horizon. The ki he looked a while, and then he said: ‘All right, if I cant get what I want lie take what I can get, and a half of a loaf is better than nothing to eat.’

“So the ki it et Mister Jonnices leg every little tiny bit up.

“You see, Johnny, when the convsation began the leg was asleep, and Mister Jonnice hadnt time for to wake it up, but bein a brave man he had hopped away without it.”

;But the zeebry is the swiftest thing which is in the world, and the hi potamus roars like he was a brigdier general, and then the rhi nosey rose winks his eye, much as to say: “Hark, I hear a angel sing.”

SHEEPS

THE he sheep is a ram and the she is a you and the little feller is lambs. Lambs is playful, and when the sun is shinin warm in the spring they turn out and have a stunnin good time, and thats why The Bible it says for to go it while you are young. When a sheep has been sheared it doesnt look very civilized, more like it was sick. Mister Gipple says one time a scientifical feller he surprised a young you which had been sheared the first time, and she blushed so rosy that he wrote to the presdent of his college: “I have discovered a new specie of red dog, which I have named *Cants rubicutis,* make me a professor of animals, with a salary of one thousand hundred dollars a year and board.” But my sister she can turn real red too when I tell her that bitin her young man isnt fair play.

A old you she had a labm, and one day she was sheared. When the labm it came to her for to get its dinner it stopped and looked at her a while, and then it backed away and made a bow, much as to say: “I beg your pardon, I didnt know you was that way. I will wait.”

Uncle Ned he said to my sister: “Missy, I have some mighty bad news for you, but you must brace up and try for to bear it. Me and Mister Gipple was out in the country yester day, and we caught your young man eatin a dead sheep.”

Missy she most fainted, and she said: “You wicked man, it isnt so, where was it?” Then Uncle Ned he said, Uncle Ned did: *a* It was in the dining room of a way side inn.”

I never have see such a furious girl like Missy was, but Uncle Ned he says every woman is a fo to the truth and I better be ware how I tell it.

Dead sheeps is mutton, but canibles eat their selves and is happy. When Jack Brily was casted a way on a island he seen 2 canibles meet, and one said to the other how did he do, and the other he said: “O, Ime jest fine — fit for to set before a king.”

A other time Jack was ship wreck, and him and the captain was threw on a bare rock, where they came near starvin to death. So they drawed lots to see which one should be et by the other, and the captain he lost. Then he said, the captain did: ‘Well, my man, you didnt think me and you would ever be mess mates, did you?”

Jack he said: “No sir, I sure didnt expect sech a honor as to meet you at dinner, and the worst of it is that I havnt my ditty bag and cant slick my self up a bit.”

There was a old ram which licked all the other rams which are in the world, so one day a feller which the old ram had licked hisn he see him comin, and he took a big lookin glass, the feller did, and set it up on the river bank long side the road. The ram he see it and shook his head and said: “You gum dasted homely galoot, if you think you can hide behind that picture frame you are mistook.”

So he backed off and let drive like he was shot out of a cannon and busted through the lookin glass and went down in to the river. Bime by he was washed a shore and stood up on his feets with the cold water a runnin out of his wool, like he was a spunge. Then he shet up his eyes for to think, cause he was all mixed up in his mind, and bime by he said, real thoughtful: “Braveness is the soldiers hope. I wont never again hide behind a picture frame for to sass a other feller which is goin a long the road a mindin his own business.”

Missis Doppy she says her little Sammy is a labm, but I dont see no wool, nothing only but just dirt. One day Sammy tore his trousers, which was brown, and she put a blue patch on the place. Pretty soon after she and him was to our house, and my father he said: “Missis Doppy, that is a mighty fine boy of yourn.”

Missis Doppy was real pleased, and she said: “Yes, indeed, he is just a little angel right down from Heaven.”

My father he smoked his pipe in silents for a while, then he said: “That little angel of yourn seems to have brought a piece of the sky down with him.”

You never seen such a furious woman as Missis Doppy was in your life, and Billy didnt in hisn, but the Bible it says we shouldnt ever let our hungry passions arise, cause them which takes up the sword shall be for ever exalted.

Labms is so famous that they have statutes in all the grave yards, just like soldiers in Washington, and now I will tell you a story which my sisters young man told me.

One time General Grant, which was the greatest man in the world, was a bein showed the statutes which adorn the city of Washinton, and he said, General Grant did: “I never seen such a lot of gam doodled scare crows!” Then a good man which was a preacher he spoke up and said: “General, you oughtnt to swear, cause the wicked shall be casted in to Hell., The General he said: “Thank you, I shouldnt mind that so very much, but I sure dont want to be casted in to bronze.”

Statutes is made by sculptors, and thats why I say every creepin thing brings 4th after its own kind and multiplies excessive.

DUCKS

I SAID did Uncle Ned know what makes water run off a ducks back, and he said: “Yes, my boy, thats about the only thing that I am prepaired for to take a examnation on with out cribbin from the tex book. One time in the garden of Eden, Adam, which was takin home a bucket of coal oil, see the frog a sittin a sleep in the grass, and then he see the duck. The duck it snook up and pecked the frog real cruel on the spine of its back. If you catch a frog you will see the hump where its back was broke.

“Adam he said: ‘You gum dasted beast of the field, why did you do that?’

“The duck tost its head contemptible and sed: ‘Cause he makes me tired, he is so disgustin clean, always takin a bath.’

“Adam said: ‘Dont you ever take a bath your own self?’

“The duck it said: ‘No, I dont, cause cleanity is only but jest a habit, and water is pizen.’

“That made Adam so mad that he flang the wKole bucket of oil on the duck, which smelt awful and has been aquaticle ever since. It swims and dives and splashes all the life long Hay for to wash the oil off, but the water wont take hold.”

I said why didnt the ducks wash their selfs with soap, but Uncle Ned he shook his head real mournful and said: “No, no, I have suggested that reform to them many a time and oft, but the march of mind is mighty slow in this world and, so far, they wont do any thing only but just eat the soap.”

Ducks quack and the eagle he screams, and the high eany it laughfs when there isnt any thing funny, the cammel he snorts out of his nose and Franky, thats the baby, he gets soap in his eye and is like the battles roar! Frankys eyes is blue, but my sisters young mans is gray, and when she looks into hisn he looks into hern. And thats why I say how wondful are the works of Provdencel One day when him and her was to the picture gaily she seen one which she liked real well and she said: “Isnt that a duck of a paintin?”

Then he said: “Yes, indeed, I seen the other side of it. It is a canvas back.”

But Uncle Ned says if he couldnt make better jokes than that he would write for the cornicle papers and defy deteckSon!

Mister Jonnice, which has the wood leg, he says one time he went to New Jersey for to be an editor of a cornicle paper, and the second day a feller came in the office, wearin a long black coat and lookin like his heart was broke. He said good mornin mighty solemn and Mister Jonnice he said: “Welcome to the Temple of Meriment, cheer up and have a chair, hows buisness?”

The feller he said: “That depends a good deal on you.”

Mister Jonnice he spoke up a other time and said: “All right, lie go home and ring the neck of my little girl and pizen my wife and discumbowel my father.”

The sollemn feller said: “You fill me with horrible! I beg you for to pawse and consider what a wicked thing that would be to do.”

Then Mister Jonnice he thought a while and bime by he said, soft and low: “Yes, I guess maybe it might be looked at that way, and I wouldnt do sech things only but for to help you.”

The feller he looked like he didnt under stand, then he said, the feller did: “Excuse me if I seem hard for to please, but how would them actions help me?”

Mister Jonnice said: “Why, aint you a a under taker?”

The feller he looked mournfuller than ever and said: “Alas, no, I am Rollickin Ralf, your chief contributer. God willin, me and you will make the Temple resound with gle.” The Bible it says thou shall not kill, cause them which is killed they shall be casted in to a lake of milk and honey, where the worm tieth a knot and the fire is not quenched.

THE NUMPORAUCUS

MISTER GIPPLE he said:

"Johnny, di ever tell you about the numporaucus?"

I said he didnt, and then he said: "The nump is by many considered the king of beasts, for its roar is like the voice of doom, and when it is heard at midnights holy hour the heathen in his blindness says he must put up a lightnin rod first thing in the mornin. But when the day dawns bright and fair like a angels face he knows it was only just the nump a talkin in his sleep. Johnny, as you justly say, the cracky dile is a microbe and the skin of the rhi nosey rose isnt made to measure, but the nump is a one legger and skowers the plane like a thing of life."

I said where was it found, and he said, Mister Gipple did: "There is a dispute about that among scientificle fellers, cause no body which has found a nump has come back for to tell the tale. Some believes it to inhabbit the equator, but others say it is a scallywag. The one which I seen was in New Jersey, where I was a missonary to the natif niggers. One day I catched a natif and was a lickin him for bowin down to wood and stone, when a big black shadow fel a thwort the scene of spiritual contversy. With a few well choosen words I brought the services to a close and looked up for to pronounce the bennediction and there, between me and the noondy sun towered a giant numporaucus! It was as big as a house of the same size and its eye was as the full moon when lovers whisper their vows of ever lastingness.

"Johnny, I was mighty scary for a man which was married and had met the lightnin eye to eye quite frequent, and I couldnt think of a word to say. The nump it stood on its lonely leg and looked at me a while, mighty reticent, and then it stept forward and took my neck between its teeths and I knew no more! When consience returned I was in my own country, a runnin for office, to which I had the bad luck to be defeated by a over weening majority.

"The years rolled on and one day I read in the paper that on the polmy plains of New Jersey a skulleton had been found with its neck bit in 2! A natif niger which would carry to his grave the marks of his conversion to the Bible was asked what he knew about it. He wank his eye mighty mournful, much as to say he could tell a good deal more if he wanted to, and I guess he could, for he was a dandy talker and had arose to high distincktion in the church."

I asked Mister Gipple who the natif nigger was and he said: "Never mind that, Johnny, for it doesnt matter much. What worries me is who I am my own self."

But if me and Billy met a nump we would fall up on him with fire and sword and strech him dead up on the plain! The Bible it says to resist evil and it will fle as a bird, and thats why I say be up and doin, for the sluggerd goes to the ant and is bit.

Mister Gipple says that one time Mister Jonnice, which has the wood leg, was a sittin by the road side in the Cannible Island and a big natif nigger came a long with nothing on but a stopipe hat. The stumach of the natif niggers belly it stuck out be fore him, real round, and he was a drummin on it with his 2 hands, mighty cumftable. When he see Mister Jonnice he stopt and looked at him a while, and then he said: “Poor feller, you seem to have lost your laig.”

Mister Jonnice he spoke up and said: “Yessir, and you seem for to have found it and et it.”

My sisters young man says if he had a wood leg he would take it to a massadger and tell him to put some ginger in to it.

Ginger bread, nice and sticky is the stuff of life, and makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.

MOLES

UNCLE NED he said: “Johnny, you have pained me by your indifference to the mole. I can only lay it to your ignance, cause maybe you don’t know there is such a feller.”

Then I spoke up and said: “The mole is amphibious and lives in the ground. It hasent got any eyes, but its nose is like a awger, cause it can bore through the solid rock and come out on the other side and holler hooray! The fur of the mole is slick and shiny and makes good mufs. Girls wears mufs but boys is kings and can stand on their head. Girls is cry babys, and if I was a girl I rather be a fellers wife and roar like distant thunder.” Then Uncle Ned he said: “Johnny, I see that I was mistook. You are not ignant about moles, and you are mighty well informed about girls. My charge of indifference arose out of the fact that you never asked me why the mole doesnt come out of the ground for to bask in the light of day and survey mankind with comperhensive view. I should think a bright, scientificle boy like you would want to know that, same as to learn why the beaver has a flat tail, and how the cammle got his hunch and what makes the buttigoat have whiskers.”

I asked him why was it, and he said: “Thats what I knocked off work a plantin potatoes, to come in and tell you, for knowlidge is power.

“One time Adam he was a diggin post holes in the Garden of Eden, when the mole it come along and said good mornin, cause the mole it was created real sociable. Adam he was grouchy, cause Eve had sassed him, and he dident say any thing. Then the mole said: ‘If I was give dominion over ol the beasts of the field, as you be, I wouldnt be diggin holes, Ide make the woodchuck do it for me, which is more skillfle.’

“That made Adam furious, like he was a wet cat, and he said: ‘I dont want advice from any gun dasted squirel of the air.’ So he catched the mole and flang it in to the post hole which he had dugged, and said: ‘lie be gam doodled if I dont burry you alive for your impidence!’

“Then he begun for to fill up the hole, and the mole it spoke up real solemn and said: ‘Ime laid here in the shure and certain hope of a blessed resuraction.’

“But Adam he said: ‘That hope will be blasted. You shant ever arise from the dead till Gabrial blows his horn and eccho ansers from the hill.’

“And, Johnny, thats why the mole, which tils the soil real industrious, never comes up for to view the land scape oer.”

One day Billy he come home a holdin up a mole by the tail, which some boy had give him, and the mole it was a live.

When my mother she see him she said: “O you cruel, cruel boy! Throw it in the fire this minute!”

One Sunday Mister Pitchel, thats the preacher, he was to our house, and mother she read out of a paper about Doctor Tanner, which didnt eat any thing for 40 days, and she said, mother did: “Stuff and non sense, he would have died.”

Father he said: “I dont know about that Bears stay in hollow trees all winter and live by suckin their feets.”

Mister Pitchel he thought a while, and bime by he looked up at the ceilin a while, real sollemn, and then he said: “There was a greater than Docktor Tanner, and He fasted forty days and forty nights in the wildness. Does any of you know what it was which sustained Him?”

Then Billy he spoke up real quick and said: “Sucked his feets!”

THE GOFURIOUS

THE GOFURIOUS is the monarck of the mountains, and Uncle Ned he says its roar is like ocean on a western beach. The go rises with the lark, and when he shakes hisself the stars shoots madly from their spheres! But the rhi nosey rose looks up from his dinner and says: “Nothin doin.”

One day a rhi met a go and the go it said: “If I had such a potuberence on my nose like that Ide wear a vail.”

The rhi he thought a while and then he said, the rhi did: “Some folks has horns on their noses and some others is gum dasted iddiots, its ail a matter of taste. I know I aint beautifle for to look at, but this sticker of mine is mighty handy for to search the innards of the sick, and I guess you aint a feelin very well this mornin, are you?” Then the go it moved away and sed it thought maybe it better take a pill.

The gofurious is a natif of the equator, which it devastates from pole to pole! Its food is niggers, and it is the joy of its sweet young life to stain it plumadge with their gore! The she one is called a scow, but the little feller is a slob. The old he one has got three horns, one on its neck, and one on its back, and a little sharp one on its tail, and when it is poked it whacks this one in to the poke feller, which turns purple and swells up like he was a baloon and xplodes with a loud report.

Sheeps is camivories, and the tagger it is a mollusk, but the go has got a white belly and only but just one leg, which is like a blasted pine and defies the storm! Its lonely foot is like the talent of a eagle, and when it skowers the desert so much dust is threw up that the natif niggers cant see which way to run, so the go catches them and they perish in their pride. When the go sees a hi potamus it gnashes its teeths once, twice, thrice, and raises a protestin voice. The hi he says he guesses he knows his own business and aint a goin to knock off bein a hi potamus for any snouty galoot which roams the plain.’But the go envelps him in a cloud of dust and clasps him to its bosum, and when the weather clears up the hi is no more! Then the go it utters a long mournful wail, much as to say: “Alas, am I doomed never to know the pleashures of a peaceful life? Why am I cursed with a unsociable disposition?”

When my sisters young man had read about the go, and the hi, and evrything, he said: “Johnny, I wonder, O, I wonder how did them facts become known to you. Can it be possible that you inherit them from your gifted uncle?”

I said, “Yes, I did.” Then he said: “Well, well, well, who would have thought it? This is the worst case of trance mission which I have ever knew about. Yes, indeed, it beats the ever lastin Dutch !”

Some folkes bears false witness, but Uncle Ned he knows every thing which is in the world, and he is increddible.

THE RHI NOSEY ROSE

MY father he told me why didnt I write about the unicorn. I said I would, so I set down and wrote about its i horn, and how it had a mane like horses, and how it stood on its hind feets for to fight lions, and every thing I could think of, but when I come to its tail I said did it have a tassel. Then my father he said: “If you have got to the end of your subject why dont you stop?”

But my sisters young man says the unicorn is nothing only but just a rhi nosey rose. Pretty soon after that Uncle Ned he said: “Johnny, I know you are just dyin for to know something about the rhi nosey rose.” Then I spoke up and said: “The rhi nosey rose is the most powful beast which is known to man. He is found in the jingles of the Nile, but the feller which finds him is lost his own self, for ever and ever, amen. The rhi is a 4 legger and gamles oer the green with whirl wind speed to catch the natif nigger as he flies afar. But the travler meets him eye to eye and fels him to the plain and writes a book about it. The lion roars like distant thunder, the gorillys song is as the wind among the pines, the long lament of the hi potamus is mournful for to hear, and the harpsicord cracky dile sobs out his heart on the evenin blast, but the rhi nosey rose hasn’t a word to say. He is all buisness.”

Uncle Ned said: “My boy, you are eloquenter than preachin, and I have listened to your perioration with delight and profit cause I know that them gloing periods come straight from the heart of your sisters young man, which wrote them for you. Cherish him, Johnny, cherish him as the apple of your eye, for he is a realy genuine bombastic, but when it comes to rhi nosey roses he isnt in it with your uncle Edard, not by a heap! Frexample, can he tell you how the rhi came to have a horn on his nose? I trow not.”

I asked how it was, and he said: “When the distinguished naturaler which you have just quoted wrote about the lions roar, and the gorillys song, and the quiring of the flopdoodle, and so 4th, he was mighty close to a great discuvery, but he missed it pretty slick. One day in the Garden of Eden them fellers was a showin off their voices, and it made the rhi feel mighty lonely. So he said to Adam: “If you please, sir, Ide like for to be frightful my self.”

Adam said: “Well, you aint particlarly reassurin to them which has good eye sight, as you are, but come to me to-morrow and we will see what can be done.”

That night, while the rhi was a sleep, Adam made a big horn grow on the rhi, and when the rhi came next day he said, Adam did: “Now you can be just as alarmin to the blind as them other chaps. All you got to do is to blow your horn."

"Johnny, when you go to the zoo and see the rhi a liftin up his lip and twistin it round in such a awfle way dont you be afraid, cos he is only just a tryin for to blow his horn to beat the resoudin lion, put to shame the deafening hyena and parolyze with envy the hoo-hooing rhododandrum. He dont always succeed, but if you go frequent you will some day be rewarded with a blast which will make the heavens be mute."

I asked Uncle Ned what makes the snale have a shell always on his back, and he said: "It dident use to be so. The snale was created all right, but it sought out many inventions and told them without tumin a hair.

One day Adam he seen the snale creepin along the gravel walk, and he said, Adam did: 'You lazy worm of the dust, why don't you get a move on you?'

"The snale it said: 'Ime the swiftest quodped which flies a long the plain, when I try. I devours distance like it was a string of maccarony, and there is only a imadginary line between the place where I am and the place where I want to be. I over take the kangaroon as he flies for his life, and the pigeon in the sky weeps to see me vanish below his horizon. When I go west it is always the same time of day with me, but when I turn east it is mid night before I have took a half dozen jumps.'

"Adam said: 'My, but you are spry when you are in a hurry. I spose you aint goin any where in particklar today.'

"The snale it said: 'Ime sick today, and have jest dragged my self out of the house for to get a breath of fresh air.'

"Adam he said: 'Where do you live, when you are to home?' and the snale said: 'In that curly house away over there on the other side of the gravel walk.'

"Adam he thought a while, and bime by he said: 'It would be a great pity if the swiftest quodped which skowers the plain should take cold and die. You just go right in to your house again, and dont you leave it till I tell you.'

"Then Adam he walked a way and wank his eye, to his self and said: 'I have such a bad remember, may be lie forget to tell him.' "Johnny, that's just what happened, so the fool snale, bein forbid to leave his house, has to take it along with him where ever he goes. And that will teach you never to brag about what you can do if you cant do it." But if Adam would scold me and Billy we would say: "You bad old man, what for did you eat that apple and make us all go to Sunday school?"

But a apple dumplin, plenty sugar on it, is as musicle as Apoloes loot.

In Madgigascar the natif niggers build their houses on the tops of posts for to keep the snakes out, and one day 2 natifs was a settin on the floor playin cards, and a rhi nosey rose he had gone under the house. Then he stuck his horn up through the floor between the niggerses legs. One of them said: “Whats that?”

But the other feller, which had just played a card, and was a studdyin his hand, and didnt see the horn, and he said: “You know what it is well enough, have you got any thing to beat it? Thats the question.”

The other feller said he didnt believe he had, and arose his self up and jumped out of the window. Then the rhi walked away with the house on his head, and you never have saw such a astonish feller as the one which was a studdyin his hand!

When the rhi meets the ephalent he roots him with his sticker in the stumach of the belly, like the rhi was a hog, and the eph he wollups the rhi with his proboscus, like beatin a carpet for to get the dust out. My picture book it says that when the rhi has got the eph on his sticker the ephs grease runs in to the rhis eyes and puts them out. I asked Mister Gipple, which has been in Africa, if that was so. Mister Gip he thought a while, and bime by he said: “Yes, that was true a long while ago, but one day the rhi nosey roses they held a public meetin to see if something couldnt be done about it. There was a hundred ways pointed out for to stop it, but all them which had the best plans and made the longest speeches was the blind fellers. Bime by a old rhi which hadnt said any thing he rose hisself up and said*:i* Mister chairman, I have give this matter much atention, and while I aint sure that the trouble can be untirely stopped, I think mebby some thing might be done toward it by keepin away from the ephalents.’

“Then they all rised in wrath and gored him with their stickers, and put him out, cause they said this was a pratticle matter and they didnt want nobodys fine spun theories.

“After a while a rhi which had been away he come in and asked what was the objek of the meetin, and when he was told he spoke up and said: ‘You gam doodled idiots, why dont you stickum in the back? Grease don’t run up hill.’

“Then they all hollered: ‘Hooray! thats jest what we was a goin to say our selfs. We will make this feller our king!’

“So they put a gold crown on his head, and give him a jacknife with 4 blades, and a kite, and a peg top, and some fire crackers, and all the candy which he could eat.

“And now, Johnny, lie tell you a other. One time a rhi it got mired in the mud of the Nile, which had overflew its banks, and the rhi was about to be drownded in the water. While he was thinkin of all the sins which he done, how he had gored the poor little hi potamuses, and trampled down the niggerses corn, and hadnt looked like the pictures on the circus posters, and every thing naughty, there was a cammel. Then the rhi he hollered: ‘Bully for you! I thought no body would come along, but I see that the righteous is never forsook.’

“The cammel he looked a while, real solemn out of his eyes, as you so graphicle say, and then he said:’What special advantage do you promise your self from my knowin that there is the remains of a rhi nosey rose under the mud of this river?’

“The rhi he seen the cammel wasnt a goin for to do anything for him, so he said: ‘I don’t care what you know, nor what you dont know, but when a feller is departin this life he goes more willin and lamb like if he sees at his bed side one of them objeks which makes life so everlasty disgustin.’”

But if I was a rhi nosey rose I rather be a eagle, cause the eag is the umblem of the land of the free, and has the stars and strips embludgeoned on his breast!

SWANS

A MAN which had a swan his boy was home from colledge, and one day the boy he come in with a gun and said, the boy did: “A awfle big snake stuck its head up out of the grass in the pond in the lawn, and I knew it was a lookin for your swan, for to bite it, so I shot it, now give me some spendin money, cause I saved your swan.”

But it was the swans neck which he had shot, and his father said: “I sent you to Yale for to learn what swans is, and now I got to send you to Harverd for to learn what snakes is, and fore you know every thing its a goin to mighty xpensive to your poor old father.” Little swans is signets and my sisters young man he says their tracks in the mud is their signetures, but that isent so, cause signetures is writtin “Johnny” real plain on a piece of paper and showin it to your mother.

Today while Uncle Ned was in the parlor my mother she come in and said: “Edard, since Johnny took to writin them animal stories, and you took to sendin them to that hasty news paper, we havent been any thing but just a famly of jokers, like we was clowns in circusses, and you have been the head of it all. I blieve every body in town is a laughfin at us. If you havnt got any self respeck for your own self you ought to have some for me and your niece.”

Uncle Ned he got up and put his hand in his waist coat and bowed and said, real sollemn: “The subjeck on which I have had the honor to be addressed is of national importance, and one in which I take the deepest intrest, and I thank the delegation for the able manner in which it has been presented. Appreciatin the dificultys of my position, you will not xpect me to say more at present, but I can ashure you that what it has been my privlege to hear shall be submited to my colleags and will recieve the most atentif considderation.”

My mother she was astonish, like Uncle Ned was out of his head, and she looked at him a while, and then she walked slow out of the room, a sayin: “Well, I never!” But the minute the door was shut Uncle Ned he said: “Quick, Johnny, jump to your work, onGe there was a dog, or a horse, or a hipporaucus, or a 3 leg rammidoodle, or any thing which you can think of, theres your paper and heres a pencil, spring, I tell you, look alive!” But I was so xcited that I couldent think of any thing for to write, so I jest busted out a cryin, and Uncle Ned said: “One time there was a weepin willow.”

About a hour after wards my mother, which was a knittin, she looked up and said: “Edard, why is a ephalent like a man which is a goin on a jurney?”

Uncle Ned, which was a readin a book, he shut it up, and stood up on his feets, and then he laid it away, and walked over to where my mother was, and looked her in the face and pretty soon he fetched 3 chairs and set them before her, and she said: “What do you mean, Edard, I have never seen such actions.” But Uncle Ned he went and got Billy, and set him in one of the chairs, and then he put me in a other, and give’ me a pencil and a piece of paper. Then he set his self down in the other chair, and Bildad, thats the new dog, it come and set down long side of Billy. After we was all put, and nobody had spoke, cause me and Billy thought it was some game which was to be played, Uncle Ned he looked at mother and said: “I give it up, now for the answer. Be sure you get it right, Johnny.”

But my mother she was a gettin redder and redder, like beets, and bime by she got up and flounced out of the room, furiouser than any thing which I have ever saw in all my life, or Billy ever seen in hisn. There was never such a dizzy pointed man as Uncle Ned was, but he says they are all just that way, in Indy and every where.

THE HIPPORIPPUS

MISTER GIPPLE, which has been in Africa, he said: “Johnny, if your ungennerous kinsman hadent saw fit for to impeech my credibility, which is the most precious juel in my crown, Ide tell you about the hipporippus.”

I said what was it like, and he said: “It is a little like a ephalent, cause it has got teeths mighty plain to see, and a little like a cammel, cause it has got a back, and a little like a giraft, cause it has got a neck, and a little like a jackus, cause its voice is heard in the stilly night, and a little like a man, cause it is pizen. It is a off spring of the thunder and the grave, and is distant related to the surf beat shore. When it winks a black shadow sweeps across the face of the world, and when it opens its eye again light breaks upon the land scope like dawn over the eastern hills. It walks a merridian of longitude and, lo, the east is parted from the west for to make room! It laughfs in fiendish glee and the milk sours in the cows of all nations.

Yet this tempestilent creature can be as gentle as a suckin whirl pool and coo like laughture in a toomb.”

I asked where was the hip found. Mister Gipple thought a while, and bime by he said: “A contented mind is better than great riches, but if you cant smuther your curosity you may look for it just out side the scruburbs of most any Afcan village, for it is mighty sociable and loves the fellership and communion of yuman beings better than pie. But when you go for to find the hip you better empty your pockets of your marbles, and your peg top, and your kite string, and your jack knife, and your base ball, and your 12 inches of rusty chain, or you will know them no more for ever.”

I said would the hip take them away from me, and he said: “No, it wont, it will take you away from them.”

But if I met a hip I would roll my sleefs up, and spit on my hands, and thunder: “You cowerdly feller, if you come a step nearer I will go home and tell my father!”

And thats why I say courage is the stuff of life, and none but the brave deserts the fair!

Mister Gipple says one time A Mister Pitchel, thats the preacher, was a mitionary in Africa, like he was his self, and he converted all the peoples in a town, and they jest doted on him. But one night a natif nigger snook in to Mister Pitchels hut and said, the natif nigger did, “You better leave here mighty quick, for they are a goin to boil you."

Mister Gipple, which was astonish, he said: "I guess there is a mistake, cause Ime so popular."

The natif nigger he said: "Thats jest the reason, for they say you are a saint and it would bring a blessin to the town for to have a few of your rellics, jest your shin bones, and a half dozzen of the nuckles of the spine of your back, and maybe the skull of your head."

I asked Mister Gipple if them rellics of Mister Pitchel, would have done any good, and he said: "Well, Johnny, not bein a church feller, Ime not shure about it, and Ime particklar scepticle about the head, seein it has never done him any good his own self, but them shin bones surely did work a mirracle when he was a pullin out of that town."

Mister Gipple says there was a other mitionary preacher, and he had only but just one leg, like Mister Jonnice. One day the king of the cannibals asked him to dinner. So he slicked his self up and went The king said: "Ime glad to see you, now take your close off."

The i legger he said: "Yessir, I see Ime not in the fashion, but I thought you would be indulgent to a benighted forreign feller which is your guest at dinner."

The king he spoke up and said: "You dont seem for to under stand. You are the dinner."

The one legger he seen how it was, but he smiled real polite and said: "O, I beg pardon, how many of you are to eat me?"

The king said there was 2, countin the dog which was to be give the bones. Then the mitionary said what was the choice parts of a feller like him, and the king said: "You chaps is like frogs. Unless fammin stalks abroad in the land we dont care for anything you have only but just the hind legs."

The mitionary said: "Ime mighty glad for to hear you say so, cause Ide like to keep my head a while. I need it in my business. Here is one of my hind legs, which will last you till midnights holy hour, and to morrow I will bring you the other."

So he reached under the table and took off his cork laig and laid it fore the king, which was so rattled that fore he knew what to do the mitionary had hopped away.

Mister Jonnice says when he gets rich he is a goin to buy a leg of sandal wood with the sandal on it, but I say blessed is the poor, for they shall go through the eye of a needle, hooray!

JACKUSSES

A FELLER was a ridin one, and every little while it would stop and bray. The feller he said: “For goodness sake, dont be 2 nusances to once. If you are a goin to sing you must trot along same time, but if you prefer to stop you got to hold your tongue. Ime a long way from home, and my wife is lyin at the point of death, and night is comin on, and I havent had my supper, but tween you and me I dont care which plan you adopt.”

One day when my father was in Nevady he met a Cornish miner comin up the grade to Virgina City, carryin a jackus on his shoulders, and my father he said: “Poor little animal! What broke its leg?”

The miner he said: “Ta blessit moke have luggit I all ta way from Reno, and I be givin he a bit of a rest fore ridin in to town, thats what brakit uns lag.”

Old Gaffer Peters has got a son which was a sailer, like Jack Brily, and the boy stopped in Spain and got married. One time he wrote to old Gaffer and sent the letter to my father for to be give him, but my father opened it his self, cause he thought it was hisn. The letter had a photy grap in it of old Graffers little grand son. But my sisters young man he snook out the picter and put in a other one, which was a baby with the head of a jackus. My father he dident know, and he give the letter to old Gaffer, which looked at the picter, and then read the letter, and then thought a while real sollemn, and bime by he said: “When a young feller makes a fool of his self and marrys a wild Spainard his boys dont look like his home folks one bit.”

But father he said: “Why, Gaffer, I never see such a spekin likeness as that pictur is of you.”

Old Gaffer he put his spettacles on again and looked at it a other time, real long, and then he shook his head and said: “Ole age is onorable, but it makes a feller look like a dam rabbit!”

Jackusses looks like mules, and Franky, thats the baby, looks like he would bust, and Missy she looks at her young man, and says to her self: “How nice!”

But if she had saw him when he wank his eye at Mary, thats the house maid, she wouldnt think so, for winkin is pligamy and thats trigonomatry.

I ast Uncle Ned did he know what makes the Jackus bray, and he said: “Yes, I do. In the Garden of Eden Adam had a field of barly, and he told the animals that if they didnt keep out of it he would cast them all in to a lake of ever las tin fire. Now the jackuses tail was created up right, like it was the mast of a ship, so one day the jack he come to Adam and said: ‘Ide like you to make my tail hang down like the other fellerses tails, cause they say Ime proud.’

“Adam knew that the jackus was really proud and he wondered, Adam did, why he wanted his tail down, but he done it and the jack thanked him and went away. Bime bi Adam he seen the jackuses trackx all thrugh the barly field, and it had et barly. Then he knew the jack had ask him to let down his tail so it wouldnt show above the barly and be tray him. So Adam he said: ‘You are a mighty smart feller for a thief. He keep my sacred word about that tail, but you will wish you hadent spoke.’

“So the tail hangs down, to this day, but evry little while the jackus yields to a inate ambition and primevle desire for to set it up like it was made, but when ever he tries to arise it it hurts him so awfle that he utters his soul in mournful song.

“Johnny, you just let the morral of this story sink deep into your heart and you will grow up a good man and some day be Presdent.”

If I was Presdent I would take my big sword and cleave the wicked Demcrats in twain, for the Bible it says them which is sinners shall have ever lastin life!

I said did Uncle Ned know what for Mexican dogs havent got any hair, and he said: “Yes, I learnt it from a old man script which I found in a Hindoo temple in Kansas. One day soon after the creation Adam he was a walkin in the Garden and he seen a dog with long curly hair which hung clear down to the ground. Adam he said: ‘My! what a beautiful back of hair you have got.’

“Now, the dog was a fool and prouded his self on his hair, so he answered: ‘You ought to seen it fore I had that fever. It hasent been the same since.’

“Adam he knew there hadnt been no fever, cause there wasnt any sin, for it is sin which makes a feller sick.”

I — ast Uncle Ned was it sin which made Franky sick the time he had a pain in his lap and howled like he was cats. Uncle Ned said: “Yes, it was, cause the sins of the father shall be fisted on to the childern, and you are mighty lucky it was Franky in stead of you which sufferd for my wicked brothers Repubcan afiliations. It will be you next time if you dont stop encurrigin him to support a Presdent which eats with niggers. But I was tellin you about that dog.

“When Adam heard him lie he made a jump at him for to kick him over the garden wall, but the dog he lit out for Mexico so fast that the friction of the atmisphere set him afire and burnt his hair every little bit off. He lived for to found a large famly in the land of his adoption, but they are all bald just like he was.

“Now, my boy, you go and tell your angel sister about this, cause there never was a woman which dident say her hair used to be longer fore she had a fever.

They are mighty funny, women be, and have got to be crushed out with a ironicle hand!”

Yesterday Mister Pitchel, thats the preacher, he was to our house, and he said to Uncle Ned: “Brother Edward, have you read in the paper a bout the cruelty of the warden at the Sing Sing penitentionary?” Uncle Ned he said he did, and it was just like him, for he is a Repubcan.

Then my father spoke up and said: “Politics hasnt got any thing to do with it. Its cause the prisners is Demcrats.”

Mister Pitchel he said: “Surely, Robert, you don’t justfy mistreatin convicks be cause of their politicle faiths!”

My father said: “Yes, I do. When a fellers politicle faith makes him burgle, and garote, and bigam, and larcen, and shoot, and go to the theater with a other mans wife I say shut him up in a dark, unwholesome cell and give him fits three times a day with a black snake whip. If I was that warden and any news paper man come around pokin his nose in to none of his business Ide take him by the scruf of his pants and the seat of his neck and chuck him into the bay. I respeck the preachin trade much as any body, Mister Pitchel, but I bedam if I wouldent!”

Then Uncle Ned he said: “Robert, your eminent services in reformin the geography of this state entitle you to a respectable hearin, even when you dont swear, and I should like to have your views on penology more at length.”

My father he said: “What is penology?” and Uncle Ned said it was the sience of punishment. Then my father he said: “My views on penology is to lickum.”

Mister Pitchel he said: “Then you blieve in the eficacy of phisical torture?”

My father he said: “I blieve it hurts, and that is all I want to know about it. But come to think, I guess it does a heap of good too. When Billy and Johnny gets it, and they dont have to ask me twice for it, it isnt necessary for me to waste any time after ward a pointin out the wickedness of dizzy bedience and expoundin the beauty of a godly life. They seem to get on to all that their own selfs, and to remain in a proper state of mind for quite a little wile. What is good enough for my boys is good enoughf for stealers, and cheaters, and assassinaters, and fellers which buy ice cream for other fellers wifes, like I said be fore. My further views on penology is that when a gum dasted galoot is sent to prison I dont care a ding what is the nature of his xperence there, nor whether at the end of his term he comes 4th alive or not. If he didnt like the way the house is conducted he neednt have gone into it. The warden isnt a standin outside the front door invitin any body in for to share the ospices of the place. The sons of guns invites their selfs!”

When my father had got done he looked all round for some thing to kick, but Bildad, thats the new dog, he knew what was up and snook under the sofa, and

Mose, which is the cat, he fled afar.

But the Bible it says dont let your angry passions rise up and call you blest. And thats why I say man is of few days and full of woman.

SOLJERS

SOLJERS isent animals, but they can lick the hi potamus and the tagger, and the rhi nosey rose, and evry thing which is in the world. When I grow up Ime a going for to be a soljer, and then He draw my long sticker and cut off all the fellers which I dont likes heads and say: “Hooray! that will teach you that Columby is the gem of the ocean.”

Then the Presdent will say: “What a brave soljer, make him a major General and give him all the candy which he can eat!”

One time there was some cannon soljers a shootin off cannons at a target, and one of them was out in front, bout a hundred feet to one side of the target, for to see if it was hit, but it wasent, cause the cannon balls they kept a comin real close to his self and makin him duck and dance lively, you never seen such a frighten soljer!

Just as he was a goin to run away, cause he couldnt stand it, bang went a cannon ball right through the bulls eye of the target.

Then he took his pipe out of his pocket, and fild it, and while he was a feelin for a match he said to his self: “Ime all right now, cause they have got mad and are a shootin at *me.*”

One day while our front door was a standin open, my father, which had just come in, he met Mary, thats the house maid, in the hall, and he said: “Mary, I know what you like, there is some soljers comin down the street with a brass band, and—” but fore he could say a other word Mary just vannished like she was shot out of a gun and was-a flyin down the street for to see the soljers, and my mother she stepped out of the parlor with Franky in her arms. My father he looked at her, and then he looked at Franky, and then he took off his spettacles and wiped them, real careful, and put them on again, and took a other look, and said: “Why, bless my soul, I would have swore it was Mary! You go in the kitchen and tell her to take off her apron, and put on her jacket and her hat, and slick her self up a bit, and go and see the soljers.”

I ast Mister Gipple wasnt he proud when he was a soljer, and he said, Mister Gipple did: “I wasnt proud only but one time. One day a ungenerus fo took a mean advantige of me and come at me with his sticker when my hands was full. I turnd my back on him, real scornful, for about a mile, then he fleed and I entered my camp in triump!, I said what was Mister Gippleses hands full of, and he said: “Johnny, if you had ast me at the time, I couldnt have told you, but when my captain pinted it out to me I remembered. They was full of revolvers.”

But if me and Billy was there Billy would met that cowerd fo, eye to eye, and laughfed him to scorn! When he is a man he is a goin for to be a captin of milishes, and ride a majesticle black steed, and cut Demcrats heads off and fling them to the Presdents feets, a shoutin the battle cry of fredom! But give me a home on the ocean wave, with a nice Sunday school book and plenty pirates for my pray!

Jack Brily, which is the wicked sailor, swears and chews tobaco and every thing, he says once when he was a pirate there was a other ship which looked like it was about to flounder. Jacks captin he said: “That ship is dangerously over manned. Jack, you take all our men and board her and make all hern walk the plank.”

So Jack and all the other pirates xcept the captin they give 3 cheers and got in their boat, with their cutlashes drawed, and boarded the ship, insted of which about a thousand jolly, jolly mariners arosed up from the deck and pointed blunder busters at them, and the captain of the ship come forwerd and said: “In reply to this funny way of hailin a strange craft I have to say that this is the *Nancy Ann,* 7 days out from Boston, and over loaded with apple pies. We was just a goin for to jettison some of the cargo, but I guess you fellers will do just as well.”

So Jack and his mates was made to sit down and eat apple pies till they was most busted and dead sick. That made the ship so light that she walked the waters like a thing alive, and the pirate captin was left lamentin.

I ast Jack why that didnt make a honest man of him, and he said: “It did, Johnny, it did. I resolvd for to repent and lead a bitter life, and I havnt been a apple pirate from that memorable day. Mince and helpin in my dads butcher shop is good enoughf for me.”

Uncle Ned he says he guesses that is true, for Jack is mighty well qualified for to swear off and on.

Mister Gipple said did I know about the battle of Gettyburg. I said no, I didn’t, and he said: “Well, Johnny, lie tell you, for it was the dandiest battle which ever was. I was there my self or it maybe would have been diferent.

“You see, Johnny, our soljers was on a hill, and Mister Lees was on a other, but ourn was the best hill and they wanted it. But Mister Mead, which was our captin, he was a brave man, and he sent for me to come over behind our hill, where he was readin a novel, and he said, Mister Mead did: ‘General Gipple, if them misguided fellers which are in arms again our country and the Repubcan party come over our way and want to get on this side the fence you shut the gate in their gum dasted faces and tell them to clear out.’

“So I went back, and pretty soon I seen Mister Picket a comin, follerd by ten thousand hunderd rebbel soljers, and I shut the gate. When they had come real close up Mister Picket poked his ugly head over the fence and said: ‘Hello, Yank, we want to get in for to bile some coffy. The feller which we are on his farm he wont let us light fires.’

“Then I spoke up in thunder tones and said, real sarcostic: ‘You havnt got the price of admition.’

“Mister Picket he said: (Dont you dare to taunt us with our povity! Its true we aint rich, cause you have stole all that we had, but we are mighty many, for the angels is on our side.’

“Then I spoke up real sneery, and said: ‘If you have any regments of angels I guess they are sort of hangin back. I dont seem to see any of their wings a floppin in the breeze.’ “Just then Mister Hancock rode up behind me and said: ‘Generl Gipple, stand firm, we got some angels of our own. Mister Mead ordered me to report to you with my whole dam celestial out fit.’

“I said: ‘Thank you, Mister Hancock, they will be right handy for to carry to Heaven the souls of the Confedit slane just as fast as I can supply them.’

“And then, Johnny, I roled my sleefs up and that memorble slotter was began! I dont need to give you the bleedy details. Suffice it that when I was done that host lay withered and strew and Mister Picket was a hikin back to his base as fast as his 2 laigs could carry him, and our soljers was a singing the dogs ology real tuneful, like they was canarys.”

I — asked Mister Gipple did he do it all his own self, and he said: “Nuthin but only just the killin, Johnny. Far be it from me for to deprife my comrads of the glory which justly blongs to the sons of hope and faith. If it hadent been for the morl sport which they give me by cheerin me on, and by their xclamations of wonder and delight, it would have took me longer.”

The Bible it says that thou shall not kill unless you are smote on one cheek or the other, but Uncle Ned he says a feller which would smite Mister Gipple on either cheek would skin his nuckles.

A other time Mr. Gipple said: “Johnny, there is a other great warior in this town, and it is Mister Pitchel, which is the preacher, as you truly describe him. He was the chaplin of the army wen it was in Cuby. One day there was a real hard fight, and when he run away he got lost in the forest primevle. Then he see a feller down on his knees behind a tree, a prayin loud and shril. So Mister Pitchel he joind him and prayed too, but pretty soon he noticed that the feller was a prayin in Spanish, so Mister Pitchel he said amen mighty quick and got up for to resume his go. Then the Spainard he said amen too, and picked up a gun and hollered: ‘Come back, ye dom herry tick, or if I dont make buzzerds meat of yer dhirty caircase may I niwer see ould Tiperary again!’

“Mister Pitchel he went back and was took prisner. Then he said:’I guess you was a prayin for the sucksess of the Spainish arms, wasent you?’

“The feller said: ‘The divel a bit, they have been licked and I was prayin for the sucksess of their legs, as is the duty of me holy office. Ime their chaplin, bedad.’” Mister Pitchel says he will pray for Mister Gippleses sinful soul, but Mister Gip he says: “Jest let me catch him at it, thats all!”

A captin of soljers he went to the camp of the enemies and said: “Some of you fellers has been a sassin some of us, what for did they do that?”

The captin of the enemies he said: “O go long about your business, we havent got any thing agin you.”

The other captin he said: “Then why do you come in to this neck o woods and sass us?”

The captin of the sassers said: “Why dont you move in to a other county fore we are drove by a relentless fate for to lick you like blazes?”

The captin which had come over he said: “A destiny which is deaf to our prayers compels us to remain and wollup the innerds out of you.”

And Mister Gip says that when the relentless fate stacked up aginst the destiny which was deaf to prayer the earth was piled with hetty combs of slain!

But if any body would sass Billy he would cleeve him to the chine!

My father was a readin a news paper, and all to once he give a long wissle and said he would be gum dasted! Uncle Ned he looked up and said what was it, and my father he said by cracky, that was the awfulest which he ever in his life!

My mother she jumpt up, and so did me and Billy, and Missy, and Bildad, the new dog, and Mose, which is the cat. My father he was so xcited that his spettacles fell off and he couldnt read no more till they was found, and all the wile he kept a sayin we was in for it, shure, and it was just what he had been xpectin, and he had always told us it would come. Bime bi my mother put his spettacles on his nose again, and he found the place and read, “The war broke out again. The Solid South in battle aray! The nations capitle in flames! Dredful massaker of the culored peoples in Virginy! Thousands of United States troops shot dead in their trackx!”

Then he seen it was nothing only but just a advertisement of a patent tooth brush and does pin combined, and he stopt and got red in the face, and wiped his spettacles with his thum, and put the paper in the fire, and said: “Edard, you better stay to home and look after the women and children, and mebby keep my memry green if I fall. Ime a goin for to march against the fo!”

Then he went out and stayed a week. And thats why I say be it ever so humble, theres no place like home.

Uncle Ned, which has been in Indy and every where, he says one time in Siam the king said to his captin of soljers: “I been supportin you and your lazy fellers for 20 years, and you havnt done nothing for your keep, only just eat and drink your heads off.”

The captin he said, the captin did: “Why, we have a inspecktion every little while, and 2 — drills a month, and a dress parade evry day, with a brass band.”

The king said: “Yes, I know, but you dont do no fightin.”

The captin he said: “The drummer he knockt the bugler silly only jest yesterdy, the i st sargent has a black eye most of the time when he isnt drunk, and I punches the corples head my self, quite frequent.”

But the king he said: “That aint enoughf, you got to go and thrash the fellers army which is a kingin on the other side of the boundry. If you suckceed in piercin his lines I will make you a earl.”

So they marched away with banners a flopin, and a long time after werd the king got a letter from the captin of soljers, and the letter said:

“Dear Madgesty, After a good deal of skilful manoover I have pierced the enemys lines without a man killed, but the number of missin is considerable. In fact, my whole army is missin. I guess it is about where it was when I begun for to move on the enemys works single handed, but I dont know. You neednt make me a earl, for the king over here has made me a duke.

Yourn for Progresiveness,

HOP SING.”

FISH

MY sisters young man he said: “Johnny, di ever tell you about Jony and the wale?”

But I said: “You cant fool me, you want me to say yes, and then you will say taint so, cause the Bible dont say it was a wale, but a big fish, and a wale isnt a fish.”

Then he said: “No, Johnny, it was a wale, I give you my honor, cross my heart and hope to die, and what I wanted for to pint out is the Bible says Jony was threw up by the wale after bein swollered, but it stands to reason it wasnt so. No, Johnny, he must have digested and become a part of the wale, for when he was shut up in the stumach of its belly the thought of home and friends would naturly make him blubber.”

Then my sister she said: “Any one which falsifys the Scripter and puts his word against a Bible truth to make such a silly joke as that will go where the worm dieth not, so there!” But her young man he said: “lie take along a early bird and have some fun with that feller.”

“

Jack Brily he was a tellin old Gaffer Peters one day how he was to a mining town, and how he fished down a shaft, with a line 20 hundred feet long. Gaffer he said: “What a whopper, I been to mines my own self, and I know the water in a mine is blazin hot.”

Jack said: “Thats what makes it easy for to catch the fish, you only got to use ice cream for bait. Them poor fish is crazy for ice cream.”

Then old Gaffer said: “Why, Jack Brily, do you think Ime a iddiot jest cause my hair aint curly like yourn? If there was fish in that water they would be boild.”

Jack said: “Thats just it, Gaffer, thats just the idee, cause I dont consider fried fish is fit to eat.”

But give me plenty potatos, and mints pies, and peserves, and some do nots, and molasses, and apple dumps, and He take them fried and boild too.

A other time Jack was a tellin old Gaffer how he was a travelin once when he had been ship wreck and didnt have nothin for to eat, and bime bi he come to a big lake of oil. So he upped and baited his fish hook and threw in his line, and in a little while he had cetched a wagon load of shads.

Gaffer he said: “How could shads live in oil?”

Jack he thought a wile, and pretty soon he said: “Thats a fact, Gaffer you have raked me fore and aft. Them fish was sardeens.” And old Gaffer hasnt never got done braggin about how he caught Jack in a lie and made him own up.

One time a nigger fell off a ship and the sailors threw him a rope, which he caught, and they was a haulin him up when a shark snapped him in 2. Just then a Southern planter, which was a pasenger, he come on deck and looked over the side of the ship and seen the shark do it. He was xcited and hollered: “It has took your hook boys, it has took your hook! Bring a other one and get a fresh nigger!”

Some folks thinks niggers is just as good as white men, cause God made us all in 6 days and was arrested on the 7th.

THE POL PATRIOT

UNCLE NED he said: “Johnny, do you know about the pol patriot?” I said: “Yessir, it can be tought for to talk, just like gerls, and says, ‘Polly wants a cracker,’ frequent.”

Uncle Ned he thought a wile, and bime bi he said: “This appears to be a case of mistaken eye dentistry, though there really is a resemble tween the pol parrot and the pol patriot, particlar in their cast of mind and their deplorable habit of saying what you have got tired of hearin. But the patriot he frequent makes the welkin ring, where as the other sport she only just shreeks like laughfter in a toomb. Both is 2 leggers, but the patriots is hind ones, and wen he wants to think he mounts them like a step ladder and does the trick with his toung, mighty awdible.”

I ast did the patriot have wings, and Uncle Ned said: “Wings is used for to go some where, but the patriot isnt migratary. He never gets very far away from his mouth, cause that is his place of business. No, my boy, the patriot never deserts his country, for he loves it and it is easy for to digest. He admires its instutions like they was pretty girls in white muslin gowns, servin pie. Its pocket is the haven of his hand, and the fat on his kidneys is public property dedicated to private use.”

But what he meant by all that rigmy roll is what floors me, and Billy is the same way. And thats why the Bible it says that wisdom is the root of all evil and flys from the rwath to come.

My sisters young man he said: “Johnny, if you was a sniposquatamus what would you rather be?”

I said it would be nice for to be a pirate, and he said: “Yes, I spose it would if it wasnt for the hangin, but I was thinkin mebby you would like to be a brother in law, which are usually acquited.”

Then Missy she spoke up and said he ought to be a shamed of his self, puttin wicked thoughts in to a inocent childs head, and tryin to break up a happy home, you never seen sech a dresin down as that feller got!

When it was all over he looked at her real sorroful and said: “Yes, I see I have went to far, dear, so if you dont mind I will just step in to the kitchen and take a carvin knife and cut my heart out. Johnny, you come with me for to hear my last words and wipe up the gore.”

But when I begun for to cry he said: “Never mind, Ime a awful firm chap, but not stuborn, and rather than pain your young soul lie postpone the rash deed and content my self with slayin your Uncle Ned."

Then Missy said he was a riddiclous old thing and wouldnt hurt a fly.

Flys are insecks, and a wops is a be, but butter flys is a catter piller at first, and then it is a crisanthemum.

And now I will tell you a story about Mister Gipple when he was a mitionary preacher in Madgigasker and had amast a considable frotchune in ephalents tushes. Mister Gip is always bragin about the kings he has met, and he says one day he met the king of Madgigasker, which said: "Ime told that you are a preachin aginst the gods of my fathers and have busted the heads off of some of them. Is that so?"

Mister Gipple he said: "Yes, brother, it has been a joy to me to spread the light quite wide, and Ime thankfle to say that a few of the ugly idles which you fellers bow down to have suckummd to the power of the ever-lasty truth as it is give me to see it."

The king said: "Ime a little tired of them idles my self, dont you think it would help along the good mitionary work for you to convert Me?"

Mister Gip he was just happy half to death, and he said: "Yes, indeed, and if you have time we will begin right now. First you must stop cuttin your wives noses off for every little thing which they do."

The king he said, the king did: "I stopt that this morning. They are all off."

Mister Gipple he wiped away a tear and said: "You must bless them which hate you." Then the king he said: "The darn galoots darent come near enough to me for to hear the blessing."

So Mister Gip he said: "Well, we will pass that for the present. When your dog dies you must not discumbowel your high priest on its grave."

The king said: "All right, my priminister will do just as well."

Mister Gipple he was mighty discuraged, but he said: "You mustnt have any of your nevews and nieces buried alive when you are took sick."

The king said: "No fear of that, I have been in mighty poor health all summer." That shocked Mister Gip so much that he hardly knew what he was a sayin, and he showted: "Poor miserable worm of the dust!"

Then the king, which had been sittin on his hawnches, he rose his self up, mighty magesticle, and said: "I have made every resonable consession and tried to meet you half way, but when you call me names you are a goin too far. You jest put new heads on them idles, and give up all the wealth of ephalents teeths in which you waller, and take your gum dasted new fangle religion out of my kingdom, or I will skin your legs!"

But if any old nigger king would skin mine I — would hurl him from the throne, for the Bible says that all men are created equal, and endowered with unavailable rights. And thats why the people are the sores of power.

Uncle Ned he said: “Johnny, one time in Indy I knew a natif nigger named Jejybehoy Bilk. He lived just out side the village of Ipecack-in-the-Jingle and had a mighty nice wife. She didnt wear much does, cause they was poor, but one day I see her a wearin a taggers skin, and I ast Jej what for she drest so warm in the summer. Jej he said: 4 Cause a tagger has arived in these parts and is makin quite free with the peoples. Me and Mary Ann thinks that if she wears a taggers skin when she has to go out to gether sticks mebby the tag will think her a other tag, and spare her life.’

“I told him I thought it a good idee, and pretty soon after, when I met him again, I said: ‘Good mornin, how is Mary Ann, and is she still wearin a taggers skin?’

“Jej he looked sollemn and said: ‘Yes, Edard Sahib, a taggers skin and a taggers ribs too, in fact, she is wearin a whole tagger.’ “Johnny, she had been et.”

COWS

THERE was a feller which had a cow, and the cow had some burs in the tossel of her tail, and the feller he tried for to pick them out. He put his fingers through the tossel, like they was a comb, and jest then the cow she got afraid and started for to walk away. The feller he couldnt hold her, and he couldnt get his fingers out, so he had to go too. He said “wo,” and “steddy, now,” and “no occasion for to hurry,” and evry thing which he culd think of, but the cow she just kept right on, a goin round and round the field, and him a follerin.

Pratty soon a big savvage bul dog it come, and after it had showed its teeths and looked on a while it fell in behind the feller and follered too. So they kept a goin, the old cow and the feller and the bull dog, the dog a smellin the mans legs and makin up its mind where to take hold. The feller he didnt know whether he would rather have the dog bite him or bite the cow, but he kept a sayin “wo, bossy,” and “good doggy,” mighty polite.

Bime by a other man he see them and he brought a bucket of slop and set it down, and when they got round to it the cow she stopt for to have some, and when her tail was slack the fellers fingers come loose all right. Then he turned round to the dog, which was settin down a grinnin, an he shooked his fist at the dog, the feller did, and said: “You worthless brute, you must take them by the tail, like I have told you 100 thousand times! If its a goin to take a half a year for me to teach you how to drive a gentle cow like this lie sell you, for what ever I can get.”

But it was the man that brought the slops dog.

Some cows is hooky, but the mooly she buts, and thats why I say beware the awfle avilantch!

Uncle Ned he says why dont I write about Mister Jonnice, which has the wood leg. I ast him why Mister Jonnice wasent made Presdent for loosin his leg so many times for his country, and he said: “He isnt eligible, for he wasnt borned of American parents. His father was Conshience and his mother was Truth, and when he was a little feller like you he lived with her at the bottom of a well. So he dident come to this country till one day he was axidental drew up in a old oaken bucket. Johnny that man inherits from his mother. He is so truthfle that when he says a thing is so, why, it wouldnt be any more so if he rwote it down in red ink and swore to fore a bald headed notary. He is so truthfle that he faces east when he wants to tell a lie north west. Do you remember that story of his about the bear? He was one day goin through the woods when a big black bear arose itself up before him and began for to hug him real cruel. Mister Jonnice he said:’Why, darling, this is a unexpected hapiness. When did you get in?5

“Then he threw his 2 arms around the bear and squeezed it so tight that when he let go it lay down and turned so white with sick that Mister Jonnice toted it to a circus and sold it for a polar.

“A other time Mister Jonnice was attacted by a lion which came a rushin at him with its mouth wide open and all its teeths on parade. Mister Jonnice he just stood still and lifted his wood leg up and stuck it strait out toward the lion, and the lion went on every side of it like a bottle around a cork. So the immoral spirit of that monark of the desert winged its way to a other and bitter world fourth with. Mister Jonnice says that was the first step in his honable career as a lion tamer. I guess the second is still to be took.

“Such, my boy, is Mister Jonnice, but the jasky foozle is a other animal. It inhabbits the crags of the Gangee river and its fluty warble is heard along with the song of the whipperwil when the natf niggers pay poker in the gloaming. Its one tooth is white as the soul of a unborn babe and the shine of its eye is like moon beams on the water of deep Galalee. When it arises its golden locks above the horizon a lovely shadow is flung athwort the land and the chickens go to roost a singing their sweetest songs. It is a six legger, and each leg has a brass hoof, so the sound of its feetsteps is like chimes of church bells on a Sabath morning in Normandy. But beware, Johnny, beware the jasky foozle when summer is green, for it is crueler than the butcher buisnes and pizen as the grave! When it points its nose your way your mother wants to see you mighty bad and your legs should be ship shape for to perform their office.

“Much more might be said, but I see old Gaffer Peters a comin over to have a smoke with me, and I guess I better go out behind the barn and plant some coco nuts.”

I guess if there was a fight tween the jasky foozle and the rhi nupple dinky and some others of them fellers which Uncle Ned and Jack Brily and Mister Gipple tells about it would be mighty hard for to say which was which, and a picture of one would do for them all.

One day Mister Pitchel, thats the preacher, he seen a picture which shocked him, cause it repsented a drunk man, but my father he said: “Well, dont men get drunk, what you growlin about?”

Mister Pitchel he said did my father aproove every thing in art which is true to nature and my father he said: “Mister Pitchel, you have knew me all my life for a onest man which pays his debts and votes the straight Repubcan ticket, like he is told, and loves his neibor as his dog, and wears a stopipe hat quite frequent. Yet you ask me sech a question as that! As I under stand it, the feller which is always objectin to naturlness in art is always a sweepin the horizen with a spy glass and a bendin his self doubble over a microscape for to find some thing to objeck to. He wants to snuffle or to blush, cause if he dont he will be sick."

Uncle Ned, which is a batchelor, he said he guessed folks like that was mostly women.

Then my father he said: "I havnt got a word to say about any but the he ones, for Johnny has pointed out in his writins that woman is the noblest animal which roams the plain and roars like distant thunder. But, Edard, the he ones is decendents of them old Puritans which come to this country when it was little, because in their own they wasnt let sing hyms through their noses. They landed on Plymuth Rock when it was jest as easy to step a shore on the grass, and they expect us to cellebrate it. They liked rocks, particklar to fire at other folkes. They used to lick the Injens, too, cause the Injens looked sort of naturel, and came to prayer meeting in their breech clouts, jest as they was created.

"Edard, them Puritan 4 fathers of ourn were a gam doodled bad outfit. When ever one of them had loaded up his old bell mouth blunder bust with led enoughf for to sink a shot goose, and had got it rightly pointed at a Injen which mebby wanted his land back, he shet his eyes up a minute, the Pu did, and, said: 'O Lord of Love, I am about to discharge a sacred duty, and if any fo to religion gets his self in the way let my light so shine that it will shine right through his benighted innards, and thine shall be the glory, but lie take his blanket and his beads my self. Yours truly, Worm-o-the-Dust Muggins.'"

Then my father he kicked Mose, which is the cat; and Bildad, thats the new dog, jumpt through the window. And thats all I know about cows.

BUZARDS

I AST my sister: “Dont you think buzards is awfle nasty fellers for to eat sech things as they do?”

My sister she said: “What can you xpect of birds that live on a carry on diet?” Thats like old Gaffer Peters, which has got the bald head. My mother she said to him: “Gaffer, the sun is mighty hot to day.” Old Gaffer he said: “Yes, mam, there aint nothing like a warm day for to heat up the sun.”

There is folks in Pershia which worships the sun, and one day one of them fellers was down on his kanees a worshipin as hard as he culd, and a good mitionary preacher come a long and said: “What a poor ignant heathener, for to worship some thing that you can see!”

But the feller which was to his devotions he said: “I aint sech a fool as you think, for Ime as blind as a bat.”

There was a hum bird a sippin neckter out of a hunny suckle and there was a buzerd, and the buz he said to the hum: “I would rather starv than eat sech stuff as that.”

The hum said: “I am drove to it. When ever I try for to eat a dead horse one of you fellers says: ‘Let that a lone, sonny, for it is pizen. It hasnt been long enoughf dead.’” The buz he said: “Well, if you want to pizen your self you may as well do it with hunny suckles as by spilin our dinner fore it is ready.”

But fore I would eat any thing which is dead Ide live on salt pork.

THE CAMEL

ARRABS drink cammels milk, and have 4 stumachs, which makes them go a long time with out water. One day I was a readin a wondful story about a cammel and a Arrab, and my father he spoke up and said I mustnt blieve only but half of what I read. Jest then the story ended by sayin that the half wasent told, and my father he said: “Thats the half to blieve.”

A Arrab chief was a leadin his cammel by the halter and a thinkin real hard, but the cam hadnt any thing in particklar for to ocupy its mind, so after a wile it snook up and lifted the chiefs turban in its teeths and et it. Bime bi the chief he begun for to feel the sun a bakin his head like it was a potato in the uven, cause they shave their hair evry little bit off, and he stopt and looked around at the cam. The cam started like it was shot, and puld the holter out of the Arrabs hand, and stared at him and walked away and stared again, much as to say: “I never have seen you before in all my life, dont you come near me.”

But after a long time it let it self be cought, and when the Arrab had turned his back for to resume the voyge the cam drawed the 2 ends of its mouth up to its ears and wank its eye repeated.

Mister Gipple he says a other Arrab, which was a travisin the dessert, lay down for to sleep, and in the middle of the night he woke, and set up, and rubbed his eyes, and looked again, and final said: “Allah be praised for grantin His servant this vizion of the Holy Mountain!”

Then he lay down in the sand with his face toward the Holy Mountain, which he could see real plain on the horizen against the stars. He knocked his fored against the ground and prayd all night, but in the mornin he see it was only just his cammel a kneelin between him and the ski. So he took a stick, the Arrab did, and beat the cam, and said it wasnt fit for to carry a True Bliever.

But the Bible it says that cammels can go through the knee of a idol.

I ast Uncle Ned what makes the cam have a hunch on his back, and he said, Uncle Ned did: “One day, in the Garden of Edin the animals was a showin off what they culd do, and the kangaroon he said he could jump high upper than any other thing which was made in the immage of its Maker. The cammel curled his lip up, real scornfle and said: ‘Why, you gum dasted creepin thing, I dont blieve you can leave the ground by 10 inches. Jest try for to jump over *me* and you will find out what a many rooted vegtable you are.’

“So the cam, which was made long like a dox hoond and had a straight back, it stood still, and the kang he took a few hops and then soared aloft to go over the cam. But the cam he wank his eye to the other fellers, much as to say, ‘See me fix him!’ and then he huncht his back up real sudden, and tript the kang, which turned a flip flop and lit on his head an pretty near broke the spine of his back.

“When Adam was told about it he said to the cammel: ‘Let me see how you done it.’

“The cam he huncht his self up again, the same way, and Ad he lifted up his hands and made some passes in the air and said: ‘Presto, abricadabbry, wheel You jest stay that way while the stars hold their courses in the fermament and the seasons on earth is bad for the crops.’ *li* So the cammel is hunchy to this day, and his countnence is deep graven with lines of care and sorry.”

But if Adam had saw Billy lick Sammy Doppy for his doin that to me when we played leap frog he would have said, Adam would: “What simpleness! Why didnt I think to do that to the cam?”

FLIES

FLIES is 3 kinds, butter, and fire, and jest flies. The butter he is first a tadpole, and then he is a crisanthmum, and bime bi he is a real butter, but not a goat. Mister Pitchel, thats the preacher, he says that the butter fly a bustin out of the crisanthmum state in to a new life prooves that we have imortle souls, but my father he says what is prooved by the butty dyin pretty soon after?

Once me and Uncle Ned and Missy, thats my sister, we was in the garden and there was a butter fly, and Missy she said why was they like girls, meanin that they are fond of flowers, or is pretty, or some sech rot.

Uncle Ned he spoke up and said: “Cause its good fun to chase them, but it spiles them to catch them.”

He says 2 men which had been in a election riot was goin to their homes in the country one night, and one said to the other: “Let me lean on you, and what ever happens dont you desert a old friend.”

When they had gone a mile or 2 that way the other feler he said: “Dont you feel any better now?”

The staggery man he said: “No, not much, Ime a fraid I will drop. It must been a awfle blow, not any pain for to speak of, but Ime a seein stars till this minute!”

Then the other feller he seen how it was, cause it was only jest the fire flies, which was evry where, and he said to his self: “A wise man cant make no body wise, but a fool can make a fool of a other man.”

When it is a hot day my father he lies down for to sleep. He snores a while, and then he wakes up and says: “Cuss them flies! Johnny, bring me the *Tribune”* and puts it over his face like it was a tent and his nose was the center pole. One day I give him the *Times,* which Mister Brily, thats the fat butcher, had sent around a calfs toung, and when my father he waked and seen what paper it was he said: “Johnny, dident you know what paper this thing is?”

I said I did, and he said: “Dont you know that flies is better than the *Times?”* Then I said: “Yes, father, but there was a wops.”

Father he thought a long time, and final he said: “Well, my son, you know what I think of flies, and you know what I think of news papers, and particklar you know what I think of the New York *Times,* but, Johnny, if there was a wops, and you heard it say that it was a goin to sit on your fathers nose and sting him deep in both his beutiful eyes, and your sister was a wearin the *Tribune* for to improve her figgure, I will over look your fault this time if you get out of this real quick."

So I jumpt out of the door jest as he flang a book at me.

The Bible it says thou shall be kind to thy father, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven, but the wicked shall have eternle life.

MUNKYS

A MAN had a pet munky, and the mans boy hated the munky cause it done every thing which he done his self. One terrible cold winter evenin the boy got 2 buckets of water and set them out doors. Then he got a piece of rope and tied it around him under his jacket and let the end hang down like it was a tail, and then he set down on the edge of one bucket and let the rope hang in the water. The munky it looked on, and then it tost its head, contemptible, much as to say it could do that too, and it went to the other bucket and done it. Then the water it froze and the boy he untied the rope and went in the house, but the munky couldent untie its tail, and it stayd there and in the mornin it was froze to death.

When the man found the dead munk he swore awful, cause he liked him, but the boy he come up and put his kanuckle in his eye, like he was cryin, and said: “Poor little feller, what a pity he died jest as he had got most out.”

Mister Gipple he says there was a painter, and he painted a picture of a awfle hiddeous babboon, and he was mighty homely his own self. His wife she hadnt see the picture, cause she was pretty and didnt care for art. One day the painter he looked in the parlor where his wife was, and said: “Ime a goin out, and shant be back till a long time,” for he was takin the picture of the bab to the mans house which had bought it. But when he got there the man was too sick abed for to look at it, so he brought it back home, the painter did, and as he was a passin the parlor window he looked in and seen his wife a sleep in her chair, facin the window.

Then the painter he said to hisself: “I will give her a good scare.” So he set the picture on the window sil out side, like it was a lookin in, and then he let his self in the house with a lach key, and set down by his wife, and took her hand and prest it mighty lovin, and she smiled in her sleep and mummered “Dear Henry,” which wasnt his name. After a while she opend her eyes and seen the picture of the bab a lookin in to the window. She started like she was shot dead, and with out lookin round she cried out: “O my! he has come back. Get under the piano!”

Now what is the sense of sech a story as that? But the rhi nosey rose is the king of beasts.

Jack Brily, which is the wicked sailor, he says one time him and the captin of his ship and the bosen they went a shore on a sawage iland for to look for coco nuts. While Jack was a little way from the captin and the bosen the natif niggers they come and catched them fellers and took them away and sinked the boat.

Then they come back and run towards Jack for to catch him too, but Jack he stood on his head and made frightfle faces. So they said he was a god, and led him to their king, which showed him great respeck and took his does off and had him painted green and yellow, and set him on a clay throne and worshipt him while he continude to make mouths frequent.

That night the natif niggers made a great feast of stew and Jack, which set by the king said: “What is it made of?”

The king said: “It is horse, which is the noblest of birds.”

So Jack, which was mighty hungry, he took a big wood spoon and fished round in the stew pot, and pretty soon brought up a lether belt, and a shoe string, and a finger ring. Then he suddenly leeped to his feets like a thing of life, and turned a hand spring, and roled his eyes awful, and shouted: “Rash mortlel Horse is forbid to be et by gods, and you have stewed it with the harness on! Fetch me some roasted munky this minute, with the tail on, or I will make your nose grow to your hand!”

Jack says he stayed on the iland 5 years and was fed so much munky that when he excaped to a ship he scampered up the riggin and leeped from mast to mast and chattered srill!

BEARS

BEARS spend the winter in hollow logs and dont eat any thing till they come out in the spring. One fine spring day a bear come out of a farmers barn yard and the farmer he see him. Then the farmer said to his boy: “Jim, you go and tackle that feller and we will have his hide. He will be easy prey, for he is so thin that he cant cast a shadow.”

The boy said: “Of course lie do it if you say so, but he is castin a mighty black shaddow all the same.”

The farmer he said: “Non sense, that is the shadow of one of our calfs. He has et it.”

One time me and Billy was to the Zoo, and Billy went to the bears den. The bear sat up and made a lap and Billy he lit a fire cracker and threw it in the bears lap. The bear looked down at the cracker, which was a smokin in his fur, and then cocked his head, real knowin, much as to say: “You cant fool me, that aint no pea nut.”

But when the cracker went off you never have saw such a crazy bear!

Fire crackers is fine, but give me the canons roar, and the chargers nay, and the flags a floppin in the breez, and heaps of slain!

Uncle Ned says once in Indy when him and his dog was a strolin on the bank of the Gangee a bear come out of the jingle and started for to swim across. When the dog seen some thing in the water he jumpt in for to fetch it out, with out thinkin particlar what it might be, but it was the bears head. But when the dog had pretty near catched up with it it turned round and give him a smile, like sayin: “Its awfle good of you to take sech a friendly intrest in a stranger. When we get to the other side lie ask you to dinner, and we will have dog.”

But when the dog seen how things was he rememberd a previous engagement, and Uncle Ned says there wasnt never any body which tried so hard for to be punctual.

Yestday was Valentines day and some wicked feller he sent me one which was the ugliest ever see. It is drew with a pen, and its me a settin on a Noays ark with wooden animals before me, and me a writin about them with my toung out and my legs twisted to gather like grape vines, but not a bit like me, more like Billy. There is a big jackus a standin behine me with his mouth to my ear, like he was a whisperin in school, and this is the poetry which is under the pictur, bad spellin and all, I never see such fool poetry!

Now here you are, Johnny, and heres Uncle Ned, Composing your stories all out of his head.

With Genius behind you and Nature before, No truth can “kanock” you, no mystery “flore., You’re true as a clock to your subject — at least, You write about beasts, and you write like a beast.

When I got that I took it strait to Uncle Ned, and when he had read it he looked mighty mad. Then I said: “Uncle Ned, what becomes of wicked fellers souls when they die?”

Uncle Ned he said: “Johnny, that is a question which will keep till you have a optunity to see for your self. This gum dasted villin says no mystry can flore you, but I guess its just as well not to go out of your way for to tackle mystries which are peaceful disposed. I respeck your motive in askin the riddle, cause it is the same which under lies the holy religion of the Pattigonions, but the Bible it says for us to love our enmies, cause they dont know any better. So I move we forgive this feller and content our selfs with the hope that what ever is done to him in a other and bitter world it will be good and plenty.”

Thats all I know bout bears to day, but Billy he can crow like a cockadoodle, and the Bible it says let us be up and doin.

THE TAIL END

UNCLE NED he said yesterday did I know what was up. I said the girafts head was upper than any thing. Then he said, Uncle Ned did: “Thats so, Johnny, but what I mean is do you know what is a goin for to happen in this house, right under your 2 eyes?”

Then I looked at my sister to see if she knew, but she was red in the face, like she was a lobster, and I said why didnt she set further away from the fire, but mother she said: “Never mind your sister, Johnny, your uncle is talkin to you, why dont you anser?”

So I told him no, I didnt know what was goin for to happen, less Billy was a goin to get a lickin, and he said: “That’s a safe guess, but wihat I mean is you are to have a new brother.”

I said: “Hooray, I vote we name him Tommy!”

Uncle Ned he beganned for to laugh, and mother she said: “Edard, if you have got any thing to say to Johnny why dont you say it like you was a man of sense, Johnny, you hush this minnute, where did Billy put them sizzors, I think baby is awoke, and that roast has got to be took out of the uven fore it burns.” And then she walked out of the room like a thing of life.

When she was gone, and Missy too, Uncle Ned he stoppd laughin and said: “Johnny, you have made a mess of this thing. Its nothin but jest only that your sister is a goin to be married.”

I said would it be for long, and after a while he said: “I give it up, ask me a easier one.” Last night we had supper late, but I was let stay up, and I et so much frute cake that I fell a sleep in my chair at the table, and what do you bet I dreamed? I thought I was a settin all alone at a other long table, and pretty soon all the animals which I had wrote about come in and set theirselfs down in the chairs. There was a ephalent, and a rhi nosey rose, and a giraft, and a wale, and a hi potamus, and a eagle, and a cammle, and a ostridge, and a big snake, and a rat, and a cow, and a ri nupple dinky, and a dog, and a cracky dile, and a munky, and evry kind of feller which roams the plain. I said to my own self: *lt* I guess this is Noahs ark and its beginnin for to rain.” Each animal had its feed before it, what ever it liked best. The ephalent had pea nuts, and the bear had ginger bread, and the giraft had a wether cock off a steeple, and the ostridge had some black smith tools, and the rat it was a eatin some Dutch cheese on a trap, and the cow had a holly hock, and the tagger had a cow, and the snake had a tagger, and the cracky dile had a natif nigger, you never seen such a fine dinner, and Missy was a waitin on the gests with a white veil on and some orang owtang blossoms. Jest as she was a passin Jack Brily to the shark, the wale, which was eatin scum longside of me at the head of the table, stood up on his tail, the wale did, and he had a boat full of wine under his fin, like it was a cup. The wale he blowed a while, and then he bellerd like a organ, and bime by he spoke up and said: "Ladys and gents, it isent any use me tellin you why we have met together to night, cause you know all about it. You know, too, that we havent ever had a square deal from the relatives of our friend the gorilly, which calls theirselfs yuman beins. They have been aginst us from the first, and shiver my timbers if I dont believe thay would send us all to the bottom if they had the power!

Blow me tight, if I wouldnt rather be a native of Nantucket than any one of them! We hav had only but just 2 friends in the whole damb outfit. One was old Noah, which wasent any use to me, and the other we have with us this evening, our distingished guest, a true friend which under stands us, the only yuman bein which has ever saw the point of our jokes and the beauty of our moral charackters. Ime sure we all hopes that his yarns mark the dawn of a new ery, and men will lam from them that we aint sech bad fellers as some Of us looks — meanin no offense to my friend the pecock; though I dont go so fur as to say that I approove certain dishes which I see bein et at this table, particklar by that shark. And now, ladys and gents, I have the honor to ask you to join me in drinkin a bumper to our ship mate, our guest, our friend, Little Johnny." Then they all stood up and drinked, and then a old rooster, which was to the other end of the table, he flopped his wings and crowed out "Three cheers for Little Johnny!" which was give by all present, each feller in the languidge that he had been teached at his mothers knee. This made such a awful noise, that it woked me up, and my sister was a pullin my ear for time to go to bed.

When I was in my bed and she was in hern the door between us was open and I said "Missy."

She said: "Hold your tungue, you bad boy, what was you a going to say?"

I said: "Missy, are you a goin to be married?" and she said: "No, you little goose, why not?"

Then I said: "Missy, I know you are, and marryin is poligamy and means movin into a other house. When you have done it I want you to do me a partickler favor."

She said no, indeed she wouldnt, what was it?

Then I spoke up and said "Missy, when you go for to live in your other house I want you to take your young man and let him live there too, cause he comes here so much to see Uncle Ned that he is a gum dasted nusance!"

And she said she would if she died for it.

The Bible it says that fellers which are nusances shall arise from the dead. And thats why I say eat drink and be merry, for to-morrow you dont. But a pigs tail, nice roasted is the king of beasts..

TWO ADMINISTRATIONS

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A PROVISIONAL SETTLEMENT

McK*inley, a President. Sagasta, a Prime Minister. Aguinaldo, a Patriot.*

SAGASTA — Senor Presidente, you are very good, and you will find that Spain is not unreasonable. I have instructed my peace commissioners to concede quite a number of the demands that yours will probably make.

McKinley — And the others?

SAG. — Why, of course, Senor, a demand that is not conceded is refused.

McK. — But if my commissioners have the sorrow to insist?

SAG. — In that case Spain knows how to defend her honor.

McK. — How, for example?

SAG. — If need be, with the naked breasts of her sons!

McK. — My good friend, you err widely. The thing which there may be a dispute about is not Spanish honor, but Spanish soil.

SAG. — In every square foot of which, Senor Porco — I mean Presidente — Spanish honor is rooted.

McK. — Sir, I shall consult my Secretary of Agriculture as to the desirability of annexing land which produces a crop like that. But this is your day to be dull: can you really suppose that in permitting you to have peace commissioners I expected them to claim the right of dissent? However these matters may be debated, there is but one deciding power — the will of the American Executive.

SAG. — Senor, you forget. Supreme over all, there is God!

McK. — O, I don’t know. He’s not the only —

SAG. — Holy cats!
[Enter Aguinaldo.]

McK. — First of all, Senor Prime Minister, you must renounce the island of Luzon, and —

AGUINALDO — Yes, Senor, that being the most important island of the group, and the one in which you have not now even a foothold, its renunciation will naturally precede that of the others, as my great and good ally is pleased to suggest. With regard to Luzon you have only to say, “We renounce”; I, “We accept.”

McK. — Please have the goodness to hold your tongue.

AG. — With both hands, your Excellency.

McK. — Second, Senor, you must assure a liberal government to the other islands.

SAG. — With great pleasure, your Excellency; quite cheerfully.

McK. — Please do not wink. Third, there must be —

AG. — Excuse me; I was brought up a Spanish subject. What is a liberal government?

McK. — That is for Spain to decide.

AG. — I don’t see what Spain will have to do with it.

McK. — My friend, you slumber — peaceful be thy dreams. Third, there must be complete separation of church and state.

SAG. — What! a Diabolocracy? You shock me!

McK. — Fourth, none of the islands, nor any part of them, is to be ceded to any foreign nation without the consent of the United States.

AG. — You understand, Senor — you heat that! Spain can never again acquire a square foot of these islands, not even by reconquest or a corrupt bargain with a recreant Filipino dictator, for she will again have to reckon with our powerful protectors, whom may the good God reward 1

McK. — The trouble with you is, you talk too much. Fifth, the United States must have in the Philippines equal commercial privileges with Spain.

AG. — Equal? May I never again run amuck if they shall not have superior! Why, I have it in mind to issue a proclamation closing every port to the ships of Spain. As to the United States, commercial primacy is a small reward for their assistance in the closing scene of our successful rebellion.

SAG. — Of course, as you say, I shall have to accept whatever terms you have the great kindness to offer. As I understand your proposal, Spain retains all the islands but Luzon; that is to belong to the United States, and —

AG. — What!

SAG. — This worthy Oriental appears to be laboring under a misapprehension.

McK. — I know of nothing else that could make an Oriental labor.

AG. — Senores, the language of diplomacy is to me an unfamiliar tongue: I have imperfectly understood — pardon me. Is it indeed intended that the United States shall take Luzon and Spain take all else?

McK.—” Retain” is the word.

AG.—”Retain?” Why, that means to keep, to hold what is already possessed. What you gentlemen have in possession in this archipelago is the ground covered by the feet of your soldiers. Now, what right have you, Senor Presidente, to the island of Luzon? The right of conquest? You have not conquered it.

McK. — My dear fellow, you distress me. I conquered this gentleman, and he is going to be good enough to give me the island as a testimonial of his esteem.

AG. — But he doesn’t own it. I had taken it away from him before you defeated him — all but the capital, and by arrangement with your man Dewey —

SAG. — Caram — !

AG. — I assisted to take that. Why, he supplied me with arms for the purpose!
Sag. — Arms with which I had had the unhappiness to supply *him.*

AG. — What is my reward? I am driven from the city which I assisted to conquer, and you take not only that but the entire island, which you had no hand in conquering.

SAG. *(aside)* — Faith! he'll conquer it before he gets it.

McK. — My friend, you are a Malay, with a slight infusion of Chinese, Hindu and Kanaka. Naturally, you cannot understand these high matters.

AG. — I understand this: We Filipinos rebelled against Spain to liberate our country from oppression. We wrested island after island, city after city, from her until Manila was virtually all that she had left. As we were about to deprive her of that and regain the independence which, through four hundred years of misrule, she had denied us we experienced a dire mischance. You quarreled with her because she denied independence to Cuba. Spanish dominion, which we had stabbed, was already dead, but you arrived just in time to kick the corpse while it was yet warm, and for this service you propose to administer upon the estate, keeping the most valuable part for your honesty. You will then revive the dead, buried and damned and reinstate him in possecsion of the remainder!

McK. *(aside)* — O, will I?

SAG. — Apparently, Senor Presidente, this worthy person is afflicted with a flow of language. *(Aside)* The Porco Americano has the habit of blushing.

McK. *(to Sagasta)* — Yes, the Filipino always has his tongue in his ear. *(To Aguinaldo)* Proceed with the address.

AG. — It is as if the French, having assisted your forefathers to independence, had kept Boston and all New England for themselves and restored the other colonies to Great Britain. If the Good Samaritan, arriving while the man fallen among thieves was still struggling with them, had assisted him to beat them off, had then taken his purse and delivered him to the thieves again you would have had a Scriptural precedent.

SAG. *(writing in a notebook*)—”At a certain temperature the Porco Americano can sweat.”

McK. — My great and good friend, you seem to have your climate with you, as well as your chin. I must beg you to abridge your oration against manifest destiny.

AG. — Destiny was a long time manifesting herself, but she has not been idle since. In the last four months you have torn up the three American political Holy Scriptures: Washington’s Farewell Address, the Monroe Doctrine and the Declaration of Independence. You now stand upon the fragments of the last and declare it an error that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. In Hawaii you are founding a government on the consent of less than three per centum of the governed. In my country you propose to found one government and restore another against the unanimous dissent of eight millions of people whom you cheated into an alliance to that end. You cajoled them into assisting at the cutting of their own throats. Your only justification in making this war at all was Spain’s denial in Havana of the political principle which you now repudiate in Honolulu and Manila. Senores, we shall resist both the American and the Spanish occupation. You will be allies — embrace!
[Exit Sagasta.’] McK. — My dear boy, you are unduly alarmed: the notion of letting Spain keep those other islands is merely a Proposal Retractable — in undiplomatic language, an offer with a string to it.

AG. — And your plan of holding Luzon — after taking it?

McK. — Rest in peace: that is only what we call an Intention Augmentable.

AG. — Ah, Senor, you make me so happy!

ASPIRANTS THREE

The Incumbent. *The Born Candidate*. *The Ambitious Mariner*.

INCUMBENT:
Sir Admiral, ‘twas but two years ago I turned you loose against a feeble foe, Gave you a chancc to write your unknown name In shouting letters on the scroll of fame, Stood by you with a firmness almost sinful, Fed you with honors till you had a skinful, Plied you with praise till drunk as any lord — And this, George Dewey, this is my reward! So drunken with success you seem to be That you have visions of succeeding — Me!

AMBITIOUS MARINER:
Why, blast my tarry toplights! what’s this row?
And which of you is speaking, anyhow?

INCUMBENT (*aside)*:
He thinks I am beside myself. Alas, He sees, as through the bottom of a glass, Darkly. Strange how this pirate of the main With an eye single to his private gain Beholds things double! Would that I, poor worm, Could see in duplicate my four years’ term. The fellow’s looked too long upon the cup — I’ll get behind his back and trip him up, Break his damned neck, and then the tale repeat Of how, poor man, he fell o’er his own feet. That’s politics.
[Enter Born Candidate.] Good Heavens, I am caught!

BORN CANDIDATE:
Hello, McPresident!

INCUMBENT:
Did you see aught Suspicious in my actions?

BORN CANDIDATE:
Well, I guess There might have been an aspirant the less If I had longer stayed where I was “at.”

INCUMBENT:

And may I venture to ask where was that?

BORN CANDIDATE:
Along the roadside, hidden in the rye To see the famous Admiral go by.
A look had done me good if I had got one. It happened, by the by, I had a shotgun.

AMBITIOUS MARINER *(to Born Candidate):*
Shiver my timbers! you’re a dandy crimp — That figure-head of yours would scare a shrimp.

INCUMBENT *(to Born Candidate)*:
Let’s try less candid measures to remove him: Moral dissuasion would perhaps improve him.
We can (when he’s not full of “old October”)
Appeal from Dewey drunk to Dewey sober.

BORN CANDIDATE *(to Incumbent)*:
Said like a lawyer (‘tis a grand profession!) But that appellate court is ne’er in session.

AMBITIOUS MARINER *(aside)*:
They think me half seas over. That’s all right —
I’m full, but what I’m full of is just fight.
(Aloud, scowling): Some sailor men — rough fellows from the fleet —
Followed me here. They’re waiting in the street.
They’re loyal, but in temper they’re unsteady And *[goes to the window and speaks* ow/] Gridley, you may fire when you are ready.
[Cannon within. Exeunt, hurriedly, Incumbent and Born Candidate.]
That’s all — I never had the least intention Of facing a political convention.

AT SANTIAGO

Torah Shafter.

TORAL — Ah, Senor, it was an anxious night — that of July 2. The angel of sleep did not visit me, and my pillow — I shame not to say it — was wet with tears.

SHAFTER — Me too. I never swore so much in my life. I tried every way to sleep, but couldn't make it go.
Tor. — How sad! Senor, we are no longer enemies, and we are alone. May I hope that Heaven will put it into your heart to tell me why *you* slept not that unhappy night?
SH. — That's an easy one: I had made up my mind to demand your surrender.

TOR. — Ah, what a tender heart; what sensibility! It pained you, the thought of humiliating me.
SH. — Not a bit of it; what worried me was the fear that you would refuse.

TOR. — And then there would be such — what you call effusion of blood. You are all compassion.
Sh. — Effusion of nothing. If you did not surrender to me I was going to surrender to you. My army was rotten with fever. Now what kept *you* awake, old man?

TOR. — The fear tjbat you would surrender first. God o' my soul! — we could not eat you!

A CABINET CONFERENCE

Hay, Secretary of State. Root, Secretary of War. Long, Secretary of the Navy.

HAY — Ah, glad to see you, gentlemen; punctuality is the politeness of princes. I feared we should have to postpone this Conference.

LONG — Perhaps it would have been better. The newspapers have learned about it. As I entered there were seven hundred and fifty correspondents outside the door!

ROOT — The Navy Department is ever liberal in its estimates.

LONG — I'll swear there are not fewer than a dozen; you saw them yourself.

ROOT — Not I. I entered by way of the chimney.

HAY — It is useless to try to conceal our movements; they learn everything.

LONG — It is to be hoped they will not learn the purpose of this Conference.

HAY — That will depend on your discretion; mine is unquestionable.

ROOT — Is the door locked?

HAY — Sure, and the keyhole stuffed. We are absolutely inaccessible to the curiosity of the vulgar.
Long — Blast their tarry —

HAY — Mr. Secretary, I beg that you will not swear. Remember that the President is a pillar of the church.

ROOT — What church?

HAY (*scratching the head of the State De~ partment*) — I'm damned if I know. I belong myself to the Church of England.

LONG — Let us proceed to business; the crisis waits.

HAY — Gentlemen (*opening secret drawer in table),* I have the honor to put before you a — [*tumult within and beating of sticks on the door.']* What's that?

ROOT — The Filipinos! — the Filipinos! Where is Corbin?
Long — Sounds like the Democratic party.

HAY — Ah, I forgot; it is the correspondents. I have the honor to put before you, with appropriate glasses, a bottle of pure Kentucky Bourbon fifty-five years old — a gift from Governor Taylor to the President.
As the President drinks nothing —
Long — What!

ROOT — What!

HAY — He drinks nothing from this bottle. I intercepted it.
[They drink and repeat. The Conference adjourns. Exeunt omnes. Enter the Public Press.]

The Public Press — There was a consultation at the State Department this afternoon among Secretaries Hay, Root and Long, the latter two of whom had been sent for in great haste. Extraordinary precautions to secure secrecy were taken, but it is understood that German aggression in Brazil was discussed, and nothing is more certain than that the next few days will witness grave and startling movements of our war ships in both the North and the South Atlantic. Senator Lodge's recent alarming speech on the Navy Appropriation Bill is recalled, in connection with this subject, as is also Senator Pettigrew's significant silence. Nor is it forgotten that last week there was a persistent rumor that the Government was about to consider the advisability of taking a step of which the importance could be determined only by its character and result.

AN INDEMNITY

McK*inley, the President*. *Hay, Secretary of State*. *The Czar of Russia*. *The Sultan of Turkey*. *AH Feroush Bey, the Turkish Minister*.

ACT I

McKinley — John, have the goodness to say to the Turkish Minister that unless his Government pays up we shall send a fleet to the Dardanelles.

HAY — Yes, but would it not be better to say *through* the Dardanelles?

McK. — I don’t know about that. One does not like to promise more than one may be able to perform. Admiral Dewey tells me there is a doubt about getting through; the strait is fortified at every turn.

H. — Why, Admiral Dewey said, *apropos* of the Nicaragua canal, that fortifications were worthless — that they only invited attack!

McK. — That was when he was standing by the Administration. He is now an aspirant to the Presidency, and dares to say what he thinks.

H. *(aside)* — Great Scott! I’d give ten years of life — nay, more: six weeks of office — for the same courage.

McK. — John, what are you muttering in your beard?

H. — A prayer for your health.

McK. *(aside)* — Ah, yes, I suffer from Hay fever.
[Observing him about to sneeze, Hay gives himself the happiness of taking snuff.]

ACT II

HAY — I greet your Excellency with rapture.

ALI Feroush Bey — May your wives be as the leaves of the forest.

H. — May it please your Excellency, the President says that if your august master finds it inconvenient to pay that little account he need not hurry.
A. F. B. — Allah forbid that the Light of the Universe should hurry about anything!

H. — The matter will keep, and an ultimatum delivered about the first week in November would —
A. F. B. — May jackasses sing on your grandmother's grave! Do you think you can use the Brother of the Prophet to further your cursed election schemes? I shall advise that the bill be paid at once.

H. — Exalted sir, I fear you are pleased to talk through your turban. But I pray that you will permit me to withdraw. I must acquaint the President with your answer.
[Exit Hay.]
A. F. B. — The devil go with him! If I had him in Stamboul he'd be walking on wood!

ACT III

McK. — John, did you deliver my ultimatum to the Turkish Minister?

HAY — Aye, that I did! And not only did I say we should send a fleet into the Dardanelles, but I ventured to add that Colonel Bryan would go into commission at once.

McK. — And did he say that he would advise his august what-does-he-call-him to pay down on the nail?

H. — I am pained to say that he did not. He said that he would see you in

Helfurst.

McK. — Where is that? — it sounds Dutch.

H. — Yes; it is a town in Pennsylvania.

McK. — Well, I'll meet him there and talk it over if you think the character of our ultimatum permits.

H. — Certainly; it is the Ultimatum Tentative.

ACT IV

THE SULTAN *(by telegraph)* — Your Majesty, would you be so good as to lend a poor fellow the price of a few American missionaries?

THE CZAR — God forbid! You must be more economical. Do you think I'm made of money?

SULTAN — But really —

CZAR — Yes, yes, I know. Your creditors are pressing you, and all that. And you'll promptly repay the loan — in a Golden Horn. I've heard it before.

SULTAN — By the toe-nails of the Prophet! if I get not the money, that dog of darkness, the American President, will be after me with a sharp stick; and he'll do, and he'll do, and he'll do! He has already delivered his ultimatum.

CZAR — What! Is it so serious as that? My poor friend, I am sorry for you. You are in for it, sure! In American diplomacy the ultimatum is a prophecy of doom; you will be talked to death!

SULTAN — Then lend me the money.
Czar — It is decreed otherwise. Kismet.

SULTAN — But what am I to do? Talked to death! — that is disagreeable.

CZAR — Build a mosque in which to pray that Heaven may put it into his heart to send a fleet to Constantinople and commute your punishment to bombardment.

SULTAN — May jackals whelp in his harem! — that is what he says he will do.

CZAR — Build two mosques.

FOR INTERVENTION

President McKinley. Envoy Fischer.
Secretary Gage. Voices.

PRESIDENT MCKINLEY — Well, Meinherr, what can we do for each other?

Envoy Fischer — Haf your Egcellenzy not vas inform of vhat I vants?

P. McK. — My Secretary of State says you bear a petition for promoting missionary work in Africa, but he is a great diplomat and not always to be believed.

E. F. — Your Egcellenzy, I coom to ask for Amerigan onterventionings between der Soud Ofrigan Ropoobligs und der dom Preetish.

P. McK. — Jeewhillikins!

E. F. — Vas?

P. McK. — Did my Secretary of State know that? And he let you in?

E. F. — Yaw, your Egcellenzy.

P. McK. — Well, I'll be gam doodled! — pardon; I mean I'll be delighted. We call it gam doodled.

E. F. — Yaw, I shbeak der Amerigan longvidge very goot meinself all der vhile somdimes yet.

P. McK. — Beautifully.

E. F. — Der Soud Ofrigan Ropoobligs dey sooffer demselfs mooch. As your Segretary of Shtate he say, Gread Bridain she don'd do a teeng to us. Sheneral Yowbert —

P. McK. — Zhoobair.

E. F. — Yowbert he is die of belly ache again, und Sheneral Cronje gif oop som more, und Sheneral Botha he droonk like a fittler's —

P. McK. — And larrups the soldiers with a slambangbok.

E. F. — Yaw, yaw, und Bresident Kruger he vas vun olt ladies, und der Preetish is aferyvheres, und Vebster Dafis don'd vas wort his monies, und —

P. McK.—"Oond," in short, you fellows are licked out of your boots.

E. F. — Vas?

P. McK. — I was saying that, in the sympathetic judgment of this country, your admirable people are experiencing an unforeseen adversity.

E. F. — Lort Roperts haf onvaded our sagred soil und he vil nod led go.

P. McK. — My great and good friend, pardon me, but didn't your people begin that?

E. F. — We haf tvice unpology made, but Lort Soolsbury he vill not occept.

P. McK. — How strange!

E. F. — Ve oppeals on der great und goot Yongee heart, vich lofes us. It vas vun grand receptions vich der Amerigan beobles vas gif us under Ny Yark som dayl
P. McK. — Yes, it was. I have here a list of names of the Reception Committee, which [*enter Secretary Gage*] I will read to you. *[Reads'],* Secretary Gage — Mr. President, may I ask if that list of names was copied from the books of the Commissioner of Immigration at Ellis Island?

P. McK. — O, no: they are names of exponents of American public sentiment. They "received" this honest gentleman.

S. G. (*eyeing honest gentleman)* — Well, I fancy it would be more blessed to give him than receive.

E. F. — But, your Egcellenza, shall ve haf der onterventionings alreaty yet? I burn mit ombatience!

P. McK. *(to servant)* — The gentleman burns. Put him out.

[Exit Envoy Fischer, pursued.]

VOICES (*within)* — Hurrah! Hurrah for the Boer Republic!

P. McK. — There must be an unusual number of Congressmen in the waiting room.

THE ORDEAL

An Historian. *Clio*.
Historian *(writing)*—"The Yanko-Spanko war was brief, but very destructive. In the two or three months that it lasted the Americans had more than three thousand soldiers and a half-dozen sailors killed by the Spaniards and—"

CLIO — Tut-tut! no romancing; less than three hundred were killed.

H. *(writing*)—"Their own officers. Armed with repeating incompetences, the latter were indeed formidable." Did you speak?

C. — No.

H. *(writing*)—"An effort was made to hold the commanding officers of the expeditionary forces responsible for the mortality among their troops, but ended in failure, for it could not be determined who was in command."
Clio, dear, who was in command at Santiago?

C. — First Linares, then Toral.

H. — I mean, who commanded the Americans.

C. — I don't know.

H. — What are you the Muse of History for if you don't know such a thing as that?

C. —— Ask me who really built the Great Pyramid, and why. Ask me who wrote the "Junius" letters. Ask me who was the Man in the Iron Mask. Ask me what Browning meant. Ask me anything in reason, but don't ask me who commanded the American army in the Yanko-Spanko war. Settle it by turning a coin. You'll be as likely to be right as wrong, and in History that will give good results. The historian who in the long run tells the truth half the time is a great historian.

H. *(turning coin)* — Head, Miles; tail, Shafter.

C. — Well?

H. — It is a smooth coin! (*Writes)* “The army before Santiago had no commander.”

FROSTING A BUD

McK*inley, President. Hay, Secretary of State. Mark Hanna, Senator and!Dictator Politicus.*

*McK*inley — John, I am greatly troubled.

HAY — Permit me to send for the head of the Bureau of Exculpation and Avoidance.

McK. — Not to-day; it is another kind of matter.

H. — Ah, then; the Lord High Disheartener of the Importunate —

McK. — No, no, John, it is about you.

H. — About me? Surely, you do not mean — you cannot think that another change in the Cabinet —

McK. — May you be Secretary of State for a thousand years.

H. — Then speak it out. I have a heart for any fate except one.

McK. — Well, it is this: I have not seen *not* heard of anybody who seems to want you for VicePresident. Actually, your name has not been mentioned except by myself.

H. — And to whom were you pleased to mention it, if I may ask?

McK. — To Senator Hanna.

H. — And am I worthy to know what he said?

McK. — It will pain you, John. Mr. Hanna is a strong, coarse man who says what he thinks and never stops to think what he says.

H. — What did he say?

McK. — That you would make a good running mate for a lame tortoise.

H. — Indeed!

McK. — He added that you had been drowned by the British Ambassador in the Nicaragua Canal.

H. — Anything more?

McK. — He said that you parted your beard on the Greenwich meridian.

H. — Yes.

McK. — He said that if asininity had not been invented you would invent it.
[Enter Mark Hanna. Exit, McKinley.]
Mark Hanna — Good-morning, Mr. Secretary.

H. — What is your business with me, sir?
M. H. — Why, John, I came to ask you if you would accept the nomination for VicePresident.

H. — After what you said to the President on that subject, sir —
M. H. — It has never been mentioned between us.

H. — Ho-o-o-wat!
[Falls in a fit of shivers.] M. H. — The gentleman appears to be indisposed. Guess he was struck by a draft from the Open Door.

A BAFFLED AMBITION

McK*inley, President. Roosevelt, Vice-President. Hay, Secretary of State. Doorkeeper*.

ROOSEVELT — Mr. President, I have come to consult with you about —

McKINLEY — Why, yes, of course. I expect always to consult with the leading men of the party — you and the others.

R. — Others?

McK. — In the great scheme of the universe Heaven has provided others.

R. — There are also snakes and flies, but we do not accord them a voice in the ordering of large affairs.

McK. — There is my Cabinet.

R. — Nice chaps — they will, no doubt, be glad to carry out any policy that we may decide upon.

McK. — Then I understand that in the guidance and direction of this administration you have the goodness to care to be the Whole Thing?

R. — You do me the greatest injustice *(lifting his eyes to the sky and reverently pointing in the same direction*). There is a greater than I.

McK. — Have you any other news?

R. — I have read your message from start to finish.

McK. — Indeed! And what do you think of it?

R. — The worst I ever! It does not at all express my views on the —

McK. — The views expressed are supposed to be those of the President.

R. — The devil!

McK. — I beg pardon. The President.

R. — But where do I come in?

McK. — Into what? The White House? Where the cat does, I think. The other entrances are guarded.

R. — Look here, pardner, I mean to be a part of this administration.

McK. — With that hat? — .

R. — What’s the matter with the hat?

McK. — The head. [*Rings bell, enter Hay.]* Mr. Secretary, this gentleman has the goodness to wish to resign and become a part of the administration. Is there a vacancy in the Cabinet?

HAY — You can easily make one, sir, by appointing him.
[Exit Roosevelt, swearing.]
The Russian Ambassador has called to talk of a concerted movement on Peking, to rescue the besieged legations.

McK. — Never mind that now — let us have peace.
[Enter Doorkeeper, pale and agitated.]

DOORKEEPER — O, if you please, sir, the gentleman with the teeth!

McK. — Well?

D. —— He — he showed ‘em!

McK. — Well?

D. —— He — he drawed a bowie knife! If you please, sir, I — I’d like another place.

McK. — You are right, my good man. You shall be Minister to China.

THE GENESIS OF A NATION

Hay, Secretary of State. Morgan, a Southern Senator. Telephone.

MORGAN — Mr. Secretary, I have startling and important news: the State of Panama has seceded from Colombia!

HAY — You don't say so! — this is so sudden!
Mor. — Yes, sir, it is true.

HAY — Well, well! Who would have thought it?
Mor. — I trust, sir, this removes the last scruple that the Administration may have had against immediate construction of the Nicaraguan Canal. The war down there will —

HAY — War? Is there also a war?
Mor. — Sir, you astonish me! Am I to suppose that you do not know that secession entails war? I learned that more than forty years ago.

HAY — Dear me! Then we shall have to protect American interests. How do you think it would do to send word to our Consul at Colon to be duly vigilant in the matter?
Or perhaps it would be better to have our Minister at Bogota notify Colombia that there must be no bloodshed.

MOR. — I think, if you want to know, that that would be taking the side of Panama.

HAY — We cannot, of course, do that: it would look like a violation of neutrality. Really, the situation is embarrassing. I wish those hot-headed southern Republics would be good.

MOR. — Well, sir, if you have nothing to propose, I shall speak of the matter in the Senate.

HAY — Oh, thank you so much. I promise you that we will await the conclusion

of your remarks before taking any action in the Nicaraguan matter.
Mor. *(aside)* — Hoist with my own petard!
[Exit Morgan; Hay goes to telephone.]

HAY — Hello! Give me the Secretary of the Navy.
Telephone — Br-r-r-r-rrr.

HAY — That you, Moody? Have you sent those fifteen warships to the Isthmus? — and the two thousand marines? And have they orders that if any Colombian soldier set foot on the sacred soil of Panama they are to shoot him on the spot?

TEL. — Br-r-r-r-rzz — spot him on the snoot.

HAY — All right. I'll draft a canal treaty with the Panaman Junta at once. The President has his ear to the ground and says that there is a pretty strong sentiment down there in favor of admittance into this Union. Truly this is a wonderful century.

TEL. — People are saying that we fomented this Panama rebellion.

HAY — Oh, Moody; how unjust!

A WHITE HOUSE IDYL

President Roosevelt. Shonts, Engineer of the Panama Canal. Loeb, Private Secretary to the President. The Adversary of Souls. The Press.

ACT I

PRESIDENT *(solus)*:
There!—'tis to be a lock canal. Now let The dirt fly.
[Enter Shonts.]

SHONTS:
Very well, sir, don't you fret; It will, right speedily, I'm sure. But I — I'm getting out of this concern. I fly!
[Exit Shonts.]

PRESIDENT:
Now let the heathen rage: their pet sea-level Canal has gone a-glimmering to the devil.
[Enter Loeb with a card.] What's this? "The Adversary." Just my luck —
Without a rake I get all kinds of muck.
Always that Democrat appears if! But mention him — I really wonder why.
Of one too many he's the one. Go say *(sighing)*
That I'll not see him — I've seen Shonts today.

LOEB:
The gentleman is in the waiting room.
I think he wants to talk about your "boom."

PRESIDENT:
Wants an appointment in my Cabinet, And there's no vacancy.

LOEB:
O — you forget —

There’s Hitchcock.
[Enter Adversary.]

PRESIDENT:
Ah, good morning, sir. Delighted!
(aside)
The fellow never waits till he’s invited.

ADVERSARY:
Sir, we have overlooked the unwritten law Forbidding a third term. You must withdraw.

PRESIDENT *(aside)*:
Come to torment me! How this horrid shape, Grinning behind his hand like any ape, Maddens to candor. *(Aloud)* Brute! you might delay Your triumph until I have had my day And nations weep, in slow procession walking —

ADVERSARY:
For him who dug the great canal by talking. ‘Twere long to wait unless your tongue were made By miracle divine into a spade.

PRESIDENT:
Take that, you beast!
[Beats him and chases him off the stage, losing his temper in the scuffle.’]

LOEB *(solus):*
The rogues fall out — *sic semper*. As honest man, I will annex his temper.
[Puts President’s temper under his coat and exit.]

ACT II

THE PRESS *(solum)*:
The President “received” last night — all smiles, Charming the throng with amiable wiles. But Loeb, with flaming eyes and flying feet, Sprang in and kicked them all into the street!

TWO FAVORITES

Wood, a Medicated Warrior. Miles, a Soldier. Satan, a Statesman. Chorus of Citizens.

MILES *(to Wood):*
Sir, I have ventured to observe with what I — hope is a becoming modesty, that not In vain have been your sacrifices, nor Quite thrown away your aptitude for war. Service and genius — these are things that count, With (if you're cavalry) the skill to mount. Somewhat, too, doubtless, it promotes your gains In rank and honors to possess the brains To know enough to go in when it rains.

WOOD:
Some know enough to note the fine effect Of sunshine on their uniform.

MILES:
Correct:
IVe keener joy to see the daybeam smite My gay attire than you to see it light Your military record. Let's get through — I'd rather bandy swords than words with you. But you're a man of peace — a doctor, sir; To save life, not to take it, you prefer; And in the Spanish War your taste was shown In saving with consummate skill your own. By that you earned, according to my notion, More leather medals, not so much promotion.

CHORUS OF CITIZENS:
By that he earned, according to our notion, More leather medals, not so much promotion.

MILES:
When you're a general in chief command, May peace dwell ever in this happy land!

CHORUS OF CITIZENS:
When he's a general in chief command, May peace dwell ever in this happy land!

WOOD:
From Santiago’s veins I drained the fever.

MILES:
When shown by Lawton how to make it leave her.

WOOD:
I washed Havana.

MILES:
Yes, you made the mud flow Right lively when you had been taught by Ludlow.

WOOD:
My service —

MILES:
‘Twas of silver, was it not? — Given you by gamblers for the Lord knows what I Well, take your honors — they’re well earned, I think, By working for yourself with printer’s ink And feats of fawning — all the arts, in fine, Whereby our peace-time heroes rise and shine.
Rather than witness more of your intrigues I’ll mount a bronco and ride thirty leagues!

WOOD:
Well, two Administrations, you’ll agree, I have been served and honored by.

SATAN:
Dear me, I’ve had the favor and support of three.

A DIPLOMATIC TRIUMPH

President Roosevelt. Secretary of State Hay.

THE PRESIDENT — Say, John, I wish you would see the Chinese Minister and tell him that Russia is complaining that China does not observe a strict neutrality. Tell him that she is imperiling her administrative entity.

SECRETARY HAY — I have already done so, sir; and I ventured to add that an oyster schooner that had just arrived from below had a very large mast.

THE P. — What the dickens had that to do with it?
S. H. — Ah, you are not skilled in the language of diplomacy; it was an oblique reference to the “big stick.” The Chink understood; he was born on one of the days before yesterday.

THE P. — And what did he say?
S. H. — Everything: put his hands into his long sleeves, crossed them on his breast and bowed three times, profoundly silent. Then he retired.

THE P. — I am from Wyoming and you’ll have to explain.
S. H. — It’s all right. I at once summoned the other Ambassadors (except the Russian and the Japanese) and told them that you had made the most forcible representations to the Chinese Empress regarding her Majesty’s breaches —

THE P. — Her what? You said *that?*
S. H. — Of neutrality. They were greatly impressed.

THE P. — What did they say?
S. H. — What could they say? They bowed and went out, one by one, leaving the door open. The Open Door is what we stand for. It is all over.

THE P. — Except the shouting.
S. H. — Secretary Loeb will see to that. He has prepared a statement of the incident for the press.

[Tumult within — cheers and fissions.]

THE P. — What’s that?
S. H. — The shouting.

A SUCKED ORANGE

The President. Root, Secretary of State.

ROOT:
O world-power President, strenuous, mightymouthed, audible, able, Director of destiny, *arbiter morum*, compeller of princes, Why this dejected demeanor, this sighing that signifies something Gone wrong with the organ wherewith you were happy aforetime? O, keep me No longer a-guessing: divulge to your faithful Elihu the hidden Vermicular monster that gnaws at the core of the executive bosom —
Nay, feeds on the damask of that which mainly attests your distinction.

PRESIDENT:
Alas, ‘tis no worm that is secretly plying the hardy incision; From troubles intestinal I and my country have present exemption —
Albeit the Democrats, turbulent ever and always disloyal, Continue to shout of political contributions, demanding A needless accounting, and some hint at restitution. My sorrow Has better foundation. King Edward of England has joined the Mikado In making a shameless alliance to tighten their grip upon Asia!

ROOT:
Why, surely, my master, we have the advantage: this compact secures us Continuous peace in the Orient, gives us the door that is open.
Prevents the partition of China — in brief it establishes firmly All that my great predecessor *(aside)* (whom the Angel of Death, in his wisdom, Removed from my path to the White House)
(aloud) so gallantly strove to accomplish.

PRESIDENT:
What’s that got to do with it, idiot? A broad-minded statesman (behold him!) O’erlooks, like a man on a stepladder, trivial and transient advantage, Discerning the meaning and menace of methods that mark the achievement.
Not once in all the proceedings that led to this hardy alliance Was uttered, or written, or thought of, the name of Theodore Roosevelt!

[*Exit*.]

ROOT *(solus):*
O, dammit! why should they consult him? — there wasn’t a roasting chestnut To pull from the fire — and his fingers still smart from the Peace of Portsmouth.

A TWISTED TALE

Roosevelt, President. Hay, Secretary of State. Cassini, Russian \Ambassador.

HAY:
Good morning, Count. Sir, are you well to-day?

CASSINI:
Quite well, I thank your Excellency. Pray
Inform me if your physical condition
Is satisfactory to your physician.

HAY:
O — no, indeed:’ I’m sounder than an apple.

CASSINI *(aside):*
The fellow’s wormy.

HAY:
Now, then, let us grapple
With “Bessarabian outrages” and such.
Some recent — ah — um — er — have pained us much.
Christians and Jews alike are up in arms
Here in America, and this alarms
The President. He tells me I’m expected
To take a firm stand till the thing’s corrected.

CASSINI:
So good of him! That means there’s trouble brewing:
If we stay wicked there’ll be “something doing.”
If, for example, we ignore your cross talk
You’ll send a monitor to Vladivostok.

HAY:
O no, my friend, it might mean more than play
If public sentiment could have its way.

Our people are so wroth it might mean war
Did naught prevent — but that’s what *I* am for.
As ‘tis, it means that an election’s coming,
And to succeed we’ve got to keep things humming.

CASSINI:
In other words, it means just nothing.

HAY:
Yes, That is about the size of it, I guess.
The Jewish vote, you understand —

CASSINI:
I see:
To help you get it you apply to me;
And my Imperial Master is the cat
To pull your chestnuts from the fire.
Well, “Scat, You beast!” is not the right command.

HAY:
My noble friend, you do not understand.
What I shall offer to you for transmission
Is nothing but a courteous petition,
Which if you pocket (*winking)* on your own head be it.
I shall have done my duty as I see it.

CASSINI:
But how about your master?

HAY:
He’s all right; He must make faces, but he need not fight.

CASSINI:
Hand in the document without delay —
‘Twill go on file. I bid you, sir, good day.
[Exit Cassini; enter Roosevelt.]

ROOSEVELT:
Well, John, I trust you broke no bones.

Did you Caution that candle-eater what we’ll do
If one more Hebrew they annoy? Does he
Clearly perceive they’ll have to deal with Me?

HAY:
Well, I should say so! Sir, I plainly said
You’d heap their land with tumuli of dead;
Hang by the heels the Czar until he’d weep
His shoes full; load the sanguinary deep
With battleships until ‘twould overwhelm
The seaboard cities of their monkey realm;
Encumber it with wrecks and floating carcasses!

ROOSEVELT:
That programme is more strenuous than Marcus’s —
Hanna, my master. *He* would never dare
To twist the tail of the fierce Russian bear.
I’m big enough to tackle any brute!
[Exit Roosevelt.)

HAY *(solus):*
I too am quite a sizable galoot.

POST MORTEM

The President. Miles, Commander of the Army. Root, Secretary of War. Loeb, Private Secretary to President. Hull, Chairman of Committee on Military Affairs. An Orderly.

ACT I

Headquarters of the Army.

MILES *(in bed):*
What ho, there! orderly — I say, I say! Bring in my breakfast. What's the time o' day? What? six o'clock! — and day's already broke? I'm too late to escape him. Holy smoke! I think I hear his footstep on the stair — But no, it is not his: there is no blare Of a great trumpet strenuously blown — That veritable *tuba mirum* known To have sounded once the charge at Kettle Hill (After 'twas made) and to be sounding still.

ORDERLY:
Perhaps he will not come.

MILES:
Perhaps, perhaps — Yet well I know those War Department chaps Have told him of my novel plan that places The Army on a military basis.
Ne'er mind the breakfast; I'll get up and fly Before the sun's another minute high.
If I can by a masterly retreat Escape him trust me to come back and eat.

ORDERLY:
There's some one, sir, a-tryin' to break in. MILES:
O Lord, forgive my every little sin!
Seeing that I was going to be late Developing my Plan, he would not wait, He's risen with the lark, alas, and brought His answer to my unperfected thought.
He always was forehanded. *[Enter President.']*

PRESIDENT:
I’ve no time
To let the punishment await the crime.
Take that, and that, and that! *(beating him.)*

MILES:
Of course, of course; I’m firm in judgment, but I yield to force.
“Submission is a military virtue,”
The Regulations say, “howe’er it hurt you.”
I’ll now submit to buffets with sobriety,
And, later on, my view of their propriety,
Together with some pertinent suggestions
Touching important military questions.

PRESIDENT:
You may, and touching civil ones to boot;
Submit them, though, to Secretary Root.
[Enter Root.]

MILES:
Yes, but ‘twould hearten me if you’d agree
To signify your mind to him, not me.
Seeing him lame I’ll know the views I deem
Correct are held by you in light esteem.

ROOT:
Don’t rub your bruises, man; that’s mutiny!

PRESIDENT:
And it demands official scrutiny.
I’ll summon a court-martial, sir, to “fire” you;
And if it finds you guiltless I’ll retire you.
You huff me anyhow. Dashnation, man,
The battle spirit, like a black-and-tan
Ranch dog, sits up and howls within my breast,
And it’s O, to bust a bronco in the West!
Fetch me that broomstick, soldier. Golly me!
I must ride something or I die.

ROOT *(on hands and knees)*:
Ride *me*.

ACT II

The White House

LOEB:
O Mr. President, depress your ear Till it enfold me, so that you may hear Strange news of one departed — one that you Have done to death: old Nelson Miles.

ROOSEVELT:
Go to!
There is no news of him; he's dead as nails.

LOEB:
About him? though, they tell alarming tales.
'Tis said that he has moved an inch or so.

ROOSEVELT:
Go put a heavier stone upon him — go!
Confound the fellow! will he ne'er stay dead?

LOEB:
The worst is yet to come: they say his head
Is half-protruded from the tomb!

ROOSEVELT:
Quick, quick!
Go rap it roundly with the big, big stick.

LOEB:
Nay, that's a weapon I'm too weak to wield.
(*aside*)
For anything I know, the corpse is "heeled."

ROOSEVELT:
Where’s Colonel Hull? Command him to attack.
He’s brave and generous enough to crack
The skull of any dead man living. Take the stick.
[Exit Loeb.]
That rogue’s obedient, but he makes me sick.

[An hour elapses. Enter Hull.]

The work is done: again he is no more —
He was half out. These red stains are his gore.

ROOSEVELT:
I trust you gave him a conclusive whack.

HULL:
Well, not exactly, but — I bit his back!

A STRAINED RELATION

The President. Root, Secretary of State. Taft, Secretary of War. Bonaparte, Secretary of the Navy. Metcalf, Secretary of Commerce and Labor. Dewey, an Admiral. Loeb, Private Secretary to the President.

ACT I

The White House, October, 1906.

ROOT — Mr. President, the Japanese Minister complains that the children of his countrymen in California are denied admittance to the public schools.

PRESIDENT — That will be bad for their education.

ROOT — He regards this as an unfriendly discrimination.

PRES. — I should suppose that would be a painful conviction.

ROOT — He says his countrymen in Japan are greatly excited about it.

PRES. — What a jabbering they; must make.

ROOT — He is making a good deal of noise himself.

PRES. — Dare say. Let's ask Metcalf about it; he's from California. [*Taps the bell nine times — enter Secretary Metcalf.*] Mr. Secretary, how about the exclusion of Japs from the Californian public schools, poor little things!

METCALF — There are separate schools for them. The average age of the poor little things is about thirty years.

PRES. — How affecting! Many of them must be orphans. I was once an orphan.

ROOT *(aside)* — His levity fatigues. *(To tKe President)* Among the Japanese there are no orphans: those of them that have lost their parents have an official father in the Minister of War.

PRES. — What's that?

ROOT — Their actual guardian is the ranking admiral of the navy.

PRES. — The devil!

ROOT — No; Togo.

PRES. — This is a mighty serious matter, as I — said. Go at once to the Japanese Minister and disavow everything. [*Exit Secretary Root, smiling aside.]* Metcalf, tell Loeb to prepare apologies for Japan, for publication in the newspapers. Take the first train to California, and —
[Exit Secretary Metcalf. Enter Secretary Bonaparte, breathless.']

BONAPARTE — Mr. President, the J-J — the Mapanese Jinister is in the offing with all his s-suite! He is sailing up the gravel walk this very m-minute! For heaven's sake, go to the window and show your teeth.
[Exit Secretary Bonaparte, running. Tumult within: "Banzai! Banzai!"]

PRES, *(solus)* — What under the sun can I say to appease the pirates? This is what comes of the Peace of Portsmouth! It is this to be a world power with a contumacious province.
[Has a bad half-hour.]

ACT II

The Same, August, 1907.

PRES. — Mr. Secretary, it is reported that the Japanese in Hawaii are rising.

MET. — You don’t say so! Why, it is hardly six o’clock by their time. They are early risers.

PRES. — I learn from Secretary Root that Admiral Togo’s battleships are coaling. Now, what can that mean?

MET. — Let us ask Dewey. *[Enter, thoughtfully, Admiral Dewey.’]* Admiral, the President has learned that the Japanese battleships at Tokio are taking on coal. What, in your judgment as a sailor, are they going to do with it?

DEWEY — Burn it.
[Enter Secretary Root.] ROOT — Mr. President, California is about to secede — we shall lose Metcalf! The entire Pacific Coast will follow. I go to glory or the grave!
[Exit Secretary Root. Enter Secretary Taft, with bottle.]

TAFT — In this supreme crisis of the nation let us fortify our souls (*filling glasses)* for any trial.

PRES. (*lifting glass)* — Here’s confusion to the memory of the late Commodore Matthew Perry!
[They drink. Tumult within: “Banzai! Banzai!” Enter Loeb.]

LOEB — Mr. President —

PRES. — Where’s Root?

LOEB — In the East Room, playing draw poker with the Japanese Minister. [i? £- *newed tumult within: “Banzai Nippon!* The Jap seems to be winning.

A WIRELESS ANTEPENULTIMATUM

The President. Hay, Secretary of State. Bowen, Minister to Venezuela.

PRESIDENT:
John Hay, where are you on the great, gray sea?
I beg you will at once return to me.
This wireless business is the devil's own,
And Castro's playing him with me alone!
Venezuela sneering at my threat;
Santo Domingo more and more in debt;
Their foreign creditors dispatching fleets
With duns land guns and sons of guns — it beats
The Dutch, the devil and the band! I swear
From sheer distraction I could pull your hair.
'Twixt Castro and the Doctrine of Monroe,
My fears are nimble and my wits are slow.
I know not where to go nor how to stop —
Stand fast or, like old Saul of Tarsus, "flop."
Nothing I know, and everything I doubt —
Dear John, in God's name put your prow about!

HAY:
Though the skies fall upon the hills beneath
Be resolute. If needful show your teeth.

PRESIDENT:
Dear Bowen, go to Castro. Tell him straight
He must make up his mind to arbitrate.
Say if he won't — here swing the big, big stick —
We'll do a little stunt to make him sick.

BOWEN:
Your words I've put into his ear. Said he:
"I'm sick already — to the mountains, me."

PRESIDENT:
Tell him again; then if he won’t, why, add
We’ll give him ninety days to wish he had.

BOWEN:
I’ve told him that, sir, and he says if you
Are pressed for time a single day will do,
For he’s a rapid wisher. What shall!
Say further, to provoke a coarse reply?

PRESIDENT:
Tell him that when the time allowed is up
We’ll press against his lips the bitter cup.
We’ll waste no further words in this.
Don’t fail To send the scalawag’s reply — by mail.

A PRESIDENTIAL PROGRESS

FIRST AMERICAN SOVEREIGN — Hurrah! Hooray! Hurroo!

SECOND AMERICAN SOVEREIGN — What's the matter with you?

F. A. S. — What's the matter with me? What's the matter with all of us? Don't you see the President's train? Don't you hear him speaking from the rear platform?

S. A. S. — What's to prevent?

F. A. S. — Nothing could prevent — not all the crowned heads of Europe, nor all their sycophant courtiers and servile subjects I S. A. S. — No, nothings — just nothing at all — excepting personal self-respect and a decent sense of the dignity of American citizenship.

F. A. S. — What! You think it base and undignified to pay honor to the President's great office?

S. A. S. — It is easy to call it "honoring his great office." I believe we commonly do give the name of some virtue to our besetting vice. I observe that the President, too, honors our own great office by the most sickening flattery of the people every time he opens his mouth. His reasons are better than ours, for we really rank him: his great office is of our own making and bestowal. But I wish he wouldn't lick my boots.

F. A. S. — Sir, you have no right to use such language of the ruler of the nation!

S. A. S. — It is "ruler" when you want an excuse to grovel; in your more austere moods it is "servant of the people" — and that is his own name for the thing that he has the distinction to be. I don't cheer my butler, nor throw flowers at my coachman, nor crush the hand of my cook.

F. A. S. *(aside)* — This must be a millionaire! *(Aloud)* I see great wisdom, sir, in what you say. I'll never again abase myself before any one. Listen to the senseless applause! *(Aside, as loud as he can bawl)* Hooray! Hooray!

S. A. S. — Ah, that was the fellow’s expiring platitude. He has finished waving the red flag and is coming this way.

[President passes, shaking hands with both,]

F. A. S. *(gazing at his hand with deep emotion)* — God bless him!

S. A. S. — Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!

MISCELLANEOUS TALES

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THE SAMPLE COUNTER

OUR HISTORICAL NOVELS

From "The First Man in Rome."

NO sooner had Cæsar crossed the Rubicon than all Rome was ablaze with excitement and terror. Horatius, who all by himself had held the bridge until outnumbered, retreated to the Tiber, where he was joined by the new levies, imperfectly armed and equipped, and some of the Praetorian Guards. There, behind such defenses as they could improvise, they swore to resist until all were dead. Sacrifices were offered to the gods, and the augurs, removing the hearts of the victims, consulted the auricles.

Meantime Caesar's leading legion, with Scipio Africanus marching proudly at its head, came into view beyond the Tarpeian Rock — the same from which the unhappy Sappho, one of the most prominent poets of her time, had cast herself — and advanced without delay in a shower of catapults.

Precisely what occurred during the next half-hour we are without the data to state with confidence: all the historical novels of the three or four centuries immediately following were destroyed in the accident at Pompeii; but at three o'clock in the afternoon of that fateful day Brutus lay dead upon the field of honor and the beaten forces of Horatius were in tumultuous retreat along the Claudian aqueduct. Then Cleopatra came forth from her place of concealment, resolved to throw herself at the feet of her conquering lover and intercede for the doomed city.

From "Court and Camp."

Through a tangled wild as dense as death the martial forced his way, despite the wounds that the Russian forces had inflicted upon his aged frame. Suddenly he departed from the undergrowth and found himself in an open glade of inconsiderable dimensions, and before his vision stood the widely known figure of Napoleon, with folded arms and in a greatcoat falling to his heels. The king was apparently oblivious to his environment, but instinctively "the bravest of the brave," ever considerate and genteel, drew back into cover, unwilling to interrupt the royal revery. Apparently Napoleon was immersed in meditations.

What these were we have not the temerity to conjecture. Waterloo had been fought and lost! — the last die had been cast to the winds and the dream of universal empire had gone down in gloom! Did he realize that all was over? Was he conjuring up the future and forecasting the judgment of posterity — the figure that he was destined to cut in the historical novels of a later age? Did visions of St. Helena float before his prophetic gaze? Alas, we know not!

At the sound of a breaking twig beneath the martial’s foot the king started from his revery and said in French: “Live the France!” Then, deriving a slender stiletto from his regalia, he plunged it into the left ventricle of his heart and fell dead before the martial, who was greatly embarrassed, could summon medical assistance.

Josephine was avenged!

From “The Crusader”

It was midnight beneath the walls of the beleaguered city. Sir Guy de Chassac de Carcassonne leaned heavily upon his great two-handed sword, fatigued with slaughter. Hardly had he closed his eyes in slumber when the seven Saracens chosen by Saladin for the perilous emprise stole forth from the postern gate and stealthily surrounded him. Then at a preconcerted signal they flashed their scimitars in air and rushed upon their prey I But it was fated to be otherwise. At the first stroke of the Toledo blades Sir Guy awoke. To pluck his long weapon from the soil was the work of a comparatively short time; then with one mighty circular sweep of the steel he clove them all asunder at the waist!

Jerusalem was delivered and remains a Christian city to this day!

From “Blood and Beer.”

The booming of the cannon awakened Bismarck with a start. Vaulting into the saddle with remarkable grace, he was soon in the thickest of the fray, and many a foeman fell beneath his genius. Yet even in the terrible din and confusion of battle his mental processes were normal, and he thought only of the countess, while absently dealing death about him. Suddenly he was roused from his revery by the impact of a battle-axe upon his helmet, and turning his eyes in the direction whence it seemed to have been delivered, he beheld the sneering visage of De Grammont on a black steed.

Here was an opportunity that might satisfy the most exacting — an opportunity to rid his country of a traitor and himself of a rival; to serve at once his ambition and his love. His noble nature forbade. Waving his enemy aside, he thoughtfully withdrew from the field, resolved to press his suit otherwise.

From “The Iron Duchess.”

As Wellington rode moodily away from the fatal field of Blenheim, meditating upon the wreck of his ambition, he encountered the seer whom he had met the day before.

“Wretch!” he exclaimed, drawing his scimitar, “it is you that have done this! But for your accursed predictions I should have won the battle and the Swiss king would now be flying before my victorious legends. Die, therefore!”

So saying, he raised his armed hand to smite, but the blow did not fall. Even while the blade was suspended in the air the seer’s long black cloak fell away, the white hair and concealing beard were flung aside, and the Iron Duke found himself gazing into the laughing eyes of Madame de Maintenon!

Speechless with astonishment, he thundered: “What is the meaning of this?”

“Ah, monsieur,” she replied, with that enchanting smile which had lured Louis XIV to the guillotine, “it means that I amuse myself.”

From “The Noddle of Navarre.”

When Henry of Navarre saw the ruin he had wrought he elevated his helmet from his marble brow and stepped three paces to the rear. The priest advanced with flashing eyes and, lifting both hands to the zenith, explained that vengeance was the Lord’s — He would repay I “It is better so,” assented the king—” I prefer it thus.”

But even as he spake a shot from the moat pierced his brain and he fell, to reign no morel.

From “Louis the Luckless.”

Observing that his presence was not suspected, Richelieu remained with his eye glued to the keyhole. It was well that he did so, for the conspirators now laid off their masks, and among them he recognized the king himself! Here was a situation that he believed unique; in all his experience in court and camp there was no precedent. A sovereign conspiring for his own overthrow, his assassination! Richelieu was deeply affected by so striking an instance of unselfishness. He reeled and fell to the floor in an agony of admiration.

From “The Road to Tusculum.”

No sooner did Cicero perceive his legions retreating than he spurred impetuously from the field, thundering that all was lost. Passing swiftly across the Tiber by a secret bridge, he proceeded to the Forum, and entering the senate unannounced, communicated the news of the disaster. This was Pompey’s opportunity; he rose in his place and extending his index finger in the direction of the defeated warrior exclaimed in sarcastic accents: “Romans, behold your liberator from the chains of the Volscians! Behold the orator-general to whom you owe so much! Let him hereafter (if we have a hereafter) oppose to his country’s armed invaders the power of his matchless tongue. The sword is too heavy for a hand trained in the light calisthenics of gesticulation!” Maddened by this artful arraignment, the senators rose as one Roman and, headed by Marcus Aurelius, fell upon the unfortunate commander, tearing him limb from limb!

From in “The Loves of Cromwell.”

Night fell darkly over the city of Worcester.

Cromwell had marched all day to reach it by seven roads, and at nine in the evening besieged it with a hundred thousand men.

A desperate struggle ensued, at the close of which Cromwell rose from his knees victorious over the forces of his king!

“Bring that son of Belial before me!” he roared, “that I may deal with him according to his sins.”

Charles, pale and trembling, with manacled hands and bowed head, was led in.

The lord protector eyed him haughtily, then addressing a brief prayer to Heaven sprang forward and with one stroke of his blade severed the royal head from the royal shoulders.

Thus ended the War of the Roses, and England was again a republic.

OUR TALES OF SENTIMENT

From "One Woman."

GLADYS climbed to the balustrade of the bridge and, adjusting her skirts, plunged into the gloomiest forebodings.

"Why," she said, "should the future look so dark to one possessing all that fortune can donate?"

She added a number of profound reflections on the vanity of life, ending with a brilliant epigram. It had scarcely died upon her lips when Armitage arrived upon the tapis and took in the situation at a glance. Striding hastily forward, he bowed gracefully and signified a desire to know the cause of her abstraction. She burst into tears and complied with his wish. Then she flung herself about his neck and accorded full expression to her grief, which he delicately professed not to observe; for this noble figure had been educated in the best schools of European gentility.

From "But a Single Thought."

Seeing her proceeding away from him, perhaps forever, Auvergne intercepted her with an expression of regret for his rudeness, coupled with a plea for pardon. For a breathless instant she stayed her progress as if uncertain as to the degree of his offense, then resumed her pace till she reached the river's brim. With an unconscious prayer she sprang swooning into the breakers and was with difficulty prevented from meeting a watery grave.

From "A Belle of Castile."

Josephina had progressed but a brief distance into the garden when some inner sense proclaimed that she was followed: the crunching of a gentleman's heel upon the gravel was indisputable. Partially terrified, she sought concealment in the shrubbery that bordered the path on the one side and the other. It passed by her there in the moonlight, that dreadful sound, yet no one visible! It went on and on, growing fainter and fainter, like herself, and was lost to hearing. Then she remembered the tradition of the Invisible Knight and her heart smote her for the absence of faith with which she had so often greeted it.

"I am fitly punished," she conceded, "for my sceptical attitude. Henceforth, so far as the constitution of my mind will permit, I will be more hospitable to the convictions of the simple.”

How she adhered to this expiational resolution we shall behold.

From “The Queen’s Chaperon.”

The duke stepped from his carriage to a neighboring hill and cast his eye athwart his ancestral domain. “All this,” he mused, “I must renounce if I comply with the queen’s royal suggestion to fly with her to Rome. Is she worth the privation? I must have time to consider a transaction of such great importance.”

Hastily entering his carriage, he haughtily bade the coachman drive him to some expensive hotel, whence he dispatched a delicately perfumed note to her Majesty, saying that he should be detained a few days by affairs of state, but assuring her of his uncommon fidelity. Then he retired to his couch and thought it all over in Italian. The next day he arose and fled rapidly.

From “The Uplifting of Lennox.”

On hearing the terrible news Myra fell supine to earth without delay!

“Is it nothing?” inquired Lennox. “Is it only a temporary indisposition? — will it soon pass?”

But Myra replied only with a significant pallor which told all too plainly what the most accomplished linguist would vainly have striven to express.

How long she lay unconscious we know not, but promptly on becoming her previous self she let fall a multitude of tears.

Lennox yielded to the requirements of etiquette and stole away. — .

From “Bertha of Bootha.”

As they strolled along the Riviera the setting sun was just touching the summit of the Alps and firing them with an electrical glow. Turning to her, he looked into her beautiful eyes and thus expressed himself:

“Dearest, I am about to make an important statement.”

She almost instantly divined the character of the communication that he referred to, and it affected her with perturbation. It was so sudden. “If,” she remarked, “you could postpone the statement above mentioned until a more suitable occasion I should regard your forbearance with satisfaction.”

“Very well,” he replied, with coldness, “I will wait until we are not alone.”

“Thank you, ever so much,” she blushed, and all was silence. Later in the season he explained to her the trend of his affections, and she signified the pleasure/ that she derived from his preference.

From “Hertha of Hootha.”

The moon rose in the east without a sound and the ripples on the bosom of the main ran silently to the beach. Hertha and Henri, having similar sensibilities, were equally overcome by the solemnity of the scene, and neither inaugurated a conversation. Their love was too true for utterance by human tongue. Thus they paced for a considerable period, when suddenly the silence was cut asunder by a woman's scream!

"I know that voice," cried Henri, hastily divesting himself of as many of his upper garments as, under the circumstances, he deemed it proper to do; "it is Minetta committing suicide!"

He immediately plunged into the Atlantic, while Hertha stood rooted to the sand, endeavoring to regulate her emotions. In a few moments, which seemed an age, he emerged from the deep, bearing the deceased, whom he tenderly flung at her rival's feet.

Then the survivors knelt and prayed in both English and French.

From "Ethel Shanks."

Ethel hastened slowly along the path leading to the cliff above the lake. The full moon was rising in the east, for the hour was midnight, and her warm radiance bathed the landscape in a blue languor.

To Ethel the sky had never seemed so blue, nor the Polyanthes tuberosa in her corsage so white. She drank joy with her every breath, and she breathed quickly from her exertion in climbing the eminence on which she stood. Hearing footprints approaching, she turned, and the baron stood before her! "I was hasty," he explained. "I should not have disclosed my love with such abruption. Permit me to withdraw my inconsiderate declaration."

Ethel's heart sank within her! She could not refuse him the desired permission; that would not have been genteel: and Ethel was under all circumstances the lady. So she beat back the tears and said:

"Please, sir, dismiss it from attention."

The cry of her broken heart was unheard by that callous ear, unaccustomed to the sad, sweet chords evoked from the harp of a dead hope. The nobleman lit his pipe and, his cruel errand performed, returned to his ancestral mansion. For one or two moments Ethel stood on the brink of eternity. Precipitating herself from the extreme edge, she awaited death with composure; she had done her full duty and had no fear of the Hereafter.... At the base of the precipice she came into violent contact with a large granite boulder and was no more.

They found her body at the feet of the cliff, and the baron was torn by conflicting emotions, for the head lay at some distance from the trunk, a truly melancholy spectacle.

“Can it be possible,” he remarked, “that she is no more?”

Assured by the physician that such was the fact, he signified a high degree of regret and strode from the spot unattended; and to this day his fate is cloaked in the impenetrable waters of oblivion.

From “A Demising Love.”

James endeavored ineffectually to ascertain the trend of her affections: her expression remained a blank. He erroneously attributed his failure to poor skill in physiognomy and inwardly bewailed his youthful neglect of the advantages of education. While so engaged he fancied he detected in her look something significant of an interest in his personality. Could he be mistaken? No, there it was again!

Arising from his sedentary attitude to the full stature of his young manhood, he crossed the intervening Persian rug and possessed himself of her hand.

“Mabel,” he inquired, “do you not experience the promptings of a dawning tenderness for one to whom you are much?”

Receiving no negative answer he kissed her simultaneously on both cheeks, and, falling rapidly upon one knee, poured out his soul in beautiful language, mostly devoted to commendation of her fine character and disposition.

Mabel did not at once respond. She was deceased.

From “March Hares.”

Mrs. Rorqual deposited her embroidery on the sofa by her side and, slightly changing color, said, “No, my ideals are not unchangeable; they have undergone memorable alteration within the last hour.”

“Let us hope,” said DAnchovi, uncrossing his hands, and putting one forefinger into a buttonhole of his coat, “that they are still high.”

She resumed her embroidery and, looking at a painting of the martyrdom of St. Denis over the mantel, replied, “Would it matter?”

“Surely,” said he, lightly beating the carpet with the heel of his well-fitting shoe; “for ideals are more than thoughts. I sometimes think they are things — that *we* are *their* thoughts.”

She did not immediately reply. A curtain at an open window moved audibly. A sunbeam crept through the lattice of the piazza outside and fell upon the window-ledge. The fly previously mentioned now walked indolently along the top of the Japanese screen, then fearlessly descended the face of it to within an inch of the mouth of a painted frog. Danchovi, with a lifting of his eyebrows, maintained a determined silence.

“I should think that an uncomfortable creed,” Mrs. Rorqual said at last, withdrawing the tip of her shoe, which had been visible beneath the edge of her gown, and shifting her gaze from St. Denis to one of the crystal ornaments of the candelabrum pendent from the ceiling.

He passed the fingers of his right hand through his hair, slightly shifted his position on his chair and said: “Mrs. Rorqual, I have to thank you for a most agreeable hour. Shall I see you on the golf-links to-morrow?”

So they parted, but when he was gone she toyed thoughtfully with a spray of heliotrope growing in a jardiniere and then ran her forefinger along a part of the pattern of the wallpaper.

From “ A Study in Dissection.”

Captain Gerard introspected. He spread his heart, as it were, upon the dissecting-table of conscience and examined it from several points of view. It is a familiar act — we call it analysis of motive. When he had concluded he knew why he had accepted the invitation of the countess to dinner. He knew why he had insulted the count. Equally obvious were his reasons for mentioning to Iphigeneia the holy bonds of matrimony. In all his conduct since his last introspection but one act baffled him: why, alas, had he spoken to Iphigeneia of the bar-semester in his crest?

As he pondered this inexplicable problem a footfall fell upon his ear and he shuddered as if the hand of death; had stepped in.

It was the countess!

From “Her Diplodocus.”

“Sir!” Miss Athylton drew herself up to her full height and looked her interlocutor squarely in the visage. For an instant he returned her scrutiny; then his eyes fell to the earth, stammering apologies. With a sweeping curtsey she passed out of the room, hand over hand.

From “L’Affaire Smith.”

As they sat there wrapping their arms about each other, she advanced the belief that they had loved in a former state of existence.

“But not as now, Irene, surely not as now.” She was well content to let him feel so about it, and did not seek to alter the character of his emotion. To have done so would have cut her to the heart. On the contrary, a little bird perched in the passion-vine above them and sang several thrilling passages.

From “Clarisse.”

He gazed into her beautiful eyes for a considerable period, during which he did not converse; then he said, with an effort to be sociable: “It has been represented to me that you are a lady of great wealth. May I inquire if I have been rightly informed?”

Blushing energetically at the compliment, she replied in silence, and for a few minutes there was an embarrassing hiatus in the exchange of thought and feeling.

Fearing that he had offended her, the duke arose, and striding to the grand piano began to improvise diligently. At that moment there came in through the open window a sound of wheels on the gravel outside.

He ceased in the middle of a nocturne and would have left the room, but she restrained him:

“It is only my father returning from India,” smiled she; “I shall be so glad to introduce you.”

The full horror of the situation burst upon him like a thunderbolt out of a clean sky.

“Madam,” he thundered, “your father is dead! He died of the plague in Bombay, and I — attended the funeral, although he had cursed me with his last breath. I cannot — cannot meet him!”

With those words falling from his white lips he flung himself out of the room. A servant entered and handed Clarisse the visiting card of Mrs. Delahanty.

From “Mary Ann & Co.”

As they neared each other on the narrow bridge Paul observed that she was profoundly agitated.

“Darling,” he said, “please to signify the cause of your perturbation. It is not impossible that I may be able to remove it. You know,” he added, “that I have studied medicine.”

She blushed deeply, then turned pale and continued to tremble. He seized her hand and laid two fingers upon her wrist.

“The pulse,” he said, “is abnormally frequent and irregular.”

With a barely audible expression of disapproval, she withdrew her hand and endeavored to pass him on the narrow footway of the bridge. A misstep precipitated her into the stream, from which with no small difficulty she was taken in a dying condition, a halfmile below. The person that drew her forth from the waters was Paul’s aged uncle. “Tell Paul Dessard,” she said with her last breath, “that I love him, die for him!

Tell him how I strove successfully to hide my love from him lest he think me unmaidenly; but it cannot matter now if he know it. Tell him all, I pray you tell him all, and add that in that Better Land whither I go my spirit will await him with impatience, prepared to explain all.”

The good old man bent over her, placed his open hand behind his ear and ejaculated:

“Hay?”

She shook her head with an infinite pathos and suspired.

From” Ideals”

Where the grand old Hudson river rolls its floods seaward between the rugged Palisades and the agricultural country of its eastern bank Janey Sewell dwelt in a little vine-covered cottage in one of the most picturesque spots of the latter.

Janey was beautiful all day long. Her hair was as dark as the pinion of a crow, and her brown eyes rivaled in lustre the sheen of the sunlight on the bosom of the river. She was also a fine French scholar.

Janey’s parents had dwelt in Yonkers from time immemorial, and sweet to her was her native environment, whence no proffers of a marriage into the aristocracy or nobility of England could entice her. Many coroneted hearts had been flung at her feet — many were the impassionate pleas that ducal lips had poured into her ear; she remained fancy free, determined to bestow her affection upon some worthy member of an American labor union or die a maid. We shall see with what indomitable tenacity she adhered through disheartening trials to that commendable policy.

From “Oopsie Mercer.”

For a long time — it seemed an eternity — they sat there hand in hand, in the gloaming. The sheep-bells tinkled faintly in the glen, and from an adjacent thicket the whip-poor-will sang rapturously. The katydid grated out her mysterious accusation from the branch of an oak overhead; the cricket droned among the glow-worms underfoot. All these vocal efforts were conspicuously futile; in their newly found happiness the lovers heeded nothing but each other. O love!

Suddenly, on the dew-starred sward, a loud oath rang out behind them. Harold rose promptly to his own feet, the lady remaining in session on the log, her hands demurely folded in her lap. The report of a firearm illuminated the gloom, and ere Harold could intercept the deadly missile it had pierced Miss Mercer’s heart! She fell forward and died without medical assistance.

Harold mounted the log and obtained a fairly good view of the aggressor; it was James Wroth, and he was engaged in taking a second aim. With the lightning-like intuition of a brave man in an emergency Harold inferred that he was the intended victim.

“Fiend!” sprang he, and a death struggle was inaugurated without delay.

Let us go back to the time when we left James Wroth nourishing the fires of an intellectual tempest implanted by Miss Mercer's rejection of his suit, and embarking for Europe in another tongue.

From "Lance and Lute."

The faint booming of the distant cannon grew more and more deafening; the thunder of the charging cavalry reverberated o'er the field of battle: the enemies were evidently making a stand.

Plympton arrived at the scene of action just as the commanding general ordered an advance along the entire front. Spurring his steed to the centre of the line he rang out his voice in accents of defiance and was promoted for gallantry.

Bertram who was an eye-witness, immediately withdrew his objection to the marriage. This took place shortly afterward and was attended with the happiest results.

From "Sundry Hearts."

When presented to the object of his devotion the earl could not suppress his sentiments. The Lady Gwendolin saw them as plainly as if they had been branded upon his brow. Her agitation was comparable to his. All the pent-up emotion of her deep, womanly nature surged to her countenance and paralyzed her so that she was unable to offer her hand. She consequently contented herself with a graceful inclination of the head. The Earl was excessively disappointed. Turning upon his heel he bowed and walked away.

Gwendolin retired to the conservatory and uttered a deep-drawn sigh, then, returning to the ballroom, flung herself into the waltz with an assumed ecstasy that elicited wide comment.

From "La 'Belle Damn."

Under the harvest moon, now at its best, the corpse of Ronald showed ghastly white, the frost sparkling in its beard and hair. Clementine's consciousness of its impulchritude was without a flaw. Had she ever really experienced an uncommon, an exceptional, tenderness for an object boasting so little charm? She was hardly able to take that view of the matter. All seemed unreal, indistinct and charged with dubiety. A sudden rustling in the circumjacent vegetation startled her from her dream, suggesting considerations of personal safety. Surveying the body for the last time, she impelled the stiletto into a contiguous tarn and left the scene with measured tread.

From "The Recrudescence of Squollander."

“Clifford,” said Isabel, earnestly yet softly, “are you sure that you truly love me?”

Clifford presented such testimony and evidence as he could command, and requested her decision on the sufficiency of what he had advanced.

“Oh, Clifford,” she said, laying her two little hands in one of his comparatively large ones, “you have extirpated my ultimate uncertainty.”

THE GREAT STRIKE OF 1895

NEW YORK, July 2, 1895. — The strike of the American Authors' Guild continues to hold public attention. No event in the history of trades-unionism since the great railroad strike of last year has equaled it in interest. Nothing else is talked of here. In some parts of the city all business is suspended and the excitement grows more intense hourly.

At about 10 o'clock this morning a nonunion author attempting to enter the premises of D. Appleton & Co with a roll of manuscript was set upon by a mob of strikers and beaten into insensibility. The strikers were driven from their victim by the police, but only after a fight in which both sides suffered severely.

NEW YORK, July 3. — Rioting was renewed last night in front of the boycotted publishing house of Charles Scribner's Sons, 153-157 Fifth avenue. Though frequently driven back by charges of the police, who used their clubs freely, the striking authors succeeded in demolishing all the front windows by stone-throwing. One shot was fired into the interior, narrowly missing a young lady typewriter. Mr. William D. Howells, a member of the Guild's board of managers, declares that he has irrefragable proof that this outrage was committed by some one connected with the Publishers' Protective League for the purpose of creating public sympathy.

It has been learned that the nonunion author so severely beaten yesterday died of his injuries last night. His name is said to have been Richard Henry (or Hengist) Stoddard, formerly a member of the Guild, but expelled for denouncing the action of President Brander Matthews in ordering the strike.

LATER. — Matters look more and more threatening. A crowd of ten thousand authors, headed by Col. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, is reported to be marching upon the Astor Library, which is strongly guarded by police, heavily armed. Many book-stores have been wrecked and their contents destroyed.

Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, who was shot last night while setting fire to the establishment of Harper & Bros., cannot recover. She is delirious, and lies on her cot in the Bellevue Hospital singing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

BOSTON, July 3. — Industrial discontent has broken out here. The members of the local branch of the American Authors' Guild threw down their pens this morning and declared that until satisfactory settlement of novelists' percentages should be arrived at not a hero and heroine should live happily ever afterward in Boston. The publishing house of Houghton, Mifflin & Co is guarded by a detachment of Pinkerton men armed with Winchester rifles and a Gatling gun. The publishers say that they are getting all the manuscripts that they are able to reject, and profess to have no apprehension as to the future. Mr. Joaquin Miller, a nonunion poet from Nevada, visiting some Indian relatives here, was terribly beaten by a mob of strikers to-day. Mr. Miller was the aggressor; he was calling them "sea-doves" — by which he is said to have meant "gulls."

CHICAGO, July 3. — The authors' strike is assuming alarming dimensions and is almost beyond control by the police. The Mayor is strongly urged to ask for assistance from the militia, but the strikers profess to have no fear of his doing so. They say that he was once an author himself, and is in sympathy with them. He wrote "The Beautiful Snow." In the mean time a mob of strikers numbering not fewer than one thousand men, women and children, headed by such determined labor leaders as Percival Pollard and Hamlin Garland, are parading the streets and defying the authorities. A striker named Opie Reed, arrested yesterday for complicity in the assassination of Mr. Stone, of the publishing firm of Stone & Kimball, was released by this mob from the officers that had him in custody. Mr. Pollard publishes a letter in the *Herald* this morning saying that Mr. Stone was assassinated by an emissary of the Publishers' Protective League to create public sympathy, and strongly hints that the assassin is the head of the house of McClurg & Co.

NEW YORK, July 4. — All arrangements for celebrating the birthday of American independence are "off." The city is fearfully excited, and scenes of violence occur hourly. Macmillan & Co.'s establishment was burned last night, and four lives were lost in the flames. The loss of property is variously estimated, All the publishing houses are guarded by the militia, and it is said that Government troops will land this afternoon to protect the United States mails carrying the manuscripts of strike-breaking authors, in transit to publishers. The destruction of the Astor Library and the Cooper Union and the closing of all the book-stores that escaped demolition in yesterday's rioting have caused sharp public distress. No similar book-famme has ever been known in this city. Novel-readers particularly, their needs being so imperative, are suffering severely, and unless relieved soon will leave the metropolis. While beating a noisy person named E. W. Townsend last night, one Richard Harding Davis had the misfortune to break two of his fingers. He said Townsend was a strike-breaker and had given information to the police, but it turns out that he is a zealous striker, and was haranguing the mob at the time of the assault. His audience of rioting authors, all of whom belonged to the War Story branch of the Guild, mistook Mr. Davis for an officer of the peace and ran away. Mr. Townsend, who cannot recover and apparently does not wish to, is said to be the author of a popular book called *The Chimney Fadder*. Advices from Boston relate the death of a Pinkerton spy named T. B. Aldrich, who attempted to run the gauntlet of union pickets and enter the premises of The Arena Publishing Company, escorting Walter Blackburn Harte. Mr. Harte was rescued by the police and sailed at once for England.

PHILADELPHIA, July 5 — A mob of striking authors attacked the publishing house of J. B. Lippincott & Co this morning and were fired on by the militia. Twenty are known to have been killed outright — the largest number of writers ever immortalized at one time.

NEW YORK, July 5. — In an interview yesterday Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton, treasurer of the Guild, said that notwithstanding the heavy expense of maintaining needy strikers with dependent families, there would be no lack of funds to carry on the light. Contributions are received daily from sympathetic trades. Sixty dollars have been sent in by the Confederated Undertakers and forty-five by the Association of Opium-Workers. President Brander Matthews has telegraphed to all the Guild’s branches in other cities that they can beat the game if they will stand pat.

New YORK, July 6. — Sympathy strikes are the order of the day, and “risings” are reported everywhere. In this city the entire East Side is up and out. Shantytown, Ballyspalpeen, Goatville and Niggernest are in line. Among those killed in yesterday’s conflict with the United States troops at Madison-square was Mark Twain, who fell while cheering on a large force of women of the town. He was shot all to rags, so as to be hardly distinguishable from a human being.

CHICAGO, July 7. — John Vance Cheney was arrested at 3 o’clock this morning while placing a dynamite bomb on the Clark-street bridge. He is believed to have entertained the design, also, of setting the river on fire. Two publishers were shot this morning by General Lew Wallace, who escaped in the confusion of the incident. The victims were employed as accountants in the Methodist Book Concern.

NEW YORK, July 8. — The authors’ strike has collapsed, and the strikers are seeking employment as waiters in the places made vacant by the lockout of the Restaurant Trust. The Publishers’ Protective League declares that no author concerned in the strike will ever again see his name upon a title-page. The American Authors’ Guild is a thing of the past. Arrests are being made every hour. As soon as he can procure bail, President Brander Matthews will go upon the vaudeville stage. 1894

A THUMB-NAIL SKETCH

MANY years ago I lived in Oakland, California. One day as I lounged in my lodging there was a gentle, hesitating rap at the door and, opening it, I found a young man, the youngest young man, it seemed to me, that I had ever confronted. His appearance, his attitude, his manner, his entire personality suggested extreme diffidence. I did not ask him in, instate him in my better chair (I had two) and inquire how we could serve each other. If my memory is not at fault I merely said: “Well,” and awaited the result..

“I am from the San Francisco *Examiner”* he explained in a voice like the fragance of violets made audible, and backed a little away.

‘ “O,” I said, “you come from Mr. Hearst.” Then that unearthly child lifted its blue eyes and cooed: “I am Mr. Hearst.”

His father had given him a daily newspaper and he had come to hire me to write for it. Twenty years of what his newspapers call “wage slavery” ensued, and although I had many a fight with his editors for my right to my self-respect, I cannot say that I ever found Mr. Hearst’s chain a very heavy burden, though indubitably I suffered somewhat in social repute for wearing it.

If ever two men were born to be enemies he and I are they. Each stands for everything that is most disagreeable to the other, yet we never clashed. I never had the honor of his friendship and confidence, never was “employed about his person,” and seldom entered the editorial offices of his newspapers. He did not once direct nor request me to write an opinion that I did not hold, and only two or three times suggested that I refrain for a season from expressing opinions that I did hold, when they were antagonistic to the policy of the paper, as they commonly were. During several weeks of a great labor strike in California, when mobs of ruffians stopped all railway trains, held the state capital and burned, plundered and murdered at will, he “laid me off,” continuing, of course, my salary; and some years later, when striking employees of street railways were devastating St. Louis, pursuing women through the street and stripping them naked, he suggested that I “let up on that labor crowd.” No other instances of “capitalistic arrogance” occur to memory. I do not know that any of his other writers enjoyed a similar liberty, or would have enjoyed it if they had had it. Most of them, indeed, seemed to think it honorable to write anything that they were expected to.

As to Mr. Hearst’s own public writings, I fancy there are none: he could not write an advertisement for a lost dog. The articles that he signs and the speeches that he makes — well, if a man of brains is one who knows how to use the brains of others this amusing demagogue is nobody's dunce.

If asked to justify my long service to journals with whose policies I was not in agreement and whose character I loathed I should confess that possibly the easy nature of the service had something to do with it. As to the point of honor (as that is understood in the profession) the editors and managers always assured me that there was commercial profit in employing my rebellious pen; and I — O well, I persuaded myself that I could do most good by addressing those who had greatest need of me — the millions of readers to whom Mr. Hearst was a misleading light. Perhaps this was an erroneous view of the matter; anyhow I am not sorry that, discovering no preservative allowable under the pure food law that would enable him to keep his word overnight, I withdrew, and can now, without impropriety, speak my mind of him as freely as his generosity, sagacity or indifference once enabled me to do of his political and industrial doctrines, in his own papers.

In illustration of some of the better features of this man's strange and complex character let this incident suffice. Soon after the assassination of Governor Goebel of Kentucky — which seemed to me a particularly perilous "precedent" if unpunished — I wrote for one of Mr. Hearst's New York newspapers the following prophetic lines:

The bullet that pierced Goebel's breast
Can not be found in all the West.
Good reason: it is speeding here
To stretch McKinley on the bier.

The lines took no attention, naturally, but twenty months afterward the President was shot by Czolgosz. Every one remembers what happened then to Mr. Hearst and his newspapers. His political enemies and business competitors were alert to their opportunity. The verses, variously garbled but mostly made into an editorial, or a news dispatch with a Washington date-line but usually no date, were published all over the country as evidence of Mr. Hearst's complicity in the crime. As such they adorned the editorial columns of the New York *Sun* and blazed upon a bill-board in front of Tammany Hall. So fierce was the popular flame to which they were the main fuel that thousands of copies of the Hearst papers were torn from the hands of newsboys and burned in the streets. Much of their advertising was withdrawn from them. Emissaries of the *Sun* overran the entire country persuading clubs, libraries and other patriotic bodies to exclude them from the files. There was even an attempt made to induce Czolgosz to testify that he had been incited to his crime by reading them — ten thousand dollars for his family to be his reward; but this cheerful scheme was blocked by the trial judge, who had been informed of it. During all this carnival of sin I lay ill in Washington, unaware of it; and my name, although appended to all that I wrote, including the verses, was not, I am told, once mentioned. As to Mr. Hearst, I dare say he first saw the lines when all this hullabaloo directed his attention to them.

With the occurrences here related the incident was not exhausted. When Mr. Hearst was making his grotesque canvass for the Governorship of New York the Roosevelt Administration sent Secretary Root into the state to beat him. This high-minded gentleman incorporated one of the garbled prose versions of my prophecy into his speeches with notable effect and great satisfaction to his conscience. Still, T am steadfast in the conviction that God sees him; and if any one thinks that Mr. Root will not go to the devil it must be the devil himself, in whom, doubtless, the wish is father to the thought.

Hearst’s newspapers had always been so unjust that no injustice could be done to them, and had been incredibly rancorous toward McKinley, but no doubt it was my luckless prophecy that cost him tens of thousands of dollars and a growing political prestige. For anything that I know (or care) they may have cost him his election. I have never mentioned the matter to him, nor — and this is what I have been coming to — has he ever mentioned it to me. I fancy there must be a human side to a man like that, even if he is a mischievous demagogue.

In matters of “industrial discontent” it has always been a standing order in the editorial offices of the Hearst newspapers to “take the side of the strikers” without inquiry or delay. Until the great publicist was bitten by political ambition and began to figure as a crazy candidate for office not a word of warning or rebuke to murderous mobs ever appeared in any column of his papers, except my own. A typical instance of the falsification of news to serve a foul purpose may be cited here. In Pennsylvania, a ferocious mob of foreign miners armed with bludgeons marched upon the property of their employers, to destroy it, incidentally chasing out of their houses all the English-speaking residents along the way and clubbing all that they could catch. Arriving at the “works,” they were confronted by a squad of deputy marshals, and while engaged in murdering the sheriff, who had stepped forward to read the riot act, were fired on and a couple of dozen of them killed. Naturally, the deputy marshals were put on trial for their lives. Mr. Hearst sent my good friend Julius Chambers to report the court proceedings. Day after day he reported at great length the testimony (translated) of the saints and angels who had suffered the mischance "while peacefully parading on a public road." Then Mr. Chambers was ordered away and not a word of testimony for the defence (all in English). ever appeared in the paper. Instances of such fair-mindedness as this could be multiplied by the thousand, but all, I charitably trust, have been recorded Elsewhere in a more notable Book than mine.

Never just, Mr. Hearst is always generous. He is not swift to redress a grievance of one of his employees against another, but he is likely to give the complainant a cottage, a steam launch, or a roll of bank notes, if that person happens to be the kind of man to accept it, and he commonly is. As to discharging anybody for inefficiency or dishonesty — no, indeed, not so long as there is a higher place for him. His notion of removal is promotion.

He once really did dismiss a managing editor, but in a few months the fellow was back in his old place. I ventured to express surprise. "Oh, that's all right," Mr. Hearst explained. "I have a new understanding with him. He is to steal only small sums hereafter; the large ones are to come to me."

In that incident we observe two dominant features in his character — his indifference to money and his marvelous sense of humor. He who should apprehend danger to public property from Mr. Hearst's elevation to high office would err. The money to which he is indifferent includes that of others, and he smiles at his own expense.

If there is a capable working newspaper man in this country who has not, *malgre lui,* a kindly feeling for Mr. Hearst, he needs the light. I do not know how it is elsewhere, but in San Francisco and New York Mr. Hearst's habit of having the cleverest (not, alas the most conscientious) obtainable men, no matter what he had to pay them, advanced the salaries of all such men more than fifty per cent. Possibly these have receded, and possibly the high average ability of his men has receded too — I don't know; but indubitably he did get the brightest men.

Some of them, I grieve to say, were imperfectly appreciative of their employer's gentle sway. At one time on the *Examiner* it was customary, when a reporter had a disagreeable assignment, for him to go away for a few days, then return and plead intoxication. That excused him. They used to tell of one clever fellow in whose behalf this plea was entered while he was still absent from duty. An hour afterward Mr. Hearst met him and, seeing that he was cold sober, reproved him for deceit. On the scamp's assurance that he had honestly intended to be drunk, but lacked the price, Mr. Hearst gave him enough money to re-establish his character for veracity and passed on.

I fancy things have changed a bit now, and that Mr. Hearst has changed with them. He is older and graver, is no longer immune to ambition, and may have discovered that good-fellowship with his subordinates and gratification of his lone humor are not profitable in business and politics. Doubtless too, he has learned from observation of his entourage of sycophants and self-seekers that generosity and gratitude are virtues that have not a speaking acquaintance. It is worth something to learn that, and it costs something.

With many amiable and alluring qualities, among which is, or used to be, a personal modesty amounting to bashfulness, the man has not a friend in the world. Nor does he merit one, for, either congenitally or by induced perversity, he is inaccessible to the conception of an unselfish attachment or a disinterested motive. Silent and smiling, he moves among men, the loneliest man. Nobody but God loves him and he knows it; and God's love he values only in so far as he fancies that it may promote his amusing ambition to darken the door of the White House. As to that, I think that he would be about the kind of President that the country — daft with democracy and sick with sin — is beginning to deserve.

MORTALITY IN THE FOOT-HILLS

A LITTLE bit of romance has just transpired to relieve the monotony of our metropolitan life. Old Sam Choggins, whom the editor of this paper has so often publicly thrashed, has returned from Mud Springs with a young wife. He is said to be very fond of her, and the way he came to get her was this:

Some time ago we courted her, but finding she was “on the make” we threw off on her after shooting her brother. She vowed revenge and promised to marry any man who would horse-whip us. This Sam agreed to undertake, and she married him on that promise.

We shall call on Sam tomorrow with our new shotgun and present our congratulations in the usual form. — *Hangtown “Gibbet.”*

The purposeless old party with a boiled shirt who has for some days been loafing about the town peddling hymnbooks at a merely nominal price (a clear proof that he stole them) has been disposed of in a cheap and satisfactory manner. His lode petered out about six o’clock yesterday afternoon, our evening edition being delayed until that time by request. The cause of his death, as nearly as could be ascertained by a single physician — Dr. Duffer being too drunk to attend — was Whisky Sam, who, it will be remembered, delivered a lecture some weeks ago, entitled “Dan’l in the Lions’ Den; and How They’d a-Et Him If He’d Ever Been Thar” — in which he overthrew revealed religion.

His course yesterday proves that he can act, as well as talk. — *Devil Gully “Expositor.”*

There was considerable excitement in the street yesterday, owing to the arrival of Bust-Head Dave, formerly of this place, who came over from Pudding Springs. He was met at the hotel by Sheriff Knogg, who leaves a large family. Dave walked down to the bridge, and it reminded one of old times to see the people go away as he heaved in view, for he had made a threat (first published in this paper) to clean out the town. Before leaving the place Dave called at our office to settle for a year’s subscription (invariably in advance) and was informed through a chink in the logs, that he might leave his dust in the tin cup at the well. Dave is looking much larger than at his last visit, just previous to the funeral of Judge Dawson. He left for Injun Hill at five o’clock amidst a good deal of shooting at rather long range. There will be an election for Sheriff as soon as a stranger can be found who will accept the honor. — *Yankee Flat “Advertiser.”*

It is to be hoped the people will turn out tomorrow, according to advertisement in another column. The men deserve hanging, no end, but at the same time they are human and entitled to some respect; and we shall print the name of every adult male who does not grace the occasion with his presence. We make this announcement simply because there have been some indications of apathy; and any man who will stay away when Bob Bolton and Sam Buxter are to be hanged is probably either an accomplice or a relation. Old Blanket-Mouth Dick was not the only blood relation these fellows had in this vicinity; and the fate that befell him when they could not be found ought to be a warning to the rest.

The bar is just in rear of the gibbet and will be run by a brother of ours. Gentlemen who shrink from publicity will patronize that bar. — *San Louis Jones “Gazette!’*

A painful accident occurred in Frog Gulch yesterday which has cast a good deal of gloom over a hitherto joyous community. Dan Spigger — or, as he was familiarly called, Murderer Dan — got drunk at his usual hour and, as is his custom, took down his gun and started after the fellow who went home with Dan’s girl the night before. He found him at breakfast with his wife and children. After dispersing them he started out to return, but, being weary, stumbled and broke his leg. Dr. Bill Croft found him in that condition and, having no wagon at hand to convey him to town, shot him to put him out of his misery. His loss is a Democratic gain. He seldom disagreed with any but Democrats and would have materially reduced the vote of that party had he not been so untimely cut off. — *Jackass Gap “Bulletin.”*

The dance-house at the corner of Moll Duncan street and Fish-Trap avenue has been broken up. Our friend the editor of *The Jamboree* succeeded in getting his cock-eyed sister in there as a beer-slinger and the hurdy-gurdy girls all swore they would not stand her society. They got up and got. The light fantastic toe is not tripped there any more, except when the *Jamboree* man sneaks in and dances a jig for his morning pizen. — *Murderburg “Herald.”*

The superintendent of the Mag Davis mine requests us to state that the custom of pitching Chinamen and Injins down the shaft will have to be stopped, as he has resumed work in the mine. The old well back of Jo Bowman’s is just as good, and more centrally located. — *New Jerusalem “Courier.”*

There is a fellow in town who claims to be the man that killed Sheriff White some months ago. We consider him an impostor seeking admission into society above his level, and hope people will stop inviting him to their houses. — *Nigger Hill “Patriot.”*

A stranger wearing a stovepipe hat arrived in town yesterday, putting up at the Nugget House. The boys are having a good time with that hat this morning. The funeral will take place at two o’clock. — *Spanish Camp “Flag”*

The scoundrel who upset our office last month will be hung tomorrow and no paper will be issued the next day.—*”Sierra Firecracker”*

The old gray-headed party who lost his life last Friday at the jeweled hands of our wife deserves more than a passing notice at ours. He came to this city last summer and started a weekly Methodist prayer-meeting, but being warned by the police, who was formerly a Presbyterian, gave up the swindle. He afterward undertook to introduce Bibles and, it is said, on one occasion attempted to preach. This was a little too much and at our suggestion he was tarred and feathered.

For a time this treatment seemed to work a reform, but the heart of a Methodist is above all things deceitful and desperately wicked: he was soon after caught in the very act of presenting a hymnbook to old Ben Spoffer’s youngest daughter, Ragged Moll. The vigilance committee *pro tern*, waited on him, when he was decently shot and left for dead, as was recorded in this paper, with an obituary notice for which we have never received a cent. Last Friday, however, he was discovered sneaking into the potato patch connected with this paper and our wife, God bless her! got an axe and finished him then and there.

His name was John Bucknor and it is reported (we do not know with how much truth) that at one time there was an improper intimacy between him and the lady who despatched him. If so, we pity Sal. — *Coyote “ Trapper* Our readers may have noticed in yesterday’s issue an editorial article in which we charged Judge Black with having murdered his father, beaten his wife and stolen seven mules from Jo Gorman. The facts are substantially as stated, but somewhat different. The killing was done by a Dutchman named Moriarty and the bruises that we happened to see on the face of the Judge’s wife were caused by a fall, she being, doubtless, drunk at the time. The mules had only strayed into the mountains and have returned all right. — .

We consider the Judge’s anger at so trifling an error very ridiculous and insulting and if he comes to town he will not come again. An independent press is not to be muzzled by any absurd old duffer with a crooked nose and a sister who is considerably more mother than wife. Not so long as we have our usual success in thinning out the judiciary. — *Lone Tree “Sockdologer.”*

Yesterday as Job Wheeler was returning from a clean-up at the Buttermilk Flume he stopped at Hell Tunnel to have a chat with the boys. John Tooley took a fancy to Job’s watch and asked for it. Being refused, he slipped away, and going to Job’s shanty, killed his three half-breed children and a valuable pig. This is the third time John has played some scurvy trick, and it is about time the superintendent discharged him. There is entirely too much of this practical joking amongst the boys. It will lead to trouble yet. — *Nugget Hill “Pickaxe of Freedom.”*

The stranger from Frisco, with the clawhammer coat, who put up at the Gage House last Thursday, and was looking for a chance to invest, was robbed of three hundred ounces of clean dust. We know who did it, but don’t be frightened, John Lowry; we’ll never tell, though we are awful hard up, owing to our subscribers going back on us. — *Choketown “Rocker”*

The railroad from this city northwest will be commenced as soon as the citizens get tired of admonishing the Chinamen brought up to do the work, which will probably be within three or four weeks. The carcasses are accumulating about town and begin to be unpleasant. — *Gravel Hill “Thunderbolt.”*

The man who was shot last week at the Gulch will be buried next Thursday. He is not dead yet, but his physician wishes to visit a mother-in-law at Lard Springs and is therefore very anxious to get the case off his hands. The undertaker describes the patient as the longest cuss in that section. — *Santa Peggy “ Times”*

There is some dispute about land titles at Little Bilk Bar. About half a dozen cases were temporarily decided on Wednesday, but it is supposed the widows will renew the litigation. The only proper way to prevent these vexatious lawsuits is to hang the judge of the county court. — *Gow-Gounty “Outcropper.”*

THE A. L. C. B.

A SOCIETY of which I am the proud and happy founder is the American League for the Circumvention of Bores. With a view to enlisting the reader's interest and favor and obtaining his initiation fee, I beg leave to expound the ends and methods of the order.

The League purposes to work within the law: Bores can be circumvented by killing; which may be called the circumvention direct; but for every Bore that is killed arises a swarm of Bores (reporters, lawyers, jurors, etc.) whom one is unable to kill. The League plan is humane, simple, ingenious and effective. It leaves the Bore alive, to suffer the lasting torments of his own esteem.

The American League, for the Circumvention of Bores has the customary machinery of grips, pass-words, signs, a goat, solemn ceremonials and mystic hoodooing; but for practical use it employs only the Signal of Eminent Distress, to preservation of the secret whereof members are bound by the most horrible oath known to the annals of juration. It is a law that any member duly convicted in the secret tribunals of the League of failing promptly to respond to the Signal of Eminent Distress shall suffer evisceration through the nose.

The plan works this way: I am, say, on a ferry-boat. Carelessly glancing about, I see — yes, it must have been — ah! again: the Signal of Eminent Distress! A Brother of the League is *in articulo mortis* — the demon hath him — the beak of the Bore is crimson in his heart! I go to the rescue, choosing, according to my judgment and tact, one of the Ten Thousand Forms of Benign Relief which I have memorized from the Ritual.

“Ah, my dear fellow,” I perhaps say to the victim, whom I may never have seen before, “I have been looking all over the boat for you. I must have a word with you on a most important matter if your friend” — looking at the baffled Bore who has been talking into him—” will have the goodness to excuse you.”

Possibly, though, I say to the signaling victim: Sir, pardon me, but is not your name — ?”

“Jonesmith,” he replies, coldly; “may I ask — ?”

“Ah, yes; I hope you will not think me intrusive, but a gentleman on the lower deck, who says he is your uncle, has fallen and broken his neck.”

As Mr. Jonesmith with a grateful look moves off, the Bore, full of solicitude, starts to follow for assistance and condolence. I lay my hand on his arm.

“Pardon, sir; the physician prescribes absolute quiet: the splendor, charm and vivacity of your conversation would unduly excite the patient.”

Before the wretch can round-up his faculties the Brother in Distress has escaped and I am walking away with the 368th Aspect of Superb Unconcern, as laid down in the Ritual.

The League has been in existence in New York city for about six months. There is a younger branch at Hohokus, and another is forming at Podunk. I am the Supreme Imperial Inimitable, though every member has high rank and office. Applications for membership must be made personally to the Grand Dictatorial Caboodle, which will judge whether the applicant is himself a Bore.

TWO CONVERSATIONS

I

CANDID PUBLISHER. — Sir, I am proud to meet you. Your book is admirable; it is exquisitely touching and beautiful.

REASONABLE AUTHOR. — Your commendation is most pleasing to me.! Was at no time in doubt of your favorable action in the matter.

C. P. — You did not hear me out. Publication of a book entails a considerable expense.

R. A. — Naturally.

C. P. — The money does not always come back.

R. A. — I have been so informed. Publishers sometimes accept work that is very bad literature.

C. P. — Yes, we try to.

R. A. — Try to? You cannot mean that you prefer such work.

C. P. — We must publish what will sell. Do you read the most popular books of the year — the “best-selling” novels? — nearly all “best sellers” are novels.

R. A. — God forbid! I sometimes look at them.

C. P. — Do you ever find *one* that has any literary merit?

R. A. — Certainly not. I did not expect my book to be popular, but hoped that it might have a steady and perhaps increasing sale and eventually become famous. You sometimes publish new editions of the great works in our language — *a* the English classics.” Do you lose money by them?

C. P. — Not usually. They have had the advantage of generations of advertising by scholars and by critics whose words had weight in their time and have in ours. If your excellent book finds a publisher pretty soon and is kept going until the year 2100, we shall be glad to put it on our list. You see it is very simple: you have only to conform to the conditions of success.

R. A. — I see. But are these the only conditions? Some great work succeeds in its author’s time — that of Tennyson, Thackeray, Dickens, Carlyle, and so forth, in England; and in America that of — m, er, huh.

C. P. — Is it surely great work? The ink is hardly dry. The literary fashions determining its form and substance are still with us. Posterity will have to pass judgment upon it, which posterity will indubitably do without reference to our view of the matter. Then, if you and I happen to be in communication with this vale of tears we shall know if these noted authors were mining the great mother-lode of human interest, or, occasionally touching some of its dips, spurs and angles, taking out barren rock. It looks to us like a rich enough ore, but it is a long journey to where there is an assaying-plant capable of dealing with that particular product. When it is “heard from” we shall not be here. Those who mined it are gone already.

R. A. — Then there can be no valuable contemporary criticism?

C. P. — None that any one can know to be valuable.

R. A. — And no man can live long enough to know if he is a good writer?

C. P. — The trade of writing has that disadvantage.

R. A. — We are getting a long way from business. Am I to understand that you reject my book because, as you say, “it is exquisitely touching and beautiful”?

C. P. — You outline the painful situation with accuracy.

R. A. — Well, Til be damned!

C. P. — Sure! — if you find a sentimentalist who will publish your book. He will do the damning.

II

EDITOR. — Glad to see you, sir. Take a chair.

VISITOR. — I am the proprietor of *The Prosperous Monthly*.

ED. — Take two chairs.

Vis. — I called to congratulate you on the extraordinary success of *The Waste Basket*. I should not have thought it possible for you to break into our field and play this game as well as we. And with so fantastic a title!

Ed. — For my success I am greatly indebted to yourself.

Vis. — Not if I know it: we have fought you, tooth and nail.

Ed. — Oh, that is all right; if it had been expedient we should have fought back. Our prosperity depended on yours.

Vis. — Heaven has withheld from me the intelligence to understand.

Ed. — Have any of the contents of this magazine ever seemed familiar to you?

Vis. — I am not much of a reader; my editor has fancied that some of your articles lacked originality, but has confessed that he could not quite identify their authors.

Ed. — Just so; I accept nothing for my magazine that has not been first submitted to yours. If it has not been when offered, I — require that to be done.

Vis. — That is monstrous nice of you. Such knightly courtesy to a senior competitor is most unusual. I thank you — come and dine with me to-morrow at seven *(handing card),* ED. — With pleasure. Good day.

Vis. — Good day. *(Exit Visitor.)*

Ed. *(solus*). — If he thinks it out, I shall miss a dinner.

A STORY AT THE CLUB

"DO you believe that?" said Dr. Dutton, passing a newspaper across the table to Will Brady and taking needless pains to point out "that" with his thumb. Brady read the discredited paragraph. It was as follows:

Mr. John Doane, of Peequecgan, Maine, has received seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars from the estate of an old man whom he protected from the abuse of a rowdy fifteen years ago, and whom he never afterward saw nor heard from. In the will the old man apologized for the smallness of the bequest, explaining that it was all that he had.

"Believe it?" said Brady; "I know it to be true. I was myself the—"

He paused to think.

"Now, how the devil," said Dutton, "can you ring yourself into *that* story? You are not John Doane, and you certainly are not the late old man."

"I was about to say," resumed Brady, composedly, "that I was myself the legatee in a somewhat similar case. In the year—"

"Waiter," said Dutton, "bring me twelve cigars, three bottles of champagne and, at daylight, a cup of powerful coffee. When the fellows come in from the theater ask them not to come into this room — say there's a man in here who is engaged in being murdered."

"In the year 1892," Mr. Brady went on to say, "I was living in Peoria, Illinois. One night while walking along the railroad track just outside of town I saw a man making the most violent exertions to release himself from the 'frog' of a switch, into which he had incautiously wedged the heel of his shoe. He was steaming with perspiration and the look of agony on his face was worth a long walk to see. You have probably seen such a look on the countenance of many a patient undergoing the operation of receiving your bill. The express train was due in two minutes, and we had not so much as a match to signal it with — the night was tar-dark."

"The look of agony, I suppose, shone by its own inherent light."

"The man was facing away from the approaching train — the thunder of which was now audible between his groans and cries.

Just in the nick of time I stepped up to him and introducing myself begged pardon for the intrusion and suggested that he unlace his shoe and remove his foot from it, which he did. When the train had passed he thanked me and handed me his card. I have carried it with me ever since — here it is."

Taking out a bit of pasteboard he handed it across the table without looking at it. It read:

DEARIE, — I could not come: I was watched. To-morrow — same time, at the *other* place.

OOPSIE.

The Doctor read the card and quietly handed it back. The story proceeded:

"A moment later the man had disappeared, but in a week or two I received a letter from him, dated at Chicago. He said he owed his life to me and should devote it to my service. Being childless, friendless and heretofore without an aim or ambition, he should pass the rest of his days in acquiring wealth, in order to testify his gratitude. It would be a labor of love to trace me wherever I might wander — I need not apprise him of my address, nor in any way bother myself about him. If I survived him I would be a very rich man.

"Well, sir, you may believe it or not, but if there is any name which deserves to be held by me in high honor for truth and simple good faith it is the name of —"

"Oopsie."

Mr. Brady was visibly affected. For a moment he was fitly comparable to nothing warmer and livelier than a snow bank under the bleak stars of a polar midnight. The Doctor toyed absently with the ash-holder. It was a supreme crisis. It passed.

"That man died in 1901 and left me, by will, an estate valued at more than nine hundred thousand dollars. The will was properly probated and never contested."

"But, my dear fellow," said Dutton, taking at last a genuine interest in the narrative, "you never told us — nobody has ever heard of this, and you certainly do not pass for a very rich man. Did you really get the property?"

"Alas, no," said Brady, with a solemn shake of the head, as he rose from the table and glanced at his watch. "It is true, just as I have told you — on my honor: the man left me that property and all was square, regular and legal, but I did not get a cent. The fact is, I died first."

THE WIZARD OF BUMBASSA

MR. GEORGE WESTING-HOUSE, the air-brake man, did a cruel and needless thing in going out of his way to try to destroy humanity's hope of being shot along the ground at a speed of one hundred miles an hour. There is no trouble, it appears, in building locomotives able to snatch a small village of us through space at the required speed; the difficulty lies in making, with sufficient promptness, those unschedulary stops necessitated by open switches, missing bridges, and various obstacles that industrial discontent is wont to grace the track withal. Even on a straight line — what the civil engineers find a pleasure in calling a tangent — the prosperous industrian at the throttle-valve cannot reasonably be expected to discern these hindrances at a greater distance than one thousand feet; and Mr. Westinghouse sadly confessed that in that distance his most effective appliance could not do more than reduce the rate from one hundred miles an hour to fifty — an obviously inadequate reduction. He held out no hope of being able to evolve from his inner consciousness either a brake of superior effectiveness or a pair of spectacles that would enable the engine driver to discover a more distant danger on a tangent, or to see round a curve.

All this begets an intelligent dejection. If we must renounce our golden dream of cannonading ourselves from place to place with a celerity suitable to our rank in the world's *fauna* — comprising the shark, the hummingbird, the hornet and the jackass rabbit — civilization is indeed a failure. But it is forbidden to the wicked pessimist to rejoice, for there is a greater than Mr. Westinghouse and he has demonstrated his ability to bring to a dead stop within its own length any railway train, however short and whatever its rate of speed. It were unwise though, to indulge too high a hope in this matter, even if the gloomy vaticinations of the Westinghouse person are fallacious. Approaching an evidence of social unrest at a speed of one and two-thirds mile a minute on a down grade, even in a train equipped by a greater than Mr. Westinghouse, may not be an altogether pleasing performance.

This possibility can be best illustrated by recalling to the reader's memory the history of the Ghargaroo and Gallywest Railway in Bumbassa. As is well known, the trains on that road attained a speed that had not theretofore been dreamed of except by the illustrious projector of the road. But the King of Bumbassa was not content: with an indifference to the laws of dynamics which in the retrospect seems almost imperial, he insisted upon instantaneous stoppage.

To the royal demand the clever and prudent gentleman who had devised and carried out the enterprise responded with an invention which he assured his Majesty would accomplish the desired end. A trial was made in the sovereign’s presence, the coaches being loaded with his chief officers of state and other courtiers, and it was eminently successful. The train, going at a speed of ninety miles an hour, was brought to a dead stop within the length of the rhinoceros-catcher and directly in front of the blue cotton umbrella beneath which his Majesty sat to observe the result of the test. The passengers, unfortunately, did not stop so promptly, and were afterward scraped off the woodwork at the forward ends of the cars and decently interred. The train-hands had all escaped by the ingenious plan of absenting themselves from the proceedings, with the exception of the engineer, who had thoughtfully been selected for the occasion from among the relatives of the projector’s wife, and instructed how to shut off the steam and apply the brake. When hosed off the several parts of the engine he was found to have incurred a serious dispersal of the viscera.

The King’s delight at the success of the experiment was somewhat mitigated by the reflection that if the train had been freighted with *bona fide* travelers instead of dignitaries whom he could replace by appointment the military resources of the state would have suffered a considerable loss; so he commanded the projector to invent a method of stopping the passengers and the trains simultaneously. This, after much experiment, was done by fixing the passengers to the seats by clamps extending across the abdomen and chest; but no provision being made for the head, a general decapitation ensued at each stop; and people who valued their heads preferred thereafter to travel afoot or ostrichback, as before. It was found, moreover, that, as arrested motion is converted into heat, the royal requirement frequently resulted in igniting and consuming the trains — which was expensive.

These various hard conditions of railroading in Bumbassa eventually subdued the spirits of the stockholders, drove the projector to drink and led at last to withdrawal of the concession — whereby one of the most promising projects for civilizing the Dark Continent was, in the words of the Ghargaroo *Palladium* “knocked perfectly cold.”

I have thought it well to recall this melancholy incident here for its general usefulness in pointing a moral, and for its particular application to the fascinating enterprise of a one-hundred-miles-an-hour electric road from New York to Chicago — a road whose trains, intending passengers are assured, will be under absolute control of the engineers and “can be stopped at a moment’s notice.” If I have said anything to discourage the enterprise I am sorry, but really it is not easy to understand why anybody should wish to go from New York to

Chicago.

THE FUTURE HISTORIAN

I — THE DISPERSAL

So sombre a phenomenon as the effacement of an ancient and brilliant civilization within the lifetime of a single generation is, fortunately, known to have occurred only once in the history of the world. The catastrophe is not only unique in history, but all the more notable for having befallen, not a single state overrun by powerful barbarians, but a half of the world; and for having been effected by a seemingly trivial agency that sprang from the civilization itself. Indeed, it was the work of one man.

Hiram Perry (or Percy) Maximus was born in the latter part of the nineteenth century of "the Christian Era," in Podunk, the capital of America. Little is known of his ancestry, although Dumbleshaw affirms on evidence not cited by him that he came of a family of pirates that infested the waters of Lake Erie (now the desert of Gobol) as early as "1813" — whenever that may have been.

The precise nature of Hiram Perry's invention, with its successive improvements, is not known — probably could not now be understood. It was called "the silent firearm" — so much we learn from fragmentary chronicles of the period; also that it was of so small size that it could be put into the "pocket." (In his *Dictionary of Antiquities* the learned Pantin-Gwocx defines "pocket" as, first, "the main temple of the American deity;" second, "a small receptacle worn on the person." The latter definition is the one, doubtless, that concerns us if the two things are not the same.) Regarding the work of "the silent firearm" we have light in abundance. Indeed, the entire history of the brief but bloody period between its invention and the extinction of the Christian civilization is an unbroken record of its fateful employment.

Of course the immense armies of the time were at once supplied with the new weapon, with results that none had foreseen. Soldiers were thenceforth as formidable to their officers as to their enemies. It was no longer possible to maintain discipline, for no officer dared offend, by punishment or reprimand, one who could fatally retaliate as secretly and securely, in the repose of camp as in the tumult of battle. In civic affairs the deadly device was malignly active. Statesmen in disfavor (and all were hateful to men of contrary politics) fell dead in the forum by means invisible and inaudible. Anarchy, discarding her noisy and imperfectly effective methods, gladly embraced the new and safe one.

In other walks of life matters were no better. Armed with the sinister power of life and death, any evil-minded person (and most of the ancient Caucasians appear to have been evil-minded) could gratify a private revenge or wanton malevolence by slaying whom he would, and nothing cried aloud the lamentable deed.

So horrible was the mortality, so futile all preventive legislation, that society was stricken with a universal panic. Cities were plundered and abandoned; villages without villagers fell to decay; homes were given up to bats and owls, and farms became jungles infested with wild beasts. The people fled to the mountains, the forests, the marshes, concealing themselves from one another in caves and thickets, and dying from privation and exposure and diseases more dreadful than the perils from which they had fled. When every human being distrusted and feared every other human being solitude was esteemed the only good; and solitude spells death. In one generation Americans and Europeans had slunk back into the night of barbarism.

II — RISE AND FALL OF THE AEROPLANE

The craze for flying appears to have culminated in the year 369 Before Smith. In that year the aeroplane (a word of unknown derivation) was almost the sole means of travel. These flying-machines were so simple and cheap that one who had not a spare half-hour in which to make one could afford to purchase. The price for a one-man machine was about two dollars — one-tenth of a gooble. Double-seated ones were of course a little more costly. No other kinds were allowed by law, for, as was quaintly explained by a chronicle of the period, “a man has a right to break his own neck, and that of his wife, but not those of his children and friends.” It had been learned by experiment that for transportation of goods and for use in war the aeroplane was without utility. (Of balloons, dirigible and indirigible, we hear nothing after 348 B. S; the price of gas, controlled by a single corporation, made them impossible.)

From extant fragments of Jobblecopper’s *History of Invention* it appears that in America alone there were at one time no fewer than ten million aeroplanes in use. In and about the great cities the air was so crowded with them and collisions resulting in falls were so frequent that prudent persons neither ventured to use them nor dared to go out of cover. As a poet of the time expressed it:

With falling fools so thick the sky is filled
That wise men walk abroad but to be killed.
Small comfort that the fool, too, dies in falling,
For he’d have starved betimes in any calling.

The earth is spattered red with their remains:
Blood, flesh, bone, gristle — everything but brains.

The reaction from this disagreeable state of affairs seems to have been brought about by a combination of causes.

First, the fierce animosities engendered by the perils to pedestrians and “motorists” — a word of disputed meaning. So savage did this hostility become that firing at aeroplanes in flight, with the newly invented silent rifle, grew to the character of a national custom. ‘ Dimshouck has found authority for the statement that in a single day thirty-one aeronauts fell from the heavens into the streets of Nebraska, the capital of Chicago, victims of popular disfavor; and a writer of that time relates, not altogether lucidly, the finding in a park in Ohio of the bodies of “the Wright brothers, each pierced with bullets from hip to shoulder, the ears cut off, and without other marks of identification.”

Second in importance of these adverse conditions was the natural disposition of the ancients to tire of whatever had engaged their enthusiasm — the fickleness that had led to abandonment of the bicycle, of republican government, of baseball, and of respect for women. In the instance of the aeroplane this reaction was probably somewhat hastened by the rifle practice mentioned.

Third, invention of the electric leg. As a means of going from place to place the ancients had from the earliest ages of history relied largely on the wheel. Just how they applied it, not in stationary machinery, as we do ourselves, but as an aid to locomotion, we cannot now hope to know, for all the literature of the subject has perished; but it was evidently a crude and clumsy device, giving a speed of less than two hundred miles (four and a half sikliks) an hour, even on roadways specially provided with rails for its rapid revolution. We know, too, that wheels produced an intolerable jolting of the body, whereby many died of a disease known as “therapeutics.” Indeed, a certain class of persons who probably traveled faster than others came to be called “rough riders,” and for their sufferings were compensated by appointment to the most lucrative offices in the gift of the sovereign. Small wonder that the men of that day hailed the aeroplane with intemperate enthusiasm and used it with insupportable immoderation!

But when the younger Eddy invented that supreme space-conquering device, the electric leg, and within six months perfected it to virtually what it is to-day, the necessity for flight no longer existed. The aeroplane, ending its brief and bloody reign a discredited and discarded toy, was “sent to the scrap-heap,” as one of our brightest and most original modern wits has expressed it. The wheel followed it into oblivion, whither the horse had preceded it, and Civilization lifted her virgin fires as a dawn in Eden, and like Cytherea leading her moonrise troop of nymphs and graces, literally legged it o’er the land!

III — AN ANCIENT HUNTER

In the nineteenth century of what, in honor of Christopher Columbum, a mythical hero, the ancients called the “Christian era,” Africa was an unknown land of deserts, jungles, fierce wild beasts, and degraded savages. It is believed that no white man had ever penetrated it to a distance of one league from the coast. All the literature of that time relating to African exploration, conquest, and settlement is now known to be purely imaginative — what the ancients admired as “fiction” and we punish as felony.

Authentic African history begins in the early years of the twentieth century of the “era” mentioned, and its most stupendous events are the first recorded, the record being made, chiefly, by the hand that wrought the work — that of Tudor Rosenfelt, the most illustrious figure of antiquity. Of this astonishing man’s parentage and early life nothing is certainly known: legend is loquacious, but history is silent. There are traditions affirming his connection with a disastrous explosion at Bronco, a city of the Chinese province of Wyo Ming, his subjugation of the usurper Tammano in the American city of N’yorx (now known to have had no existence outside the imagination of the poets) and his conquest of the island of Cubebs; but from all this bushel of fable we get no grain of authenticated fact. The tales appear to be merely hero-myths, such as belong to the legendary age of every people of the ancient world except the Greeks and Romans. Further than that he was an American Indian nothing can be positively affirmed of Tudor Rosenfelt before the year “1909” of the “Christian [Columbian] era.” In that year we glimpse him disembarking from two ships on the African coast near Bumbassa, and, with one foot in the sea and the other on dry land, swearing through clenched teeth that other forms of life than Man shall be no more. He then strides, unarmed and unattended, into the jungle, and is lost to view for ten years!

Legend and myth now reassert their ancient reign. In that memorable decade, as we know from the ancient author of “Who’s Whoest in Africa,” the most incredible tales were told and believed by those who, knowing the man and his mission, suffered insupportable alternations of hope and despair. It was said that the Dark Continent into which he had vanished was frequently shaken from coast to coast as by the trampling and wrestling of titanic energies in combat and the fall of colossal bulks on the yielding crust of the earth; that mariners in adjacent waters heard recurrent growls and roars of rage and shouts of triumph — an enormous uproar that smote their ships like a gale from the land and swept them affrighted out to sea; that so loud were these terrible sounds as to be simultaneously audible in the Indian and Atlantic oceans, as was proved by comparing the logs of vessels arriving from both seas at the port of Berlin. As is quaintly related in one of these marine diaries, “ The noise was so strenuous that our ears was nigh to busting with the volume of the sound.” Through all this monstrous opulence of the primitive rhetorical figure known as the Lie we easily discern a nucleus of truth: something uncommon was going on in Africa.

At the close of the memorable decade *(circa* “1919”) authentic history again appears in the fragmentary work of Antrolius: Rosenfelt walks out of the jungle at Mbongwa on the side of the continent opposite Bumbassa. He is now attended by a caravan of twenty thousand camels and ten thousand native porters, all bearing trophies of the chase. A complete list of these would require more pages than Homer Wheeler Wilcox’s catalogue of ships, but among them were heads of elephants with antlers attached; pelts of the checkered lion and the spiny hippopotentot, respectively the most ferocious and the most venomous of their species; a skeleton of the missing lynx (*Pithecanthropos erectus compilatus)*; entire bodies of pterodactyls and broncosauruses; a slithy tove mounted on a fine specimen of the weeping wanderoo; the downy electrical whacknasty *(Ananias flabber gastor)*; the carnivorous mastodon; ten specimens of the skinless tiger (*Felis decorticata)*; a saber-toothed python, whose bite produced the weeping sickness; three ribnosed gazzadoodles; a pair of blood-sweating bandicoots; a night-blooming jeewhillikins; three and a half varieties of the crested skynoceros; a purring crocodile, or buzz-saurian; two Stymphalian linnets; a skeleton of the three footed swammigolsis — afterwards catalogued at the Podunk Museum of Defective Types as *Talpa unopede noninvento;* a hydra from Lerna; the ring-tail mollycoddle and the fawning polecat (*Givis nondesiderabilis).*

These terrible monsters, which from the dawning of time had ravaged all Africa, baffling every attempt at exploration and settlement, the Exterminator, as he came to be called, had strangled or captured with his bare hands; and the few remaining were so cowed that they gave milk. Indeed, such was their terror of his red right arm that all forsook their evil ways, offered themselves as beasts of burden to the whites that came afterward, and in domestication and servitude sought the security that he denied to their ferocity and power. Within a single generation prosperous colonies of Caucasians sprang up all along the coasts, and the silk hat and pink shirt, immemorial pioneers and promoters of civilization, penetrated the remotest fastnesses, spreading peace and plenty o’er a smiling land!

The later history of this remarkable man is clouded in obscurity. Much of his own account of his exploits, curiously intertangled with those of an earlier hero named Hercules, is extant, but it closes with his re-embarkation for America. Some hold that on returning to his native land he was assailed with opprobrium, loaded with chains, and cast into Chicago; others contend that he was enriched by gifts from the sovereigns of the world, received with acclamation by his grateful countrymen, and even mentioned for the presidency to succeed Samuel Gompers — an honor that he modestly declined on the ground of inexperience and unfitness. Whatever may be the truth of these matters, he doubtless did not long suffer affliction nor enjoy prosperity, for in the great catastrophe of the year 254 B. S. the entire continent of North America and the contiguous island of Omaha were swallowed up by the sea. Fortunately his narrative is preserved in the Royal Library of Timbuktu, in which capital of civilization stands his colossal statue of ivory and gold. In the shadow of that renowned memorial I write this imperfect tribute to his worth.

OBJECTIVE IDEAS

WE all remember that the sound of a trumpet has been described as scarlet. The fact that we do remember it is evidence that the incident of a physical sensation masquerading in a garment appropriate to the guest of another sense than the one entertaining it is a general, not an individual, experience. Not, of course, that a trumpet-call impresses us all with a sense of color, but the odd description would long ago have been forgotten had not each mind recognized it as the statement of a fact belonging to a class of facts of which itself has had knowledge. For myself, I never hear good music without wishing to paint it — which I should certainly do with divine success if I understood music and could paint. The hackneyed and tiresome fashion of calling certain pictures “symphonies” in this or that color has a basis of reason — which will somewhat discredit it in the esteem of those whom it has enslaved. I never hear a man talking of “symphonies” in gray, green, pepper-and-salt, crushed banana, ashes-of-heretic or toper’s-nose without thinking with satisfaction of the time when he will himself be a symphony in flame-color, lighting up the landscape of the underworld like a flamingo in the dun expanse of a marsh in the gloaming.

I have in mind a notable instance of a sensation taking on three dimensions — one for which I am not indebted, probably, to the courtesy of some forgotten experience producing an association of ideas. It will be conceded that it is at least unlikely that one should ever enjoy simultaneously the double gratification of eating a pine-apple and seeing a man hanged; such felicity is reserved, I fancy, for creatures more meritorious than poor sinful human beings. Nevertheless, I never taste pine-apple without a lively sense of a man with his head in a black bag, depending from his beam. It is not that I am at the same time conscious of the fruit and of that solemn spectacle; it simply seems to me that a man hanging is the taste of that fruit. It is needless to add that when thinking of those unworthy persons, my enemies, I derive a holy delight from consuming generous slices of pine-apple.

There is a class of mental phenomena which, so far as my knowledge goes, has never been “spread upon the record.” Possibly they are peculiar to my own imperfect understanding, and a saner consciousness is innocent of them. If so it will gratify my pride of monopoly to admit the public to a view of my intellectual chattels. The mental process of enumeration is with me a gliding upward in various directions from i to 100; not along a column of successive figures, like a cat scampering up a staircase, but along a smooth, pale-bluish, angular streak, with the hither-and-yon motion of a soaring snipe. From i to 10 the line runs upward, and to the right at an angle with the horizon of about sixty degrees. There it turns sharply back to the left and the grade to 20 is nearly flat. Thence to 30 the ascent is vertical. From 30 to 50 there is an ascent of 10 degrees to the right and slightly away from me. The course to 60 is to the left again, the angle, say 10 degrees. From 60 to 90 there is no break, the course, too, is almost level and directly away; thence to 100 nearly vertical. It will be observed that the angles are all at 10 and its multiples, but there is no angle at 40, none at 70, nor at 80. I may explain that the interval between 10 and 20 is greatly longer than it ought to be, and I venture to protest against the exceptional and unwarrantable brevity of that between 90 and 100.

Every time I count I am compelled to ascend some part of this reasonless and ridiculous Jacob's-ladder, with a "hitchety, hatchety, up I go" movement, like Jack mounting his bean-stalk; and it is ludicrously true that I feel a sense of relief on arriving at the more nearly level stages, and on them am conscious of an augmented speed. I can count from 60 to 70 twice as quickly as I can from 90 to 100. Investigation and comparison of such conceptions as these can but result in unspeakable advancement of knowledge. If any gentleman has similar ones and a little leisure for their discussion I hope he will consent to meet me in Heaven.

MY CREDENTIALS

MY death occurred on the 17th day of June, 1879 — I shall never forget it. The day had been uncommonly hot, and the doctor kept telling me that unless it grew cooler he would hardly be able to pull me through. He said he was willing to do his best and prolong my life to the latest possible moment if I wished him to, but in any case I should have to die in a few days. I directed him to keep on prolonging, but the heat grew greater and finally overcame him, and I died. That is to say, while he was absent at an adjacent saloon after a sherry cobbler one of my “bad spells” came on and I fell a victim to inattention. Things turned out exactly as medical science had foretold.

The funeral was largely attended and a society reporter was good enough to describe it as an “enjoyable occasion.” I had been a prominent member of one hundred and fifty societies, including the Sovereigns of Glory, the Confederated Idiots, Knights and Ladies of Indigence, Gorgeous Obsequies Guarantee Fraternity, Protective League of Adult Orphans, Ancient and Honorable Order of Divorced Men, Society for Converting Lawyers to Christianity, Murderers’ Mutual Resentment Association, League of Persons Having Moles on Their Necks, Brotherhood of Grand Flashing Inaccessibles, Mutual Pall Bearers, and Floral Tribute Consolation Guard. All these societies, and many more, were represented at my funeral, some in “regalia.” I was buried under more auspices than you could count. Soon after, I was ushered into the Other World.

It is not like what you have been told, but I am forbidden to say what it is like. Suffice it that its inhabitants know all that goes on in the world we have left. Imagine, then, the delight with which I read in all the daily papers the various “resolutions of respect” adopted by the societies of which I had been a member. The Sovereigns of Glory said:

Whereas, Providence has found a pleasure in removing from among us His Majesty, Peter Wodel Mocump, our Order’s Serene Reigner over the Records; and *Whereas,* Our royal hearts are deeply touched by this exercise of the divine prerogative; — , *Resolved,* That in all the relations of life he was truly majestic and imperial.

Resolved, That we tender our royal sympathy to his surviving Queen and the Princess and Princesses of his dynasty.

Resolved, That in testimony to his worth these resolutions be engrossed on parchment and publicly displayed for thirty days in the windows of a dry-goods shop.

The Protective League of Adult Orphans held a meeting before I was cold, and passed the resolutions following:

Whereas, The flower that bloomed under the name of Peter Wodel Mocump has been ruthlessly cut down by the Reaper whose name is Death; and *Whereas,* He was a pansy; be it, therefore, *Resolved,* That in his removal this League has lost a sturdy champion of the rights of orphans; and be it further *Resolved,* That a general boycott be, and hereby is, declared against all orphans outside this Protective League.

The Ancient and Honorable Order of Divorced Men eulogized me in the strongest language as one who had possessed in a high and conspicuous degree every qualification for membership in their Order. By the Murderers' Mutual Resentment Association I was described as one whose time, talent and fortune were ever at the service of those injured in the world's esteem by the judicial practice of alluding to the past. The League of Persons Having Moles on Their Necks said that, apart from the unusual size of my mole, I had ever shown a strong zeal for the public welfare and the advancement of civilization.

I gathered up these various evidences of worth. I got together all the obituary notices from the newspapers, which showed with a singular unanimity that I was greatly addicted to secret almsgiving (how did they know it?) and that I was without a fault of character or disposition. I copied the inscription on my headstone and the verses in the death-column of the *Morning Buglehorn* — some of its death editor's happiest and most striking lines. Altogether, this literature made a pretty large volume of eulogy. I had it printed and bound (in the Other World sense) and copiously indexed. It was the best reading I ever saw.

The time arrived for me to appear at the gate of Heaven and make a personal demand for admission. I was notified of the hour when I would be heard, and was on hand. St. Peter received me with a smile and said:

"We are full of business to-day; be brief and speak to the point. What do you know of yourself that entitles you to a seat in the blest abodes?" — .

I smiled rather loftily but without *hauteur,* and silently handed him the volume, bearing in golden letters on the cover the title: "My Record." St. Peter turned over the leaves deliberately, read a passage here and there and handed it back, saying:

"My friend, you have run into a streak of hard luck. The persons who have given you so good a character — the societies, newspapers, *etc.* — are unknown to me, and I don't wish to say anything against them. But they have been backing a good many applicants lately, and I have let in a few on their judgment.

Well, this very morning I got this note. I don't mind letting you read it if you won't say I showed it. You will see I can't do anything for you."

He handed me a letter with about half the envelope torn off by careless opening. It read as follows:

DEAR PETER, — There has been quite a number of disturbances in here lately, and three or four cases of scandalous misconduct on the part of the saints, one of whom, in fact, eloped with an angel. Another was arrested for pocketing some of the golden pavement, and some have been trying to become famous by cutting their initials in the bark of the Tree of Life. Inquiry shows that in every instance the offender is a recent arrival, always a prominent citizen and a member of a number of "societies." I won't overrule your action, but really the character of this place is changing. I must ask you to stick to the old tests — a godly life and a humble acceptance of the Christian religion.

When I saw the Name that was signed to that note I could not utter a word. I turned away and came Here.

THE FOOL

(Bits of Dialogue from an Unpublished Morality Play)

I

FOOL — I have a question for you. PHILOSOPHER — I have many, for myself. Do you happen to have heard that a fool can ask what a philosopher is unable to answer?

F. — I happen to have heard that if that is true the one is as great a fool as the other.

PH. — What presumption! Philosophy is search for truth; folly is submission to happiness.

F. — But happiness is the sole desire and only possible purpose of man.

PH. — Has virtue no other end?

F. — The other end of virtue is the beginning.

PH. — Instructed, I sit at your feet.

F. — Unwilling to instruct, I stand on my head.

PHILOSOPHER — You say that happiness is the sole desire of man. This is much disputed.

FOOL — There is happiness in disputation. PH. — But Socrates says —

F. — He was a Grecian. I hate foreigners. PH. — Wisdom is of no country.

F. — Of none that I have observed.

PHILOSOPHER — Let us return to our subject, happiness as the sole desire of man. Crack me these nuts. (1) The man that endures a life of toil and privation for the good of others.

FOOL — Does he feel remorse for so doing? Does he not rather like it?

PH. — (2) He who, famishing himself, gives his loaf to a beggar.

F. — There are those who prefer benevolence to bread.

PH. — (3) How of him who goes joyfully to martyrdom at the stake?

F. — He goes joyfully.

PH. — And yet —

F. — Did you ever talk with a good man going to the stake?

PH. — I never saw one going to the stake.

F. — Unfavored observer! — you were born a century too early.

PHILOSOPHER — You say that you hate foreigners. Why?

FOOL — Because I am human.

PH. — But so are they.

F. — I thank you for the better reason.

PHILOSOPHER — I have been thinking of the pocopo.

FOOL — So have I; what is it?

PH. — The pocopo is a small Brazilian animal, chiefly remarkable for singularity of diet. A pocopo eats nothing but other pocopos. As these are not easily obtained, the annual mortality from starvation is very great. As a result, there are fewer mouths to feed, and by consequence the race is rapidly multiplying.

F. — From whom had you this?

PH. — A professor of political economy.

F. — Let us rise and uncover.

FOOL — A foreign student of the English language read the report of a colloquy between a fool and a philosopher. The remarks of the fool were indicated by the letter F; those of the philosopher by the letters PH — as ours will be if Heaven raise up a great, wise man to report them.

PHILOSOPHER — Well?

F. — Nothing. Ever thereafter the misguided foreign student spelled “fool” with ph and philosopher with an f.

PH. — Neo-Platonist!

II

FOOL — If I were a doctor —— , DOCTOR — I should endeavor to be a fool.

F. — You would fail — folly is not achieved, but upon the meritorious it is conferred.

D. — For what purpose?

F. — For yours.

FOOL — I have a friend who —

DOCTOR — Is in need of my assistance. Absence of excitement, absolute quiet, a hard bed and a simple diet; that will cure him.

F. — Hardly. He is dead — he is taking your prescription.

D. — All but the simple diet. — .

F. — He is himself the diet.

D. — How simple.

FOOL — What is the nastiest medicine? DOCTOR — A fool’s advice.

F. — And what the most satisfactory disease?

D. — The most lingering one.

F. — To the patient, I mean.

D. — Paralysis of the thoracic duct.

F. — I am not familiar with it.

D. — It does not encourage familiarity. Paralysis of the thoracic duct enables the patient to overeat without taking the edge off his appetite.

F. — What an admirable equipment for dining outl How long does the patient’s unnatural appetite last?

D. — The time varies; always longer than he does.

F. — As an hypothesis, that is imperfectly conceivable. It sounds like a doctrine.

DOCTOR — Anything further?

FOOL — You attend a patient; nevertheless he recovers. How do you tell if his recovery was because of your treatment or in spite of it?

D. — I never do tell.

F. — I mean, how do you know?

D. — I take the opinion of a person interested in such matters: I ask a fool.

F. — How does the patient know?

D. — The fool asks me.

F. — You are very kind; how shall I prove my ingratitude?

D. — By close attention to the laws of health. F. — God forbid!

III

FOOL — Sir Cutthroat, how many orphans have you made to-day?

SOLDIER — The devil an orphan. Have you a family?

F. — Put up your iron; I am the last of my race.

S. — What! — no more fools?

F. — Not one, so help me! They have all gone to the wars. By the way, you are somewhat indebted to me.

S. — Let us arbitrate your claim: arbitration is good for my trade.

F. — The only arbiter whose decision you respect is on your side. It hangs there.

S. — It is impartial: it cuts both ways. For what am I indebted to you?

F. — For existence. Prevalence of me has made you possible.

S. — Possible? Sir, I am probable.

SOLDIER — Why do you wear a cap and bells?

FOOL — The civic equivalent of a helmet and plume.

S. — Go “hang a calf-skin on those recreant limbs.”

F.—’Tis only wisdom should be bound in calf, for wisdom is the veal of which folly is the matured beef.

S. — Then folly should be garbed in cowskin.

F. — Aye, that it may the sooner appear for what it is — the naked truth.

S. — How should it?

F. — You would soon strip off the hide to make harness and trappings withal. No one thinks what conquerors owe to cows.

FOOL — Tell me, hero, what is strategy?

SOLDIER — The art of putting two knives to one throat.

F. — And what is tactics?

S. — The art of drawing them across it.

F. — Fine! I read (in Joinville, I think) that during the Crusades the armament of a warship comprised two hundred serpents. These be strange weapons.

S. — What stuff a fool may talk! The great Rameses used to turn loose lions against his enemies, but no true soldier would employ serpents. Those snakes were used by sailors.

F. — A nice distinction, truly. Did you ever employ your blade in the splitting of hairs?

S. — I have split masses of them!

FOOL — Speaking of the Crusades — at the siege of Acre, when a part of the wall had been thrown down by the Christians the Pisans rushed gallantly into the breach, but the greater part of their army being at dinner, they were bloodily repulsed. Was it not a shame that those feeders should not stir from their porridge to succor their allies?

SOLDIER — Pray why should a man neglect his business to oblige a friend?

F. — But they might have conquered, and the city would have been open to sacking and pillage.

S. — The selfish gluttons!

FOOL — Why is a coachman’s uniform called a livery and a soldier’s livery a uniform?

S. — Your presumption grows insupportable. Speak no more of matters that you know nothing about.

F. — Such censorship would doom all tongues to inactivity. Test my knowledge.
S. — What is war?

F. — An acute stage of logical politics.

S. — What is peace?

F. — A suspension of hostilities. An armistice for the purpose of digging up the dead.

S. — I do not follow you.

F. — Then I have security without exertion. S. — You damned half-ration!

OUR SMART SETS

URBAN

THE party given on Tuesday evening last at the residence of the Puffers was an enjoyable occasion. Next door to the residence is a church, and the festivities were frequently interrupted by an old-fashioned prayer meeting that was going on in the sacred edifice — the “amens” and “God-grant-its” being distinctly audible in the midst of the dance. The nuisance was finally abated by the police, but not until many of the guests had left the Puffer mansion in disgust.

The week has been prolific of social gaieties. The hospitable mansions of the genteel, which were thrown shut during Lent, have been thrown open again, and all has gone merry as a married belle. The list of successful and long-to-be-remembered occasions is too long for publication and too important for abbreviation. It can only be said here, in a general way, that Society whooped it up great!

The engagement is announced of Mr. Dreffeldude P. Milquesoppe to Miss Enameline Stuccup, the least-young daughter of our distinguished townsman, Impyqu Stuccup, Esq., familiarly known as “the Golden Pauper.” The wedding is to take place as soon as the old man can sell his pigs.

On Wednesday H. Grabberson Tump led to the altar Miss Toozifoozle Bile, and having got her there, married her alive. The bridal presents were gorgeous, being the famous “Set No. 3” from the well and favorably known establishment of Pasticraft, Nickelgilt & Co. — the same set that graced the showtable on the memorable occasion of the Whoopup-Hurroo nuptials last fall.

The Society Editors’ League has purchased a new evening coat and appointed a committee to arrange a uniform vocabulary — a social Esperanto. The phrases, “palatial mansion,” “the hospitable doors were thrown open,” “the rank, beauty and fashion,” “the festivities were prolonged into the wee sma’ hours,” *li* Terpsichorean exercises were indulged in,” “the elegant collation was done ample justice to,” “joined in the holy bonds of wedlock,” will stand without revision.

A fancy-dress ball was given by the inmates of the insanity asylum last Monday night. The only outmate present was the society editor of the *Technologist*, who took the character of “The Lunatic,” and sustained it with such fidelity that he was a marked man. [They marked him “3397” and kept him there.

Our distinguished townsman, the Hon. Dollop Gobb, whose public-spirited investments in unimproved real estate have done so much to make this city what she is, was received everywhere with great consideration while in Europe. The brigands who captured him near Athens demanded the largest ransom for him that has ever been exacted for an American. When he ascended the Great Pyramid he was detained at the top until all that he had excepting his underclothing had gone as backsheesh to the downtrodden millions of Egypt. Innkeepers, couriers, guides, porters and servants vied with one another in paying homage to success in the person of this selfmade American. Mr. Gobb believes that genuine worth is better appreciated under monarchical forms of Government than it is here.

Mr. Joel Hamfat is reported engaged to Mrs. John Bamberson, whose husband is lying at the point of death. It is a genuine case of love at first sight, Mr. Hamfat being the head of the measuring department of the United Undertakers.

On Monday, at the Church of St. Iniquity (Episcopalian), the Rev. Dr. Mammon Godder joined in the holy bonds of matrimony Jacob Abraham Isaacson, of the firm of Isaacson, Isaacson & Isaacson, proprietors of the Seventh Commandment Bazaar, to Miss Rebekah Katzenstein, daughter of Aaron Levi Katzenstein, Esq., of Katzenstein, Abramson & Lubeckheimer, gentlemen clothiers, No. 315 Little Kneedeep street. The wedding — including breakfast, wines, decorations, carriages and everything — cost more than a thousand dollars, but as the bride’s father felicitously remarked, “Monish is noddings ven it is a qvestion of doing somedings in a drooly Ghristian vay, don’t it?” It undoubtedly does.

Old man Snoop has returned from Mud Springs much improved in age. His daughter, Mrs. Major and Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Straddleblind, has engaged lodging and board for him at the Alms House, where his private system of grammar will excite greater enthusiasm than it does at Humility Hill, as the charming villa of the Straddleblinds is called.

The wedding of Miss Euphemia de Genlis Bullworthy-Clopsattle, the second charming daughter of our distinguished fellow citizen, the Hon. Aminadab Azrael Bullworthy Clopsattle, of “The Pollards,” to Jake Snoots will not take place at once; the bride-to-be will first be “confirmed.” She is wise — if anybody needs the consolation of religion she will.

A reception in honor of the composer who wrote *Johnny, Get Your Gun* was held on Thursday evening last at the pal man of Mrs. Macpogram, who is herself a musician of no mean ability. The guest of the evening — whose name we do not at this moment recall — sang the composition which has made him famous from Maine to California. Afterward Miss Castoria Hamfat rendered *Yow che m' rumpus* in excellent style, and Mr. — (the gentleman who composed the other thing) was tickled half to death. We wish she had sung the whole opera.

Mr and Mrs. Whackup have returned from Europe, bringing many objects of art, some of which cost a great deal of money. Among them is Turner's "Boy Eating an Apple," of which the distinguished critic, Col. Twobottle, of Georgia, said that it would live as long as the language. Another treasure of the Whackup collection is Titian's portrait of Mrs. Whackup's aunt, painted by Signor Titian at one sitting. It is the intention to have the frame made of real ormolu and set with brilliants.

The elegant entertainment last Tuesday evening at the palatial mansion of our distinguished townsman, J. Giles Noovoreesh Esq., was shorn of its intended proportions by the unexpected arrival of Mr. Noovoreesh himself. Some of the gentlemen who graced the occasion with their presence have not yet obtained their hats and overcoats. The scene that followed the irruption of Mr. N. into the grand hall where Terpsichorean festivities were eventuating is said by an eye-witness to have been the grandest spectacle since the retreat from Waterloo.

A series of "Saturday morning *soirees* " is announced at the suburban residence of Mrs. Judge of the Court of Acquittal Smythe. It is Mrs. Judge of the Court of Acquittal Symthe's opinion that the uncommon hour will enable her to invite the persons whom she does not want, as well as the ladies and gentlemen whom she does.

Mrs. Lowt has had her ears pierced. It was done by the singing of her second daughter, Miss Loobie. —

From the list of persons whose presence added interest and charm to the splendid obsequies of the late Mrs. Bangupper, on Thursday last, we inadvertently omitted the name of the beautiful and accomplished Miss Chippie Hifli. She was lovely in a costume from Chicago, and divided honors with the remains.

Mrs. Suds will give a literary entertainment at her residence on Angel avenue next Thursday evening, when her beautiful and gifted niece, Miss Simpergiggle, will read Poe's *Raven.* She is an *élocutioniste* of remarkable powers, having twice received the highest honors in Professor's Drumlung's class and once driven an audience mad. Her rendering of *The Charge of the Light Brigade* is said to be unlike anything ever heard, and on one occasion it so fired the heart of a young man who was engaged to her that he instantly broke off the match, resolved to dedicate himself to the sword in the next war.

One of the most enjoyable parties of the season was given on Thursday evening last by the hoodlumni of the little university around the corner. The guests comprised nearly all the gentlemen who have graduated during the past two years.

Miss Adiposa Brown wishes us to say that among those present at the Sucklebuster wedding we observed Miss Addie P. Brown, who looked enchanting in white silk and diamonds. We strive to please.

Last Thursday's post-mortem reception at the costly mansion of the Jonesmiths was a tasteful affair. The body of the hostess, in one of Grimdole & Grewsums popular caskets, wore a magnificent moire-antique Mother Hubbard and a look of serene peace adorned with pearls. The coiffure was a triumph of the hair-dresser's art. Too great praise cannot be given to the skill and artistic taste of Miss Nobbie Chic, under whose supervision the gorgeous apartments had been decorated with all manner of griefery: a skull-and-cross-bones in black spatter-work on a scarlet ground being particularly pleasing. The vegetable tributes, including a skeleton in orange blossoms, were mostly from the floral emporium of Jickster & Gonkle. When the lid of the casket was screwed down there was noiser weeping than has ever been heard on any similar occasion in this city: the guests literally weltered in woe.

Physicians declare that the apparently innocent habit of kissing lap dogs is a fruitful source of contagion. They point to the recent mortality among the dogs as confirmatory evidence.

Last Wednesday evening's reception at the Slumsprung residence was marred by the unexpected return of the old man. As it was understood that he was in Milpitas, and would not be invited anyhow, many of the guests had not taken the precaution to be armed, and for some time the festivities were one-sided. Luckily the tide, was turned by the opportune arrival of Col. Spotshot. Silas Edward Slumsprung was born at Dawkinsville, Missouri, October 3, 1845. Educated as a blacksmith and fired with the spirit of adventure, he came to this state in 1870, since which time his fame is familiar to even the most lowly: no name has more prominently adorned the advertising columns of this journal than that of the distinguished remains. We mourn our loss.

A successful party at Tarrytown — John D. Rockefeller.

Among the most honored guests at the Hull-Caboodle reception last Thursday evening was Mr. Moriarty Monaghan, the distinguished inventor of the steam chaperon.

At Mrs. Fastiddio's *musicale* last Thursday evening the harmony of the occasion was somewhat marred by the sound of a desperate squabble in the entrance hall as Professor Schwackenheimer was singing his famous solo, *Dere's moosic eferyvheres.* The fair hostess signified a wish that the festivities should not be suspended, but even beauty is unable to muzzle the press, and our reporter left the room to see what it was all about. The hall porter, whose hair and clothing were greatly deranged, explained with some excitement, between his gasps of fatigue, that he'd been "a firin' out another one o' them dam antecedents."

The Jacksprats are in Jebigue. They live there.

The engagement is announced of Hunker Gowk to the widow Jonesmith, who will be remembered in connection with the road-house scandal of ten years ago. The engagement having revived public interest in that unfortunate episode in the life of the lady, it is related in full in another column.

Our reporter was contumeliously treated at last Wednesday evening's hoe-down at the Robinson mansion. This is the more surprising because the hostess is one of our oldest and most esteemed landmarks and is sincerely devoted to study of books on etiquette to make up for her early disadvantages. We forgive it as a mere *reversio ad naturam.*

Miss Enameline Cartilagina Cmythe is visiting the mummy of Rameses II, in Cairo. They were schoolmates.

They are telling (under the breath) of a clever thing which Mrs. Rooley said the other day. "My dear," said an old schoolgirl friend whom she had not met since her marriage, "how could you venture to marry Mr. Rooley with that awful scandal hanging over you?"

"The most natural thing in the world," was the placid reply. "People were beginning to talk, and I married Mr. Rooley at once to keep him from hearing about it."

The Princess Bulli-Bulli is at the Golden Hotel. She will be remembered as the lady who kept the peanut parlors at 9276 Cobble street in the old days. Since she has got royal blood in her veins her Highness is, of course, somewhat haughty and cold in her manner, and has on two or three occasions inflicted severe injuries on the hotel servants; but she is at heart a true American lady and has six dogs.

Mrs. Excrusia Blogg gave a party last Tuesday in celebration of her thirtieth birthday.

Among the names of those not invited was that of the fair hostess' daughter, Mrs. Rougeline Blogg-Dumperton, who with her five lovely children lives just over the way. The particulars of the estrangement are not known.

In diamonds it is the fashion to have the breakfast sets entirely different from those worn at dinner. Nothing so conspicuously distinguishes the true lady as the jewelry she wears at breakfast. Mrs. Bluegore, the wife of the Hon. Asa Bluegore, M. C., is a model in this way; her diamonds always look as if she had slept in them, they are worn with so negligent a grace.

At five-and-half o’clock teas it is *en regie* for the hostess to stir each cup of the beverage with her forefinger before administering it to the patient. This assures so low a temperature that the tea is retained in the system.

Miss Exquisitia Multiboodle and father are registered at the Majestic hotel.

The Tooquites, the Culcherfads and the Refinings are at the Divine.

Old Mumchortle and his mahala are at the Squaremeal.

There will be another *musicale* next Tuesday evening at the residence of Mrs. Jonas Goard. Professor Henrj Beerbellj will be present with his violin, and will play some choice selections from Schopenhauer, Mazzini, Gambetta and Murillo. Mrs. Goard says it is her intention to make her weekly *musicales* the most peerless that money will collar.

The Hiflungs are at the Splurge House. Their health has not been good since their return from Europe, Colonel Hiflung, Miss Hiflung, Miss Phlebotomy Hiflung and Masters Thanatopsis and Epithalamium Hiflung all suffering more or less acutely from brain failure.

Gargoyle Squutney has arrived from Paris, where he had the distinction of ascending the Eiffel Tower. The Emperor paid him a great deal of attention and he met the Tuilleries.

Society is justly indignant at the threatened publication of an *Élite Directory* with an “Appendix of Antecedents.” Strenuous efforts at suppression have resulted in nothing, so far, but hopes are entertained of conciliating the author and publisher with an invitation to the Pursang luncheon next week. In the mean time that hardy and desperate man speaks of the ladies and gentlemen whom he weakly maligns in the columns of an infamous daily newspaper as “Our Sore Hundred.”

The fashion of leaving the dog’s card with that of the mistress is obtaining favor again.

The new spring-style coffins have oxidized silver trimmings.

Our distinguished townsman, the Hon. Mr. Col. Samuel Jiggs, Esquire, is understood to deprecate Society’s attitude toward him. He has confided to a prominent society man the fact that he is tired of attending his wife’s entertainments and hearing himself addressed by her guests as “Sam” and “Jiggsy.” He purposes, he says, to make certain radical improvements in the next galoots as allows they kin prosper withouten good manners.

At the funeral of Miss Nobbie Skihi, last Thursday, the corpse was attired in a Directoire costume from Worth’s, and wore a diamond and sapphire necklace valued, according to the tag, at $15,000. In removing this at the close of the entertainment, the mother of the deceased was overcome with emotion, which found audible expression. The lady’s voice is a clear soprano of remarkable power.

The Lalligaggs have taken rooms at the Hotel Paradise for the winter and the Mollicoddles for the storm. The Von Doodles are reported as storming at Hohokus.

At the Rodaigent-Cadje wedding reception a new and admirable feature was introduced. On one end of a table were displayed the wedding presents, with the donor’s names attached. On the other end was a large number of wooden naughts, gilt and variously decorated. These bore the names of friends and acquaintances who gave nothing. It is said that some of the persons blacklisted have applied to the police for protection.

Mrs. Wollysnopple is in town again, where, being at present afflicted with smallpox, she has a wide circle of acquaintances.

The beautiful and accomplished Miss Vaseline Upshoot damaged one of her toes last week in alighting from a street car. It was the sweetest little accident in the world, and the fair sufferer underwent a charming amputation.

The Impycu family, who are at Gophertown, Hog Valley, wish us to state that they are traveling in Europe. So are we.

Mrs. Breezy O’Blairney has offered the Academy of Sciences a magnificent oil portrait of her late husband, the Hon. Moriarty Fitz Flaherty O’Blairney. It is reported that the Academy is willing to compromise.

A pleasing incident in high life occurred the other evening at a *conversazione* given by Mrs. Fastidiana Rushereeeee, *nee* Scroggins. The fair hands of the distinguished and wealthy hostess had worked in violets on a yellow ground the following chaste and elegant lines, which adorned one of the walls:

Here mind meets mind on the occasion
Of an intellectual *conversazione.*

A gentleman of some literary pretensions from Boston enticed the hostess aside, and in the most cowardly manner intimated that she had erred in pronunciation, or else had a bad ear for rhyme. The insulted lady apprised the other gentlemen present of what had been said to her in her own house, and the fellow was energetically booted abroad, returning not any more to that place. And that is the pleasing incident above referred to.

Mrs. Follyswaddle’s reception in honor of Lord’Arry Chortle of Wapping was enjoyable until his lordship was taken drunk; then the festivities were parted in the middle.

The Tollipoodles are Octobering in Sprouleville — all except the old man, who is Tollipoodling here, in the regular way. In him there is neither change nor shadow of turning — such as creation's dawn beheld he Tollipoodleth now.

The wake of Malone Finucain last Thursday night was marred by but a single untoward incident — the corpse got up and kicked everybody out of the house. The widow desires us to say that the second wake of the series will take place at a date not now determined, and each guest will be supplied at the door with an attested copy of a physician's certificate of death.

One of the most interesting souvenirs of royalty that this country can boast is in the possession of Miss Celeritie Hifli of this city. It was given to Miss Hifli by his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who greatly admired her beauty. The souvenir is a Bank of England ten-pound note, which Miss Hifli has had framed and exhibits with pardonable pride. After the first few shocks, it is quite charming to observe her ingenuous way of speaking of his Royal Highness as "Al."

Society is discussing a shocking scandal. It is difficult to get the particulars from an authentic source, but they are believed to be about as follows: Three weeks ago, on the death of Miss R — , the body was placed in the handsome tomb of Colonel H — , an old friend of the family, the fine mausoleum of the R — s being incomplete. The only occupant of the tomb when the body of Miss R — was placed there was the remains of Colonel H—'s brother, but for the sake of propriety Mrs. X — , a friend of both families, had the mortal part of her mother conveyed there from another place. But on Tuesday last Mrs. X — , without notifying the R — s, had her mother's body removed and sent East. From that day until yesterday the remains of Miss R — were without a chaperon. Great indignation is felt against Mrs.

X — , and it is thought that her action will seriously affect her social standing.

RURAL

The festivities last Wednesday evening at the Turveypool mansion scooped the ranch. It was the slickest outfit of the season, and will shine in the annals of society worse than a new tin pan. The genial hostess was as affable as a candidate for coroner, and pitchforked her smiles about without caring a cuss where they struck and stuck. She's the whitest woman in this social camp, and don't you forget it.

Mrs. Flyorbust gave a reception on Friday evening, which in point of pure elegance knocked everything perfectly cold and was a regular round-up of beauty, rank and fashion. The fair hostess' long residence in the social centers of Europe, where she experted some of the niftiest occasions, has taught her how to do such things white. Among those present we observed Mr. Flyorbust, Miss Flyorbust, Miss Georgiana Glorinda Flyorbust, and Master Tom Busted.

The engagement is announced of Mr. Megacephaloid Polliglot Paupertas, the distinguished and popular scion of the Munniglut stock, to a lady of acceptable fortune but humble birth, who is not at present in society and is therefore nameless in these columns. The wedding is expected to take place as soon as this person can dispose of some property in Hangtown. If the sale is auspiciously consummated the nuptials will eventuate with unscrupulous grandiosity.

Society is unaffected by Lent: Mrs. Vulgaria de Binks-Browne says that she means to give a dizzy party next Wednesday evening and put on as much dog as anybody or bust a-trying. Those near to Mrs. Binks-Browne hope that she will succeed.

We were honored yesterday by a call from the eminent statesman, the Hon. Braygong Bumble, and his distinguished dog. They remained an hour and left, going in the direction of our loathsome contemporary, *The Squeege*. It is to be hoped they did not tarnish their respective escutcheons by calling on the presiding felon of that gang, and they probably did not, for the voice of fame has not pointed the finger of discovery at him.

Old man Blivens wants the public to get onto the racket that his fat girl, Piggy Jane, is effectuating. As nearly as we could tumble to it from the elderly party's prospectus, it is to be a lavender feed. The guests are not expected to eat that herb of the field, unless they want to, but its color will pervade the occasion like an undertone of garlic in a Dago Christmas. Ladies whose rinds don't hitch well with lavender had better stay at home and go to the circus.

Mrs. Colonel Pompinuppy's Wednesday evenings will henceforth eventuate on Thursday afternoons. At the next one Signora Fahertini, a Dutch *cantatreechy*, will squawk up some classical music that will make the hair curl.

Pimply Johnson is pinching out at his Burro street shack. The medicine man has tooted his doom, but says he may possibly pull through the week. Keep your northwest eye open for an enjoyable funeral if it is Christian weather. The remains will be *cached* in the natty mausoleum erected by them during life.

The services last Sunday evening at the Church of the Holy Jones were enlivened by the presence of the beautiful Miss Marie Jeanne Hodj, who brandished the most paralyzing follyswaddles of any hen in the kaboodle. Her leading figleaf was of nun's-unavailing, with a demi-train which responded rhythmically to every lateral impulse of her willowy figure. The rest of her outfit we didn’t slate. Miss Hodj looked sweet enough to eat!

At the reception, last Tuesday evening, at the Loftinudle mansion, the many guests gracing the occasion with their presence were profoundly affected by the costliness and elegance of everything in the house and its appointments. No one thing knocked them silly, but there was a general allroundishness that laid ‘em out like dead! It is universally admitted that the Loftinudle shack is uncommonly tough to tackle, and it is not thought that any of the shanties now going up in Smith’s Addition will be able to hold a candle to it. There are some persons, however, who expect old Loftinudle will himself hold a candle to it, as the insurance is significantly heavy.

The Squuljees are now established in their new Malaria county villa, Skunkmead. The house, which is of the Renuisance style, is fitted with all the ancient and modern conveniences, and the whole place has been happily described by a reporter of the *Malarian* as strongly resembling Mr. Elysian’s fields. Mrs. Squuljee, Miss Squuljee and Miss Carameline Squuljee were in the city yesterday and were seen at a distance by our reporter. Unluckily they had seen him first.

The Bachelor’s Club is madder than a wet cat. It was first flung to the breeze to enable the unmarried roosters to return-match the old hens who entertain them at the henneries; but the chaps do it so white that now the o h.’s don’t put up at all. We plank down our in-’ardest sympathy in the business, but that’s all we can do; owing to the death of a heavy advertiser the o h. appertaining to our loathsome contemporary isn’t branching out into social gaieties much at the present writing.

Mr. James O’Squander and Mrs. Jane McMillion are to be married next Hangman’s day — that day being selected in memory of the bridegroom’s sainted father. It was of this engagement that the Bard of Tar Flat, Ferd Anderson Snooks, penned his brutal couplet, published by a disgusting contemporary:

Jim will tie to Jane in the holy bonds of wedlock, But ere a year is gone he’ll be scraping round on bedrock.

A Leap Year party was given on Monday evening at the Coyote District school-house, Potato county. The Temple of Science was beautifully decorated, the words “Leep Yeer,” tastily executed in colored chalks on the black-board, being conspicuously pleasing. They were the work of the teacher.

The McCorkle crowd is Novembering at Iron Springs. That summer place of last resort does not advertise in this journal, but we know enough about it from other sources to whack up our deepest dollar on the proposition that the essence of latch-key which Mother Earth spits out at that place will knock the McCorkle livers galley west.

THE EVOLUTION OF A STORY

ON a calm evening in the early summer, a young girl stood leaning carelessly against a donkey at the top of Plum Hill, daintily but with considerable skill destroying a biscuit by mastication's artful aid. The sun had been for some time behind the sea, but the conscious West was still suffused with a faint ruddiness, like the reflection from an army of boiled lobsters marching below the horizon for a flank attack upon the stomach of Boston.

Slowly and silently the ruby legion held its way. Not a word was spoken; commands given by the general were passed from mouth to mouth, like a single bit of chewing gum amongst the seven children immortalized by Edward Bok, who was more than usually active this evening, if that were possible.

And it was possible; in no spirit of bravado, but with firm reliance on the *blanc mange* he had eaten for dinner, and which was even now shaping itself into exquisite fancies in the laboratory of his genius, the great editor had resolved to reach a higher excellence, or perish in the attempt, as the tree frog, baffled by the smooth bark of the beech, falls exhausted into the spanning jaws of the serpent biding his time below.

Having swallowed the frog, the reptile turned to go away, and by a sinuous course soon reached the highway. Here he stood up and looked about him. There was no living thing in sight. To the right hand and the left the dusty white road stretched away without a break in its dreary, mathematical sameness. Beyond a belt of pines on the opposite side rose a barren, rounded hilltop, resembling the bald crown of a game keeper thrust upward from behind a hedge to offer a shining mark for the poacher.

Grimly the poacher raised and sighted his gun, charged with a double quantity of heavy slugs. There was a moment of silence — a silence so profound, so deathlike in its intensity, that a keen ear might have heard the spanking of an infant in a distant village.

This infant had come, no one knew whence. The story went that it had tramped into town one cold morning, with its cradle slung across its back, and after being refused admittance to the hotel, had gone quietly to the back door and lain down, having first written and pinned to its gown the following placard: “This unfortunate child is the natural son of a foreign prince, who until he shall succeed to the throne of his ancestors begs that the illustrious waif may be tenderly cared for. His Royal Highness cannot say how long his own worthless father may continue to disgrace the realm, but hopes not long. At the end of that time, his Royal Highness will appear to the child’s astonished benefactor, crusted as thickly with gems as a toad with warts.”

These troublesome excrescences had given the poor toad much pain. Everything that science had devised, and skill applied, had been a mere waste of money; and now at the age of four hundred years, with life just opening before him, with other toads reveling about him in all the jump-up-and-come-down-hardness of their hearts he was compelled to drag himself nervelessly through existence, with no more hope of happiness than a piano has of marriage.

It was not a nice piano; the keys were warped, the mainspring was relaxed, the cogwheels would not have anything to do with one another, and the pendulum would swing only one way. Altogether a disreputable and ridiculous old instrument. But such as it was, it had stood in that dim old attic, man and boy, for more than thirty years. Its very infirmities, by exciting pity, had preserved it; not one of the family would have laid an axe at the root of that piano for as much gold as could be drawn by a team of the strongest horses.

Of these rare and valuable animals we shall speak in our next chapter.

THE ALLOTMENT

“DOUBTLESS we have all great gratitude this night of Thanksgiving. Doubtless, too, we have ample cause and justification, for the dullest crack-brain of us all knows that life might have gone harder with him had the Power that compounds our joys and pains proportioned differently, to that end, the simples of the mixture.”

So reading, I fell asleep, for I was full of bird. Straight appeared to me an angel, the dexter half of whom was white, the sinister, black — the line of division parting him from the hair down. Two skins of wine he bore; one wine was clear and sweet, and one was dark and bitter exceeding, such as would make a pig squeal. I saw, also, at his feet as he stood, some large glass vessels of even size, marked from bottom to top with a scale, the divisions numbered upward from 1 to 100.

“Son of Mortality,” said he, “I am the Compounding Power — behold my standard mixture.” So saying he poured into one of the vessels 50 parts of sweet and the same of bitter. “This,” he said, “is without taste. It is for him whom Heaven doth neither bless nor afflict. There is but one such that liveth.”

“The devil!” I cried, for indeed I greatly marveled that this should be so.

Said the angel: “Guess again.”

“Compound now, I beseech thee,” I said, “the best that thou hast use for in thy business: a tipple of surpassing richness — one which maketh the hair to curl.”

Thereupon he put into the second vessel 1 part of bitter and 9 of sweet. And he looked upon it saying: “It is the best that it is permitted to me to do.”, “Show me,” I said, “the worst; for truly it must be exceeding fierce, slaying at eighty rods.”

“It is bad to take,” he answered, and straightway poured into the third vessel 10 parts of sweet. Then, upraising the other skin, he filled the vessel to the brim, and a great compassion fell upon my spirit, thinking on the unhappy man who should get himself outside that unholy tope.

“Behold,” said the angel, “Heaven is just! The ratio of pain to joy in the lot of the happiest mortal is the same as that of joy to pain in his who is most wretched. It is i to 10.” And after some little time he spake again:

“I’m a dandy for fairness.”

“True, O Dandy Allotter,” I said: “the proportions are only reversed. But these two vessels, the second and the third, holding the good draught and the bad —

lo! the good is but a tenth part full, whilst the latter overfloweth the vessel. Is each quantity a dose?”

And the angel said: “Each is a dose.” Wherefore I raised my voice against him, and called him out of his name, and cast my pillow upon him, and he departed out of that place with a loud cry. Then they that came in haste to my chamber, unbidden, looked one upon another and said: “He ate of the bird.”

LACKING FACTORS

GENDER is the sex of words. But either this matter of sex is imperfectly understood, or Nature has made faulty provision for the duality of things; for history and speech show many melancholy examples of natural celibacy, and Shelley’s dictum that “nothing in the world is single” must be accepted with the large limitation of a comprehensive denial. Who ever heard of an alligatrix? The spinster — has she anywhere a femaler mate, the spinstress? I am told there is an article, a garment, if I have rightly understood — called a garter, and that it has commonly a mate, yet I — know not if any one has seen a gartress. Nor, for that matter, a garter. Has the cypress a lord and master known as the cypor? We hear of personal encounters, but a personal encounter between two ladies is not an encountress. Every one knows that an epistle is a female apostle, but why the male mate of the unlisted himmit should, except for consistency in perversion, be called a hermit, who can say?

Oddly enough, the shero is unknown to fame. Is there a place beyond the grave of the sinner, called Heol, and was its existence hinted at in the old name for Sheol? In Irish folklore is no mention of the banhee. An ornithologist of even the widest attainments will assure you that the queenfisher is an undiscovered fowl. Ancient history, sacred or profane, is vainly questioned concerning the King of Heba — whom nevertheless, I love to figure to myself as making a long journey to lay countless camel loads of gifts at the feet of the very wisest sovereign in all the world — the queen of the Shebrews.

A CALIFORNIAN STATESMAN

PERSONS who have not had the advantage of hearing about the Hon. Henry Vrooman in the past ten or twelve years will be surprised to learn that he is still living. The man has more lives than a ship-load of cats from Malta. In the past few years he has been dying of heart disease so fast that he is in danger of becoming extinct. His death-rate is appalling! He has died in every voting precinct in this part of the state, and his last words are about to be compiled in three volumes. Whenever Mr. Vrooman wants “the suffrages of his fellow-citizens” he gets them together in a hall, makes them a speech, assures them that his sands of life are pretty nearly run out, closes with some neat and appropriate patriotic sentiment suitable to the sad occasion, and then flops down and dies all over the floor. Just before the vital spark is extinct the meeting is adjourned by turning off the gas and the corpse is at liberty to rise and go home. The next morning Mr. Vrooman’s political organ relates how he was snatched from the jaws of death, though his condition is still critical; and the sovereign electors say: “Well, poor feller, he’s on his last legs anyway — guess it won’t do much harm to elect him.” The wretch never drew a cent of salary without committing the crime of obtaining money by false pretenses; he is always elected on the understanding that he is to die.

But he doesn’t die — he is immortal. The moment that the “innumerable caravan” has passed the polling place he drops out of the procession and hangs about for his certificate of election. Then we hear no more about his poor heart until his term is about to expire, when it begins to trouble him again. He and his term generally manage to expire together in the sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection.

In the closing hours of the last session of the state senate somebody made a motion to limit all speeches to ten minutes. This brought Mr. Vrooman to his hind feet forthwith. “Mr. President,” he said, “standing as I do upon the threshold of the Unknown, and turning back to address my fellow-citizens for the last time, I feel grateful indeed that an all-wise Providence has so ordered it that my final words can be spoken in advocacy of the righteous and beneficent principle of free speech, and in denunciation of the reptiles who would limit the liberty of debate. With a solemn sense of my responsibility to Him from whom I received my mental powers, and to whom I am so soon to give an account of my stewardship; gazing with a glazing eye upon the transitory scenes of earth, about which ‘the dark Plutonian shadows gather on the evening blast’; conscious that the lutestring is about to snap and the pitcher to be broken at the well, I adjure you, friends of my former days, as in a whisper from the dark, not to let that motion prevail.”

Wiping a light froth from his lips, the failing senator, with a friend under each arm and a half-dozen volunteer pall-bearers following, solemnly left the chamber to the sound of a dozen busy pens drafting resolutions of respect.

A moment later Senator Moffitt walked into the hall, dexterously caught the presiding officer’s eye, and said: “Mr. President, it is my mournful duty to apprise this honorable body of my distinguished colleague’s continued existence. Born of poor but thoughtless parents and educated as a blacksmith; gifted with a penetrating intelligence which never failed in the darkest night to distinguish a five-dollar piece from a nickel, yet blessed with an impartial soul which loved the humbler coin as well, in proportion to its value, as the nobler one; blessed with a benevolence which relieved alike the rich man and the poor — the one of his coin, the other of his character; reared in the principles of religion and giving to the worship of himself an incredible devotion — this great man moved among the property of his neighbors, a living instance of the power of personal magnetism and the strength of political attachment. He was a generous man: one-half of all that he took with his right hand he bestowed upon his left. He was a respecter of Truth, and did not profane her with his lips. He was a patriot: other nations might be more powerful in arms, or more glorious in history, but America was good enough for him if he could get it. Withal, he had a tender heart acutely responsive to indigestion and closely identified with the political history of this state. Mr. President, I move that when the senate adjourn to go to luncheon it do so out of respect to the memory of Henry Vrooman. True, he is no deader than he was when he began to die ten years ago, but, sir, a memorial adjournment may have a deeper and better significance than is visible in a mere conformity to fact: it may entoken a pious people’s readiness to submit to a tardy bereavement.”

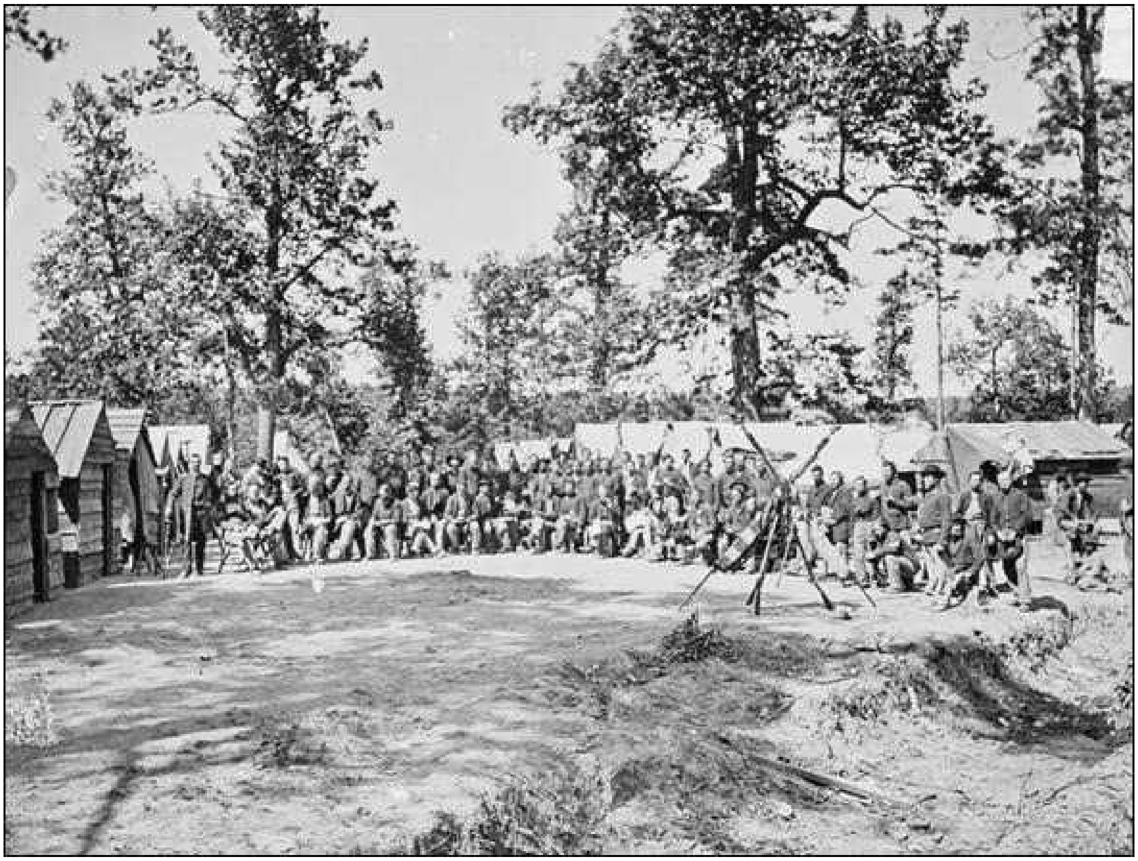
Senator Moffitt’s motion was peremptorily and contumeliously declared out of order, and that erring statesman dejectedly took his seat a sadder and a nicer man. It saddens to add that he solaced himself by consuming the public stationery in composing the following discreditable epitaph:

Step lightly, stranger o’er this holy place,
Nor push this sacred monument aside,
Set by his fellow-citizens to grace
The only spot where Vrooman never died.

1888.

THE END

The Short Stories



The Union Army's 9th Indiana Infantry Regiment, c.1862. At the outset of the Civil War, Bierce enlisted in the regiment and participated in the Operations in Western Virginia campaign (1861). He was present at the "first battle" at Philippi and received newspaper attention for his daring rescue, under fire, of a gravely wounded comrade at the Battle of Rich Mountain.

LIST OF SHORT STORIES IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

ONE MORE UNFORTUNATE.
THE STRONG YOUNG MAN OF COLUSA.
THE GLAD NEW YEAR.
THE LATE DOWLING, SENIOR.
LOVE’S LABOUR LOST.
A COMFORTER.
LITTLE ISAAC.
THE HEELS OF HER.
A TALE OF TWO FEET.
THE SCOLLIVER PIG.
MR. HUNKER’S MOURNER.
A BIT OF CHIVALRY.
THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY.
DEATHBED REPENTANCE.
THE NEW CHURCH THAT WAS NOT BUILT.
A TALE OF THE GREAT QUAKE.
JOHNNY.
THE CHILD’S PROVIDER.
BOYS WHO BEGAN WRONG.
A KANSAS INCIDENT.
MR. GRILE’S GIRL.
HIS RAILWAY.
MR. GISH MAKES A PRESENT.
A COW–COUNTY PLEASANTRY.
THE OPTIMIST, AND WHAT HE DIED OF.
THE ROOT OF EDUCATION.
RETRIBUTION.
MARGARET THE CHILDLESS.
THE DISCOMFITED DEMON.
THE MISTAKE OF A LIFE.
L. S.
THE BAFFLED ASIAN.
A CALL TO DINNER.
ON DEATH AND IMMORTALITY.
MUSIC–MUSCULAR AND MECHANICAL.

THE GOOD YOUNG MAN.
THE AVERAGE PARSON.
DID WE EAT ONE ANOTHER?
YOUR FRIEND’S FRIEND.
LE DIABLE EST AUX VACHES.
ANGELS AND ANGLES.
A WINGLESS INSECT.
PORK ON THE HOOF.
THE YOUNG PERSON.
A CERTAIN POPULAR FALLACY.
PASTORAL JOURNALISM.
MENDICITY’S MISTAKE.
PICNICKING CONSIDERED AS A MISTAKE.
THANKSGIVING DAY.
FLOGGING.
REFLECTIONS UPON THE BENEFICENT INFLUENCE OF THE PRESS.
CHARITY.
THE STUDY OF HUMAN NATURE.
ADDITIONAL TALK–DONE IN THE COUNTRY.
CHRISTIANS.
PAGANS.
FABLES OF ZAMBRI, THE PARSEE.
DIVERS TALES.
THE GRATEFUL BEAR.
THE SETTING SACHEM.
FEODORA.
THE LEGEND OF IMMORTAL TRUTH.
CONVERTING A PRODIGAL.
FOUR JACKS AND A KNAVE.
DR. DEADWOOD, I PRESUME.
NUT-CRACKING.
THE MAGICIAN’S LITTLE JOKE.
SEAFARING.
TONY ROLLO’S CONCLUSION.
NO CHARGE FOR ATTENDANCE.
PERNICKETTY’S FRIGHT.
JUNIPER.
FOLLOWING THE SEA.
A TALE OF SPANISH VENGEANCE.

MRS. DENNISON’S HEAD.
A FOWL WITCH.
THE CIVIL SERVICE IN FLORIDA.
A TALE OF THE BOSPHORUS.
JOHN SMITH, LIBERATOR
SUNDERED HEARTS.
THE EARLY HISTORY OF BATH.
THE FOLLOWING DORG.
SNAKING.
MAUD’S PAPA.
JIM BECKWOURTH’S POND.
STRINGING A BEAR.
PRESENT AT A HANGING
A COLD GREETING
A WIRELESS MESSAGE
AN ARREST
A MAN WITH TWO LIVES
THREE AND ONE ARE ONE
A BAFFLED AMBUSCADE
TWO MILITARY EXECUTIONS
THE ISLE OF PINES
A FRUITLESS ASSIGNMENT
A VINE ON A HOUSE
AT OLD MAN ECKERT’S
THE SPOOK HOUSE
THE OTHER LODGERS
THE THING AT NOLAN
MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES
THE DIFFICULTY OF CROSSING A FIELD
AN UNFINISHED RACE
CHARLES ASHMORE’S TRAIL
SCIENCE TO THE FRONT
A HORSEMAN IN THE SKY
AN OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE
CHICKAMAUGA
A SON OF THE GODS
ONE OF THE MISSING
KILLED AT RESACA
THE AFFAIR AT COULTER’S NOTCH

THE COUP DE GRÂCE
PARKER ADDERSON, PHILOSOPHER
AN AFFAIR OF OUTPOSTS
THE STORY OF A CONSCIENCE
ONE KIND OF OFFICER
ONE OFFICER, ONE MAN
GEORGE THURSTON
THE MOCKING-BIRD
THE MAN OUT OF THE NOSE
AN ADVENTURE AT BROWNVILLE
THE FAMOUS GILSON BEQUEST
THE APPLICANT
A WATCHER BY THE DEAD
THE MAN AND THE SNAKE
A HOLY TERROR
THE SUITABLE SURROUNDINGS
THE BOARDED WINDOW
A LADY FROM REDHORSE
THE EYES OF THE PANTHER
THE DEATH OF HALPIN FRAYSER
THE SECRET OF MACARGER’S GULCH
ONE SUMMER NIGHT
THE MOONLIT ROAD
A DIAGNOSIS OF DEATH
MOXON’S MASTER
A TOUGH TUSSLE
ONE OF TWINS
THE HAUNTED VALLEY
A JUG OF SIRUP
STALEY FLEMING’S HALLUCINATION
A RESUMED IDENTITY
A BABY TRAMP
THE NIGHT-DOINGS AT “DEADMAN’S”
BEYOND THE WALL
A PSYCHOLOGICAL SHIPWRECK
THE MIDDLE TOE OF THE RIGHT FOOT
JOHN MORTONSON’S FUNERAL
THE REALM OF THE UNREAL
JOHN BARTINE’S WATCH

THE DAMNED THING
HAITA THE SHEPHERD
AN INHABITANT OF CARCOSA
THE STRANGER
THE MORAL PRINCIPLE AND THE MATERIAL INTEREST
THE CRIMSON CANDLE
THE BLOTTED ESCUTCHEON AND THE SOILED ERMINE
THE INGENIOUS PATRIOT
TWO KINGS
AN OFFICER AND A THUG
THE CONSCIENTIOUS OFFICIAL
HOW LEISURE CAME
THE MORAL SENTIMENT
THE POLITICIANS
THE THOUGHTFUL WARDEN
THE TREASURY AND THE ARMS
THE CHRISTIAN SERPENT
THE BROOM OF THE TEMPLE
THE CRITICS
THE FOOLISH WOMAN
FATHER AND SON
THE DISCONTENTED MALEFACTOR
A CALL TO QUIT
THE MAN AND THE LIGHTNING
THE LASSOED BEAR
THE INEFFECTIVE ROOTER
A PROTAGONIST OF SILVER
THE HOLY DEACON
A HASTY SETTLEMENT
THE WOODEN GUNS
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THE POET’S DOOM
THE NOSER AND THE NOTE
THE CAT AND THE KING
THE LITERARY ASTRONOMER
THE LION AND THE RATTLESNAKE
THE MAN WITH NO ENEMIES
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THE LIFE–SAVERS
THE AUSTRALIAN GRASSHOPPER
THE PAVIOR
THE TRIED ASSASSIN
THE BUMBO OF JIAM
THE TWO POETS
THE THISTLES UPON THE GRAVE
THE SHADOW OF THE LEADER
THE SAGACIOUS RAT
THE MEMBER AND THE SOAP
ALARM AND PRIDE
A CAUSEWAY
TWO IN TROUBLE
THE WITCH’S STEED
THE ALL DOG
THE FARMER’S FRIEND
PHYSICIANS TWO
THE OVERLOOKED FACTOR
A RACIAL PARALLEL
THE HONEST CADI
THE KANGAROO AND THE ZEBRA
A MATTER OF METHOD
THE MAN OF PRINCIPLE
THE RETURNED CALIFORNIAN
THE COMPASSIONATE PHYSICIAN
TWO OF THE DAMNED
THE AUSTERE GOVERNOR
RELIGIONS OF ERROR
THE PENITENT ELECTOR
THE TAIL OF THE SPHINX
A PROPHET OF EVIL

THE CREW OF THE LIFE-BOAT
A TREATY OF PEACE
THE NIGHTSIDE OF CHARACTER
THE FAITHFUL CASHIER
THE CIRCULAR CLEW
THE DEVOTED WIDOW
THE HARDY PATRIOTS
THE HUMBLE PEASANT
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THE JUDGE AND THE RASH ACT
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HIS FLY–SPECK MAJESTY
THE PUGILIST’S DIET
THE OLD MAN AND THE PUPIL
THE DECEASED AND HIS HEIRS
THE POLITICIANS AND THE PLUNDER
THE MAN AND THE WART
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A FORFEITED RIGHT
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AN OPTIMIST
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AT THE POLE
THE OPTIMIST AND THE CYNIC
THE POET AND THE EDITOR
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AN UNSPEAKABLE IMBECILE
A NEEDFUL WAR
THE MINE OWNER AND THE JACKASS

THE DOG AND THE PHYSICIAN
THE LEGISLATOR AND THE CITIZEN
THE RAINMAKER
THE CITIZEN AND THE SNAKES
FORTUNE AND THE FABULIST
A SMILING IDOL
PHILOSOPHERS THREE
THE BONELESS KING
UNCALCULATING ZEAL
A TRANSPOSITION
THE HONEST CITIZEN
A CREAKING TAIL
WASTED SWEETS
SIX AND ONE
THE SPORTSMAN AND THE SQUIRREL
THE FOGY AND THE SHEIK
AT HEAVEN’S GATE
THE CATTED ANARCHIST
THE HONOURABLE MEMBER
THE EXPATRIATED BOSS
AN INADEQUATE FEE
THE JUDGE AND THE PLAINTIFF
THE RETURN OF THE REPRESENTATIVE
A STATESMAN
TWO DOGS
THREE RECRUITS
THE MIRROR
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THE THIEF AND THE HONEST MAN
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THE GRASSHOPPER AND THE ANT
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DAME FORTUNE AND THE TRAVELLER
THE VICTOR AND THE VICTIM
THE WOLF AND THE SHEPHERDS
THE GOOSE AND THE SWAN
THE LION, THE COCK, AND THE ASS
THE SNAKE AND THE SWALLOW
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THE MAN AND HIS GOOSE
THE WOLF AND THE FEEDING GOAT
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THE LION AND THE MOUSE
THE NORTH WIND AND THE SUN
THE MOUNTAIN AND THE MOUSE
THE BELLAMY AND THE MEMBERS
THE WOLF AND THE CRANE
THE LION AND THE MOUSE
THE HARES AND THE FROGS
THE BELLY AND THE MEMBERS
THE PIPING FISHERMAN
THE ANTS AND THE GRASSHOPPER

THE DOG AND HIS REFLECTION
THE LION, THE BEAR, AND THE FOX
THE ASS AND THE LION’S SKIN
THE ASS AND THE GRASSHOPPERS
THE WOLF AND THE LION
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THE RACE AT LEFT BOWER
THE FAILURE OF HOPE & WANDEL
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A PROVISIONAL SETTLEMENT
ASPIRANTS THREE
AT SANTIAGO
A CABINET CONFERENCE
AN INDEMNITY
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A SUCKED ORANGE
A TWISTED TALE
POST MORTEM
A STRAINED RELATION
A WIRELESS ANTEPENULTIMATUM
A PRESIDENTIAL PROGRESS

LIST OF SHORT STORIES IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

A-D E-H I-L M-O P-S T-V W-Z

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A BAFFLED AMBUSCADE
A BIT OF CHIVALRY.
A BOTTOMLESS GRAVE
A CABINET CONFERENCE
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A CALL TO QUIT
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A PROVISIONAL SETTLEMENT
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AN INADEQUATE FEE
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MARGARET THE CHILDLESS.
MAUD’S PAPA.
MENDICITY’S MISTAKE.
MERCURY AND THE WOODCHOPPER
MOLES
MOXON’S MASTER
MR. GISH MAKES A PRESENT.
MR. GRILE’S GIRL.
MR. HUNKER’S MOURNER.
MR. MASTHEAD, JOURNALIST
MR. SWIDDLER’S FLIP-FLAP
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THE ASS AND THE LION’S SKIN
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THE BASKING CYCLONE
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THE BELLY AND THE MEMBERS
THE BLOTTED ESCUTCHEON AND THE SOILED ERMINE
THE BOARDED WINDOW
THE BONELESS KING
THE BOYS AND THE FROGS
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THE BUFLO
THE BUMBO OF JIAM
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THE CAT AND THE KING
THE CAT AND THE YOUTH
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THE CHRISTIAN SERPENT
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THE DISCONTENTED MALEFACTOR
THE DISINTERESTED ARBITER

THE DIVIDED DELEGATION
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THE DOG AND THE PHYSICIAN
THE DOG AND THE REFLECTION
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THE EYES OF THE PANTHER
THE FABULIST AND THE ANIMALS
THE FAILURE OF HOPE & WANDEL
THE FAITHFUL CASHIER
THE FAMOUS GILSON BEQUEST
THE FARMER AND HIS SONS
THE FARMER AND THE FOX
THE FARMER’S FRIEND
THE FAWN AND THE BUCK
THE FISHER AND THE FISHED
THE FLYING–MACHINE
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THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE
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THE HERDSMAN AND THE LION
THE HIGHWAYMAN AND THE TRAVELLER
THE HIPPORIPPUS
THE HOLY DEACON
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THE HUMBLE PEASANT
THE HYPNOTIST
THE INEFFECTIVE ROOTER
THE INGENIOUS BLACKMAILER
THE INGENIOUS PATRIOT
THE ISLE OF PINES
THE JUDGE AND THE PLAINTIFF
THE JUDGE AND THE RASH ACT
THE JUSTICE AND HIS ACCUSER
THE KANGAROO AND THE ZEBRA
THE KITE, THE PIGEONS, AND THE HAWK
THE LASSOED BEAR
THE LATE DOWLING, SENIOR.
THE LEGEND OF IMMORTAL TRUTH.
THE LEGISLATOR AND THE CITIZEN
THE LIFE–SAVERS
THE LION AND THE BOAR
THE LION AND THE BULL
THE LION AND THE MOUSE
THE LION AND THE MOUSE
THE LION AND THE RATTLESNAKE
THE LION AND THE THORN
THE LION, THE BEAR, AND THE FOX
THE LION, THE COCK, AND THE ASS
THE LITERARY ASTRONOMER
THE LITTLE STORY
THE MAGICIAN’S LITTLE JOKE.
THE MAJOR’S TALE
THE MAN AND HIS GOOSE
THE MAN AND THE BIRD
THE MAN AND THE DOG

THE MAN AND THE EAGLE
THE MAN AND THE FISH-HORN
THE MAN AND THE LIGHTNING
THE MAN AND THE SNAKE
THE MAN AND THE VIPER
THE MAN AND THE WART
THE MAN OF PRINCIPLE
THE MAN OUT OF THE NOSE
THE MAN OVERBOARD
THE MAN WITH NO ENEMIES
THE MASSACRE
THE MEMBER AND THE SOAP
THE MIDDLE TOE OF THE RIGHT FOOT
THE MILKMAID AND HER BUCKET
THE MINE OWNER AND THE JACKASS
THE MIRROR
THE MISTAKE OF A LIFE.
THE MOCKING-BIRD
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THE NORTH WIND AND THE SUN
THE NOSER AND THE NOTE
THE NUMPORAUCUS
THE OLD MAN AND THE PUPIL
THE OPOSSUM OF THE FUTURE
THE OPTIMIST AND THE CYNIC
THE OPTIMIST, AND WHAT HE DIED OF.
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THE OVERLOOKED FACTOR
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THE PAVIOR
THE PENITENT ELECTOR
THE PENITENT THIEF
THE PIG
THE PIPING FISHERMAN
THE POET AND THE EDITOR
THE POET’S DOOM
THE POETESS OF REFORM
THE POL PATRIOT
THE POLICEMAN AND THE CITIZEN
THE POLITICIANS
THE POLITICIANS AND THE PLUNDER
THE POWER OF THE SCALAWAG
THE PREROGATIVE OF MIGHT
THE PUGILIST’S DIET
THE RACE AT LEFT BOWER
THE RAINMAKER
THE RAT
THE REALM OF THE UNREAL
THE REFORM SCHOOL BOARD
THE RETURN OF THE REPRESENTATIVE
THE RETURNED CALIFORNIAN
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THE SECRET OF MACARGER’S GULCH
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THE SHADOW OF THE LEADER
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THE STRONG YOUNG MAN OF COLUSA.
THE STUDY OF HUMAN NATURE.
THE SUITABLE SURROUNDINGS
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THE TAKEN HAND
THE THIEF AND THE HONEST MAN
THE THING AT NOLAN
THE THISTLES UPON THE GRAVE
THE THOUGHTFUL WARDEN
THE THRIFT OF STRENGTH
THE TOOTSY WOOTSY
THE TREASURY AND THE ARMS
THE TRIED ASSASSIN
THE TWO POETS
THE TYRANT FROG
THE UNCHANGED DIPLOMATIST
THE VARIOUS DELEGATION
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THE WITCH’S STEED
THE WOLF AND THE BABE
THE WOLF AND THE CRANE
THE WOLF AND THE FEEDING GOAT
THE WOLF AND THE LAMB
THE WOLF AND THE LION
THE WOLF AND THE OSTRICH
THE WOLF AND THE SHEPHERDS
THE WOLF WHO WOULD BE A LION
THE WOLVES AND THE DOGS
THE WOODEN GUNS
THE WRITER AND THE TRAMPS
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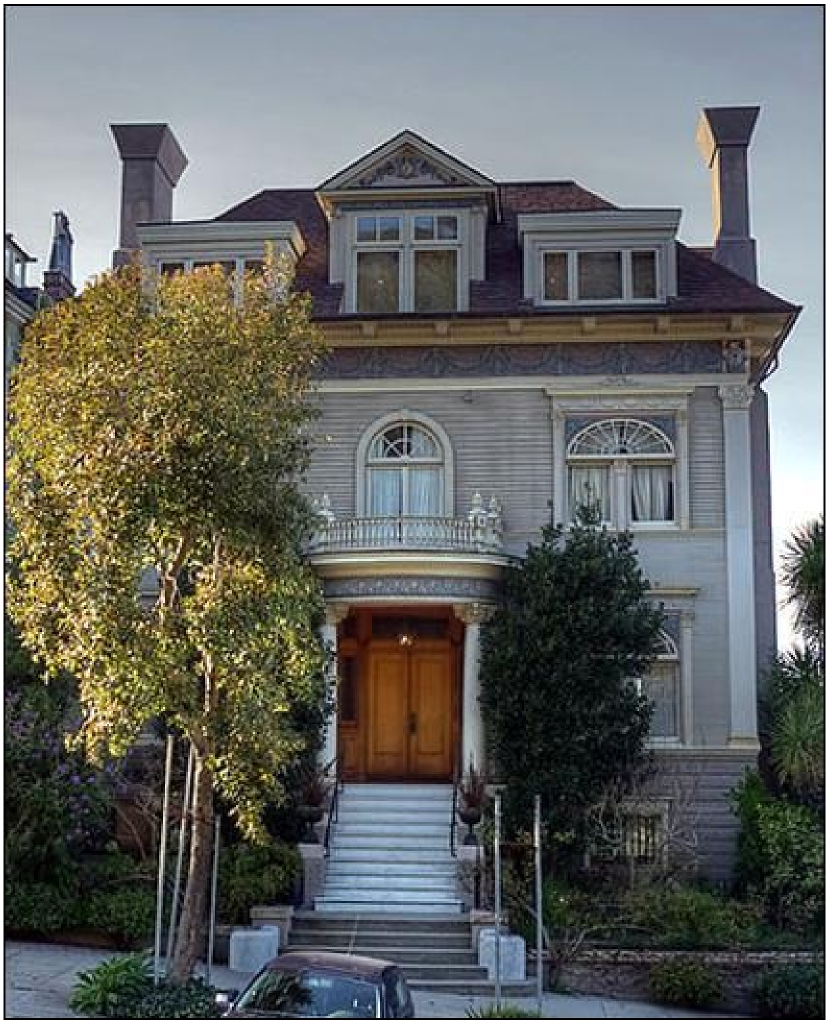
THREE AND ONE ARE ONE
THREE OF A KIND
THREE RECRUITS
TONY ROLLO’S CONCLUSION.
TRUTH AND THE TRAVELLER

TWO DOGS
TWO FAVORITES
TWO FOOTPADS
TWO IN TROUBLE
TWO KINGS
TWO MILITARY EXECUTIONS
TWO OF THE DAMNED
TWO OF THE PIOUS
TWO POLITICIANS
UNCALCULATING ZEAL
WASTED SWEETS
WHY I AM NOT EDITING “THE STINGER”
YOUR FRIEND’S FRIEND.

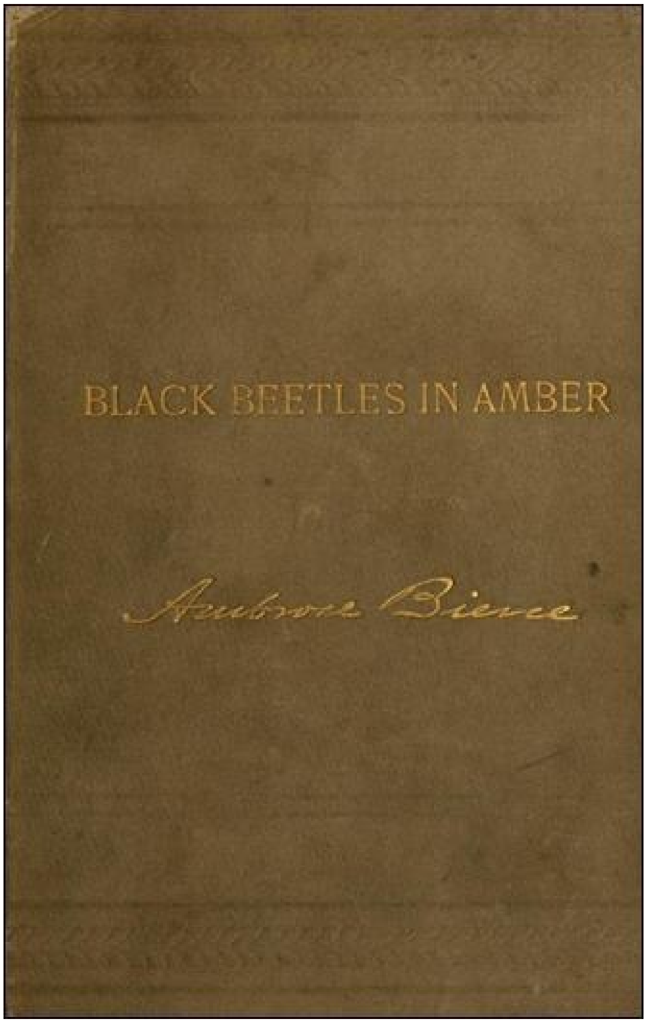
The Poetry Collections



Bierce's residence at 737 W. Buena Vista, San Francisco, California. Other famous residents include the author Jack London, who wrote 'White Fang' here, rock star Graham Nash and the actor, Danny Glover.

BLACK BEETLES IN AMBER

Black Beetles in Amber was Ambrose Bierce's first collection of poetry, published in San Francisco in 1892 by Western Authors Publishing. Contemporary reviewers responded to the book's universality and devastating wit, unusual for poetry of that era. Newsman and editor, Arthur McEwan wrote at the time, "Ambrose Bierce has found San Francisco a microcosm, and in flaying the fools and pretenders and villains of this one town, he has flayed the fools and villains and pretenders of the world." J. O'Hara Cosgrave, editor of *The Wave*, said that the unusual collection "is without a replica in literature. Never has anyone written such scathing satire. He exhausts the verbal possibilities of vituperation and does so in verse that has the crystalline polish of Pope's. Think of being gibbeted for posterity. That is what he has done for a handful of venial millionaires and corrupt officials. The form and style of these verses is so polished, so graceful, that they must live…"


BLACK BEETLES IN AMBER
Ambrose Bierce

Western Authors Publishing, first edition, 1892

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A WATER-PIRATE

C.P. BERRY
THE REV. JOSEPH

IN EXPLANATION

Many of the verses in this book are republished, with considerable alterations, from various newspapers. The collection includes few not relating to persons and events more or less familiar to the people of the Pacific Coast — to whom the volume may be considered as especially addressed, though, not without a hope that some part of the contents may be found to have sufficient intrinsic interest to commend it to others. In that case, doubtless, commentators will be "raised up" to make exposition of its full meaning, with possibly an added meaning read into it by themselves.

Of my motives in writing, and in now republishing, I do not care to make either defense or explanation, except with reference to those persons who since my first censure of them have passed away. To one having only a reader's interest in the matter it may easily seem that the verses relating to those might more properly have been omitted from this collection. But if these pieces, or, indeed, if any considerable part of my work in literature, have the intrinsic worth which by this attempt to preserve some of it I have assumed, their permanent suppression is impossible, and it is only a question of when and by whom they shall be republished. Some one will surely search them out and put them in circulation.

I conceive it the right of an author to have his fugitive work collected in his lifetime; and this seems to me especially true of one whose work, necessarily engendering animosities, is peculiarly exposed to challenge as unjust. That is a charge that can be best examined before time has effaced the evidence. For the death of a man of whom I may have written what I venture to think worthy to live I am no way responsible; and, however sincerely I may regret it, I can hardly be expected to consent that it shall affect my fortunes. If the satirist who does not accept the remarkable doctrine that while condemning the sin he should spare the sinner were bound to let the life of his work be coterminous with that of his subject his were a lot of peculiar hardship.

Persuaded of the validity of all this, I have not hesitated to reprint even certain "epitaphs" which, once of the living, are now of the dead, as all the others must eventually be. The objection inheres in all forms of applied satire — my understanding of whose laws and liberties is at least derived from reverent study of the masters. That in respect of matters herein mentioned I have but followed their practice can be shown by abundant instance and example.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

THE KEY NOTE

I dreamed I was dreaming one morn as I lay
  In a garden with flowers teeming.
On an island I lay in a mystical bay,
  In the dream that I dreamed I was dreaming.

The ghost of a scent — had it followed me there
  From the place where I truly was resting?
It filled like an anthem the aisles of the air,
  The presence of roses attesting.

Yet I thought in the dream that I dreamed I dreamed
  That the place was all barren of roses —
That it only seemed; and the place, I deemed,
  Was the Isle of Bewildered Noses.

Full many a seaman had testified
  How all who sailed near were enchanted,
And landed to search (and in searching died)
  For the roses the Sirens had planted.

For the Sirens were dead, and the billows boomed
  In the stead of their singing forever;
But the roses bloomed on the graves of the doomed,
  Though man had discovered them never.

I thought in my dream ‘twas an idle tale,
  A delusion that mariners cherished —
That the fragrance loading the conscious gale
  Was the ghost of a rose long perished.

I said, “I will fly from this island of woes.”
  And acting on that decision,
By that odor of rose I was led by the nose,
  For ‘twas truly, ah! truly, Elysian.

I ran, in my madness, to seek out the source
  Of the redolent river — directed
By some supernatural, sinister force
  To a forest, dark, haunted, infected.

And still as I threaded (‘twas all in the dream
  That I dreamed I was dreaming) each turning
There were many a scream and a sudden gleam
  Of eyes all uncannily burning!

The leaves were all wet with a horrible dew
  That mirrored the red moon’s crescent,
And all shapes were fringed with a ghostly blue,
  Dim, wavering, phosphorescent.

But the fragrance divine, coming strong and free,
  Led me on, though my blood was clotting,
Till — ah, joy! — I could see, on the limbs of a tree,
  Mine enemies hanging and rotting!

CAIN

Lord, shed thy light upon his desert path,
  And gild his branded brow, that no man spill
  His forfeit life to balk thy holy will
That spares him for the ripening of wrath.

Already, lo! the red sign is descried,
  To trembling jurors visibly revealed:
  The prison doors obediently yield,
The baffled hangman flings the cord aside.

Powell, the brother's blood that marks your trail —
  Hark, how it cries against you from the ground,
  Like the far baying of the tireless hound.
Faith! to your ear it is no nightingale.

What signifies the date upon a stone?
  To-morrow you shall die if not to-day.
  What matter when the Avenger choose to slay
Or soon or late the Devil gets his own.

Thenceforth through all eternity you'll hold
  No one advantage of the later death.
  Though you had granted Ralph another breath
Would *he* to-day less silent lie and cold?

Earth cares not, curst assassin, when you die;
  You never will be readier than now.
  Wear, in God's name, that mark upon your brow,
And keep the life you purchased with a lie!

AN OBITUARIAN

Death-poet Pickering sat at his desk,
Wrapped in appropriate gloom;
His posture was pensive and picturesque,
Like a raven charming a tomb.

Enter a party a-drinking the cup
Of sorrow — and likewise of woe:
“Some harrowing poetry, Mister, whack up,
All wrote in the key of O.

“For the angels has called my old woman hence
From the strife (where she fit mighty free).
It’s a nickel a line? Cond — n the expense!
For wealth is now little to me.”

The Bard of Mortality looked him through
In the piercingest sort of a way:
“It is much to me though it’s little to you —
I’ve *taken* a wife to-day.”

So he twisted the tail of his mental cow
And made her give down her flow.
The grief of that bard was long-winded, somehow —
There was reams and reamses of woe.

The widower man which had buried his wife
Grew lily-like round each gill,
For she turned in her grave and came back to life —
Then he cruel ignored the bill!

Then Sorrow she opened her gates a-wide,
  As likewise did also Woe,
And the death-poet’s song, as is heard inside,
  Is sang in the key of O.

A COMMUTED SENTENCE

Boruck and Waterman upon their grills
  In Hades lay, with many a sigh and groan,
  Hotly disputing, for each swore his own
Were clearly keener than the other’s ills.
  And, truly, each had much to boast of — bone
And sinew, muscle, tallow, nerve and skin,
Blood in the vein and marrow in the shin,
  Teeth, eyes and other organs (for the soul
Has all of these and even a wagging chin)
  Blazing and coruscating like a coal!
For Lower Sacramento, you remember,
Has trying weather, even in mid-December.

Now this occurred in the far future. All
  Mankind had been a million ages dead,
  And each to her reward above had sped,
Each to his punishment below, — I call
  That quite a just arrangement. As I said,
Boruck and Waterman in warmest pain
Crackled and sizzed with all their might and main.
  For, when on earth, they’d freed a scurvy host
Of crooks from the State prison, who again
  Had robbed and ravaged the Pacific Coast
And (such the felon’s predatory nature)
Even got themselves into the Legislature.

So Waterman and Boruck lay and roared
  In Hades. It is true all other males
  Felt the like flames and uttered equal wails,
But did not suffer *them*; whereas *they* bored
  Each one the other. But indeed my tale’s
Not getting on at all. They lay and browned
Till Boruck (who long since his teeth had ground

Away and spoke Gum Arabic and made
Stump speeches even in praying) looked around
And said to Bob’s incinerated shade:
“Your Excellency, this is mighty hard on
The inventors of the unpardonable pardon.”

The other soul — his right hand all aflame,
For ‘twas with that he’d chiefly sinned, although
His tongue, too, like a wick was working woe
To the reserve of tallow in his frame —
Said, with a sputtering, uncertain flow,
And with a gesture like a shaken torch:
“Yes, but I’m sure we’ll not much longer scorch.
Although this climate is not good for Hope,
Whose joyous wing ‘twould singe, I think the porch
Of Hell we’ll quit with a pacific slope.
Last century I signified repentance
And asked for commutation of our sentence.”

Even as he spoke, the form of Satan loomed
In sight, all crimson with reflections’s fire,
Like some tall tower or cathedral spire
Touched by the dawn while all the earth is gloomed
In mists and shadows of the night time. “Sire,”
Said Waterman, his agitable wick
Still sputtering, “what calls you back so quick?
It scarcely was a century ago
You left us.” “I have come to bring,” said Nick,
”St. Peter’s answer (he is never slow
In correspondence) to your application
For pardon — pardon me! — for commutation.

“He says that he’s instructed to reply
(And he has so instructed me) that sin
Like yours — and this poor gentleman’s who’s in
For bad advice to you — comes rather high;
But since, apparently, you both begin

To feel some pious promptings to the right,
And fain would turn your faces to the light,
  Eternity seems all too long a term.
So ‘tis commuted to one-half. I’m quite
  Prepared, when that expires, to free the worm
And quench the fire.” And, civilly retreating,
He left them holding their protracted meeting.

A LIFTED FINGER

[The *Chronicle* did a great public service in whipping
—— and his fellow-rascals out of office. — *M.H. de Young's Newspaper*.]

What! *you* whip rascals? — *you*, whose gutter blood
Bears, in its dark, dishonorable flood,
Enough of prison-birds' prolific germs
To serve a whole eternity of terms?
You, for whose back the rods and cudgels strove
Ere yet the ax had hewn them from the grove?
You, the De Young whose splendor bright and brave
Is phosphorescence from another's grave —
Till now unknown, by any chance or luck,
Even to the hearts at which you, feebly struck?
You whip a rascal out of office? — *you*
Whose leadless weapon once ignobly blew
Its smoke in six directions to assert
Your lack of appetite for others' dirt?

Practice makes perfect: when for fame you thirst,
Then whip a rascal. Whip a cripple first.
Or, if for action you're less free than bold —
Your palms both brimming with dishonest gold —
Entrust the castigation that you've planned,
As once before, to woman's idle hand.
So in your spirit shall two pleasures join
To slake the sacred thirst for blood and coin.
Blood? Souls have blood, even as the body hath,
And, spilled, 'twill fertilize the field of wrath.
Lo! in a purple gorge of yonder hills,
Where o'er a grave a bird its day-song stills,
A woman's blood, through roses ever red,
Mutely appeals for vengeance on your head.

Slandered to death to serve a sordid end,
She called you murderer and called me friend.

Now, mark you, libeler, this course if you
Dare to maintain, or rather to renew;
If one short year's immunity has made
You blink again the perils of your trade —
The ghastly sequence of the maddened "knave,"
The hot encounter and the colder grave;
If the grim, dismal lesson you ignore
While yet the stains are fresh upon your floor,
And calmly march upon the fatal brink
With eyes averted to your trail of ink,
Counting unkind the services of those
Who pull, to hold you back, your stupid nose,
The day for you to die is not so far,
Or, at the least, to live the thing you are!

Pregnant with possibilities of crime,
And full of felons for all coming time,
Your blood's too precious to be lightly spilt
In testimony to a venial guilt.
Live to get whelpage and preserve a name
No praise can sweeten and no lie unshame.
Live to fulfill the vision that I see
Down the dim vistas of the time to be:
A dream of clattering beaks and burning eyes
Of hungry ravens glooming all the skies;
A dream of gleaming teeth and foetid breath
Of jackals wrangling at the feast of death;
A dream of broken necks and swollen tongues —
The whole world's gibbets loaded with De Youngs!

1881.

TWO STATESMEN

In that fair city by the inland sea,
Where Blaine unhived his Presidential bee,
Frank Pixley's meeting with George Gorham sing,
Celestial muse, and what events did spring
From the encounter of those mighty sons
Of thunder, and of slaughter, and of guns.
Great Gorham first, his yearning tooth to sate
And give him stomach for the day's debate,
Entering a restaurant, with eager mien,
Demands an ounce of bacon and a bean.
The trembling waiter, by the statesman's eye
Smitten with terror, hastens to comply;
Nor chairs nor tables can his speed retard,
For famine's fixed and horrible regard
He takes for menace. As he shaking flew,
Lo! the portentous Pixley heaved in view!
Before him yawned invisible the cell,
Unheard, behind, the warden's footsteps fell.
Thrice in convention rising to his feet,
He thrice had been thrust back into his seat;
Thrice had protested, been reminded thrice
The nation had no need of his advice.
Balked of his will to set the people right,
His soul was gloomy though his hat was white,
So fierce his mien, with provident accord
The waiters swarmed him, thinking him a lord.
He spurned them, roaring grandly to their chief:
"Give me (Fred. Crocker pays) a leg of beef!"
His wandering eye's deluminating flame
Fell upon Gorham and the crisis came!
For Pixley scowled and darkness filled the room
Till Gorham's flashing orbs dispelled the gloom.
The patrons of the place, by fear dismayed,
Sprang to the street and left their scores unpaid.

So, when Jove thunders and his lightnings gleam
To sour the milk and curdle, too, the cream,
And storm-clouds gather on the shadowed hill,
The ass forsakes his hay, the pig his swill.
Hotly the heroes now engaged — their breath
Came short and hard, as in the throes of death.
They clenched their hands, their weapons brandished high,
Cut, stabbed, and hewed, nor uttered any cry,
But gnashed their teeth and struggled on! In brief,
One ate his bacon, t’other one his beef.

MATTER FOR GRATITUDE

[Especially should we be thankful for having escaped the ravages of the yellow scourge by which our neighbors have been so sorely afflicted. — *Governor Stoneman's Thanksgiving Proclamation.*]

Be pleased, O Lord, to take a people's thanks
That Thine avenging sword has spared our ranks —
That Thou hast parted from our lips the cup
And forced our neighbors' lips to drink it up.
Father of Mercies, with a heart contrite
We thank Thee that Thou goest south to smite,
And sparest San Francisco's loins, to crack
Thy lash on Hermosillo's bleeding back —
That o'er our homes Thine awful angel spread
His wings in vain, and Guaymas weeps instead.

We praise Thee, God, that Yellow Fever here
His horrid banner has not dared to rear,
Consumption's jurisdiction to contest,
Her dagger deep in every second breast!
Catarrh and Asthma and Congestive Chill
Attest Thy bounty and perform Thy will.
These native messengers obey Thy call —
They summon singly, but they summon all.
Not, as in Mexico's impested clime,
Can Yellow Jack commit recurring crime.
We thank Thee that Thou killest all the time.

Thy tender mercies, Father, never end:
Upon all heads Thy blessings still descend,
Though their forms vary. Here the sown seeds yield
Abundant grain that whitens all the field —
There the smit corn stands barren on the plain,
Thrift reaps the straw and Famine gleans in vain.

Here the fat priest to the contented king
Points out the contrast and the people sing —
There mothers eat their offspring. Well, at least
Thou hast provided offspring for the feast.
An earthquake here rolls harmless through the land,
And Thou art good because the chimneys stand —
There templed cities sink into the sea,
And damp survivors, howling as they flee,
Skip to the hills and hold a celebration
In honor of Thy wise discrimination.

O God, forgive them all, from Stoneman down,
Thy smile who construe and expound Thy frown,
And fall with saintly grace upon their knees
To render thanks when Thou dost only sneeze.

THREE KINDS OF A ROGUE

I

Sharon, ambitious of immortal shame,
Fame's dead-wall daubed with his illustrious name —
Served in the Senate, for our sins, his time,
Each word a folly and each vote a crime;
Law for our governance well skilled to make
By knowledge gained in study how to break;
Yet still by the presiding eye ignored,
Which only sought him when too loud he snored.
Auspicious thunder! — when he woke to vote
He stilled his own to cut his country's throat;
That rite performed, fell off again to sleep,
While statesmen ages dead awoke to weep!
For sedentary service all unfit,

By lying long disqualified to sit,
Wasting below as he decayed aloft,
His seat grown harder as his brain grew soft,
He left the hall he could not bring away,
And grateful millions blessed the happy day!
Whate’er contention in that hall is heard,
His sovereign State has still the final word:
For disputatious statesmen when they roar
Startle the ancient echoes of his snore,
Which from their dusty nooks expostulate
And close with stormy clamor the debate.
To low melodious thunders then they fade;
Their murmuring lullabies all ears invade;
Peace takes the Chair; the portal Silence keeps;
No motion stirs the dark Lethean deeps —
Washoe has spoken and the Senate sleeps.

II

Lo! the new Sharon with a new intent,
Making no laws, but keen to circumvent
The laws of Nature (since he can’t repeal)
That break his failing body on the wheel.
As Tantalus again and yet again
The elusive wave endeavors to restrain
To slake his awful thirst, so Sharon tries
To purchase happiness that age denies;
Obtains the shadow, but the substance goes,
And hugs the thorn, but cannot keep the rose;
For Dead Sea fruits bids prodigally, eats,
And then, with tardy reformation — cheats.
Alert his faculties as three score years
And four score vices will permit, he nears —
Dicing with Death — the finish of the game,
And curses still his candle’s wasting flame,
The narrow circle of whose feeble glow

Dims and diminishes at every throw.
Moments his losses, pleasures are his gains,
Which even in his grasp revert to pains.
The joy of grasping them alone remains.

III

Ring up the curtain and the play protract!
Behold our Sharon in his last mad act.
With man long warring, quarreling with God,
He crouches now beneath a woman’s rod
Predestined for his back while yet it lay
Closed in an acorn which, one luckless day,
He stole, unconscious of its foetal twig,
From the scant garner of a sightless pig.
With bleeding shoulders pitilessly scored,
He bawls more lustily than once he snored.
The sympathetic Comstocks droop to hear,
And Carson river sheds a viscous tear,
Which sturdy tumble-bugs assail amain,
With ready thrift, and urge along the plain.
The jackass rabbit sorrows as he lopes;
The sage-brush glooms along the mountain slopes;
In rising clouds the poignant alkali,
Tearless itself, makes everybody cry.
Washoe canaries on the Geiger Grade
Subdue the singing of their cavalcade,
And, wiping with their ears the tears unshed,
Grieve for their family’s unlucky head.
Virginia City intermits her trade
And well-clad strangers walk her streets unflayed.
Nay, all Nevada ceases work to weep
And the recording angel goes to sleep.
But in his dreams his goose-quill’s creaking fount
Augments the debits in the long account.
And still the continents and oceans ring

With royal torments of the Silver King!
Incessant bellowings fill all the earth,
Mingled with inextinguishable mirth.
He roars, men laugh, Nevadans weep, beasts howl,
Plash the affrighted fish, and shriek the fowl!
With monstrous din their blended thunders rise,
Peal upon peal, and brawl along the skies,
Startle in hell the Sharons as they groan,
And shake the splendors of the great white throne!
Still roaring outward through the vast profound,
The spreading circles of receding sound
Pursue each other in a failing race
To the cold confines of eternal space;
There break and die along that awful shore
Which God’s own eyes have never dared explore —
Dark, fearful, formless, nameless evermore!

Look to the west! Against yon steely sky
Lone Mountain rears its holy cross on high.
About its base the meek-faced dead are laid
To share the benediction of its shade.
With crossed white hands, shut eyes and formal feet,
Their nights are innocent, their days discreet.
Sharon, some years, perchance, remain of life —
Of vice and greed, vulgarity and strife;
And then — God speed the day if such His will —
You’ll lie among the dead you helped to kill,
And be in good society at last,
Your purse unsilvered and your face unbrassed.

A MAN

Pennoyer, Governor of Oregon,
Casting to South his eye across the bourne
Of his dominion (where the Palmiped,
With leathers ‘twixt his toes, paddles his marsh,
Amphibious) saw a rising cloud of hats,
And heard a faint, far sound of distant cheers
Below the swell of the horizon. “Lo,”
Cried one, “the President! the President!”
All footed webwise then took up the word —
The hill tribes and the tribes lacustrine and
The folk riparian and littoral,
Cried with one voice: “The President! He comes!”
And some there were who flung their headgear up
In emulation of the Southern mob;
While some, more soberly disposed, stood still
And silently had fits; and others made
Such reverent genuflexions as they could,
Having that climate in their bones. Then spake
The Court Dunce, humbly, as became him: “Sire,
If thou, as heretofore thou hast, wilt deign
To reap advantage of a fool’s advice
By action ordered after nature’s way,
As in thy people manifest (for still
Stupidity’s the only wisdom) thou
Wilt get thee straight unto to the border land
To mark the President’s approach with such
Due, decent courtesy as it shall seem
We have in custom the best warrant for.”

Pennoyer, Governor of Oregon,
Eyeing the storm of hats which darkened all
The Southern sky, and hearing far hurrahs
Of an exulting people, answered not.

Then some there were who fell upon their knees,
And some upon their Governor, and sought
Each in his way, by blandishment or force,
To gain his action to their end. “Behold,”
They said, “thy brother Governor to South
Met him even at the gateway of his realm,
Crook-kneed, magnetic-handed and agrin,
Backed like a rainbow — all things done in form
Of due observance and respect. Shall we
Alone of all his servitors refuse
Swift welcome to our master and our lord?”

Pennoyer, Governor of Oregon,
Answered them not, but turned his back to them
And as if speaking to himself, the while
He started to retire, said: “He be damned!”

To that High Place o’er Portland’s central block,
Where the Recording Angel stands to view
The sinning world, nor thinks to move his feet
Aside and look below, came flocking up
Inferior angels, all aghast, and cried:
“Pennoyer, Governor of Oregon,
Has said, O what an awful word! — too bad
To be by us repeated!” “Yes, I know,”
Said the superior bird—”I heard it too,
And have already booked it. Pray observe.”
Splitting the giant tome, whose covers fell
Apart, o’ershadowing to right and left
The Eastern and the Western world, he showed
The newly written entry, black and big,
Upon the credit side of thine account,
Pennoyer, Governor of Oregon.

Y’E FOE TO CATHAYE

O never an oathe sweares he,
  And never a pig-taile jerkes;
  With a brick-batte he ne lurkes
For to buste y’e crust, perdie,
Of y’e man from over sea,
  A-synging as he werkes.
For he knows ful well, y’s youth,
  A tricke of exceeding worth:
And he plans withouten ruth
  A conflagration’s birth!

SAMUEL SHORTRIDGE

Like a worn mother he attempts in vain
To still the unruly Crier of his brain:
The more he rocks the cradle of his chin
The more uproarious grows the brat within.

SURPRISED

“O son of mine age, these eyes lose their fire:
Be eyes, I pray, to thy dying sire.”

“O father, fear not, for mine eyes are bright —
I read through a millstone at dead of night.”

“My son, O tell me, who are those men,
Rushing like pigs to the feeding-pen?”

“Welcomers they of a statesman grand.
They’ll shake, and then they will pocket; his hand.”

“Sagacious youth, with the wondrous eye,
They seem to throw up their headgear. Why?”

“Because they’ve thrown up their hands until, O,
They’re so tired! — and dinners they’ve none to throw.”

“My son, my son, though dull are mine ears,
I hear a great sound like the people’s cheers.”

“He’s thanking them, father, with tears in his eyes,
For giving him lately that fine surprise.”

“My memory fails as I near mine end;
How *did* they astonish their grateful friend?”

“By letting him buy, like apples or oats,
With that which has made him so good, the votes
Which make him so wise and grand and great.

Now, father, please die, for ‘tis growing late.”

POSTERITY'S AWARD

I'd long been dead, but I returned to earth.
  Some small affairs posterity was making
A mess of, and I came to see that worth
  Received its dues. I'd hardly finished waking,
The grave-mould still upon me, when my eye
Perceived a statue standing straight and high.

'Twas a colossal figure — bronze and gold —
  Nobly designed, in attitude commanding.
A toga from its shoulders, fold on fold,
  Fell to the pedestal on which 'twas standing.
Nobility it had and splendid grace,
And all it should have had — except a face!

It showed no features: not a trace nor sign
  Of any eyes or nose could be detected —
On the smooth oval of its front no line
  Where sites for mouths are commonly selected.
All blank and blind its faulty head it reared.
Let this be said: 'twas generously eared.

Seeing these things, I straight began to guess
  For whom this mighty image was intended.
"The head," I cried, "is Upton's, and the dress
  Is Parson Bartlett's own." True, *his* cloak ended
Flush with his lowest vertebra, but no
Sane sculptor ever made a toga so.

Then on the pedestal these words I read: "*Erected Eighteen Hundred Ninety-seven*" (Saint Christofer! how fast the time had sped! Of course it naturally does in Heaven) "*To* — —" (here a blank space for the name began) "*The Nineteenth Century's Great Foremost Man*!"

“*Completed*” the inscription ended, “*in*
  The Year Three Thousand” — which was just arriving.
By Jove! thought I, ‘twould make the founders grin
  To learn whose fame so long has been surviving —
To read the name posterity will place
In that blank void, and view the finished face.

Even as I gazed, the year Three Thousand came,
  And then by acclamation all the people
Decreed whose was our century’s best fame;
  Then scaffolded the statue like a steeple,
To make the likeness; and the name was sunk
Deep in the pedestal’s metallic trunk.

Whose was it? Gentle reader, pray excuse
  The seeming rudeness, but I can’t consent to
Be so forehanded with important news.
  ’Twas neither yours nor mine — let that content you.
If not, the name I must surrender, which,
Upon a dead man’s word, was George K. Fitch!

AN ART CRITIC

Ira P. Rankin, you’ve a nasal name —
I’ll sound it through “the speaking-trump of fame,”
And wondering nations, hearing from afar
The brazen twang of its resounding jar,
Shall say: “These bards are an uncommon class —
They blow their noses with a tube of brass!”
Rankin! ye gods! if Influenza pick
Our names at christening, and such names stick,
Let’s all be born when summer suns withstand
Her prevalence and chase her from the land,
And healing breezes generously help
To shield from death each ailing human whelp!
“What’s in a name?” There’s much at least in yours
That the pained ear unwillingly endures,
And much to make the suffering soul, I fear,
Envy the lesser anguish of the ear.

So you object to Cytherea! Do,
The picture was not painted, sir, for you!
Your mind to gratify and taste address,
The masking dove had been a dove the less.
Provincial censor! all untaught in art,
With mind indecent and indecent heart,
Do you not know — nay, why should I explain?
Instruction, argument alike were vain —
I’ll show you reasons when you show me brain.

THE SPIRIT OF A SPONGE

I dreamed one night that Stephen Massett died,
And for admission up at Heaven applied.
“Who are you?” asked St. Peter. Massett said:
“Jeems Pipes, of Pipesville.” Peter bowed his head,
Opened the gates and said: “I’m glad to know you,
And wish we’d something better, sir, to show you.”
“Don’t mention it,” said Stephen, looking bland,
And was about to enter, hat in hand,
When from a cloud below such fumes arose
As tickled tenderly his conscious nose.
He paused, replaced his hat upon his head,
Turned back and to the saintly warden said,
O’er his already sprouting wings: “I swear
I smell some broiling going on down there!”
So Massett’s paunch, attracted by the smell,
Followed his nose and found a place in Hell.

ORNITHANTHROPOS

“Let John P. Irish rise!” the edict rang
As when Creation into being sprang!
Nature, not clearly understanding, tried
To make a bird that on the air could ride.
But naught could baffle the creative plan —
Despite her efforts ‘twas almost a man.
Yet he had risen — to the bird a twin —
Had she but fixed a wing upon his chin.

TO E.S. SALOMON

Who in a Memorial Day oration protested bitterly against decorating the graves of Confederate dead.

What! Salomon! such words from you,
  Who call yourself a soldier? Well,
  The Southern brother where he fell
Slept all your base oration through.

Alike to him — he cannot know
  Your praise or blame: as little harm
  Your tongue can do him as your arm
A quarter-century ago.

The brave respect the brave. The brave
  Respect the dead; but *you* — you draw
  That ancient blade, the ass’s jaw,
And shake it o’er a hero’s grave.

Are you not he who makes to-day
  A merchandise of old renown
  Which he persuades this easy town
He won in battle far away?

Nay, those the fallen who revile
  Have ne’er before the living stood
  And stoutly made their battle good
And greeted danger with a smile.

What if the dead whom still you hate

  Were wrong? Are you so surely right?
  We know the issue of the fight —
The sword is but an advocate.

Men live and die, and other men
  Arise with knowledges diverse:
  What seemed a blessing seems a curse,
And Now is still at odds with Then.

The years go on, the old comes back
  To mock the new — beneath the sun.
  Is *nothing* new; ideas run
Recurrent in an endless track.

What most we censure, men as wise
  Have reverently practiced; nor
  Will future wisdom fail to war
On principles we dearly prize.

We do not know — we can but deem,
  And he is loyalest and best
  Who takes the light full on his breast
And follows it throughout the dream.

The broken light, the shadows wide —
  Behold the battle-field displayed!
  God save the vanquished from the blade,
The victor from the victor’s pride!

If, Salomon, the blessed dew
  That falls upon the Blue and Gray
  Is powerless to wash away
The sin of differing from you.

Remember how the flood of years
  Has rolled across the erring slain;
  Remember, too, the cleansing rain
Of widows' and of orphans' tears.

The dead are dead — let that atone:
  And though with equal hand we strew
  The blooms on saint and sinner too,
Yet God will know to choose his own.

The wretch, whate'er his life and lot,
  Who does not love the harmless dead
  With all his heart and all his head —
May God forgive him — *I* shall not.

When, Salomon, you come to quaff
  The Darker Cup with meeker face,
  I, loving you at last, shall trace
Upon your tomb this epitaph:

"Draw near, ye generous and brave —
  Kneel round this monument and weep:
  It covers one who tried to keep
A flower from a dead man's grave."

DENNIS KEARNEY

Your influence, my friend, has gathered head —
To east and west its tides encroaching spread.
There’ll be, on all God’s foot-stool, when they meet,
No clean spot left for God to set His feet.

FINIS ÆTERNITATIS

Strolling at sunset in my native land,
With fruits and flowers thick on either hand,
  I crossed a Shadow flung athwart my way,
Emerging on a waste of rock and sand.

“The apples all are gone from here,” I said,
“The roses perished and their spirits fled.
  I will go back.” A voice cried out: “The man
Is risen who eternally was dead!”

I turned and saw an angel standing there,
Newly descended from the heights of air.
  Sweet-eyed compassion filled his face, his hands
A naked sword and golden trumpet bare.

“Nay, ‘twas not death, the shadow that I crossed,”
I said. “Its chill was but a touch of frost.
  It made me gasp, but quickly I came through,
With breath recovered ere it scarce was lost.”

‘Twas the same land! Remembered mountains thrust
Grayed heads asky, and every dragging gust,
  In ashen valleys where my sons had reaped,
Stirred in familiar river-beds the dust.

Some heights, where once the traveler was shown
The youngest and the proudest city known,
  Lifted smooth ridges in the steely light —
Bleak, desolate acclivities of stone.

Where I had worshiped at my father’s tomb,
Within a massive temple’s awful gloom,
A jackal slunk along the naked rock,
Affrighted by some prescience of doom.

Man’s vestiges were nowhere to be found,
Save one brass mausoleum on a mound
(I knew it well) spared by the artist Time
To emphasize the desolation round.

Into the stagnant sea the sullen sun
Sank behind bars of crimson, one by one.
”Eternity’s at hand!” I cried aloud.
“Eternity,” the angel said, “is done.

For man is ages dead in every zone;
The angels all are dead but I alone;
The devils, too, are cold enough at last,
And God lies dead before the great white throne!

‘Tis foreordained that I bestride the shore
When all are gone (as Gabriel did before,
When I had throttled the last man alive)
And swear Eternity shall be no more.”

“O Azrael — O Prince of Death, declare
Why conquered I the grave?” I cried. “What rare,
Conspicuous virtues won this boon for me?”
“You’ve been revived,” he said, “to hear me swear.”

“Then let me creep again beneath the grass,
And knock thou at yon pompous tomb of brass.
If ears are what you want, Charles Crocker’s there —
Betwixt the greatest ears, the greatest ass.”

He rapped, and while the hollow echoes rang,
Out at the door a curst hyena sprang
    And fled! Said Azrael: “His soul’s escaped,”
And closed the brazen portal with a bang.

THE VETERAN

John Jackson, once a soldier bold,
  Hath still a martial feeling;
So, when he sees a foe, behold!
  He charges him — with stealing.

He cares not how much ground to-day
  He gives for men to doubt him;
He’s used to giving ground, they say,
  Who lately fought with — out him.

When, for the battle to be won,
  His gallantry was needed,
They say each time a loaded gun
  Went off — so, likewise, he did.

And when discharged (for war’s a sport
  So hot he had to leave it)
He made a very loud report,
  But no one did believe it.

AN EXHIBIT

Goldenson hanged! Well, Heaven forbid
  That I should smile above him:
Though truth to tell, I never did
  Exactly love him.

It can’t be wrong, though, to rejoice
  That his unpleasing capers
Are ended. Silent is his voice
  In all the papers.

No longer he’s a show: no more,
  Bear-like, his den he’s walking.
No longer can he hold the floor
  When I’d be talking.

The laws that govern jails are bad
  If such displays are lawful.
The fate of the assassin’s sad,
  But ours is awful!

What! shall a wretch condemned to die
  In shame upon the gibbet
Be set before the public eye
  As an “exhibit”? —

His looks, his actions noted down,
  His words if light or solemn,
And all this hawked about the town —
  So much a column?

The press, of course, will publish news
  However it may get it;
But blast the sheriff who’ll abuse
  His powers to let it!

Nay, this is not ingratitude;
  I’m no reporter, truly,
Nor yet an editor. I’m rude
  Because unruly —

Because I burn with shame and rage
  Beyond my power of telling
To see assassins in a cage
  And keepers yelling.

“Walk up! Walk up!” the showman cries:
  ”Observe the lion’s poses,
His stormy mane, his glooming eyes.
  His — hold your noses!”

How long, O Lord, shall Law and Right
  Be mocked for gain or glory,
And angels weep as they recite
  The shameful story?

THE TRANSMIGRATIONS OF A SOUL

What! Pixley, must I hear you call the roll
Of all the vices that infest your soul?
Was't not enough that lately you did bawl
Your money-worship in the ears of all?[A]
Still must you crack your brazen cheek to tell
That though a miser you're a sot as well?
Still must I hear how low your taste has sunk —
From getting money down to getting drunk?[B]

Who worships money, damning all beside,
And shows his callous knees with pious pride,
Speaks with half-knowledge, for no man e'er scorns
His own possessions, be they coins or corns.
You've money, neighbor; had you gentle birth
You'd know, as now you never can, its worth.

You've money; learning is beyond your scope,
Deaf to your envy, stubborn to your hope.
But if upon your undeserving head
Science and letters had their glory shed;
If in the cavern of your skull the light
Of knowledge shone where now eternal night
Breeds the blind, poddy, vapor-fatted naughts
Of cerebration that you think are thoughts —
Black bats in cold and dismal corners hung
That squeak and gibber when you move your tongue —
You would not write, in Avarice's defense,
A senseless eulogy on lack of sense,
Nor show your eagerness to sacrifice
All noble virtues to one loathsome vice.

You've money; if you'd manners too you'd shame

To boast your weakness or your baseness name.
Appraise the things you have, but measure not
The things denied to your unhappy lot.
He values manners lighter than a cork
Who combs his beard at table with a fork.
Hare to seek sin and tortoise to forsake,
The laws of taste condemn you to the stake
To expiate, where all the world may see,
The crime of growing old disgracefully.

Religion, learning, birth and manners, too,
All that distinguishes a man from you,
Pray damn at will: all shining virtues gain
An added luster from a rogue's disdain.
But spare the young that proselyting sin,
A toper's apotheosis of gin.
If not our young, at least our pigs may claim
Exemption from the spectacle of shame!

Are you not he who lately out of shape
Blew a brass trumpet to denounce the grape? —
Who led the brave teetotalers afield
And slew your leader underneath your shield? —
Swore that no man should drink unless he flung
Himself across your body at the bung?
Who vowed if you'd the power you would fine
The Son of God for making water wine?

All trails to odium you tread and boast,
Yourself enamored of the dirtiest most.
One day to be a miser you aspire,
The next to wallow drunken in the mire;
The third, lo! you're a meritorious liar![C]
Pray, in the catalogue of all your graces,
Have theft and cowardice no honored places?

Yield thee, great Satan — here’s a rival name
With all thy vices and but half thy shame!
Quick to the letter of the precept, quick
To the example of the elder Nick;
With as great talent as was e’er applied
To fool a teacher and to fog a guide;
With slack allegiance and boundless greed,
To paunch the profit of a traitor deed,
He aims to make thy glory all his own,
And crowd his master from the infernal throne!

[Footnote A: We are not writing this paragraph for any other purpose than to protest against this never ending cant, affectation, and hypocrisy about money. It is one of the best things in this world — better than religion, or good birth, or learning, or good manners. — *The Argonaut*.]

[Footnote B: Now, it just occurs to us that some of our temperance friends will take issue with us, and say that this is bad doctrine, and that it is ungentlemanly to get drunk under any circumstances or under any possible conditions. We do not think so. — *The same*.]

[Footnote C: The man or woman who, for the sake of benefiting others, protecting them in their lives, property, or reputation, sparing their feelings, contributing to their enjoyment, or increasing their pleasures, will tell a lie, deserves to be rewarded. — *The same*.]

AN ACTOR

Some one (‘tis hardly new) has oddly said
The color of a trumpet’s blare is red;
And Joseph Emmett thinks the crimson shame
On woman’s cheek a trumpet-note of fame.
The more the red storm rises round her nose —
The more her eyes averted seek her toes,
He fancies all the louder he can hear
The tube resounding in his spacious ear,
And, all his varied talents to exert,
Darkens his dullness to display his dirt.
And when the gallery’s indecent crowd,
And gentlemen below, with hisses loud,
In hot contention (these his art to crown,
And those his naked nastiness to drown)
Make such a din that cheeks erewhile aflame
Grow white and in their fear forget their shame,
With impudence imperial, sublime,
Unmoved, the patient actor bides his time,
Till storm and counter-storm are both allayed,
Like donkeys, each by t’other one outbrayed.
When all the place is silent as a mouse
One slow, suggestive gesture clears the house!

FAMINE'S REALM

To him in whom the love of Nature has
Imperfectly supplanted the desire
And dread necessity of food, your shore,
Fair Oakland, is a terror. Over all
Your sunny level, from Tamaletown
To where the Pestuary's fragrant slime,
With dead dogs studded, bears its ailing fleet,
Broods the still menace of starvation. Bones
Of men and women bleach along the ways
And pampered vultures sleep upon the trees.
It is a land of death, and Famine there
Holds sovereignty; though some there be her sway
Who challenge, and intrenched in larders live,
Drawing their sustentation from abroad.
But woe to him, the stranger! He shall die
As die the early righteous in the bud
And promise of their prime. He, venturesome
To penetrate the wilds rectangular
Of grass-grown ways luxuriant of blooms,
Frequented of the bee and of the blithe,
Bold squirrel, strays with heedless feet afar
From human habitation and is lost
In mid-Broadway. There hunger seizes him,
And (careless man! deeming God's providence
Extends so far) he has not wherewithal
To bate its urgency. Then, lo! appears
A mealery — a restaurant — a place
Where poison battles famine, and the two,
Like fish-hawks warring in the upper sky
For that which one has taken from the deep,
Manage between them to dispatch the prey.
He enters and leaves hope behind. There ends
His history. Anon his bones, clean-picked
By buzzards (with the bones himself had picked,

Incautious) line the highway. O, my friends,
Of all felonious and deadlywise
Devices of the Enemy of Souls,
Planted along the ways of life to snare
Man’s mortal and immortal part alike,
The Oakland restaurant is chief. It lives
That man may die. It flourishes that life
May wither. Its foundation stones repose
On human hearts and hopes. I’ve seen in it
Crabs stewed in milk and salad offered up
With dressing so unholily compound
That it included flour and sugar! Yea,
I’ve eaten dog there! — dog, as I’m a man,
Dog seethed in sewage of the town! No more —
Thy hand, Dyspepsia, assumes the pen
And scrawls a tortured “Finis” on the page.

THE MACKAIAD

Mackay’s hot wrath to Bonynge, direful spring
Of blows unnumbered, heavenly goddess, sing —
That wrath which hurled to Hellman’s office floor
Two heroes, mutually smeared with gore,
Whose hair in handfuls marked the dire debate,
And riven coat-tails testified their hate.
Sing, muse, what first their indignation fired,
What words augmented it, by whom inspired.

First, the great Bonynge comes upon the scene
And asks the favor of the British Queen.
Suppliant he stands and urges all his claim:
His wealth, his portly person and his name,
His habitation in the setting sun,
As child of nature; and his suit he won.
No more the Sovereign, wearied with his plea,
From slumber’s chain her faculties can free.
Low and more low the royal eyelids creep,
She gives the assenting nod and falls asleep.
Straightway the Bonynges all invade the Court
And telegraph the news to every port.
Beneath the seas, red-hot, the tidings fly,
The cables crinkle and the fishes fry!
The world, awaking like a startled bat,
Exclaims: “A Bonynge? What the devil’s that?”
Mackay, meanwhile, to envy all attent,
Untaught to spare, unable to relent,
Walks in our town on needles and on pins,
And in a mean, revengeful spirit — grins!

Sing, muse, what next to break the peace occurred —
What act uncivil, what unfriendly word?

The god of Bosh ascending from his pool,
Where since creation he has played the fool,
Clove the blue slush, as other gods the sky,
And, waiting but a moment's space to dry,
Touched Bonynge with his finger-tip. "O son,"
He said, "alike of nature and a gun,
Knowest not Mackay's insufferable sin?
Hast thou not heard that he doth stand and grin?
Arise! assert thy manhood, and attest
The uncommercial spirit in thy breast.
Avenge thine honor, for by Jove I swear
Thou shalt not else be my peculiar care!"
He spake, and ere his worshiper could kneel
Had dived into his slush pool, head and heel.
Full of the god and to revenges nerved,
And conscious of a will that never swerved,
Bonynge set sail: the world beyond the wave
As gladly took him as the other gave.
New York received him, but a shudder ran
Through all the western coast, which knew the man;
And science said that the seismic action
Was owing to an asteroid's impaction.

O goddess, sing what Bonynge next essayed.
Did he unscabbard the avenging blade,
The long spear brandish and porrect the shield,
Havoc the town and devastate the field?
His sacred thirst for blood did he allay
By halving the unfortunate Mackay?
Small were the profit and the joy to him
To hew a base-born person, limb from limb.
Let vulgar souls to low revenge incline,
That of diviner spirits is divine.
Bonynge at noonday stood in public places
And (with regard to the Mackays) made faces!
Before those formidable frowns and scowls
The dogs fled, tail-tucked, with affrighted howls,
And horses, terrified, with flying feet

O’erthrew the apple-stands along the street,
Involving the metropolis in vast
Financial ruin! Man himself, aghast,
Retreated east and west and north and south
Before the menace of that twisted mouth,
Till Jove, in answer to their prayers, sent Night
To veil the dreadful visage from their sight!

Such were the causes of the horrid strife —
The mother-wrongs which nourished it to life.
O, for a quill from an archangel’s wing!
O, for a voice that’s adequate to sing
The splendor and the terror of the fray,
The scattered hair, the coat-tails all astray,
The parted collars and the gouts of gore
Reeking and smoking on the banker’s floor,
The interlocking limbs, embraces dire,
Revolving bodies and deranged attire!

Vain, vain the trial: ‘tis vouchsafed to none
To sing two millionaires rolled into one!
My hand and pen their offices refuse,
And hoarse and hoarser grows the weary muse.
Alone remains, to tell of the event,
Abandoned, lost and variously rent,
The Bonynge nethermost habiliment.

A SONG IN PRAISE

Hail, blessed Blunder! golden idol, hail! —
Clay-footed deity of all who fail.
Celestial image, let thy glory shine,
Thy feet concealing, but a lamp to mine.
Let me, at seasons opportune and fit,
By turns adore thee and by turns commit.
In thy high service let me ever be
(Yet never serve thee as my critics me)
Happy and fallible, content to feel
I blunder chiefly when to thee I kneel.
But best felicity is his thy praise
Who utters unaware in works and ways —
Who *laborare est orare* proves,
And feels thy suasion wheresoe’er he moves,
Serving thy purpose, not thine altar, still,
And working, for he thinks it his, thy will.
If such a life with blessings be not fraught,
I envy Peter Robertson for naught.

A POET’S FATHER

Welcker, I’m told, can boast a father great
And honored in the service of the State.
Public Instruction all his mind employs —
He guides its methods and its wage enjoys.
Prime Pedagogue, imperious and grand,
He waves his ferule o’er a studious land
Where humming youth, intent upon the page,
Thirsting for knowledge with a noble rage,
Drink dry the whole Pierian spring and ask
To slake their fervor at his private flask.
Arrested by the terror of his frown,
The vaulting spit-ball drops untimely down;
The fly impaled on the tormenting pin
Stills in his awful glance its dizzy din;
Beneath that stern regard the chewing-gum
Which writhed and squeaked between the teeth is dumb;
Obedient to his will the dunce-cap flies
To perch upon the brows of the unwise;
The supple switch forsakes the parent wood
To settle where ‘twill do the greatest good,
Puissant still, as when of old it strove
With Solomon for spitting on the stove
Learned Professor, variously great,
Guide, guardian, instructor of the State —
Quick to discern and zealous to correct
The faults which mar the public intellect
From where of Siskiyou the northern bound
Is frozen eternal to the sunless ground
To where in San Diego’s torrid clime
The swarthy Greaser swelters in his grime —
Beneath your stupid nose can you not see
The dunce whom once you dandled on your knee?
O mighty master of a thousand schools,
Stop teaching wisdom, or stop breeding fools.

A COWARD

When Pickering, distressed by an “attack,”
Has the strange insolence to answer back
He hides behind a name that is a lie,
And out of shadow falters his reply.
God knows him, though — identified alike
By hardihood to rise and fear to strike,
And fitly to rebuke his sins decrees,
That, hide from others with what care he please,
Night sha’n’t be black enough nor earth so wide
That from himself himself can ever hide!
Hard fate indeed to feel at every breath
His burden of identity till death! —
No moment’s respite from the immortal load,
To think himself a serpent or a toad,
Or dream, with a divine, ecstatic glow,
He’s long been dead and canonized a crow!

TO MY LIARS

Attend, mine enemies of all degrees,
From sandlot orators and sandlot fleas
To fallen gentlemen and rising louts
Who babble slander at your drinking bouts,
And, filled with unfamiliar wine, begin
Lies drowned, ere born, in more congenial gin.
But most attend, ye persons of the press
Who live (though why, yourselves alone can guess)
In hope deferred, ambitious still to shine
By hating me at half a cent a line —
Like drones among the bees of brighter wing,
Sunless to shine and impotent to sting.
To estimate in easy verse I'll try
The controversial value of a lie.
So lend your ears — God knows you have enough! —
I mean to teach, and if I can't I'll cuff.

A lie is wicked, so the priests declare;
But that to us is neither here nor there.
'Tis worse than wicked, it is vulgar too;
N'importe — with that we've nothing here to do.
If 'twere artistic I would lie till death,
And shape a falsehood with my latest breath.
Parrhasius never more did pity lack,
The while his model writhed upon the rack,
Than I for my collaborator's pain,
Who, stabbed with fibs again and yet again,
Would vainly seek to move my stubborn heart
If slander were, and wit were not, an art.
The ill-bred and illiterate can lie
As fast as you, and faster far than I.
Shall I compete, then, in a strife accurst
Where Allen Forman is an easy first,

And where the second prize is rightly flung
To Charley Shortridge or to Mike de Young?

In mental combat but a single end
Inspires the formidable to contend.
Not by the raw recruit's ambition fired,
By whom foul blows, though harmless, are admired;
Not by the coward's zeal, who, on his knee
Behind the bole of his protecting tree,
So curves his musket that the bark it fits,
And, firing, blows the weapon into bits;
But with the noble aim of one whose heart
Values his foeman for he loves his art
The veteran debater moves afield,
Untaught to libel as untaught to yield.
Dear foeman mine, I've but this end in view —
That to prevent which most you wish to do.
What, then, are you most eager to be at?
To hate me? Nay, I'll help you, sir, at that.
This only passion does your soul inspire:
You wish to scorn me. Well, you shall admire.

'Tis not enough my neighbors that you school
In the belief that I'm a rogue or fool;
That small advantage you would gladly trade
For what one moment would *yourself* persuade.
Write, then, your largest and your longest lie:
You sha'n't believe it, howsoe'er you try.
No falsehood you can tell, no evil do,
Shall turn me from the truth to injure you.
So all your war is barren of effect;
I find my victory in your respect.
What profit have you if the world you set
Against me? For the world will soon forget
It thought me this or that; but I'll retain
A vivid picture of your moral stain,
And cherish till my memory expire
The sweet, soft consciousness that you're a liar

Is it *your* triumph, then, to prove that you
Will do the thing that I would scorn to do?
God grant that I forever be exempt
From such advantage as my foe’s contempt.

PHIL CRIMMINS

Still as he climbed into the public view
His charms of person more apparent grew,
Till the pleased world that watched his airy grace
Saw nothing of him but his nether face —
Forgot his follies with his head’s retreat,
And blessed his virtues as it viewed their seat.

CODEX HONORIS

Jacob Jacobs, of Oakland, he swore:
“Dat Solomon Martin — I’ll haf his gore!”
Solomon Martin, of Oakland, he said:
“Of Shacob Shacobs der bleed I vill shed!”
So they met, with seconds and surgeon at call,
And fought with pistol and powder and — all
Was done in good faith, — as before I said,
They fought with pistol and powder and — shed
Tears, O my friends, for each other they marred
Fighting with pistol and powder and — lard!
For the lead had been stolen away, every trace,
And Christian hog-product supplied its place.
Then the shade of Moses indignant arose:
“Quvicker dan lighdnings go vosh yer glose!”
Jacob Jacobs, of Oakland, they say,
Applied for a pension the following day.
Solomon Martin, of Oakland, I hear,
Will call himself Colonel for many a year.

TO W.H.L.B.

Refrain, dull orator, from speaking out,
For silence deepens when you raise the shout;
But when you hold your tongue we hear, at least,
Your noise in mastering that little beast.

EMANCIPATION

Behold! the days of miracle at last
Return — if ever they were truly past:
From sinful creditors’ unholy greed
The church called Calvary at last is freed —
So called for there the Savior’s crucified,
Roberts and Carmany on either side.

The circling contribution-box no more
Provokes the nod and simulated snore;
No more the Lottery, no more the Fair,
Lure the reluctant dollar from its lair,
Nor Ladies’ Lunches at a bit a bite
Destroy the health yet spare the appetite,
While thrifty sisters o’er the cauldron stoop
To serve their God with zeal, their friends with soup,
And all the brethren mendicate the earth
With viewless placards: “We’ve been *so* from birth!”

Sure of his wage, the pastor now can lend
His whole attention to his latter end,
Remarking with a martyr’s prescient thrill
The Hemp maturing on the cheerless Hill.
The holy brethren, lifting pious palms,
Pour out their gratitude in prayer and psalms,
Chant *De Profundis*, meaning “out of debt,”
And dance like mad — or would if they were let.

Deeply disguised (a deacon newly dead
Supplied the means) Jack Satan holds his head
As high as any and as loudly sings
His *jubilate* till each rafter rings.
“Rejoice, ye ever faithful,” bellows he,
“The debt is lifted and the temple free!”

Then says, aside, with gentle cachination:
“I’ve got a mortgage on the congregation.”

JOHNDONKEY

[There isn’t a man living who does not have at least a sneaking reverence for a horse-shoe. — *Evening Post*.]

Thus the poor ass whose appetite has ne’er
Known than the thistle any sweeter fare
Thinks all the world eats thistles. Thus the clown,
The wit and Mentor of the country town,
Grins through the collar of a horse and thinks
Others for pleasure do as he for drinks,
Though secretly, because unwilling still
In public to attest their lack of skill.
Each dunce whose life and mind all follies mar
Believes as he is all men living are —
His vices theirs, their understandings his;
Naught that he knows not, all he fancies, *is*.
How odd that any mind such stuff should boast!
How natural to write it in the *Post*!

HELL

The friends who stood about my bed
Looked down upon my face and said:
“God’s will be done — the fellow’s dead.”

When from my body I was free
I straightway felt myself, ah me!
Sink downward to the life to be.

Full twenty centuries I fell,
And then alighted. “Here you dwell
For aye,” a Voice cried—”this is Hell!”

A landscape lay about my feet,
Where trees were green and flowers sweet.
The climate was devoid of heat.

The sun looked down with gentle beam
Upon the bosom of the stream,
Nor saw I any sign of steam.

The waters by the sky were tinged,
The hills with light and color fringed.
Birds warbled on the wing unsinged.

“Ah, no, this is not Hell,” I cried;
“The preachers ne’er so greatly lied.
This is Earth’s spirit glorified!

“Good souls do not in Hades dwell,

And, look, there’s John P. Irish!” “Well,”
The Voice said, “that’s what makes it Hell.”

BY FALSE PRETENSES

John S. Hittell, whose sovereign genius wields
The quill his tributary body yields;
The author of an opera — that is,
All but the music and libretto's his:
A work renowned, whose formidable name,
Linked with his own, repels the assault of fame
From the high vantage of a dusty shelf,
Secure from all the world except himself; —
Who told the tale of "Culture" in a screed
That all might understand if some would read; —
Master of poesy and lord of prose,
Dowered, like a setter, with a double nose;
That one for Erato, for Clio this;
He flushes both — not his fault if we miss; —
Judge of the painter's art, who'll straight proclaim
The hue of any color you can name,
And knows a painting with a canvas back
Distinguished from a duck by the duck's quack; —
This thinker and philosopher, whose work
Is famous from Commercial street to Turk,
Has got a fortune now, his talent's meed.
A woman left it him who could not read,
And so went down to death's eternal night
Sweetly unconscious that the wretch could write.

LUCIFER OF THE TORCH

O Reverend Ravlin, once with sounding lung
You shook the bloody banner of your tongue,
Urged all the fiery boycotters afield
And swore you'd rather follow them than yield,
Alas, how brief the time, how great the change! —
Your dogs of war are ailing all of mange;
The loose leash dangles from your finger-tips,
But the loud "havoc" dies upon your lips.
No spirit animates your feeble clay —
You'd rather yield than even run away.
In vain McGlashan labors to inspire
Your pallid nostril with his breath of fire:
The light of battle's faded from your face —
You keep the peace, John Chinaman his place.
O Ravlin, what cold water, thrown by whom
Upon the kindling Boycott's ruddy bloom,
Has slaked your parching blood-thirst and allayed
The flash and shimmer of your lingual blade?
Your salary — your salary's unpaid!

In the old days, when Christ with scourges drave
The Ravlins headlong from the Temple's nave,
Each bore upon his pelt the mark divine —
The Boycott's red authenticating sign.
Birth-marked forever in surviving hurts,
Glowing and smarting underneath their shirts,
Successive Ravlins have revenged their shame
By blowing every coal and flinging flame.
And you, the latest (may you be the last!)
Endorsed with that hereditary, vast
And monstrous rubric, would the feud prolong,
Save that cupidity forbids the wrong.
In strife you preferably pass your days —

But brawl no moment longer than it pays.
By shouting when no more you can incite
The dogs to put the timid sheep to flight
To load, for you, the brambles with their fleece,
You cackle concord to congenial geese,
Put pinches of goodwill upon their tails
And pluck them with a touch that never fails.

THE WHIRLIGIG OF TIME

Dr. Jewell speaks of Balaam
And his vices, to assail ‘em.
Ancient enmities how cruel! —
Balaam cudgeled once a Jewell.

A RAILROAD LACKEY

Ben Truman, you’re a genius and can write,
  Though one would not suspect it from your looks.
You lack that certain spareness which is quite
  Distinctive of the persons who make books.
  You show the workmanship of Stanford’s cooks
About the region of the appetite,
Where geniuses are singularly slight.
Your friends the Chinamen are understood,
Indeed, to speak of you as “belly good.”

Still, you can write — spell, too, I understand —
  Though how two such accomplishments can go,
Like sentimental schoolgirls, hand in hand
  Is more than ever I can hope to know.
  To have one talent good enough to show
Has always been sufficient to command
The veneration of the brilliant band
Of railroad scholars, who themselves, indeed,
Although they cannot write, can mostly read.

There’s Towne and Fillmore, Goodman and Steve Gage,
  Ned Curtis of Napoleonic face,
Who used to dash his name on glory’s page
  ”A.M.” appended to denote his place
  Among the learned. Now the last faint trace
Of Nap. is all obliterate with age,
And Ned’s degree less precious than his wage.
He says: “I done it,” with his every breath.
“Thou canst not say I did it,” says Macbeth.

Good land! how I run on! I quite forgot
  Whom this was meant to be about; for when

I think upon that odd, unearthly lot —
  Not quite Creedhaymonds, yet not wholly men —
  I'm dominated by my rebel pen
That, like the stubborn bird from which 'twas got,
Goes waddling forward if I will or not.
To leave your comrades, Ben, I'm now content:
I'll meet them later if I don't repent.

You've writ a letter, I observe — nay, more,
  You've published it — to say how good you think
The coolies, and invite them to come o'er
  In thicker quantity. Perhaps you drink
No corporation's wine, but love its ink;
Or when you signed away your soul and swore
On railrogue battle-fields to shed your gore
You mentally reserved the right to shed
The raiment of your character instead.

You're naked, anyhow: unragged you stand
  In frank and stark simplicity of shame.
And here upon your flank, in letters grand,
  The iron has marked you with your owner's name.
  Needless, for none would steal and none reclaim.
  But "£eland $tanford" is a pretty brand,
Wrought by an artist with a cunning hand
But come — this naked unreserve is flat:
Don your habiliment — you're fat, you're fat!

THE LEGATEE

In fair San Francisco a good man did dwell,
And he wrote out a will, for he didn’t feel well,
Said he: “It is proper, when making a gift,
To stimulate virtue by comforting thrift.”

So he left all his property, legal and straight,
To “the cursedest rascal in all of the State.”
But the name he refused to insert, for, said he;
“Let each man consider himself legatee.”

In due course of time that philanthropist died,
And all San Francisco, and Oakland beside —
Save only the lawyers — came each with his claim
The lawyers preferring to manage the same.

The cases were tried in Department Thirteen,
Judge Murphy presided, sedate and serene,
But couldn’t quite specify, legal and straight,
The cursedest rascal in all of the State.

And so he remarked to them, little and big —
To claimants: “You skip!” and to lawyers: “You dig!”
They tumbled, tumultuous, out of his court
And left him victorious, holding the fort.

‘Twas then that he said: “It is plain to my mind
This property’s ownerless — how can I find
The cursedest rascal in all of the State?”
So he took it himself, which was legal and straight.

DIED OF A ROSE

A reporter he was, and he wrote, wrote he:
  ”The grave was covered as thick as could be
  With floral tributes” — which reading,
The editor man he said, he did so:
  ”For ‘floral tributes’ he’s got for to go,
  For I hold the same misleading.”
Then he called him in and he pointed sweet
To a blooming garden across the street,
  Inquiring: “What’s them a-growing?”
The reporter chap said: “Why, where’s your eyes?
Them’s floral tributes!” “Arise, arise,”
  The editor said, “and be going.”

A LITERARY HANGMAN

Beneath his coat of dirt great Neilson loves
  To hide the avenging rope.
He handles all he touches without gloves,
  Excepting soap.

AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR

As through the blue expanse he skims
  On joyous wings, the late
Frank Hutchings overtakes Miss Sims,
  Both bound for Heaven’s high gate.

In life they loved and (God knows why
  A lover so should sue)
He slew her, on the gallows high
  Died pious — and they flew.

Her pinions were bedraggled, soiled
  And torn as by a gale,
While his were bright — all freshly oiled
  The feathers of his tail.

Her visage, too, was stained and worn
  And menacing and grim;
His sweet and mild — you would have sworn
  That *she* had murdered *him*.

When they’d arrived before the gate
  He said to her: “My dear,
‘Tis hard once more to separate,
  But *you* can’t enter here.

“For you, unluckily, were sent
  So quickly to the grave
You had no notice to repent,
  Nor time your soul to save.”

“‘Tis true,” said she, “and I should wail
  In Hell even now, but I
Have lingered round the county jail
  To see a Christian die.”

A CONTROVERSIALIST

I’ve sometimes wished that Ingersoll were wise
To hold his tongue, nor rail against the skies;
  For when he’s made a point some pious dunce
Like Bartlett of the *Bulletin* “replies.”

I brandish no iconoclastic fist,
Nor enter the debate an atheist;
  But when they say there is a God I ask
Why Bartlett, then, is suffered to exist.

Even infidels that logic might resent,
Saying: “There’s no place for his punishment
  That’s worse than earth.” But humbly I submit
That he would make a hell wherever sent.

MENDAX

High Lord of Liars, Pickering, to thee
Let meaner mortals bend the subject knee!
Thine is mendacity's imperial crown,
Alike by genius, action and renown.
No man, since words could set a cheek aflame
E'er lied so greatly with so little shame!
O bad old man, must thy remaining years
Be passed in leading idiots by their ears —
Thine own (which Justice, if she ruled the roast
Would fasten to the penitential post)
Still wagging sympathetically — hung
the same rocking-bar that bears thy tongue?

Thou dog of darkness, dost thou hope to stay
Time's dread advance till thou hast had thy day?
Dost think the Strangler will release his hold
Because, forsooth, some fibs remain untold?
No, no — beneath thy multiplying load
Of years thou canst not tarry on the road
To dabble in the blood thy leaden feet
Have pressed from bosoms that have ceased to beat
Of reputations margining thy way,
Nor wander from the path new truth to slay.
Tell to thyself whatever lies thou wilt,
Catch as thou canst at pennies got by guilt —
Straight down to death this blessed year thou'lt sink,
Thy life washed out as with a wave of ink.
But if this prophecy be not fulfilled,
And thou who killest patience be not killed;
If age assail in vain and vice attack
Only by folly to be beaten back;
Yet Nature can this consolation give:
The rogues who die not are condemned to live!

THE RETROSPECTIVE BIRD

His caw is a cackle, his eye is dim,
And he mopes all day on the lowest limb;
Not a word says he, but he snaps his bill
And twitches his palsied head, as a quill,
The ultimate plume of his pride and hope,
Quits his now featherless nose-of-the-Pope,
Leaving that eminence brown and bare
Exposed to the Prince of the Power of the Air.
And he sits and he thinks: “I’m an old, old man,
Mateless and chickless, the last of my clan,
But I’d give the half of the days gone by
To perch once more on the branches high,
And hear my great-grand-daddy’s comical croaks
In authorized versions of *Bulletin* jokes.”

THE OAKLAND DOG

I lay one happy night in bed
And dreamed that all the dogs were dead.
They’d all been taken out and shot —
Their bodies strewed each vacant lot.

O’er all the earth, from Berkeley down
To San Leandro’s ancient town,
And out in space as far as Niles —
I saw their mortal parts in piles.

One stack upreared its ridge so high
Against the azure of the sky
That some good soul, with pious views,
Put up a steeple and sold pews.

No wagging tail the scene relieved:
I never in my life conceived
(I swear it on the Decalogue!)
Such penury of living dog.

The barking and the howling stilled,
The snarling with the snarler killed,
All nature seemed to hold its breath:
The silence was as deep as death.

True, candidates were all in roar
On every platform, as before;
And villains, as before, felt free
To finger the calliope.

True, the Salvationist by night,
And milkman in the early light,
The lonely flutist and the mill
Performed their functions with a will.

True, church bells on a Sunday rang
The sick man's curtain down — the bang
Of trains, contesting for the track,
Out of the shadow called him back.

True, cocks, at all unheavenly hours,
Crew with excruciating powers,
Cats on the woodshed rang and roared,
Fat citizens and fog-horns snored.

But this was all too fine for ears
Accustomed, through the awful years,
To the nocturnal monologues
And day debates of Oakland dogs.

And so the world was silent. Now
What else befell — to whom and how?
Imprimis, then, there were no fleas,
And days of worth brought nights of ease.

Men walked about without the dread
Of being torn to many a shred,
Each fragment holding half a cruse
Of hydrophobia's quickening juice.

They had not to propitiate
Some curst kioodle at each gate,
But entered one another's grounds,

Unscared, and were not fed to hounds.

Women could drive and not a pup
Would lift the horse's tendons up
And let them go — to interject
A certain musical effect.

Even children's ponies went about,
All grave and sober-paced, without
A bulldog hanging to each nose —
Proud of his fragrance, I suppose.

Dog being dead, Man's lawless flame
Burned out: he granted Woman's claim,
Children's and those of country, art —
all took lodgings in his heart.

When memories of his former shame
Crimsoned his cheeks with sudden flame
He said; "I know my fault too well —
They fawned upon me and I fell."

Ah! 'twas a lovely world! — no more
I met that indisposing bore,
The unseraphic cynogogue —
The man who's proud to love a dog.

Thus in my dream the golden reign
Of Reason filled the world again,
And all mankind confessed her sway,
From Walnut Creek to San Jose.

THE UNFALLEN BRAVE

Not all in sorrow and in tears,
To pay of gratitude’s arrears
  The yearly sum —
Not prompted, wholly by the pride
Of those for whom their friends have died,
  To-day we come.

Another aim we have in view
Than for the buried boys in blue
  To drop a tear:
Memorial Day revives the chin
Of Barnes, and Salomon chimes in —
  That’s why we’re here.

And when in after-ages they
Shall pass, like mortal men, away,
  Their war-song sung,
Then fame will tell the tale anew
Of how intrepidly they drew
  The deadly tongue.

Then cull white lilies for the graves
Of Liberty’s loquacious braves,
  And roses red.
Those represent their livers, these
The blood that in unmeasured seas
  They did not shed.

A CELEBRATED CASE

Way down in the Boom Belt lived Mrs. Roselle;
A person named Petrie, he lived there as well;
But Mr. Roselle he resided away —
Sing tooral iooral iooral iay.

Once Mrs. Roselle in her room was alone:
The flesh of her flesh and the bone of her bone
Neglected the wife of his bosom to woo —
Sing tooral iooral iooral ioo.

Then Petrie, her lover, appeared at the door,
Remarking: “My dear; I don’t love you no more.”
“That’s awfully rough,” said the lady, “on me —
Sing tooral iooral iooral iee.”

“Come in, Mr. Petrie,” she added, “pray do:
Although you don’t love me no more, I love you.
Sit down while I spray you with vitriol now —
Sing tooral iooral iooral iow.”

Said Petrie: “That liquid I know won’t agree
With my beauty, and then you’ll no longer love me;
So spray and be “ — O, what a word he did say! —
Sing tooral iooral iooral iay.

She deluged his head and continued to pour
Till his bonny blue eyes, like his love, were no more.
It was seldom he got such a hearty shampoo —
Sing tooral iooral iooral ioo.

Then Petrie he rose and said: “Mrs. Roselle,
I have an engagement and bid you farewell.”
“You see,” she began to explain — but not he! —
Sing tooral, iooral, iooral iee.

The Sheriff he came and he offered his arm,
Saying, “Sorry I am for disturbin’ you, marm,
But business is business.” Said she, “So they say —
Sing tooral, iooral, iooral iay.”

The Judge on the bench he looked awfully stern;
The District Attorney began to attorn;
The witnesses lied and the lawyers — O my! —
Sing tooral, iooral, iooral iyi.

The chap that defended her said: “It’s our claim
That he loved us no longer and told us the same.
What else than we did could we decently do? —
Sing tooral, iooral, iooral ioo.”

The District Attorney, sarcastic, replied:
“We loved you no longer — that can’t be denied.
Not having no eyes we may dote on you now —
Sing tooral, iooral, iooral iow.”

The prisoner wept to entoken her fears;
The sockets of Petrie were flooded with tears.
O heaven-born Sympathy, bully for you! —
Sing tooral, iooral, iooral ioo.

Four jurors considered the prisoner mad,
And four thought her victim uncommonly bad,
And four that the acid was all in his eye —
Sing rum tiddy iddity iddity hi.

COUPLETS

Intended for Inscription on a Sword Presented to Colonel Cutting of the National Guard of California.

I am for Cutting. I’m a blade
Designed for use at dress parade.
My gleaming length, when I display
Peace rules the land with gentle sway;
But when the war-dogs bare their teeth
Go seek me in the modest sheath.
I am for Cutting. Not for me
The task of setting nations free.
Let soulless blades take human life,
My softer metal shuns the strife.
The annual review is mine,
When gorgeous shopmen sweat and shine,
And Biddy, tip-toe on the pave,
Adores the cobble-trotting brave.
I am for Cutting. ‘Tis not mine
To hew amain the hostile line;
Not mine all pitiless to spread
The plain with tumuli of dead.
My grander duty lies afar
From haunts of the insane hussar,
Where charging horse and struggling foot
Are grimed alike with cannon-soot.
When Loveliness and Valor meet
Beneath the trees to dance, and eat,
And sing, and much beside, behold
My golden glories all unfold!
There formidably are displayed
The useful horrors of my blade
In time of feast and dance and ballad,
I am for cutting chicken salad.

A RETORT

As vicious women think all men are knaves,
And shrew-bound gentlemen discourse of slaves;
As reeling drunkards judge the world unsteady
And idlers swear employers ne’er get ready —
Thieves that the constable stole all they had,
The mad that all except themselves are mad;
So, in another’s clear escutcheon shown,
Barnes rails at stains reflected from his own;
Prates of “docility,” nor feels the dark
Ring round his neck — the Ralston collar mark.
Back, man, to studies interrupted once,
Ere yet the rogue had merged into the dunce.
Back, back to Yale! and, grown with years discreet,
The course a virgin’s lust cut short, complete.
Go drink again at the Pierian pool,
And learn — at least to better play the fool.
No longer scorn the draught, although the font,
Unlike Pactolus, waters not Belmont.

A VISION OF RESURRECTION

I had a dream. The habitable earth —
Its continents and islands, all were bare
Of cities and of forests. Naught remained
Of its old aspect, and I only knew
(As men know things in dreams, unknowing how)
That this was earth and that all men were dead.
On every side I saw the barren land,
Even to the distant sky’s inclosing blue,
Thick-pitted all with graves; and all the graves
Save one were open — not as newly dug,
But rather as by some internal force
Riven for egress. Tombs of stone were split
And wide agape, and in their iron decay
The massive mausoleums stood in halves.
With mildewed linen all the ground was white.
Discarded shrouds upon memorial stones
Hung without motion in the soulless air.
While greatly marveling how this should be
I heard, or fancied that I heard, a voice,
Low like an angel’s, delicately strong,
And sweet as music.

—”Spirit,” it said, “behold
The burial place of universal Man!
A million years have rolled away since here
His sheeted multitudes (save only some
Whose dark misdeeds required a separate
And individual arraignment) rose
To judgment at the trumpet’s summoning
And passed into the sky for their award,
Leaving behind these perishable things
Which yet, preserved by miracle, endure
Till all are up. Then they and all of earth,

Rock-hearted mountain and storm-breasted sea,
River and wilderness and sites of dead
And vanished capitals of men, shall spring
To flame, and naught shall be for evermore!
When all are risen that wonder will occur.
‘Twas but ten centuries ago the last
But one came forth — a soul so black with sin,
Against whose name so many crimes were set
That only now his trial is at end.
But one remains.”

Straight, as the voice was stilled —
That single rounded mound cracked lengthliwise
And one came forth in grave-clothes. For a space
He stood and gazed about him with a smile
Superior; then laying off his shroud
Disclosed his two attenuated legs
Which, like parentheses, bent outwardly
As by the weight of saintliness above,
And so sprang upward and was lost to view
Noting his headstone overthrown, I read:
“Sacred to memory of George K. Fitch,
Deacon and Editor — a holy man
Who fell asleep in Jesus, full of years
And blessedness. The dead in Christ rise first.”

MASTER OF THREE ARTS

Your various talents, Goldenson, command
  Respect: you are a poet and can draw.
It is a pity that your gifted hand
  Should ever have been raised against the law.
If you had drawn no pistol, but a picture,
You would have saved your throttle from a stricture.

About your poetry I’m not so sure:
  ’Tis certain we have much that’s quite as bad,
Whose hardy writers have not to endure
  The hangman’s fondling. It is said they’re mad:
Though lately Mr. Brooks (I mean the poet)
Looked well, and if demented didn’t show it.

Well, Goldenson, I am a poet, too —
  Taught by the muses how to smite the harp
And lift the tuneful voice, although, like you
  And Brooks, I sometimes flat and sometimes sharp.
But let me say, with no desire to taunt you,
I never murder even the girls I want to.

I hold it one of the poetic laws
  To sing of life, not take. I’ve ever shown
A high regard for human life because
  I have such trouble to support my own.
And you — well, you’ll find trouble soon in blowing
Your private coal to keep it red and glowing.

I fancy now I see you at the Gate
  Approach St. Peter, crawling on your belly,
You cry: “Good sir, take pity on my state —

Forgive the murderer of Mamie Kelly!"
And Peter says: "O, that's all right — but, mister,
You scribbled rhymes. In Hell I'll make you
blister!"

THERSITES

So, in the Sunday papers *you*, Del Mar,
  Damn, all great Englishmen in English speech?
  I am no Englishman, but in my reach
A rogue shall never rail where heroes are.

You are the man, if I mistake you not,
  Who lately with a supplicating twitch
  Plucked at the pockets of the London rich
And paid your share-engraver all you got.

Because that you have greatly lied, because
  You libel nations, and because no hand
  Of officer is raised to bid you stand,
And falsehood is unpunished of the laws,

I stand here in a public place to mark
  With level finger where you part the crowd —
  I stand to name you and to cry aloud:
“Behold mendacity’s great hierarch!”

A SOCIETY LEADER

“The Social World”! O what a world it is —
  Where full-grown men cut capers in the German,
Cotillion, waltz, or what you will, and whizz
  And spin and hop and sprawl about like mermen!
  I wonder if our future Grant or Sherman,
As these youths pass their time, is passing his —
  If eagles ever come from painted eggs,
  Or deeds of arms succeed to deeds of legs.

I know they tell us about Waterloo:
  How, “foremost fighting,” fell the evening’s
    dancers.
I don’t believe it: I regard it true
  That soldiers who are skillful in “the Lancers”
  Less often die of cannon than of cancers.
Moreover, I am half-persuaded, too,
  That David when he danced before the Ark
  Had the reporter’s word to keep it dark.

Ed. Greenway, you fatigue. Your hateful name
  Like maiden’s curls, is in the papers daily.
You think it, doubtless, honorable fame,
  And contemplate the cheap distinction gaily,
  As does the monkey the blue-painted tail he
Believes becoming to him. ‘Tis the same
  With men as other monkeys: all their souls
  Crave eminence on any kind of poles.
But cynics (barking tribe!) are all agreed
  That monkeys upon poles performing capers
Are not exalted, they are only “treed.”
  A glory that is kindled by the papers
  Is transient as the phosphorescent vapors

That shine in graveyards and are seen, indeed,
  But while the bodies that supply the gas
  Are turning into weeds to feed an ass.

One can but wonder sometimes how it feels
  To *be* an ass — a beast we beat condignly
Because, like yours, his life is in his heels
  And he is prone to use them unbenignly.
  The ladies (bless them!) say you dance divinely.
I like St. Vitus better, though, who deals
  His feet about him with a grace more just,
  And hops, not for he will, but for he must.

Doubtless it gratifies you to observe
  Elbowy girls and adipose mamas
All looking adoration as you swerve
  This way and that; but prosperous papas
  Laugh in their sleeves at you, and their ha-has,
If heard, would somewhat agitate your nerve.
  And dames and maids who keep you on their
    shelves
Don’t seem to want a closer tie themselves.

Gods! what a life you live! — by day a slave
  To your exacting back and urgent belly;
Intent to earn and vigilant to save —
  By night, attired so sightly and so smelly,
  With countenance as luminous as jelly,
Bobbing and bowing! King of hearts and knave
  Of diamonds, I’d bet a silver brick
  If brains were trumps you’d never take a trick.

EXPOSITOR VERITATIS

I Slept, and, waking in the years to be,
  Heard voices, and approaching whence they came,
Listened indifferently where a key
  Had lately been removed. An ancient dame
Said to her daughter: “Go to yonder caddy
And get some emery to scour your daddy.”

And then I knew — some intuition said —
  That tombs were not and men had cleared their shelves
Of urns; and the electro-plated dead
  Stood pedestaled as statues of themselves.
With famous dead men all the public places
Were thronged, and some in piles awaited bases.

One mighty structure’s high façade alone
Contained a single monumental niche,
Where, central in that steep expanse of stone,
Gleamed the familiar form of Thomas Fitch.
A man cried: “Lo! Truth’s temple and its founder!”
Then gravely added: “I’m her chief expounder.”

TO COLONEL DAN. BURNS

They say, my lord, that you’re a Warwick. Well,
  The title’s an absurd one, I believe:
You make no kings, you have no kings to sell,
  Though really ‘twere easy to conceive
  You stuffing half-a-dozen up your sleeve.
No, you’re no Warwick, skillful from the shell
To hatch out sovereigns. On a mare’s nest, maybe,
You’d incubate a little jackass baby.

I fancy, too, that it is naught but stuff,
  This “power” that you’re said to be “behind
The throne.” I’m sure ‘twere accurate enough
  To represent you simply as inclined
  To push poor Markham (ailing in his mind
And body, which were never very tough)
Round in an invalid’s wheeled chair. Such menial
Employment to low natures is congenial.

No, Dan, you’re an impostor every way:
  A human bubble, for “the earth,” you know,
“Hath bubbles, as the water hath.” Some day
  Some careless hand will prick your film, and O,
  How utterly you’ll vanish! Daniel, throw
(As fallen Woolsey might to Cromwell say)
Your curst ambition to the pigs — though truly
‘Twould make them greater pigs, and more unruly.

GEORGE A. KNIGHT

Attorney Knight, it happens so sometimes
That lawyers, justifying cut-throats' crimes
For hire — calumniating, too, for gold,
The dead, dumb victims cruelly unsouled —
Speak, through the press, to a tribunal far
More honorable than their Honors are, —
A court that sits not with assenting smile
While living rogues dead gentleman revile, —
A court where scoundrel ethics of your trade
Confuse no judgment and no cheating aid, —
The Court of Honest Souls, where you in vain
May plead your right to falsify for gain,
Sternly reminded if a man engage
To serve assassins for the liar's wage,
His mouth with vilifying falsehoods crammed,
He's twice detestable and doubly damned!

Attorney Knight, defending Powell, you,
To earn your fee, so energetic grew
(So like a hound, the pride of all the pack,
Clapping your nose upon the dead man's track
To run his faults to earth — at least proclaim
At vacant holes the overtaken game)
That men who marked you nourishing the tongue,
And saw your arms so vigorously swung,
All marveled how so light a breeze could stir
So great a windmill to so great a whirr!
Little they knew, or surely they had grinned,
The mill was laboring to raise the wind.

Ralph Smith a "shoulder-striker"! God, O hear
This hardy man's description of thy dear

Dead child, the gentlest soul, save only One,
E’er born in any land beneath the sun.
All silent benefactions still he wrought:
High deed and gracious speech and noble thought,
Kept all thy law, and, seeking still the right,
Upon his blameless breast received the light.

“Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints,” he cried
Whose wrath was deep as his comparison wide —
Milton, thy servant. Nay, thy will be done:
To smite or spare — to me it all is one.
Can vengeance bring my sorrow to an end,
Or justice give me back my buried friend?
But if some Milton vainly now implore,
And Powell prosper as he did before,
Yet ‘twere too much that, making no ado,
Thy saints be slaughtered and be slandered too.
So, Lord, make Knight his weapon keep in sheath,
Or do Thou wrest it from between his teeth!

UNARMED

Saint Peter sat at the jasper gate,
When Stephen M. White arrived in state.

“Admit me.” “With pleasure,” Peter said,
Pleased to observe that the man was dead;

“That’s what I’m here for. Kindly show
Your ticket, my lord, and in you go.”

White stared in blank surprise. Said he
“I *run* this place — just turn that key.”

“Yes?” said the Saint; and Stephen heard
With pain the inflection of that word.

But, mastering his emotion, he
Remarked: “My friend, you’re too d —— free;

“I’m Stephen M., by thunder, White!”
And, “Yes?” the guardian said, with quite

The self-same irritating stress
Distinguishing his former yes.

And still demurely as a mouse
He twirled the key to that Upper House.

Then Stephen, seeing his bluster vain
Admittance to those halls to gain,

Said, neighborly: “Pray tell me. Pete,
Does any one contest my seat?”

The Saint replied: “Nay, nay, not so;
But you voted always wrong below:

“Whate’er the question, clear and high
You’re voice rang: ‘*I*,’ ‘*I*,’ ever ‘*I*.’”

Now indignation fired the heart
Of that insulted immortal part.

“Die, wretch!” he cried, with blanching lip,
And made a motion to his hip,

With purpose murderous and hearty,
To draw the Democratic party!

He felt his fingers vainly slide
Upon his unappareled hide

(The dead arise from their “silent tents”
But not their late habiliments)

Then wailed — the briefest of his speeches:
“I’ve left it in my other breeches!”

A POLITICAL VIOLET

Come, Stanford, let us sit at ease
  And talk as old friends do.
You talk of anything you please,
  And I will talk of you.

You recently have said, I hear,
  That you would like to go
To serve as Senator. That’s queer!
  Have you told William Stow?

Once when the Legislature said:
  ”Go, Stanford, and be great!”
You lifted up your Jovian head
  And everlooked the State.

As one made leisurely awake,
  You lightly rubbed your eyes
And answered: “Thank you — please to make
  A note of my surprise.

“But who are they who skulk aside,
  As to get out of reach,
And in their clothing strive to hide
  Three thousand dollars each?

“Not members of your body, sure?
  No, that can hardly be:
All statesmen, I suppose, are pure.
  What! there are rogues? Dear me!”

You added, you’ll recall, that though
  You were surprised and pained,
You thought, upon the whole, you’d go,
  And in that mind remained.

Now, what so great a change has wrought
  That you so frankly speak
Of “seeking” honors once unsought
  Because you “scorned to seek”?

Do you not fear the grave reproof
  In good Creed Haymond’s eye?
Will Stephen Gage not stand aloof
  And pass you coldly by?

O, fear you not that Vrooman’s lich
  Will rise from earth and point
At you a scornful finger which
  May lack, perchance, a joint?

Go, Stanford, where the violets grow,
  And join their modest train.
Await the work of William Stow
  And be surprised again.

THE SUBDUED EDITOR

Pope-choker Pixley sat in his den
 A-chewin' upon his quid.
He thought it was Leo Thirteen, and then
 He bit it intenser, he did.

The amber which overflew from the cud
 Like rivers which burst out of bounds —
'Twas peculiar grateful to think it blood
 A-gushin' from Papal wounds.

A knockin' was heard uponto the door
 Where some one a-waitin' was.
"Come in," said the shedder of priestly gore,
 Arrestin' to once his jaws.

The person which entered was curly of hair
 And smilin' as ever you see;
His eyes was blue, and uncommon fair
 Was his physiognomee.

And yet there was some'at remarkable grand —
 And the editor says as he looks:
"Your Height" (it was Highness, you understand,
 That he meant, but he spoke like books) —

"Your Height, I am in. I'm the editor man
 Of this paper — which is to say,
I'm the owner, too, and it's alway ran
 In the independentest way!

"Not a damgaloot can interfere,

A-shapin' my course for me:
This paper's (and nothing can make it veer)
Pixleian in policee!"

"It's little to me," said the sunny youth,
"If journals is better or worse
Where I am to home they won't keep, in truth,
The climate is that perverse.

"I've come, howsomever, your mind to light
With a more superior fire:
You'll have naught hencefor'ard to do but write,
While I sets by and inspire.

"We'll make it hot all round, bedad!"
And his laughture was loud and free.
"The devil!" cried Pixley, surpassin' mad.
"Exactly, my friend — that's me."

So he took a chair and a feather fan,
And he sets and sets and sets,
Inspirin' that humbled editor man,
Which sweats and sweats and sweats!

All unavailin' his struggles be,
And it's, O, a weepin' sight
To see a great editor bold and free
Reducted to sech a plight!

"BLACK BART, Po8"

Welcome, good friend; as you have served your term,
And found the joy of crime to be a fiction,
I hope you'll hold your present faith, stand firm
And not again be open to conviction.

Your sins, though scarlet once, are now as wool:
  You've made atonement for all past offenses,
And conjugated—'twas an awful pull! —
  The verb "to pay" in all its moods and tenses.

You were a dreadful criminal — by Heaven,
  I think there never was a man so sinful!
We've all a pinch or two of Satan's leaven,
  But you appeared to have an even skinful.

Earth shuddered with aversion at your name;
  Rivers fled backward, gravitation scorning;
The sea and sky, from thinking on your shame,
  Grew lobster-red at eve and in the morning.

But still red-handed at your horrid trade
  You wrought, to reason deaf, and to compassion.
But now with gods and men your peace is made
  I beg you to be good and in the fashion.

What's that? — you "ne'er again will rob a stage"?
  What! did you do so? Faith, I didn't know it.
Was *that* what threw poor Themis in a rage?
  I thought you were convicted as a poet!

I own it was a comfort to my soul,
  And soothed it better than the deepest curses,
To think they'd got one poet in a hole
  Where, though he wrote, he could not print, his verses.

I thought that Welcker, Plunkett, Brooks, and all
  The ghastly crew who always are begriming
With villain couplets every page and wall,
  Might be arrested and "run in" for rhyming.

And then Parnassus would be left to me,
  And Pegasus should bear me up it gaily,
Nor down a steep place run into the sea,
  As now he must be tempted to do daily.

Well, grab the lyre-strings, hearties, and begin:
  Bawl your harsh souls all out upon the gravel.
I must endure you, for you’ll never sin
  By robbing coaches, until dead men travel.

A SCION OF NOBILITY

Come, sisters, weep! — our Baron dear,
  Alas! has run away.
If always we had kept him here
  He had not gone astray.

Painter and grainer it were vain
  To say he was, before;
And if he were, yet ne’er again
  He’ll darken here a door.

We mourn each matrimonial plan —
  Even tradesmen join the cry:
He was so promising a man
  Whenever he did buy.

He was a fascinating lad,
  Deny it all who may;
Even moneyed men confess he had
  A very taking way.

So from our tables he is gone —
  Our tears descend in showers;
We loved the very fat upon.
  His kidneys, for ‘twas ours.

To women he was all respect
  To duns as cold as ice;
No lady could his suit reject,
  No tailor get its price.

He raised our hope above the sky;
  Alas! alack! and O!
That one who worked it up so high
  Should play it down so low!

THE NIGHT OF ELECTION

“O venerable patriot, I pray
Stand not here coatless; at the break of day
We’ll know the grand result — and even now
The eastern sky is faintly touched with gray.

“It ill befits thine age’s hoary crown —
This rude environment of rogue and clown,
Who, as the lying bulletins appear,
With drunken cries incarnadine the town.

“But if with noble zeal you stay to note
The outcome of your patriotic vote
For Blaine, or Cleveland, and your native land,
Take — and God bless you! — take my overcoat.”

“Done, pard — and mighty white of you. And now
guess the country’ll keep the trail somehow.
I aint allowed to vote, the Warden said,
But whacked my coat up on old Stanislow.”

THE CONVICTS’ BALL

San Quentin was brilliant. Within the halls
Of the noble pile with the frowning walls
(God knows they’ve enough to make them frown,
With a Governor trying to break them down!)
Was a blaze of light. ‘Twas the natal day
Of his nibs the popular John S. Gray,
And many observers considered his birth
The primary cause of his moral worth.
“The ball is free!” cried Black Bart, and they all
Said a ball with no chain was a novel ball;
“And I never have seed,” said Jimmy Hope,
“Sech a lightsome dance withouten a rope.”
Chinamen, Indians, Portuguese, Blacks,
Russians, Italians, Kanucks and Kanaks,
Chilenos, Peruvians, Mexicans — all
Greased with their presence that notable ball.
None were excluded excepting, perhaps,
The Rev. Morrison’s churchly chaps,
Whom, to prevent a religious debate,
The Warden had banished outside of the gate.
The fiddler, fiddling his hardest the while,
“Called off” in the regular foot-hill style:
“Circle to the left!” and “Forward and back!”
And “Hellum to port for the stabbard tack!”
(This great *virtuoso*, it would appear,
Was Mate of the *Gatherer* many a year.)
“*Ally man* left!” — to a painful degree
His French was unlike to the French of Paree,
As heard from our countrymen lately abroad,
And his “*doe cee doe*” was the gem of the fraud.
But what can you hope from a gentleman barred
From circles of culture by dogs in the yard?
‘Twas a glorious dance, though, all the same,
The Jardin Mabille in the days of its fame

Never saw legs perform such springs —
The cold-chisel’s magic had given them wings.
They footed it featly, those lades and gents:
Dull care (said Long Moll) had a helly go-hence!

‘Twas a very aristocratic affair:
The *crême de la crême* and *élite* were there —
Rank, beauty and wealth from the highest sets,
And Hubert Howe Bancroft sent his regrets.

A PRAYER

Sweet Spirit of Cesspool, hear a mother’s prayer:
Her terrors pacify and offspring spare!
Upon Silurians alone let fall
(And God in Heaven have mercy on them all!)
The red revenges of your fragrant breath,
Hot with the flames invisible of death.
Sing in each nose a melody of smells,
And lead them snoutwise to their several hells!

TO ONE DETESTED

Sir, you’re a veteran, revealed
  In history and fable
As warrior since you took the field,
    Defeating Abel.

As Commissary later (or
  If not, in every cottage
The tale is) you contracted for
    A mess of pottage.

In civil life you were, we read
  (And our respect increases)
A man of peace — a man, indeed,
    Of thirty pieces.

To paying taxes when you turned
  Your mind, or what you call so,
A wide celebrity you earned —
    Saphira also.

In every age, by various names,
  You’ve won renown in story,
But on your present record flames
    A greater glory.

Cain, Esau, and Iscariot, too,
  And Ananias, likewise,
Each had peculiar powers, but who
    Could lie as Mike lies?

THE BOSS'S CHOICE

Listen to his wild romances:
He advances foolish fancies,
Each expounded as his "view" —
Gu.

In his brain's opacous clot, ah
He has got a maggot! What a
Man with "views" to overwhelm us! —
Gulielmus.

Hear his demagogic clamor —
Hear him stammer in his grammar!
Teaching, he will learn to spell —
Gulielmus L.

Slave who paid the price demanded —
With two-handed iron branded
By the boss — pray cease to dose us,
Gulielmus L. Jocosus.

A MERCIFUL GOVERNOR

Standing within the triple wall of Hell,
  And flattening his nose against a grate
Behind whose brazen bars he'd had to dwell
  A thousand million ages to that date,
  Stoneman bewailed his melancholy fate,
And his big tear-drops, boiling as they fell,
Had worn between his feet, the record mentions,
A deep depression in the "good intentions."

Imperfectly by memory taught how —
  For prayer in Hell is a lost art — he prayed,
Uplifting his incinerated brow
  And flaming hands in supplication's aid.
"O grant," he cried, "my torment may be stayed —
In mercy, some short breathing spell allow!
If one good deed I did before my ghosting,
Spare me and give Delmas a double roasting."

Breathing a holy harmony in Hell,
  Down through the appalling clamors of the place,
Charming them all to willing concord, fell
  A Voice ineffable and full of grace:
"Because of all the law-defying race
One single malefactor of the cell
Thou didst not free from his incarceration,
Take thou ten thousand years of condonation."

Back from their fastenings began to shoot
  The rusted bolts; with dreadful roar, the gate
Laboriously turned; and, black with soot,
  The extinguished spirit passed that awful strait,
  And as he legged it into space, elate,
Muttered: "Yes, I remember that galoot —

I’d signed his pardon, ready to allot it,
But stuck it in my desk and quite forgot it.”

AN INTERPRETATION

Now Lonergan appears upon the boards,
And Truth and Error sheathe their lingual swords.
No more in wordy warfare to engage,
The commentators bow before the stage,
And bookworms, militant for ages past,
Confess their equal foolishness at last,
Reread their Shakspeare in the newer light
And swear the meaning’s obvious to sight.
For centuries the question has been hot:
Was Hamlet crazy, or was Hamlet not?
Now, Lonergan’s illuminating art
Reveals the truth of the disputed “part,”
And shows to all the critics of the earth
That Hamlet was an idiot from birth!

A SOARING TOAD

So, Governor, you would not serve again
  Although we'd all agree to pay you double.
You find it all is vanity and pain —
  One clump of clover in a field of stubble —
  One grain of pleasure in a peck of trouble.
'Tis sad, at your age, having to complain
Of disillusion; but the fault is whose
When pigmies stumble, wearing giants' shoes?

I humbly told you many moons ago
  For high preferment you were all unfit.
A clumsy bear makes but a sorry show
  Climbing a pole. Let him, judicious, sit
  With dignity at bottom of his pit,
And none his awkwardness will ever know.
Some beasts look better, and feel better, too,
Seen from above; and so, I think, would you.

Why, you were mad! Did you suppose because
  Our foolish system suffers foolish men
To climb to power, make, enforce the laws,
  And, it is whispered, break them now and then,
  We love the fellows and respect them when
We've stilled the volume of our loud hurrahs?
When folly blooms we trample it the more
For having fertilized it heretofore.

Behold yon laborer! His garb is mean,
  His face is grimy, but who thinks to ask
The measure of his brains? 'Tis only seen
  He's fitted for his honorable task,
  And so delights the mind. But let him bask

In droll prosperity, absurdly clean —
Is that the man whom we admired before?
Good Lord, how ignorant, and what a bore!

Better for you that thoughtless men had said
  (Noting your fitness in the humbler sphere):
“Why don’t they make him Governor?” instead
  Of, “Why the devil did they?” But I fear
  My words on your inhospitable ear
Are wasted like a sermon to the dead.
Still, they may profit you if studied well:
You can’t be taught to think, but may to spell.

AN UNDRESS UNIFORM

The apparel does *not* proclaim the man —
Polonius lied like a partisan,
And Salomon still would a hero seem
If (Heaven dispel the impossible dream!)
He stood in a shroud on the hangman’s trap,
His eye burning holes in the black, black cap.
And the crowd below would exclaim amain:
“He’s ready to fall for his country again!”

THE PERVERTED VILLAGE

AFTER GOLDSMITH

Sweet Auburn! liveliest village of the plain,
Where Health and Slander welcome every train,
Whence smiling innocence, its tribute paid,
Retires in terror, wounded and dismayed —
Dear lovely bowers of gossip and disease,
Whose climate cures us that thy dames may tease,
How often have I knelt upon thy green
And prayed for death, to mitigate their spleen!
How often have I paused on every charm
With mingled admiration and alarm —
The brook that runs by many a scandal-mill,
The church whose pastor groans upon the grill,
The cowthorn bush with seats beneath the shade,
Where hearts are struck and reputations flayed;
How often wished thine idle wives, some day,
Might more at whist, less at the devil, play.

Unblest retirement! ere my life's decline
(Killed by detraction) may I witness thine.
How happy she who, shunning shades like these,
Finds in a wolf-den greater peace and ease;
Who quits the place whence truth did earlier fly,
And rather than come back prefers to die!
For her no jealous maids renounce their sleep,
Contriving malices to make her weep;
No iron-faced dames her character debate
And spurn imploring mercy from the gate;
But down she lies to a more peaceful end,
For wolves do not calumniate, but rend —
Sinks piecemeal to their maws, a willing prey,
While resignation lubricates the way,
And all her prospects brighten at the last:
To wolves, not women, an approved repast.

1884.

MR. SHEETS

The Devil stood before the gate
Of Heaven. He had a single mate:
Behind him, in his shadow, slunk
Clay Sheets in a perspiring funk.
“Saint Peter, see this season ticket,”
Said Satan; “pray undo the wicket.”
The sleepy Saint threw slight regard
Upon the proffered bit of card,
Signed by some clerical dead-beats:
“Admit the bearer and Clay Sheets.”
Peter expanded all his eyes:
“‘Clay Sheets?’ — well, I’ll be damned!” he cries.
“Our couches are of golden cloud;
Nothing of earth is here allowed.
I’ll let you in,” he added, shedding
On Nick a smile—”but not your bedding.”

A JACK-AT-ALL-VIEWS

So, Estee, you are still alive! I thought
  That you had died and were a blessed ghost
I know at least your coffin once was bought
  With Railroad money; and ‘twas said by most
  Historians that Stanford made a boast
The seller “threw you in.” That goes for naught —
Man takes delight in fancy’s fine inventions,
And woman too, ‘tis said, if they are French ones.

Do you remember, Estee — ah, ‘twas long
  And long ago! — how fierce you grew and hot
When anything impeded the straight, strong,
  Wild sweep of the great billow you had got
  Atop of, like a swimmer bold? Great Scott!
How fine your wavemanship! How loud your song
Of “Down with railroads!” When the wave subsided
And left you stranded you were much divided.

Then for a time you were content to wade
  The waters of the “robber barons’” moat.
To fetch, and carry was your humble trade,
  And ferry Stanford over in a boat,
  Well paid if he bestowed the kindly groat
And spoke you fair and called you pretty maid.
And when his stomach seemed a bit unsteady
You got your serviceable basin ready.

Strange man! how odd to see you, smug and spruce,
  There at Chicago, burrowed in a Chair,
Not made to measure and a deal too loose,
  And see you lift your little arm and swear
  Democracy shall be no more! If it’s a fair

And civil question, and not too abstruse,
Were you elected as a “robber baron,”
Or as a Communist whose teeth had hair on?

MY LORD POET

“Who drives fat oxen should himself be fat;”
  Who sings for nobles, he should noble be.
There’s no *non sequitur*, I think, in that,
  And this is logic plain as a, b, c.
Now, Hector Stuart, you’re a Scottish prince,
  If right you fathom your descent — that fall
From grace; and since you have no peers, and since
  You have no kind of nobleness at all,
‘Twere better to sing little, lest you wince
  When made by heartless critics to sing small.
And yet, my liege, I bid you not despair —
  Ambition conquers but a realm at once:
For European bays arrange your hair —
  Two continents, in time, shall crown you Dunce!

TO THE FOOL-KILLER

Ah, welcome, welcome! Sit you down, old friend;
Your pipe I'll serve, your bottle I'll attend.
'Tis many a year since you and I have known
Society more pleasant than our own
In our brief respites from excessive work —
I pointing out the hearts for you to dirk.
What have you done since lately at this board
We canvassed the deserts of all the horde
And chose what names would please the people best,
Engraved on coffin-plates — what bounding breast
Would give more satisfaction if at rest?
But never mind — the record cannot fail:
The loftiest monuments will tell the tale.

I trust ere next we meet you'll slay the chap
Who calls old Tyler "Judge" and Merry "Cap" —
Calls John P. Irish "Colonel" and John P.,
Whose surname Jack-son speaks his pedigree,
By the same title — men of equal rank
Though one is belly all, and one all shank,
Showing their several service in the fray:
One fought for food and one to get away.
I hope, I say, you'll kill the "title" man
Who saddles one on every back he can,
Then rides it from Beërsheba to Dan!
Another fool, I trust, you will perform
Your office on while my resentment's warm:
He shakes my hand a dozen times a day
If, luckless, I so often cross his way,
Though I've three senses besides that of touch,
To make me conscious of a fool too much.
Seek him, friend Killer, and your purpose make
Apparent as his guilty hand you take,

And set him trembling with a solemn: “Shake!”

But chief of all the addle-witted crew
Conceded by the Hangman’s League to you,
The fool (his dam’s acquainted with a knave)
Whose fluent pen, of his no-brain the slave,
Strews notes of introduction o’er the land
And calls it hospitality — his hand
May palsy seize ere he again consign
To me his friend, as I to Hades mine!
Pity the wretch, his faults howe’er you see,
Whom A accredits to his victim, B.
Like shuttlecock which battledores attack
(One speeds it forward, one would drive it back)
The trustful simpleton is twice unblest —
A rare good riddance, an unwelcome guest.
The glad consignor rubs his hands to think
How duty is commuted into ink;
The consignee (his hands he cannot rub —
He has the man upon them) mutters: “Cub!”
And straightway plans to lose him at the Club.
You know, good Killer, where this dunce abides —
The secret jungle where he writes and hides —
Though no exploring foot has e’er upstirred
His human elephant’s exhaustless herd.
Go, bring his blood! We’ll drink it — letting fall
A due libation to the gods of Gall.
On second thought, the gods may have it all.

ONE AND ONE ARE TWO

The trumpet sounded and the dead
  Came forth from earth and ocean,
And Pickering arose and sped
  Aloft with wobbling motion.

“What makes him fly lop-sided?” cried
  A soul of the elected.
“One ear was wax,” a rogue replied,
  ”And isn’t resurrected.”

Below him on the pitted plain,
  By his abandoned hollow,
His hair and teeth tried all in vain
  The rest of him to follow.

Saint Peter, seeing him ascend,
  Came forward to the wicket,
And said: “My mutilated friend,
  I’ll thank you for your ticket.”

“The *Call*,” said Pickering, his hand
  To reach the latch extended.
Said Peter, affable and bland:
  ”The free-list is suspended —

“What claim have you that’s valid here?”
  That ancient vilifier
Reflected; then, with look austere,
  Replied: “I am a liar.”

Said Peter: “That is simple, neat
  And candid Anglo-Saxon,

But — well, come in, and take a seat
  Up there by Colonel Jackson.”

MONTAGUE LEVERSON

As some enormous violet that towers
Colossal o’er the heads of lowlier flowers —
Its giant petals royally displayed,
And casting half the landscape into shade;
Delivering its odors, like the blows
Of some strong slugger, at the public nose;
Pride of two Nations — for a single State
Would scarce suffice to sprout a plant so great;
So Leverson’s humility, outgrown
The meaner virtues that he deigns to own,
To the high skies its great corolla rears,
O’ertopping all he has except his ears.

THE WOFUL TALE OF MR. PETERS

I should like, good friends, to mention the disaster which befell
Mr. William Perry Peters, of the town of Muscatel,
Whose fate is full of meaning, if correctly understood —
Admonition to the haughty, consolation to the good.

It happened in the hot snap which we recently incurred,
When ‘twas warm enough to carbonize the feathers of a bird,
And men exclaimed: “By Hunky!” who were bad enough to swear,
And pious persons supervised their adjectives with care.

Mr. Peters was a pedagogue of honor and repute,
His learning comprehensive, multifarious, minute.
It was commonly conceded in the section whence he came
That the man who played against him needed knowledge of the game.

And some there were who whispered, in the town of Muscatel,
That besides the game of Draw he knew Orthography as well;
Though, the school directors, frigidly contemning that as stuff,
Thought that Draw (and maybe Spelling, if it pleased him) was enough.

Withal, he was a haughty man — indubitably great,
But too vain of his attainments and his power in debate.
His mien was contumelious to men of lesser gift:
“It’s only *me*,” he said, “can give the human mind a lift.

“Before a proper audience, if ever I’ve a chance,
You’ll see me chipping in, the cause of Learning to advance.
Just let me have a decent chance to back my mental hand
And I’ll come to center lightly in a way they’ll understand.”

Such was William Perry Peters, and I feel a poignant sense
Of grief that I'm unable to employ the present tense;
But Providence disposes, be our scheming what it may,
And disposed of Mr. Peters in a cold, regardless way.

It occurred in San Francisco, whither Mr. Peters came
In the cause of Education, feeling still the holy flame
Of ambition to assist in lifting up the human mind
To a higher plane of knowledge than its Architect designed.

He attended the convention of the pedagogic host;
He was first in the Pavilion, he was last to leave his post.
For days and days he narrowly observed the Chairman's eye,
His efforts ineffectual to catch it on the fly.

The blessed moment came at last: the Chairman tipped his head.
"The gentleman from ah — um — er," that functionary said.
The gentleman from ah — um — er reflected with a grin:
"They'll know me better by-and-by, when I'm a-chipping in."

So William Perry Peters mounted cheerfully his feet —
And straightway was aglow with an incalculable heat!
His face was as effulgent as a human face could be,
And caloric emanated from his whole periphery;

For he felt himself the focus of non-Muscatelish eyes,
And the pain of their convergence was a terror and surprise.
As with pitiless impaction all their heat-waves on him broke
He was seen to be evolving awful quantities of smoke!

"Put him out!" cried all in chorus; but the meaning wasn't clear
Of that succoring suggestion to his obfuscated ear;
And it notably augmented his incinerating glow
To regard himself excessive, or in any way *de trop*.

Gone was all his wild ambition to lift up the human mind! —
Gone the words he would have uttered! — gone the thought that lay behind!
For “words that burn” may be consumed in a superior flame,
And “thoughts that breathe” may breathe their last, and die a death of shame.

He’d known himself a shining light, but never had he known
Himself so very luminous as now he knew he shone.
“A pillar, I, of fire,” he’d said, “to guide my race will be;”
And now that very inconvenient thing to him was he.

He stood there all irresolute; the seconds went and came;
The minutes passed and did but add fresh fuel to his flame.
How long he stood he knew not—’twas a century or more —
And then that incandescent man levanted for the door!

He darted like a comet from the building to the street,
Where Fahrenheit attested ninety-five degrees of heat.
Vicissitudes of climate make the tenure of the breath
Precarious, and William Perry Peters froze to death!

TWIN UNWORTHIES

Ye parasites that to the rich men stick,
As to the fattest sheep the thrifty tick —
Ed’ard to Stanford and to Crocker Ben
(To Ben and Ed’ard many meaner men,
And lice to these) — who do the kind of work
That thieves would have the honesty to shirk —
Whose wages are that your employers own
The fat that reeks upon your every bone
And deigns to ask (the flattery how sweet!)
About its health and how it stands the heat, —
Hail and farewell! I meant to write about you,
But, no, my page is cleaner far without you.

ANOTHER PLAN

Editor Owen, of San Jose,
Commonly known as “our friend J.J.”
Weary of scribbling for daily bread,
Weary of writing what nobody read,
Slept one day at his desk and dreamed
That an angel before him stood and beamed
With compassionate eyes upon him there.

Editor Owen is not so fair
In feature, expression, form or limb
But glances like that are familiar to him;
And so, to arrive by the shortest route
At his visitor’s will he said, simply: “Toot.”
“Editor Owen,” the angel said,
“Scribble no more for your daily bread.
Your intellect staggers and falls and bleeds,
Weary of writing what nobody reads.
Eschew now the quill — in the coming years
Homilize man through his idle ears.
Go lecture!” “Just what I intended to do,”
Said Owen. The angel looked pained and flew.

Editor Owen, of San Jose,
Commonly known as “our friend J.J.”
Scribbling no more to supply his needs,
Weary of writing what nobody reads,
Passes of life each golden year
Speaking what nobody comes to hear.

A POLITICAL APOSTATE

Good friend, it is with deep regret I note
The latest, strangest turning of your coat;
Though any way you wear that mental clout
The seamy side seems always to be out.
Who could have thought that you would e’er sustain
The Southern shotgun’s arbitrary reign! —
Your sturdy hand assisting to replace
The broken yoke on a delivered race;
The ballot’s purity no more your care,
With equal privilege to dark and fair.
To Yesterday a traitor, to To-day
You’re constant but the better to betray
To-morrow. Your convictions all are naught
But the wild asses of the world of thought,
Which, flying mindless o’er the barren plain,
Perceive at last they’ve nothing so to gain,
And, turning penitent upon their track,
Economize their strength by flying back.

Ex-champion of Freedom, battle-lunged,
No more, red-handed, or at least red-tongued,
Brandish the javelin which by others thrown
Clove Sambo’s heart to quiver in your own!
Confess no more that when his blood was shed,
And you so sympathetically bled,
The bow that spanned the mutual cascade
Was but the promise of a roaring trade
In offices. Your fingering now the trigger
Shows that you *knew* your Negro was a nigger!
Ad hominem this *argumentum* runs:
Peace! — let us fire another kind of guns.

I grant you, friend, that it is very true

The Blacks are ignorant — and sable, too.
What then? One way of two a fool must vote,
And either way with gentlemen of note
Whose villain feuds the fact attest too well
That pedagogues nor vice nor error quell.
The fiercest controversies ever rage
When Miltons and Salmasii engage.
No project wide attention ever drew
But it disparted all the learned crew.
As through their group the cleaving line's prolonged
With fiery combatants each field is thronged.
In battle-royal they engage at once
For guidance of the hesitating dunce.
The Titans on the heights contend full soon —
On this side Webster and on that Calhoun,
The monstrous conflagration of their fight
Startling the day and splendoring the night!
Both are unconquerable — *one* is right.
Will't keep the pigmy, if we make him strong,
From siding with a giant in the wrong?
When Genius strikes for error, who's afraid
To arm poor Folly with a wooden blade?
O Rabelais, you knew it all! — your good
And honest judge (by men misunderstood)
Knew to be right there was but one device
Less fallible than ignorance — the dice.
The time must come — Heaven expedite the day! —
When all mankind shall their decrees obey,
And nations prosper in their peaceful sway.

TINKER DICK

Good Parson Dickson preached, I’m told,
A sermon — ah, ‘twas very old
  And very, very, bald!
‘Twas all about — I know not what
It was about, nor what ‘twas not.
  ”A Screw Loose” it was called.

Whatever, Parson Dick, you say,
The world will get each blessed day
  Still more and more askew,
And fall apart at last. Great snakes!
What skillful tinker ever takes
  His tongue to turn a screw?

BATS IN SUNSHINE

Well, Mr. Kemble, you are called, I think,
  A great divine, and I'm a great profane.
You as a Congregationalist blink
  Some certain truths that I esteem a gain,
  And drop them in the coffers of my brain,
Pleased with the pretty music of their chink.
Perhaps your spiritual wealth is such
A golden truth or two don't count for much.

You say that you've no patience with such stuff
  As by Rénan is writ, and when you read
(Why *do* you read?) have hardly strength enough
  To hold your hand from flinging the vile screed
  Into the fire. That were a wasteful deed
Which you'd repent in sackcloth extra rough;
For books cost money, and I'm told you care
To lay up treasures Here as well as There.

I fear, good, pious soul, that you mistake
  Your thrift for toleration. Never mind:
Rénan in any case would hardly break
  His great, strong, charitable heart to find
  The bats and owls of your myopic kind
Pained by the light that his ideas make.
'Tis Truth's best purpose to shine in at holes
Where cower the Kembles, to confound their souls!

A WORD TO THE UNWISE

[Charles Main, of the firm of Main & Winchester, has ordered a grand mausoleum for his plot in Mountain View Cemetery. — *City Newspaper*.]

Charles Main, of Main & Winchester, attend
With friendly ear the chit-chat of a friend
  Who knows you not, yet knows that you and he
Travel two roads that have a common end.

We journey forward through the time allowed,
I humbly bending, you erect and proud.
  Our heads alike will stable soon the worm —
The one that’s lifted, and the one that’s bowed.

You in your mausoleum shall repose,
I where it pleases Him who sleep bestows;
  What matter whether one so little worth
Shall stain the marble or shall feed the rose?

Charles Main, I had a friend who died one day.
A metal casket held his honored clay.
  Of cyclopean architecture stood
The splendid vault where he was laid away.

A dozen years, and lo! the roots of grass
Had burst asunder all the joints; the brass,
  The gilded ornaments, the carven stones
Lay tumbled all together in a mass.

A dozen years! That taxes your belief.
Make it a thousand if the time’s too brief.
  ’Twill be the same to you; when you are dead
You cannot even count your days of grief.

Suppose a pompous monument you raise
Till on its peak the solar splendor blaze
  While yet about its base the night is black;
But will it give your glory length of days?

Say, when beneath your rubbish has been thrown,
Some rogue to reputation all unknown —
  Men’s backs being turned — should lift his thieving hand,
Efface your name and substitute his own.

Whose then would be the monument? To whom
Would be the fame? Forgotten in your gloom,
  Your very name forgotten — ah, my friend,
The name is all that’s rescued by the tomb.

For memory of worth and work we go
To other records than a stone can show.
  These lacking, naught remains; with these
The stone is needless for the world will know.

Then build your mausoleum if you must,
And creep into it with a perfect trust;
  But in the twinkling of an eye the plow
Shall pass without obstruction through your dust.

Another movement of the pendulum,
And, lo! the desert-haunting wolf shall come,
  And, seated on the spot, shall howl by night
O’er rotting cities, desolate and dumb.

ON THE PLATFORM

When Dr. Bill Bartlett stepped out of the hum
  Of Mammon’s distracting and wearisome strife
To stand and deliver a lecture on “Some
  Conditions of Intellectual Life,”
I cursed the offender who gave him the hall
To lecture on any conditions at all!

But he rose with a fire divine in his eye,
  Haranguing with endless abundance of breath,
Till I slept; and I dreamed of a gibbet reared high,
  And Dr. Bill Bartlett was dressing for death.
And I thought in my dream: “These conditions, no doubt,
Are bad for the life he was talking about.”

So I cried (pray remember this all was a dream):
  ”Get off of the platform! — it isn’t the kind!”
But he fell through the trap, with a jerk at the beam,
  And wiggled his toes to unburden his mind.
And, O, so bewitching the thoughts he advanced,
That I clung to his ankles, attentive, entranced!

A DAMPENED ARDOR

The Chinatown at Bakersfield
  Was blazing bright and high;
The flames to water would not yield,
  Though torrents drenched the sky
And drowned the ground for miles around —
  The houses were so dry.

Then rose an aged preacher man
  Whom all did much admire,
Who said: “To force on you my plan
  I truly don’t aspire,
But streams, it seems, might quench these beams
  If turned upon the fire.”

The fireman said: “This hoary wight
  His folly dares to thrust
On *us*! ‘Twere well he felt our might —
  Nay, he shall feel our must!”
With jet of wet and small regret
  They laid that old man’s dust.

ADAIR WELCKER, POET

The Swan of Avon died — the Swan
Of Sacramento’ll soon be gone;
And when his death-song he shall coo,
Stand back, or it will kill you too.

TO A WORD-WARRIOR

Frank Pixley, you, who kiss the hand
  That strove to cut the country’s throat,
  Cannot forgive the hands that smote
Applauding in a distant land, —

Applauding carelessly, as one
  The weaker willing to befriend
  Until the quarrel’s at an end,
Then learn by whom it was begun.

When North was pitted against South
  Non-combatants on either side
  In calculating fury vied,
And fought their foes by word of mouth.

That devil’s-camisade you led
  With formidable feats of tongue.
  Upon the battle’s rear you hung —
With Samson’s weapon slew the dead!

So hot the ardor of your soul
  That every fierce civilian came,
  His torch to kindle at your name,
Or have you blow his cooling coal.

Men prematurely left their beds
  And sought the gelid bath — so great
  The heat and splendor of your hate
Of Englishmen and “Copperheads.”

King Liar of deceitful men,
  For imposition doubly armed!
  The patriots whom your speaking charmed
You stung to madness with your pen.

There was a certain journal here,
  Its English owner growing rich —
  Your hand the treason wrote for which
A mob cut short its curst career.

If, Pixley, you had not the brain
  To know the true from false, or you
  To Truth had courage to be true,
And loyal to her perfect reign;

If you had not your powers arrayed
  To serve the wrong by tricksy speech,
  Nor pushed yourself within the reach
Of retribution’s accolade,

I had not had the will to go
  Outside the olive-bordered path
  Of peace to cut the birch of wrath,
And strip your body for the blow.

Behold how dark the war-clouds rise
  About the mother of our race!
  The lightnings gild her tranquil face
And glitter in her patient eyes.

Her children throng the hither flood
  And lean intent above the beach.
  Their beating hearts inhibit speech
With stifling tides of English blood.

“Their skies, but not their hearts, they change
  Who go in ships across the sea” —
  Through all centuries to be
The strange new land will still be strange.

The Island Mother holds in gage
  The souls of sons she never saw;
  Superior to law, the law
Of sympathetic heritage.

Forgotten now the foolish reign
  Of wrath which sundered trivial ties.
  A soldier’s sabre vainly tries
To cleave a spiritual chain.

The iron in our blood affines,
  Though fratricidal hands may spill.
  Shall Hate be throned on Bunker Hill,
Yet Love abide at Seven Pines?

A CULINARY CANDIDATE

A cook adorned with paper cap,
  Or waiter with a tray,
May be a worthy kind of chap
      In his way,
But when we want one for Recorder,
Then, Mr. Walton, take our order.

THE OLEOMARGARINE MAN

Once — in the county of Marin,
Where milk is sold to purchase gin —
Renowned for butter and renowned
For fourteen ounces to the pound —
A bull stood watching every turn
Of Mr. Wilson with a churn,
As that deigning worthy stalked
About him, eying as he walked,
El Toro’s sleek and silken hide,
His neck, his flank and all beside;
Thinking with secret joy: “I’ll spread
That mammal on a slice of bread!”

Soon Mr. Wilson’s keen concern
To get the creature in his churn
Unhorsed his caution — made him blind
To the fell vigor of bullkind,
Till, filled with valor to the teeth,
He drew his dasher from its sheath
And bravely brandished it; the while
He smiled a dark, portentous smile;
A deep, sepulchral smile; a wide
And open smile, which, at his side,
The churn to copy vainly tried;
A smile so like the dawn of doom
That all the field was palled in gloom,
And all the trees within a mile,
As tribute to that awful smile,
Made haste, with loyalty discreet,
To fling their shadows at his feet.
Then rose his battle-cry: “I’ll spread
That mammal on a slice of bread!”

To such a night the day had turned
That Taurus dimly was discerned.
He wore so meek and grave an air
It seemed as if, engaged in prayer
This thunderbolt incarnate had
No thought of anything that’s bad:
This concentrated earthquake stood
And gave his mind to being good.
Lightly and low he drew his breath —
This magazine of sudden death!
All this the thrifty Wilson’s glance
Took in, and, crying, “Now’s my chance!”
Upon the bull he sprang amain
To put him in his churn. Again
Rang out his battle-yell: “I’ll spread
That mammal on a slice of bread!”

Sing, Muse, that battle-royal — sing
The deeds that made the region ring,
The blows, the bellowing, the cries,
The dust that darkened all the skies,
The thunders of the contest, all —
Nay, none of these things did befall.
A yell there was — a rush — no more:
El Toro, tranquil as before,
Still stood there basking in the sun,
Nor of his legs had shifted one —
Stood there and conjured up his cud
And meekly munched it. Scenes of blood
Had little charm for him. His head
He merely nodded as he said:
“I’ve spread that butterman upon
A slice of Southern Oregon.”

GENESIS

God said, “Let there be Crime,” and the command
Brought Satan, leading Stoneman by the hand.
“Why, that’s Stupidity, not Crime,” said God —
“Bring what I ordered.” Satan with a nod
Replied, “This is *one* element — when I
The *other* — Opportunity — supply
In just equivalent, the two’ll affine
And in a chemical embrace combine
And Crime result — for Crime can only be
Stupiditate of Opportunity.”
So leaving Stoneman (not as yet endowed
With soul) in special session on a cloud,
Nick to his sooty laboratory went,
Returning soon with t’other element.
“Here’s Opportunity,” he said, and put
Pen, ink, and paper down at Stoneman’s foot.
He seized them — Heaven was filled with fires and thunders,
And Crime was added to Creation’s wonders!

LLEWELLEN POWELL

Villain, when the word is spoken,
And your chains at last are broken
  When the gibbet’s chilling shade
Ceases darkly to enfold you,
And the angel who enrolled you
  As a master of the trade
Of assassination sadly
  Blots the record he has made,
And your name and title paints
In the calendar of saints;
When the devils, dancing madly
In the midmost Hell, are very
Multitudinously merry —
Then beware, beware, beware! —
Nemesis is everywhere!
You shall hear her at your back,
  And, your hunted visage turning,
  Fancy that her eyes are burning
Like a tiger’s on your track!
You shall hear her in the breeze
Whispering to summer trees.
You shall hear her calling, calling
  To your spirit through the storm
  When the giant billows form
And the splintered lightning, falling
Down the heights of Heaven, appalling,
Splendors all the tossing seas!
On your bed at night reclining,
Stars into your chamber shining
  As they roll around the Pole,
None their purposes divining,
  Shall appear to search your soul,
And to gild the mark of Cain
That burns into your tortured brain!

And the dead man’s eyes shall ever
  Meet your own wherever you,
  Desperate, shall turn you to,
And you shall escape them never!

By your heritage of guilt;
By the blood that you have spilt;
By the Law that you have broken;
By the terrible red token
  That you bear upon your brow;
By the awful sentence spoken
  And irrevocable vow
Which consigns you to a living
Death and to the unforgiving
Furies who avenge your crime
Through the periods of time;
By that dread eternal doom
Hinted in your future’s gloom,
  As the flames infernal tell
Of their power and perfection
In their wavering reflection
  On the battlements of Hell;
By the mercy you denied,
  I condemn your guilty soul
In your body to abide,
  Like a serpent in a hole!

THE SUNSET GUN.

Off Santa Cruz the western wave
  Was crimson as with blood:
The sun was sinking to his grave
  Beneath that angry flood.

Sir Walter Turnbull, brave and stout,
  Then shouted, “Ho! lads; run —
The powder and the ball bring out
  To fire the sunset gun.

“That punctual orb did ne’er omit
  To keep, by land or sea,
Its every engagement; it
  Shall never wait for me.”

Behold the black-mouthed cannon stand,
  Ready with charge and prime,
The lanyard in the gunner’s hand.
  Sir Walter waits the time.

The glowing orb sinks in the sea,
  And clouds of steam aspire,
Then fade, and the horizon’s free.
  Sir Walter thunders: “Fire!”

The gunner pulls — the lanyard parts
  And not a sound ensues.
The beating of ten thousand hearts
  Was heard at Santa Cruz!

Off Santa Cruz the western wave
  Was crimson as with blood;
The sun, with visage stern and grave,
  Came back from out the flood.

THE VIDUATE DAME

‘Tis the widow of Thomas Blythe,
  And she goeth upon the spree,
And red are cheeks of the bystanders
  For her acts are light and free.

In a seven-ounce costume
  The widow of Thomas Blythe,
Y-perched high on the window ledge,
  The difficult can-can tryeth.

Ten constables they essay
  To bate the dame’s halloing.
With the widow of Thomas Blythe
  Their hands are overflowing,

And they cry: “Call the National Guard
  To quell this parlous muss —
For all of the widows of Thomas Blythe
  Are upon the spree and us!”

O long shall the eerie tale be told
  By that posse’s surviving tithe;
And with tears bedewed he’ll sing this rude
  Ballàd of the widow of Thomas Blythe.

FOUR OF A KIND

ROBERT F. MORROW

Dear man! although a stranger and a foe
To soft affection's humanizing glow;
Although untaught how manly hearts may throb
With more desires than the desire to rob;
Although as void of tenderness as wit,
And owning nothing soft but Maurice Schmitt;
Although polluted, shunned and in disgrace,
You fill me with a passion to embrace!
Attentive to your look, your smile, your beck,
I watch and wait to fall upon your neck.
Lord of my love, and idol of my hope,
You are my Valentine, and I'm
A ROPE.

ALFRED CLARKE JR.

Illustrious son of an illustrious sire —
Entrusted with the duty to cry “Fire!”
And call the engines out, exert your power
With care. When, looking from your lofty tower,
You see a ruddy light on every wall,
Pause for a moment ere you sound the call:
It may be from a fire, it may be, too,
From good men’s blushes when they think of you.

JUDGE RUTLEDGE

Sultan of Stupids! with enough of brains
To go indoors in all uncommon rains,
But not enough to stay there when the storm
Is past. When all the world is dry and warm,
In irking comfort, lamentably gay,
Keeping the evil tenor of your way,
You walk abroad, sweet, beautiful and smug,
And Justice hears you with her wonted shrug,
Lifts her broad bandage half-an-inch and keeps
One eye upon you while the other weeps.

W.H.L. BARNES

Happy the man who sin’s proverbial wage
Receives on the instalment plan — in age.
For him the bulldog pistol’s honest bark
Has naught of terror in its blunt remark.
He looks with calmness on the gleaming steel —
If e’er it touched his heart he did not feel:
Superior hardness turned its point away,
Though urged by fond affinity to stay;
His bloodless veins ignored the futile stroke,
And moral mildew kept the cut in cloak.
Happy the man, I say, to whom the wage
Of sin has been commuted into age.
Yet not *quite* happy — hark, that horrid cry! —
His cruel mirror wounds him in the eye!

RECONCILIATION

Stanford and Huntington, so long at outs,
Kissed and made up. If you have any doubts
Dismiss them, for I saw them do it, man;
And then — why, then I clutched my purse and ran.

A VISION OF CLIMATE

I dreamed that I was poor and sick and sad,
  Broken in hope and weary of my life;
My ventures all miscarrying — naught had
  For all my labor in the heat and strife.
  And in my heart some certain thoughts were rife
Of an unsummoned exit. As I lay
  Considering my bitter state, I cried:
“Alas! that hither I did ever stray.
  Better in some fair country to have died
Than live in such a land, where Fortune never
(Unless he be successful) crowns Endeavor.”

Then, even as I lamented, lo! there came
  A troop of Presences — I knew not whence
Nor what they were: thought cannot rightly name
  What’s known through spiritual evidence,
  Reported not by gross material sense.
“Why come ye here?” I seemed to cry (though naught
  My sleeping tongue did utter) to the first —
“What are ye? — with what woful message fraught?
  Ye have a ghastly look, as ye had burst
Some sepulcher in memory. Weird creatures,
I’m sure I’d know you if ye had but features.”

Some subtle organ noted the reply
  (Inaudible to ear of flesh the tone):
“The Finest Climate in the World am I,
  From Siskiyou to San Diego known —
  From the Sierra to the sea. The zone
Called semi-tropical I’ve pulled about
  And placed it where it does most good, I trust.
I shake my never-failing bounty out
  Alike upon the just and the unjust.”

“That’s very true,” said I, “but when ‘tis shaken
My share by the unjust is ever taken.”

“Permit me,” it resumed, “now to present
  My eldest son, the Champagne Atmosphere,
And others to rebuke your discontent —
  The Mammoth Squash, Strawberry All the Year,
  The fair No Lightning — flashing only here —
The Wholesome Earthquake and Italian Sky,
  With its Unstriking Sun; and last, not least,
The Compos Mentis Dog. Now, ingrate, try
  To bring a better stomach to the feast:
When Nature makes a dance and pays the piper,
  To be unhappy is to be a viper!”

“Why, yet,” said I, “with all your blessings fine
  (And Heaven forbid that I should speak them ill)
I yet am poor and sick and sad. Ye shine
  With more of splendor than of heat: for still,
  Although my will is warm, my bones are chill.”
“Then warm you with enthusiasm’s blaze —
  Fortune waits not on toil,” they cried; “O then
Join the wild chorus clamoring our praise —
  Throw up your beaver and throw down you pen!”
“Begone!” I shouted. They bewent, a-smirking,
  And I, awakening, fell straight a-working.

A MASS MEETING

It was a solemn rite as e’er
  Was seen by mortal man.
The celebrants, the people there,
  Were all Republican.

There Estee bent his grizzled head,
  And General Dimond, too,
And one—’twas Reddick, some one said,
  Though no one clearly knew.

I saw the priest, white-robed and tall
  (Assistant, Father Stow) —
He was the pious man men call
  Dan Burns of Mexico.

Ah, ‘twas a high and holy rite
  As any one could swear.
“What does it mean?” I asked a wight
  Who knelt apart in prayer.

“A mass for the repose,” he said,
  ”Of Colonel Markham’s” — —”What,
Is gallant Colonel Markham dead?
  ’Tis sad, ‘tis sad, God wot!”

“A mass” — repeated he, and rose
  To go and kneel among
The worshipers—”for the repose
  Of Colonel Markham’s tongue.”

FOR PRESIDENT, LELAND STANFORD

Mahomet Stanford, with covetous stare,
Gazed on a vision surpassingly fair:
Far on the desert's remote extreme
A mountain of gold with a mellow gleam
Reared its high pinnacles into the sky,
The work of *mirage* to delude the eye.
Pixley Pasha, at the Prophet's feet
Piously licking them, swearing them sweet,
Ventured, observing his master's glance,
To beg that he order the mountain's advance.
Mahomet Stanford exerted his will,
Commanding: "In Allah's name, hither, hill!"
Never an inch the mountain came.
Mahomet Stanford, with face aflame,
Lifted his foot and kicked, alack!
Pixley Pasha on the end of the back.
Mollified thus and smiling free,
He said: "Since the mountain won't come to me,
I'll go to the mountain." With infinite pains,
Camels in caravans, negroes in trains,
Warriors, workmen, women, and fools,
Food and water and mining tools
He gathered about him, a mighty array,
And the journey began at the close of day.
All night they traveled — at early dawn
Many a wearisome league had gone.
Morning broke fair with a golden sheen,
Mountain, alas, was nowhere seen!
Mahomet Stanford pounded his breast,
Pixley Pasha he thus addressed:
"Dog of mendacity, cheat and slave,
May jackasses sing o'er your grandfather's grave!"

FOR MAYOR

O Abner Doble — whose “catarrhal name”
  Budd of that ilk might envy—’tis a rough
  Rude thing to say, but it is plain enough
Your name is to be sneezed at: its acclaim
Will “fill the speaking trump of future fame”
  With an impeded utterance — a puff
  Suggesting that a pinch or two of snuff
Would clear the tube and somewhat disinflame.
Nay, Abner Doble, you’ll not get from me
  My voice and influence: I’ll cheer instead,
    Some other man; for when my voice ascends a
Tall pinnacle of praise, and at high C
  Sustains a chosen name, it shan’t be said
    My influence is naught but influenza.

A CHEATING PREACHER

Munhall, to save my soul you bravely try,
Although, to save my soul, I can’t say why.
‘Tis naught to you, to me however much —
Why, bless it! you might save a million such
Yet lose your own; for still the “means of grace”
That you employ to turn us from the place
By the arch-enemy of souls frequented
Are those which to ensnare us he invented!
I do not say you utter falsehoods — I
Would scorn to give to ministers the lie:
They cannot fight — their calling has estopped it.
True, I did not persuade them to adopt it.
But, Munhall, when you say the Devil dwells
In all the breasts of all the infidels —
Making a lot of individual Hells
In gentlemen instinctively who shrink
From thinking anything that you could think,
You talk as I should if some world I trod
Where lying is acceptable to God.
I don’t at all object — forbid it Heaven! —
That your discourse you temperately leaven
With airy reference to wicked souls
Cursing impenitent on glowing coals,
Nor quarrel with your fancy, blithe and fine,
Which represents the wickedest as mine.
Each ornament of style my spirit eases:
The subject saddens, but the manner pleases.
But when you “deal damnation round” ‘twere sweet
To think hereafter that you did not cheat.
Deal, and let all accept what you allot ‘em.
But, blast you! you are dealing from the bottom!

A CROCODILE

Nay, Peter Robertson, ‘tis not for you
  To blubber o’er Max Taubles for he’s dead.
By Heaven! my hearty, if you only knew
  How better is a grave-worm in the head
Than brains like yours — how far more decent, too,
  A tomb in far Corea than a bed
Where Peter lies with Peter, you would covet
His happier state and, dying, learn to love it.

In the recesses of the silent tomb
  No Maunderings of yours disturb the peace.
Your mental bag-pipe, droning like the gloom
  Of Hades audible, perforce must cease
From troubling further; and that crack o’ doom,
  Your mouth, shaped like a long bow, shall release
In vain such shafts of wit as it can utter —
The ear of death can’t even hear them flutter.

THE AMERICAN PARTY

Oh, Marcus D. Boruck, me hearty,
  I sympathize wid ye, poor lad!
A man that’s shot out of his party
  Is mighty onlucky, bedad!
  An’ the sowl o’ that man is sad.

But, Marcus, gossoon, ye desarve it —
  Ye know for yerself that ye do,
For ye j’ined not intendin’ to sarve it,
  But hopin’ to make it sarve you,
  Though the roll of its members wuz two.

The other wuz Pixley, an’ “Surely,”
  Ye said, “he’s a kite that wall sail.”
An’ so ye hung till him securely,
  Enactin’ the role of a tail.
  But there wuzn’t the ghost of a gale!

But the party to-day has behind it
  A powerful backin’, I’m told;
For just enough Irish have j’ined it
  (An’ I’m m’anin’ to be enrolled)
  To kick ye out into the cold.

It’s hard on ye, darlint, I’m thinkin’ —
  So young — so American, too —
Wid bypassers grinnin’ an’ winkin’,
  An’ sayin’, wid ref’rence to you:
“Get onto the murtherin’ Joo!”

Republicans never will take ye —

They had ye for many a year;
An’ Dimocrats — angels forsake ye! —
If ever ye come about here
We’ll brand ye and scollop yer ear!

UNCOLONELED

Though war-signs fail in time of peace, they say,
  Two awful portents gloom the public mind:
All Mexico is arming for the fray
  And Colonel Mark McDonald has resigned!
  We know not by what instinct he divined
The coming trouble — may be, like the steed
  Described by Job, he smelled the fight afar.
Howe’er it be, he left, and for that deed
  Is an aspirant to the G.A.R.
When cannon flame along the Rio Grande
A citizen’s commission will be handy.

THE GATES AJAR

The Day of Judgment spread its glare
  O’er continents and seas.
The graves cracked open everywhere,
  Like pods of early peas.

Up to the Court of Heaven sped
  The souls of all mankind;
Republicans were at the head
  And Democrats behind.

Reub. Lloyd was there before the tube
  Of Gabriel could call:
The dead in Christ rise first, and Reub.
  Had risen first of all.

He sat beside the Throne of Flame
  As, to the trumpet’s sound,
Four statesmen of the Party Came
  And ranged themselves around —

Pure spirits shining like the sun,
  From taint and blemish free —
Great William Stow was there for one,
  And George A. Knight for three.

Souls less indubitably white
  Approached with anxious air,
Judge Blake at head of them by right
  Of having been a Mayor.

His ermine he had donned again,
  Long laid away in gums.
‘Twas soiled a trifle by the stains
  Of politicians’ thumbs.

Then Knight addressed the Judge of Heaven:
  ”Your Honor, would it trench
On custom here if Blake were given
  A seat upon the Bench?”

‘Twas done. “Tom Shannon!” Peter cried.
  He came, without ado,
In forma pauperis was tried,
  And was acquitted, too!

Stow rose, remarking: “I concur.”
  Lloyd added: “That suits *us*.
I move Tom’s nomination, sir,
  Be made unanimous.”

TIDINGS OF GOOD

Old Nick from his place of last resort
  Came up and looked the world over.
He saw how the grass of the good was short
  And the wicked lived in clover.

And he gravely said: “This is all, all wrong,
  And never by me intended.
If to me the power should ever belong
  I shall have this thing amended.”

He looked so solemn and good and wise
  As he made this observation
That the men who heard him believed their eyes
  Instead of his reputation.

So they bruited the matter about, and each
  Reported the words as nearly
As memory served — with additional speech
  To bring out the meaning clearly.

The consequence was that none understood,
  And the wildest rumors started
Of something intended to help the good
  And injure the evil-hearted.

Then Robert Morrow was seen to smile
  With a bright and lively joyance.
“A man,” said he, “that is free from guile
  Will now be free from annoyance.

“The Featherstones doubtless will now increase
  And multiply like the rabbits,
While jailers, deputy sheriffs, police,
  And writers will form good habits.

“The widows more easily robbed will be,
  And no juror will ever heed ‘em,
But open his purse to my eloquent plea
  For security, gain, or freedom.”

When Benson heard of the luck of the good
  (He was eating his dinner) he muttered:
“It cannot help *me*, for ‘tis understood
  My bread is already buttered.

“My plats of surveys are all false, they say,
  But that cannot greatly matter
To me, for I’ll tell the jurors that they
  May lick, if they please, my platter.”

ARBORICULTURE

[Californians are asking themselves how Joaquin Miller will make the trees grow which he proposes to plant in the form of a Maltese cross on Goat Island, in San Francisco Bay. — *New York Graphic*.]

You may say they won’t grow, and say they’ll decay —
Say it again till you’re sick of the say,
Get up on your ear, blow your blaring bazoo
And hire a hall to proclaim it; and you
May stand on a stump with a lifted hand
As a pine may stand or a redwood stand,
And stick to your story and cheek it through.
But I point with pride to the far divide
Where the Snake from its groves is seen to glide —
To Mariposa’s arboreal suit,
And the shaggy shoulders of Shasta Butte,
And the feathered firs of Siskiyou;
And I swear as I sit on my marvelous hair —
I roll my marvelous eyes and swear,
And sneer, and ask where would your forests be
To-day if it hadn’t been for me!
Then I rise tip-toe, with a brow of brass,
Like a bully boy with an eye of glass;
I look at my gum sprouts, red and blue,
And I say it loud and I say it low:
“They know their man and you bet they’ll grow!”

A SILURIAN HOLIDAY

‘Tis Master Fitch, the editor;
  He takes an holiday.
Now wherefore, venerable sir,
  So resolutely gay?

He lifts his head, he laughs aloud,
  Odzounds! ‘tis drear to see!
“Because the Boodle-Scribbler crowd
  Will soon be far from me.

“Full many a year I’ve striven well
  To freeze the caitiffs out
By making this good town a Hell,
  But still they hang about.

“They maken mouths and eke they grin
  At the dollar limit game;
And they are holpen in that sin
  By many a wicked dame.

“In sylvan bowers hence I’ll dwell
  My bruisèd mind to ease.
Farewell, ye urban scenes, farewell!
  Hail, unfamiliar trees!”

Forth Master Fitch did bravely hie,
  And all the country folk
Besought him that he come not nigh
  The deadly poison oak!

He smiled a cheerful smile (the day
  Was straightway overcast) —
The poison oak along his way
  Was blighted as he passed!

REJECTED

When Dr. Charles O’Donnell died
They sank a box with him inside.

The plate with his initials three
Was simply graven—”C.O.D.”

That night two demons of the Pit
Adown the coal-hole shunted it.

Ten million million leagues it fell,
Alighting at the gate of Hell.

Nick looked upon it with surprise,
A night-storm darkening his eyes.

“They’ve sent this rubbish, C.O.D. —
I’ll never pay a cent!” said he.

JUDEX JUDICATUS

Judge Armstrong, when the poor have sought your aid,
To be released from vows that they have made
In haste, and leisurely repented, you,
As stern as Rhadamanthus (Minos too,
And Æeacus) have drawn your fierce brows down
And petrified them with a moral frown!
With iron-faced rigor you have made them run
The gauntlet of publicity — each Hun
Or Vandal of the public press allowed
To throw their households open to the crowd
And bawl their secret bickerings aloud.
When Wealth before you suppliant appears,
Bang! go the doors and open fly your ears!
The blinds are drawn, the lights diminished burn,
Lest eyes too curious should look and learn
That gold refines not, sweetens not a life
Of conjugal brutality and strife —
That vice is vulgar, though it gilded shine
Upon the curve of a judicial spine.
The veiled complainant's whispered evidence,
The plain collusion and the no defense,
The sealed exhibits and the secret plea,
The unrecorded and unseen decree,
The midnight signature and — *chink! chink! chink!* —
Nay, pardon, upright Judge, I did but think
I heard that sound abhorred of honest men;
No doubt it was the scratching of your pen.

O California! long-enduring land,
Where Judges fawn upon the Golden Hand,
Proud of such service to that rascal thing
As slaves would blush to render to a king —
Judges, of judgment destitute and heart,

Of conscience conscious only by the smart
From the recoil (so insight is enlarged)
Of duty accidentally discharged; —
Invoking still a “song o’ sixpence” from
The Scottish fiddle of each lusty palm,
Thy Judges, California, skilled to play
This silent music, through the livelong-day
Perform obsequious before the rich,
And still the more they scratch the more they itch!

ON THE WEDDING OF AN AËRONAUT

Aëronaut, you’re fairly caught,
  Despite your bubble’s leaven:
Out of the skies a lady’s eyes
  Have brought you down to Heaven!

No more, no more you’ll freely soar
  Above the grass and gravel:
Henceforth you’ll walk — and she will chalk
  The line that you’re to travel!

A HASTY INFERENCE

The Devil one day, coming up from the Pit,
  All grimy with perspiration,
Applied to St. Peter and begged he'd admit
  Him a moment for consultation.

The Saint showed him in where the Master reclined
  On the throne where petitioners sought him;
Both bowed, and the Evil One opened his mind
  Concerning the business that brought him:

"For ten million years I've been kept in a stew
  Because you have thought me immoral;
And though I have had my opinion of you,
  You've had the best end of the quarrel.

"But now — well, I venture to hope that the past
  With its misunderstandings we'll smother;
And you, sir, and I, sir, be throned here at last
  As equals, the one to the other."

"Indeed!" said the Master (I cannot convey
  A sense of his tone by mere letters)
"What makes you presume you'll be bidden to stay
  Up here on such terms with your betters?"

"Why, sure you can't mean it!" said Satan. "I've seen
  How Stanford and Crocker you've nourished,
And Huntington — bless me! the three like a green
  Umbrageous great bay-tree have flourished.

They are fat, they are rolling in gold, they command
  All sources and well-springs of power;

You’ve given them houses, you’ve given them land —
  Before them the righteous all cower.”

“What of that?” “What of that?” cried the Father of Sin;
  ”Why, I thought when I saw you were winking
At crimes such as theirs that perhaps you had been
  Converted to my way of thinking.”

A VOLUPTUARY

Who’s this that lispeth in the thickening throng
Which crowds to claim distinction in my song?
Fresh from “the palms and temples of the South,”
The mixed aromas quarrel in his mouth:
Of orange blossoms this the lingering gale,
And that the odor of a spicy tale.
Sir, in thy pleasure-dome down by the sea
(No finer one did Kubla Khan decree)
Where, Master of the Revels, thou dost stand
With joys and mysteries on either hand,
Dost keep a poet to report the rites
And sing the tale of those Elysian nights?
Faith, sir, I’d like the place if not too young.
I’m no great bard, but — I can hold my tongue.

AD CATTONUM

I know not, Mr. Catton, who you are,
Nor very clearly why; but you go far
To show that you are many things beside
A Chilean Consul with a tempting hide;
But what they are I hardly could explain
Without afflicting you with mental pain.
Your name (gods! what a name the muse to woo —
Suggesting cats, and hinting kittens, too!)
Points to an origin — perhaps Maltese,
Perhaps Angoran — where the wicked cease
From fiddling, and the animals that grow
The strings that groan to the tormenting bow
Live undespoiled of their insides, resigned
To give their name and nature to mankind.
With Chilean birth your name but poorly tallies;
The test is — Did you ever sell tamales?

It matters very little, though, my boy,
If you're from Chile or from Illinois;
You can't, because you serve a foreign land,
Spit with impunity on ours, expand,
Cock-turkeywise, and strut with blind conceit,
All heedless of the hearts beneath your feet,
Fling falsehoods as a sower scatters grain
And, for security, invoke disdain.
Sir, there are laws that men of sense observe,
No matter whence they come nor whom they serve —
The laws of courtesy; and these forbid
You to malign, as recently you did,
As servant of another State, a State
Wherein your duties all are concentrate;
Branding its Ministers as rogues — in short,
Inviting cuffs as suitable retort.

Chileno or American, ‘tis one —
Of any land a citizen, or none —
If like a new Thersites here you rail,
Loading with libels every western gale,
You’ll feel the cudgel on your scurvy hump
Impinging with a salutary thump.
‘Twill make you civil or ‘twill make you jump!

THE NATIONAL GUARDSMAN

I’m a gorgeous golden hero
  And my trade is taking life.
Hear the twittle-twittle-tweero
  Of my sibillating fife
And the rub-a-dub-a-dum
  Of my big bass drum!
I’m an escort strong and bold,
  The Grand Army to protect.
My countenance is cold
  And my attitude erect.
I’m a Californian Guard
  And my banner flies aloft,
But the stones are O, so hard!
  And my feet are O, so soft!

THE BARKING WEASEL

You say, John Irish, Mr. Taylor hath
  A painted beard. Quite likely that is true,
And sure ‘tis natural you spend your wrath
  On what has been least merciful to you.
By Taylor’s chin, if I am not mistaken,
You like a rat have recently been shaken.

To wear a beard of artificial hue
  May be or this or that, I know not what;
But, faith, ‘tis better to be black-and-blue
  In beard from dallying with brush and pot
Than to be so in body from the beating
That hardy rogues get when detected cheating.

You’re whacked about the mazzard rather more
  Of late than any other man in town.
Certes your vulnerable back is sore
  And tender, too, your corrigible crown.
In truth your whole periphery discloses
More vivid colors than a bed of posies!

You call it glory! Put your tongue in sheath! —
  Scars got in battle, even if on the breast,
May be a shameful record if, beneath,
  A robber heart a lawless strife attest.
John Sullivan had wounds, and Paddy Ryan —
Nay, as to that, even Masten has, and Bryan.

‘Tis willingly conceded you’ve a knack
  At holding the attention of the town;

The worse for you when you have on your back
  What did not grow there — prithee put it down!
For pride kills thrift, and you lack board and lodging,
Even while the brickbats of renown you’re dodging.

A REAR ELEVATION

[He can speak with his eyes, his hands, arms, legs, body — nay, with his very bones, for he turned the broad of his back upon us in “Conrad,” the other night, and his shoulder-blades spoke to us a volume of hesitation, fear, submission, desperation — everything which could haunt a man at the moment of inevitable detection. — *A “Dramatic Critic.”*]

Once Moses (in Scripture the story is told)
Entreated the favor God’s face to behold.
Compassion divine the petition denied
Lest vision be blasted and body be fried.
Yet this much, the Record informs us, took place:
Jehovah, concealing His terrible face,
Protruded His rear from behind a great rock,
And edification ensued without shock.
So godlike Salvini, lest worshipers die,
Averting the blaze of his withering eye,
Tempers his terrors and shows to the pack
Of feeble adorers the broad of his back.
The fires of their altars, which, paled and declined
Before him, burn all the more brightly behind.
O happy adorers, to care not at all
Where fawning may tickle or lip-service fall!

IN UPPER SAN FRANCISCO

I heard that Heaven was bright and fair,
And politicians dwelt not there.

‘Twas said by knowing ones that they
Were in the Elsewhere — so to say.

So, waking from my last long sleep,
I took my place among the sheep.

I passed the gate — Saint Peter eyed
Me sharply as I stepped inside.

He thought, as afterward I learned,
That I was Chris, the Unreturned.

The new Jerusalem — ah me,
It was a sorry sight to see!

The mansions of the blest were there,
And mostly they were fine and fair;

But O, such streets! — so deep and wide,
And all unpaved, from side to side!

And in a public square there grew
A blighted tree, most sad to view.

From off its trunk the bark was ripped —

Its very branches all were stripped!

An angel perched upon the fence
With all the grace of indolence.

“Celestial bird,” I cried, in pain,
“What vandal wrought this wreck? Explain.”

He raised his eyelids as if tired:
“What is a Vandal?” he inquired.

“This is the Tree of Life. ‘Twas stripped
By Durst and Siebe, who have shipped

“The bark across the Jordan — see? —
And sold it to a tannery.”

“Alas,” I sighed, “their old-time tricks!
That pavement, too, of golden bricks —

“They’ve gobbled that?” But with a scowl,
“You greatly wrong them,” said the fowl:

“‘Twas Gilleran did that, I fear —
Head of the Street Department here.”

“What! what!” cried I—”you let such chaps
Come here? You’ve Satan, too, perhaps.”

“We had him, yes, but off he went,
Yet showed some purpose to repent;

“But since your priests and parsons filled
The place with those their preaching killed” —

(Here Siebe passed along with Durst,
Psalming as if their lungs would burst) —

“He swears his foot no more shall press
(‘Tis cloven, anyhow, I guess)

“Our soil. In short, he’s out on strike —
But devils are not all alike.”

Lo! Gilleran came down the street,
Pressing the soil with broad, flat feet!

NIMROD

There were brave men, some one has truly said,
Before Atrides (those were mostly dead
Behind him) and ere you could e’er occur
Actaeon lived, Nimrod and Bahram-Gur.
In strength and speed and daring they excelled:
The stag they overtook, the lion felled.
Ah, yes, great hunters flourished before you,
And — for Munchausen lived — great talkers too.
There’ll be no more; there’s much to kill, but — well,
You have left nothing in the world to tell!

CENSOR LITERARUM

So, Parson Stebbins, you’ve released your chin
  To say that here, and here, we press-folk ail.
‘Tis a great thing an editor to skin
  And hang his faulty pelt upon a nail
  (If over-eared, it has, at least, no tail)
And, for an admonition against sin,
Point out its maculations with a rod,
And act, in short, the gentleman of God.

‘Twere needless cruelty to spoil your sport
  By comment, critical or merely rude;
But you, too, have, according to report,
  Despite your posing as a holy dude,
  Imperfect spiritual pulchritude
For so severe a judge. May’t please the court,
We shall appeal and take our case at once
Before that higher court, a taller dunce.

Sir, what were *you* without the press? What spreads
  The fame of your existence, once a week,
From the Pacific Mail dock to the Heads,
  Warning the people you’re about to wreak
  Upon the human ear your Sunday freak? —
Whereat the most betake them to their bed
Though some prefer to slumber in the pews
And nod assent to your hypnotic views.

Unhappy man! can you not still your tongue
  When (like a luckless brat afflict with worms,
By cruel fleas intolerably stung,
  Or with a pang in its small lap) it squirms?
Still must it vulgarize your feats of lung?

No preaching better were, the sun beneath,
If you had nothing there behind your teeth.

BORROWED BRAINS

Writer folk across the bay
Take the pains to see and say —
All their upward palms in air:
“Joaquin Miller’s cut his hair!”
Hasten, hasten, writer folk —
In the gutters rake and poke,
If by God’s exceeding grace
You may hit upon the place
Where the barber threw at length
Samson’s literary strength.
Find it, find it if you can;
Happy the successful man!
He has but to put one strand
In his beaver’s inner band
And his intellect will soar
As it never did before!
While an inch of it remains
He will noted be for brains,
And at last (‘twill so befall)
Fit to cease to write at all.

THE FYGHTYNGE SEVENTH

It is the gallant Seventh —
  It fyghteth faste and free!
God wot the where it fyghteth
  I ne desyre to be.

The Gonfalon it flyeth,
  Seeming a Flayme in Sky;
The Bugel loud yblowen is,
  Which sayeth, Doe and dye!

And (O good Saints defende us
  Agaynst the Woes of Warr)
Drawn Tongues are flashing deadly
  To smyte the Foeman sore!

With divers kinds of Riddance
  The smoaking Earth is wet,
And all aflowe to seaward goe
  The Torrents wide of Sweat!

The Thunder of the Captens,
  And eke the Shouting, mayketh
Such horrid Din the Soule within
  The boddy of me quayketh!

Who fyghteth the bold Seventh?
  What haughty Power defyes?
Their Colonel ‘tis they drubben sore,
  And dammen too his Eyes!

INDICTED

Dear Bruner, once we had a little talk
  (That is to say, ‘twas I did all the talking)
About the manner of your moral walk:
  How devious the trail you made in stalking,
On level ground, your law-protected game —
“Another’s Dollar” is, I think, its name.

Your crooked course more recently is not
  So blamable; for, truly, you have stumbled
On evil days; and ‘tis your luckless lot
  To traverse spaces (with a spirit humbled,
Contrite, dejected and divinely sad)
Where, ‘tis confessed, the walking’s rather bad.

Jordan, the song says, is a road (I thought
  It was a river) that is hard to travel;
And Dublin, if you’d find it, must be sought
  Along a highway with more rocks than gravel.
In difficulty neither can compete
With that wherein you navigate your feet.

As once George Gorham said of Pixley, so
  I say of you: “The prison yawns before you,
The turnkey stalks behind!” Now will you go?
  Or lag, and let that functionary floor you?
To change the metaphor — you seem to be
Between Judge Wallace and the deep, deep sea!

OVER THE BORDER

O, justice, you have fled, to dwell
  In Mexico, unstrangled,
Lest you should hang as high as — well,
    As Haman dangled.

(I know not if his cord he twanged,
  Or the King proved forgiving.
‘Tis hard to think of Haman hanged,
    And Haymond living.)

Yes, as I said: in mortal fear
  To Mexico you journeyed;
For you were on your trial here,
    And ill attorneyed.

The Law had long regarded you
  As an extreme offender.
Religion looked upon you, too,
    With thoughts untender.

The Press to you was cold as snow,
  For sin you’d always call so.
In Politics you were *de trop*,
    In Morals also.

All this is accurately true
  And, faith! there might be more said;
But — well, to save your thrapple you
    Fled, as aforesaid.

You’re down in Mexico — that’s plain
  As that the sun is risen;
For Daniel Burns, down there, his chain
  Drags round in prison.

ONE JUDGE

Wallace, created on a noble plan
To show us that a Judge can be a Man;
Through moral mire exhaling mortal stench
God-guided sweet and foot-clean to the Bench;
In salutation here and sign I lift
A hand as free as yours from lawless thrift,
A heart — ah, would I truly could proclaim
My bosom lighted with so pure a flame!
Alas, not love of justice moves my pen
To praise, or to condemn, my fellow men.
Good will and ill its busy point incite:
I do but gratify them when I write.
In palliation, though, I'd humbly state,
I love the righteous and the wicked hate.
So, sir, although we differ we agree,
Our work alike from persecution free,
And Heaven, approving you, consents to me.
Take, therefore, from this not all useless hand
The crown of honor — not in all the land
One honest man dissenting from the choice,
Nor in approval one Fred. Crocker's voice!

TO AN INSOLENT ATTORNEY

So, Hall McAllister, you’ll not be warned —
My protest slighted, admonition scorned!
To save your scoundrel client from a cell
As loth to swallow him as he to swell
Its sum of meals insurgent (it decries
All wars intestinal with meats that rise)
You turn your scurril tongue against the press
And damn the agency you ought to bless.
Had not the press with all its hundred eyes
Discerned the wolf beneath the sheep’s disguise
And raised the cry upon him, he to-day
Would lack your company, and you would lack his pay.

Talk not of “hire” and consciences for sale —
You whose profession ‘tis to threaten, rail,
Calumniate and libel at the will
Of any villain who can pay the bill —
You whose most honest dollars all were got
By saying for a fee “the thing that’s not!”
To you ‘tis one, to challenge or defend;
Clients are means, their money is an end.
In my profession sometimes, as in yours
Always, a payment large enough secures
A mercenary service to defend
The guilty or the innocent to rend.
But mark the difference, nor think it slight:
We do not hold it proper, just and right;
Of selfish lies a little still we shame
And give our villainies another name.
Hypocrisy’s an ugly vice, no doubt,
But blushing sinners can’t get on without.
Happy the lawyer! — at his favored hands
Nor truth nor decency the world demands.

Secure in his immunity from shame,
His cheek ne'er kindles with the tell-tale flame.
His brains for sale, morality for hire,
In every land and century a licensed liar!

No doubt, McAllister, you can explain
How honorable 'tis to lie for gain,
Provided only that the jury's made
To understand that lying is your trade.
A hundred thousand volumes, broad and flat,
(The Bible not included) proving that,
Have been put forth, though still the doubt remains
If God has read them with befitting pains.
No Morrow could get justice, you'll declare,
If none who knew him foul affirmed him fair.
Ingenious man! how easy 'tis to raise
An argument to justify the course that pays!

I grant you, if you like, that men may need
The services performed for crime by greed, —
Grant that the perfect welfare of the State
Requires the aid of those who in debate
As mercenaries lost in early youth
The fine distinction between lie and truth —
Who cheat in argument and set a snare
To take the feet of Justice unaware —
Who serve with livelier zeal when rogues assist
With perjury, embracery (the list
Is long to quote) than when an honest soul,
Scorning to plot, conspire, intrigue, cajole,
Reminds them (their astonishment how great!)
He'd rather suffer wrong than perpetrate.
I grant, in short, 'tis better all around
That ambidextrous consciences abound
In courts of law to do the dirty work
That self-respecting scavengers would shirk.
What then? Who serves however clean a plan

By doing dirty work, he is a dirty man!

ACCEPTED

Charles Shortridge once to St. Peter came.
“Down!” cried the saint with his face aflame;
“‘Tis writ that every hardy liar
Shall dwell forever and ever in fire!”
“That’s what I said the night that I died,”
The sinner, turning away, replied.
“What! *you* said that?” cried the saint—”what! what!
You said ‘twas so writ? Then, faith, ‘tis *not!*
I’m a devil at quoting, but I begin
To fail in my memory. Pray walk in.”

A PROMISED FAST TRAIN

I turned my eyes upon the Future’s scroll
And saw its pictured prophecies unroll.

I saw that magical life-laden train
Flash its long glories o’er Nebraska’s plain.

I saw it smoothly up the mountain glide.
“O happy, happy passengers!” I cried.

For Pleasure, singing, drowned the engine’s roar,
And Hope on joyous pinions flew before.

Then dived the train adown the sunset slope —
Pleasure was silent and unseen was Hope.

Crashes and shrieks attested the decay
That greed had wrought upon that iron way.

The rusted rails broke down the rotting ties,
And clouds of flying spikes obscured the skies.

My coward eyes I drew away, distressed,
And fixed them on the terminus to-West,

Where soon, its melancholy tale to tell,
One bloody car-wheel wabbled in and fell!

ONE OF THE SAINTS

Big Smith is an Oakland School Board man,
And he looks as good as ever he can;
And he's such a cold and a chaste Big Smith
That snowflakes all are his kin and kith.
Wherever his eye he chances to throw
The crystals of ice begin to grow;
And the fruits and flowers he sees are lost
By the singeing touch of a sudden frost.
The women all shiver whenever he's near,
And look upon *us* with a look austere —
Effect of the Smithian atmosphere.
Such, in a word, is the moral plan
Of the Big, Big Smith, the School Board man.
When told that Madame Ferrier had taught
Hernani in school, his fist he brought
Like a trip-hammer down on his bulbous knee,
And he roared: "Her Nanny? By gum, we'll see
If the public's time she dares devote
To the educatin' of any dam goat!"
"You do not entirely comprehend —
Hernani's a play," said his learned friend,
"By Victor Hugo — immoral and bad.
What's worse, it's French!" "Well, well, my lad,"
Said Smith, "if he cuts a swath so wide
I'll have him took re'glar up and tried!"
And he smiled so sweetly the other chap
Thought that himself was a Finn or Lapp
Caught in a storm of his native snows,
With a purple ear and an azure nose.
The Smith continued: "I never pursue
Immoral readin'." And that is true:
He's a saint of remarkably high degree,
With a mind as chaste as a mind can be;
But read! — the devil a word can he!

A MILITARY INCIDENT

Dawn heralded the coming sun —
  Fort Douglas was computing
The minutes — and the sunrise gun
  Was manned for his saluting.

The gunner at that firearm stood,
  The which he slowly loaded,
When, bang! — I know not how it could,
  But sure the charge exploded!

Yes, to that veteran's surprise
  The gun went off sublimely,
And both his busy arms likewise
Went off with it, untimely.

Then said that gunner to his mate
  (He was from Ballyshannon):
"Bedad, the sun's a minute late,
  Accardin' to this cannon!"

SUBSTANCE VERSUS SHADOW

So, gentle critics, you would have me tilt,
Not at the guilty, only just at Guilt! —
Spare the offender and condemn Offense,
And make life miserable to Pretense!
“Whip Vice and Folly — that is satire’s use —
But be not personal, for *that’s* abuse;
Nor e’er forget what, ‘like a razor keen,
Wounds with a touch that’s neither felt nor seen.’”
Well, friends, I venture, destitute of awe,
To think that razor but an old, old saw,
A trifle rusty; and a wound, I’m sure,
That’s felt not, seen not, one can well endure.
Go to! go to! — you’re as unfitted quite
To give advice to writers as to write.
I find in Folly and in Vice a lack
Of head to hit, and for the lash no back;
Whilst Pixley has a pow that’s easy struck,
And though good Deacon Fitch (a Fitch for luck!)
Has none, yet, lest he go entirely free,
God gave to him a corn, a heel to me.
He, also, sets his face (so like a flint
The wonder grows that Pickering doesn’t skin’t)
With cold austerity, against these wars
On scamps—’tis Scampery that *he* abhors!
Behold advance in dignity and state —
Grave, smug, serene, indubitably great —
Stanford, philanthropist! One hand bestows
In alms what t’other one as justice owes.
Rascality attends him like a shade,
But closes, woundless, o’er my baffled blade,
Its limbs unsevered, spirit undismayed.
Faith! I’m for something can be made to feel,
If, like Pelides, only in the heel.
The fellow’s self invites assault; his crimes

Will each bear killing twenty thousand times!
Anon Creed Haymond — but the list is long
Of names to point the moral of my song.
Rogues, fools, impostors, sycophants, they rise,
They foul the earth and horrify the skies —
With Mr. Huntington (sole honest man
In all the reek of that rapscallion clan)
Denouncing Theft as hard as e’er he can!

THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC MORALS

The Senate met in Sacramento city;
On public morals it had no committee
Though greatly these abounded. Soon the quiet
Was broken by the Senators in riot.
Now, at the end of their contagious quarrels,
There’s a committee but no public morals.

CALIFORNIA

[The Chinaman’s Assailant was allowed to walk quietly away, although the street was filled with pedestrians. — *Newspaper*.]

Why should he not have been allowed
To thread with peaceful feet the crowd
  Which filled that Christian street?
The Decalogue he had observed,
From Faith in Jesus had not swerved,
And scorning pious platitudes,
He saw in the Beatitudes
  A lamp to guide his feet.

He knew that Jonah downed the whale
And made no bones of it. The tale
  That Ananias told
He swore was true. He had no doubt
That Daniel laid the lions out.
In short, he had all holiness,
All meekness and all lowliness,
  And was with saints enrolled.

‘Tis true, some slight excess of zeal
Sincerely to promote the weal
  Of this most Christian state
Had moved him rudely to divide
The queue that was a pagan’s pride,
And in addition certify
The Faith by making fur to fly
  From pelt as well as pate?

But, Heavenly Father, thou dost know
That in this town these actions go

  For nothing worth a name.
Nay, every editorial ass,
To prove they never come to pass
Will damn his soul eternally,
Although in his own journal he
  May read the printed shame.

From bloody hands the reins of pow’r
Fall slack; the high-decisive hour
  Strikes not for liars’ ears.
Remove, O Father, the disgrace
That stains our California’s face,
And consecrate to human good
The strength of her young womanhood
  And all her golden years!

DE YOUNG — A PROPHECY

Running for Senator with clumsy pace,
He stooped so low, to win at least a place,
That Fortune, tempted by a mark so droll,
Sprang in an kicked him to the winning pole.

TO EITHER

Back further than
I know, in San
Francisco dwelt a wealthy man.
So rich was he
That none could be
Wise, good and great in like degree.

’Tis true he wrought,
In deed or thought,
But few of all the things he ought;
But men said: “Who
Would wish him to?
Great souls are born to be, not do!”

One thing, indeed,
He did, we read,
Which was becoming, all agreed:
Grown provident,
Ere life was spent
He built a mighty monument.

For longer than
I know, in San
Francisco lived a beggar man;
And when in bed
They found him dead —
“Just like the scamp!” the people said.

He died, they say,
On the same day
His wealthy neighbor passed away.

What matters it
When beggars quit
Their beats? I answer: Not a bit.

They got a spade
And pick and made
A hole, and there the chap was laid.
”He asked for bread,”
’Twas neatly said:
“He’ll get not even a stone instead.”

The years rolled round:
His humble mound
Sank to the level of the ground;
And men forgot
That the bare spot
Was like (and was) the beggar’s lot.

Forgotten, too,
Was t’other, who
Had reared the monument to woo
Inconstant Fame,
Though still his name
Shouted in granite just the same.

That name, I swear,
They both did bear
The beggar and the millionaire.
That lofty tomb,
Then, honored — whom?
For argument here’s ample room.

I’ll not debate,
But only state
The scamp first claimed it at the Gate.
St. Peter, proud

To serve him, bowed
And showed him to the softest cloud.

DISAPPOINTMENT

The Senate woke; the Chairman’s snore
  Was stilled, its echoes balking;
The startled members dreamed no more,
For Steele, who long had held the floor,
  Had suddenly ceased talking.

As, like Elijah, in his pride,
  He to his seat was passing,
“Go up thou baldhead!” Reddy cried.
Then six fierce bears ensued and tried
  To sunder him for “sassing.”

Two seized his legs, and one his head,
  The fourth his trunk, to munch on;
The fifth preferred an arm instead;
The last, with rueful visage, said:
  ”Pray what have *I* for luncheon?”

Then to that disappointed bear
  Said Steele, serene and chipper,
“My friend, you shall not lack your share:
Look in the Treasury, and there
  You’ll find his other flipper.”

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF THEFT

In fair Yosemite, that den of thieves
  Wherein the minions of the moon divide
The travelers’ purses, lo! the Devil grieves,
  His larger share as leader still denied.

El Capitan, foreseeing that *his* reign
  May be disputed too, beclouds his head.
The joyous Bridal Veil is torn in twain
  And the crêpe steamer dangles there instead.

The Vernal Fall abates her pleasant speed
  And hesitates to take the final plunge,
For rumors reach her that another greed
  Awaits her in the Valley of the Sponge.

The Brothers envy the accord of mind
  And peace of purpose (by the good deplored
As honor among Commissioners) which bind
  That confraternity of crime, the Board.

The Half-Dome bows its riven face to weep,
  But not, as formerly, because bereft:
Prophetic dreams afflict him when asleep
  Of losing his remaining half by theft.

Ambitious knaves! has not the upper sod
  Enough of room for every crime that crawls
But you must loot the Palaces of God
  And daub your filthy names upon the walls?

DOWN AMONG THE DEAD MEN

Within my dark and narrow bed
  I rested well, new-laid:
I heard above my fleshless head
  The grinding of a spade.

A gruffer note ensued and grew
  To harsh and harsher strains:
The poet Welcker then I knew
  Was “snatching” my remains.

“O Welcker, let your hand be stayed
  And leave me here in peace.
Of your revenge you should have made
  An end with my decease.”

“Hush, Mouldyshanks, and hear my moan:
  I once, as you’re aware,
Was eminent in letters — known
  And honored everywhere.

“My splendor made all Berkeley bright
  And Sacramento blind.
Men swore no writer e’er could write
  Like me — if I’d a mind.

“With honors all insatiate,
  With curst ambition smit,
Too far, alas! I tempted fate —
  I *published* what I’d writ!

“Good Heaven! with what a hunger wild
  Oblivion swallows fame!
Men who have known me from a child
  Forget my very name!

“Even creditors with searching looks
  My face cannot recall;
My heaviest one — he prints my books —
  Oblivious most of all.

“O I should feel a sweet content
  If one poor dun his claim
Would bring to me for settlement,
  And bully me by name.

“My dog is at my gate forlorn;
  It howls through all the night,
And when I greet it in the morn
  It answers with a bite!”

“O Poet, what in Satan’s name
  To me’s all this ado?
Will snatching me restore the fame
  That printing snatched from you?”

“Peace, dread Remains; I’m not about
  To do a deed of sin.
I come not here to hale you out —
  I’m trying to get in.”

THE LAST MAN

I dreamed that Gabriel took his horn
On Resurrection's fateful morn,
And lighting upon Laurel Hill
Blew long, blew loud, blew high and shrill.
The houses compassing the ground
Rattled their windows at the sound.
But no one rose. "Alas!" said he,
"What lazy bones these mortals be!"
Again he plied the horn, again
Deflating both his lungs in vain;
Then stood astonished and chagrined
At raising nothing but the wind.
At last he caught the tranquil eye
Of an observer standing by —
Last of mankind, not doomed to die.
To him thus Gabriel: "Sir, I pray
This mystery you'll clear away.
Why do I sound my note in vain?
Why spring they not from out the plain?
Where's Luning, Blythe and Michael Reese,
Magee, who ran the *Golden Fleece?*
Where's Asa Fisk? Jim Phelan, who
Was thought to know a thing or two
Of land which rose but never sank?
Where's Con O'Conor of the Bank,
And all who consecrated lands
Of old by laying on of hands?
I ask of them because their worth
Was known in all they wished — the earth.
Brisk boomers once, alert and wise,
Why don't they rise, why don't they rise?"
The man replied: "Reburied long
With others of the shrouded throng
In San Mateo — carted there

And dumped promiscuous, anywhere,
In holes and trenches — all misfits —
Mixed up with one another’s bits:
One’s back-bone with another’s shin,
A third one’s skull with a fourth one’s grin —
Your eye was never, never fixed
Upon a company so mixed!
Go now among them there and blow:
‘Twill be as good as any show
To see them, when they hear the tones,
Compiling one another’s bones!
But here ‘tis vain to sound and wait:
Naught rises here but real estate.
I own it all and shan’t disgorge.
Don’t know me? I am Henry George.”

ARBOR DAY

Hasten, children, black and white —
Celebrate the yearly rite.
Every pupil plant a tree:
It will grow some day to be
Big and strong enough to bear
A School Director hanging there.

THE PIUTE

Unbeautiful is the Piute!
  Howe’er bedecked with bravery,
  His person is unsavory —
Of soap he’s destitute.

He multiplies upon the earth
  In spite of all admonishing;
  All censure his astonishing
And versatile unworth.

Upon the Reservation wide
  We give for his inhabiting
  He goes a-jackass rabbiting
To furnish his inside.

The hopper singing in the grass
  He seizes with avidity:
  He loves its tart acidity,
And gobbles all that pass.

He penetrates the spider’s veil,
  Industriously pillages
  The toads’ defenseless villages,
And shadows home the snail.

He lightly runs to earth the quaint
  Red worm and, deftly troweling,
  He makes it with his boweling
Familiarly acquaint.

He tracks the pine-nut to its lair,
  Surrounds it with celerity,
  Regards it with asperity —
Smiles, and it isn’t there!

I wish he’d open up a grin
  Of adequate vivacity
  And carrying capacity
To take his Agent in.

FAME

He held a book in his knotty paws,
  And its title grand read he:
“The Chronicles of the Kings” it was,
  By the History Companee.
“I’m a monarch,” he said
(But a tear he shed)
  ”And my picter here you see.

“Great and lasting is my renown,
  However the wits may flout —
As wide almost as this blessed town”
  (But he winced as if with gout).
“I paid ‘em like sin
For to put me in,
  But it’s O, and O, to be out!”

ONE OF THE REDEEMED

Saint Peter, standing at the Gate, beheld
A soul whose body Death had lately felled.

A pleasant soul as ever was, he seemed:
His step was joyous and his visage beamed.

“Good morning, Peter.” There was just a touch
Of foreign accent, but not overmuch.

The Saint bent gravely, like a stately tree,
And said: “You have the advantage, sir, of me.”

“Rénan of Paris,” said the immortal part —
“A master of the literary art.

“I’m somewhat famous, too, I grieve to tell,
As controversialist and infidel.”

“That’s of no consequence,” the Saint replied,
“Why, I myself my Master once denied.

“No one up here cares anything for that.
But is there nothing you were always at?

“It seems to me you were accused one day
Of *something* — what it was I can’t just say.”

“Quite likely,” said the other; “but I swear
My life was irreproachable and fair.”

Just then a soul appeared upon the wall,
Singing a hymn as loud as he could bawl.

About his head a golden halo gleamed,
As well befitted one of the redeemed.

A harp he bore and vigorously thumbed,
Strumming he sang, and, singing, ever strummed.

His countenance, suffused with holy pride,
Glowed like a pumpkin with a light inside.

“Ah! that’s the chap,” said Peter, “who declares:
‘Rénan’s a rake and drunkard — smokes and swears.’

“Yes, that’s the fellow — he’s a preacher — came
From San Francisco. Mansfield was his name.”

“Do you believe him?” said Rénan. “Great Scott!
Believe? Believe the blackguard? Of course *not!*

“Just walk right in and make yourself at home.
And if he pecks at you I’ll cut his comb.

“He’s only here because the Devil swore
He wouldn’t have him, for the smile he wore.”

Resting his eyes one moment on that proof
Of saving grace, the Frenchman turned aloof,

And stepping down from cloud to cloud, said he:
“Thank you, monsieur, — I’ll see if he’ll have *me*.”

A CRITIC

[Apparently the Cleveland *Leader* is not a good judge of poetry. — *The Morning Call*.]

That from *you*, neighbor! to whose vacant lot
  Each rhyming literary knacker scourges
His cart-compelling Pegasus to trot,
  As folly, fame or famine smartly urges?

Admonished by the stimulating goad,
  How gaily, lo! the spavined crow-bait prances —
Its cart before it — eager to unload
  The dead-dog sentiments and swill-tub fancies.

Gravely the sweating scavenger pulls out
  The tail-board of his curst imagination,
Shoots all his rascal rubbish, and, no doubt,
  Thanks Fortune for so good a dumping-station.

To improve your property, the vile cascade
  Your thrift invites — to make a higher level.
In vain: with tons of garbage overlaid,
  Your baseless bog sinks slowly to the devil.

“Rubbish may be shot here” — familiar sign!
  I seem to see it in your every column.
You have your wishes, but if I had mine
  ’Twould to your editor mean something solemn.

A QUESTION OF ELIGIBILITY

It was a bruised and battered chap
The victim of some dire mishap,
Who sat upon a rock and spent
His breath in this ungay lament:

“Some wars — I’ve frequent heard of such —
Has beat the everlastin’ Dutch!
But never fight was fit by man
To equal this which has began
In our (I’m in it, if you please)
Academy of Sciences.
For there is various gents belong
To it which go persistent wrong,
And loving the debates’ delight
Calls one another names at sight.
Their disposition, too, accords
With fighting like they all was lords!
Sech impulses should be withstood:
‘Tis scientific to be good.

“‘Twas one of them, one night last week,
Rose up his figure for to speak:
‘Please, Mr. Chair, I’m holding here
A resolution which, I fear,
Some ancient fossils that has bust
Their cases and shook off their dust
To sit as Members here will find
Unpleasant, not to say unkind.’
And then he read it every word,
And silence fell on all which heard.
That resolution, wild and strange,
Proposed a fundamental change,

Which was that idiots no more
Could join us as they had before!

“No sooner was he seated than
The members rose up, to a man.
Each chap was primed with a reply
And tried to snatch the Chairman’s eye.
They stomped and shook their fists in air,
And, O, what words was uttered there!

“The Chair was silent, but at last
He hove up his proportions vast
And stilled them tumults with a look
By which the undauntedest was shook.
He smiled sarcastical and said:
‘If Argus was the Chair, instead
Of me, he’d lack enough of eyes
Each orator to recognize!
And since, denied a hearing, you
Might maybe undertake to do
Each other harm before you cease,
I’ve took some steps to keep the peace:
I’ve ordered out — alas, alas,
That Science e’er to such a pass
Should come! — I’ve ordered out — the gas!’

“O if a tongue or pen of fire
Was mine I could not tell entire
What the ensuin’ actions was.
When swollered up in darkness’ jaws
We fit and fit and fit and fit,
And everything we felt we hit!
We gouged, we scratched and we pulled hair,
And O, what words was uttered there!
And when at last the day dawn came
Three hundred Scientists was lame;
Two hundred others couldn’t stand,

They’d been so careless handled, and
One thousand at the very least
Was spread upon the floor deceased!
‘Twere easy to exaggerate,
But lies is things I mortal hate.

“Such, friends, is the disaster sad
Which has befel the Cal. Acad.
And now the question is of more
Importance than it was before:
Shall vacancies among us be
To idiots threw open free?”

FLEET STROTHER

What! you were born, you animated doll,
Within the shadow of the Capitol?
‘Twas always thought (and Bancroft so assures
His trusting readers) it was reared in yours.

CALIFORNIAN SUMMER PICTURES

THE FOOT-HILL RESORT

Assembled in the parlor
  Of the place of last resort,
The smiler and the snarler
  And the guests of every sort —
    The elocution chap
    With rhetoric on tap;
  The mimic and the funny dog;
  The social sponge; the money-hog;
    Vulgarian and dude;
    And the prude;
  The adiposing dame
  With pimply face aflame;
  The kitten-playful virgin —
    Vergin’ on to fifty years;
  The solemn-looking sturgeon
    Of a firm of auctioneers;
  The widower flirtatious;
  The widow all too gracious;
The man with a proboscis and a sepulcher beneath.
One assassin picks the banjo, and another picks his teeth.

AT ANCHOR

The soft asphaltum in the sun;
Betrays a tendency to run;
Whereas the dog that takes his way
Across its course concludes to stay.

THE IN-COMING CLIMATE

Now o’ nights the ocean breeze
  Makes the patient flinch,
For that zephyr bears a sneeze
  In every cubic inch.
Lo! the lively population
Chorusing in sternutation
A catarrhal acclamation!

A LONG-FELT WANT

Dimly apparent, through the gloom
Of Market-street’s opaque simoom,
A queue of people, parti-sexed,
Awaiting the command of “Next!”
A sidewalk booth, a dingy sign:
“Teeth dusted nice — five cents a shine.”

TO THE HAPPY HUNTING GROUNDS

Wide windy reaches of high stubble field;
A long gray road, bordered with dusty pines;
A wagon moving in a “cloud by day.”
Two city sportsmen with a dove between,
Breast-high upon a fence and fast asleep —
A solitary dove, the only dove
In twenty counties, and it sick, or else
It were not there. Two guns that fire as one,
With thunder simultaneous and loud;
Two shattered human wrecks of blood and bone!
And later, in the gloaming, comes a man —
The worthy local coroner is he,
Renowned all thereabout, and popular
With many a remain. All tenderly
Compiling in a game-bag the débris,
He glides into the gloom and fades from sight.
The dove, cured of its ailment by the shock,
Has flown, meantime, on pinions strong and fleet,
To die of age in some far foreign land.

SLANDER

FITCH:

“All vices you’ve exhausted, friend;
  So all the papers say.”

PICKERING:

“Ah, what vile calumnies are penned! —
  ’Tis just the other way.”

JAMES L. FLOOD

As oft it happens in the youth of day
That mists obscure the sun’s imperfect ray,
Who, as he’s mounting to the dome’s extreme,
Smites and dispels them with a steeper beam,
So you the vapors that begirt your birth
Consumed, and manifested all your worth.
But still one early vice obstructs the light
And sullies all the visible and bright
Display of mind and character. You write.

FOUR CANDIDATES FOR SENATOR

To flatter your way to the goad of your hope,
  O plausible Mr. Perkins,
You’ll need ten tons of the softest soap
  And butter a thousand firkins.
The soap you could put to a better use
  In washing your hands of ambition
Ere the butter’s used for cooking your goose
  To a beautiful brown condition.

*

“The Railroad can’t run Stanford.” That is so —
  The tail can’t curl the pig; but then, you know,
Inside the vegetable-garden’s pale
  The pig will eat more cabbage than the tail.

*

When Sargent struts by all the lawmakers say:
  ”Right — left!” It is fair to infer
The right will get left, nor polar the day
  When he makes that thing to occur.

Not so, not so, ‘tis a joke, that cry —
  Foolish and dull and small:
He so bores them for votes that they mean to imply
  He’s a drill-Sargent, that is all.

*

Gods! what a sight! Astride McClure’s broad back

Estee jogs round the Senatorial track,
The crowd all undecided, as they pass,
Whether to cheer the man or cheer the ass.
They stop: the man to lower his feet is seen
And the tired beast, withdrawing from between,
Mounts, as they start again, the biped’s neck,
And scarce the crowd can say which one’s on deck.

A GROWLER

Judge Shafter, you’re an aged man, I know,
  And learned too, I doubt not, in the law;
And a head white with many a winter’s snow
  (I wish, however that your heart would thaw)
  Claims reverence and honor; but the jaw
That’s always wagging with a word malign,
  Nagging and scolding every one in sight
As harshly as a jaybird in a pine,
  And with as little sense of wrong and right
As animates that irritable creature,
Is not a very venerable feature.

You damn all witnesses, all jurors too
  (And swear at the attorneys, I suppose,
But *that’s* commendable) “till all is blue”;
  And what it’s all about, the good Lord knows,
  Not you; but all the hotter, fiercer glows
Your wrath for that — as dogs the louder howl
  With only moonshine to incite their rage,
And bears with more ferocious menace growl,
  Even when their food is flung into the cage.
Reform, your Honor, and forbear to curse us.
Lest all men, hearing you, cry: “*Ecce ursus*!”

AD MOODIUM

Tut! Moody, do not try to show
  To gentlemen and ladies
That if they have not “Faith,” they’ll go
    Headlong to Hades.

Faith is belief; and how can I
  Have that by being willing?
This dime I cannot, though I try,
    Believe a shilling.

Perhaps you can. If so, pray do —
  Believe you own it, also.
But what seems evidence to you
    I may not call so.

Heaven knows I’d like the Faith to think
  This little vessel’s contents
Are liquid gold. I see ‘tis ink
    For writing nonsense.

Minds prone to Faith, however, may
  Come now and then to sorrow:
They put their trust in truth to-day,
    In lies to-morrow.

No doubt the happiness is great
  To think as one would wish to;
But not to swallow every bait,
    As certain fish do.

To think a snake a cord, I hope,
  Would bolden and delight me;
But some day I might think a rope
    Would chase and bite me.

“Curst Reason! Faith forever blest!”
  You’re crying all the season.
Well, who decides that Faith is best?
    Why, Mr. Reason.

He’s right or wrong; he answers you
  According to your folly,
And says what you have taught him to,
    Like any polly.

AN EPITAPH

Hangman’s hands laid in this tomb an
  Imp of Satan’s getting, whom an
Ancient legend says that woman
  Never bore — he owed his birth
  To Sin herself. From Hell to Earth
  She brought the brat in secret state
  And laid him at the Golden gate,
And they named him Henry Vrooman.
  While with mortals here he stayed,
  His father frequently he played.
Raised his birth-place and in other
Playful ways begot his mother.

A SPADE

[The spade that was used to turn the first sod in the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad is to be exhibited at the New Orleans Exposition. — *Press Telegram*.]

Precursor of our woes, historic spade,
What dismal records burn upon thy blade!
On thee I see the maculating stains
Of passengers' commingled blood and brains.
In this red rust a widow's curse appears,
And here an orphan tarnished thee with tears.
Upon thy handle sanguinary bands
Reveal the clutching of thine owner's hands
When first he wielded thee with vigor brave
To cut a sod and dig a people's grave —
(For they who are debauched are dead and ought,
In God's name, to be hid from sight and thought.)
Within thee, as within a magic glass,
I seem to see a foul procession pass —
Judges with ermine dragging in the mud
And spotted here and there with guiltless blood;
Gold-greedy legislators jingling bribes;
Kept editors and sycophantic scribes;
Liars in swarms and plunderers in tribes;
They fade away before the night's advance,
And fancy figures thee a devil's lance
Gleaming portentous through the misty shade,
While ghosts of murdered virtues shriek about my blade!

THE VAN NESSIAD

From end to end, thine avenue, Van Ness,
Rang with the cries of battle and distress!
Brave lungs were thundering with dreadful sound
And perspiration smoked along the ground!
Sing, heavenly muse, to ears of mortal clay,
The meaning, cause and finish of the fray.

Great Porter Ashe (invoking first the gods,
Who signed their favor with assenting nods
That snapped off half their heads — their necks grown dry
Since last the nectar cup went circling by)
Resolved to build a stable on his lot,
His neighbors fiercely swearing he should not.
Said he: “I build that stable!” “No, you don’t,”
Said they. “I can!” “You can’t!” “I will!” “You won’t!”
“By heaven!” he swore; “not only will I build,
But purchase donkeys till the place is filled!”
“Needless expense,” they sneered in tones of ice —
“The owner’s self, if lodged there, would suffice.”
For three long months the awful war they waged:
With women, women, men with men engaged,
While roaring babes and shrilling poodles raged!

Jove, from Olympus, where he still maintains
His ancient session (with rheumatic pains
Touched by his long exposure) marked the strife,
Interminable but by loss of life;
For malediction soon exhausts the breath —
If not, old age itself is certain death.
Lo! he holds high in heaven the fatal beam;
A golden pan depends from each, extreme;
This feels of Porter’s fate the downward stress,

That bears the destiny of all Van Ness.
Alas! the rusted scales, their life all gone,
Deliver judgment neither pro nor con:
The dooms hang level and the war goes on.
With a divine, contemptuous disesteem
Jove dropped the pans and kicked, himself, the beam:
Then, to decide the strife, with ready wit,
The nickel that he did not care for it
Twirled absently, remarking: “See it spin:
Head, Porter loses; tail, the others win.”
The conscious nickel, charged with doom, spun round,
Portentously and made a ringing sound,
Then, staggering beneath its load of fate,
Sank rattling, died at last and lay in state.

Jove scanned the disk and then, as is his wont,
Raised his considering orbs, exclaiming: “Front!”
With leisurely alacrity approached
The herald god, to whom his mind he broached:
“In San Francisco two belligerent Powers,
Such as contended round great Ilion’s towers,
Fight for a stable, though in either class
There’s not a horse, and but a single ass.
Achilles Ashe, with formidable jaw
Assails a Trojan band with fierce hee-haw,
Firing the night with brilliant curses. They
With dark vituperation gloom the day.
Fate, against which nor gods nor men compete,
Decrees their victory and his defeat.
With haste, good Mercury, betake thee hence
And salivate him till he has no sense!”

Sheer downward shot the messenger afar,
Trailing a splendor like a falling star!
With dimming lustre through the air he burned,
Vanished, nor till another sun returned.
The sovereign of the gods superior smiled,
Beaming benignant, fatherly and mild:

“Is Destiny’s decree performed, my lad? —
And has he now no sense?” “Ah, sire, he never had.”

A FISH COMMISSIONER

Great Joseph D. Redding — illustrious name! —
Considered a fish-horn the trumpet of Fame.
That goddess was angry, and what do you think?
Her trumpet she filled with a gallon of ink,
And all through the Press, with a devilish glee,
She sputtered and spattered the name of J.D.

TO A STRAY DOG

Well, Towser (I’m thinking your name must be Towser),
  You’re a decentish puppy as puppy dogs go,
For you never, I’m sure, could have dined upon trowser,
  And your tail’s unimpeachably curled just so.

But, dear me! your name — if ‘tis yours — is a “poser”:
  Its meaning I cannot get anywise at,
When spoken correctly perhaps it is Toser,
  And means one who toses. Max Muller, how’s that?

I ne’er was ingenious at all at divining
  A word’s prehistorical, primitive state,
Or finding its root, like a mole, by consigning
  Its bloom to the turnep-top’s sorrowful fate.

And, now that I think of it well, I’m no nearer
 The riddle’s solution than ever — for how’s
My pretty invented word, “tose,” any clearer
  In point of its signification than “towse”?

So, Towser (or Toser), I mean to rename you
  In honor of some good and eminent man,
In the light and the heat of whose quickening fame you
  May grow to an eminent dog if you can.

In sunshine like his you’ll not long be a croucher:
 The Senate shall hear you — for that I will vouch.
Come here, sir. Stand up. I rechristen you Goucher.
 But damn you! I’ll shoot you if ever you gouch!

IN HIS HAND

De Young (in Chicago the story is told)
“Took his life in his hand,” like a warrior bold,
And stood before Buckley — who thought him behind,
For Buckley, the man-eating monster is blind.
“Count fairly the ballots!” so rang the demand
Of the gallant De Young, with his life in his hand.
‘Tis done, and the struggle is ended. No more
He havocs the battle-field, gilt with the gore
Of slain reputations. No more he defies
His “lying opponents” with deadlier lies.
His trumpet is hushed and his belt is unbound —
His enemies’ characters cumber the ground.
They bloat on the war-plain with ink all asoak,
The fortunate candidates perching to croak.
No more he will charge, with a daring divine,
His foes with corruption, his friends by the line.
The thunders are stilled of the horrid campaign,
De Young is triumphant, and never again
Will he need, with his life in his hand, to roar:
“Count fair or, by G —— , I will die on your floor!”
His life has been spared, for his sins to atone,
And the hand that he took it in washed with cologne.

A DEMAGOGUE

”Yawp, yawp, yawp!
Under the moon and sun.
It’s aye the rabble,
And I to gabble,
And hey! for the tale that is never done.

”Chant, chant, chant!
To woo the reluctant vote.
I would I were dead
And my say were said
And my song were sung to its ultimate note.

”Stab, stab, stab!
Ah! the weapon between my teeth —
I’m sick of the flash of it;
See how the slash of it
Misses the foeman to mangle the sheath!

”Boom, boom, boom!
I’m beating the mammoth drum.
My nethermost tripes
I blow into the pipes —
It’s oh! for the honors that never come!”

’Twas the dolorous blab
Of a tramping “scab” —
’Twas the eloquent Swift
Of the marvelous gift —
The wild, weird, wonderful gift of gab!

IGNIS FATUUS

Weep, weep, each loyal partisan,
  For Buckley, king of hearts;
A most accomplished man; a man
Of parts — of foreign parts.

Long years he ruled with gentle sway,
  Nor grew his glory dim;
And he would be with us to-day
  If we were but with him.

Men wondered at his going off
  In such a sudden way;
‘Twas thought, as he had come to scoff
  He would remain to prey.

Since he is gone we’re all agreed
  That he is what men call
A crook: his very steps, indeed,
  Are bent — to Montreal.

So let our tears unhindered flow,
  Our sighs and groans have way:
It matters not how much we Oh! —
  The devil is to pay.

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

[Japan has 73,759 Buddhist priests, “most of whom,” says a Christian missionary, “are grossly ignorant, and many of them lead scandalous lives.”]

O Buddha, had you but foreknown
  The vices of your priesthood
It would have made you twist and moan
  As any wounded beast would.
You would have damned the entire lot
And turned a Christian, would you not?

There were no Christians, I’ll allow,
  In your day; that would only
Have brought distinction. Even now
  A Christian might feel lonely.
All take the name, but facts are things
As stubborn as the will of kings.

The priests were ignorant and low
  When ridiculed by Lucian;
The records, could we read, might show
  The same of times Confucian.
And yet the fact I can’t disguise
That Deacon Rankin’s good and wise.

‘Tis true he is not quite a priest,
  Nor more than half a preacher;
But he exhorts as loud at least
  As any living creature.
And when the plate is passed about

He never takes a penny out.

From Buddha down to Rankin! There, —
  I never did intend to.
This pen’s a buzzard’s quill, I swear,
  Such subjects to descend to.
When from the humming-bird I’ve wrung
A plume I’ll write of Mike de Young.

AN IDLER

Who told Creed Haymond he was witty? — who
Had nothing better in this world to do?
Could no greased pig’s appeal to his embrace
Kindle his ardor for the friendly chase?
Did no dead dog upon a vacant lot,
Bloated and bald, or curdled in a clot,
Stir his compassion and inspire his arms
To hide from human eyes its faded charms?

If not to works of piety inclined,
Then recreation might have claimed his mind.
The harmless game that shows the feline greed
To cinch the shorts and make the market bleed[A]
Is better sport than victimizing Creed;
And a far livelier satisfaction comes
Of knowing Simon, autocrat of thumbs.[B]
If neither worthy work nor play command
This gentleman of leisure’s heart and hand,
Then Mammon might his idle spirit lift
By hope of profit to some deed of thrift.
Is there no cheese to pare, no flint to skin,
No tin to mend, no glass to be put in,
No housewife worthy of a morning visit,
Her rags and sacks and bottles to solicit?
Lo! the blind sow’s precarious pursuit
Of the aspiring oak’s familiar fruit! —
‘Twould more advantage any man to steal
This easy victim’s undefended meal
Than tell Creed Haymond he has wit, and so
Expose the state to his narcotic flow!

[Footnote A: “Pussy Wants a Corner.”]
[Footnote B: “Simon Says Thumbs Up.”]

THE DEAD KING

Hawaii’s King resigned his breath —
  Our Legislature guffawed.
The awful dignity of death
  Not any single rough awed.
But when our Legislators die
All Kings, Queens, Jacks and Aces cry.

A PATTER SONG

There was a cranky Governor —
  His name it wasn't Waterman.
  For office he was hotter than
The love of any lover, nor
Was Boruck's threat of aiding him
Effective in dissuading him —
  This pig-headed, big-headed, singularly self-conceited Governor Nonwaterman.

To citrus fairs, *et cætera*,
  He went about philandering,
  To pride of parish pandering.
He knew not any better — ah,
His early education had
Not taught the abnegation fad —
  The wool-witted, bull-witted, fabulously feeble-minded king of gabble-gandering!

He conjured up, *ad libitum*,
  With postures energetical,
  One day (this is prophetical)
His graces, to exhibit 'em.
He straddled in each attitude,
Four parallels of latitude —
  The slab-footed, crab-footed, galloping gregarian, of presence unæsthetical!
An ancient cow, perceiving that
  His powers of agility
  Transcended her ability
(A circumstance for grieving at)
Upon her horns engrafted him
And to the welkin wafted him —
  The high-rolling, sky-rolling, hurtling hallelujah-lad of peerless volatility!

A CALLER

“Why, Goldenson, you’re looking very well.”
Said Death as, strolling through the County Jail,
He entered that serene assassin’s cell
And hung his hat and coat upon a nail.
“I think that life in this secluded spot
Agrees with men of your trade, does it not?”

“Well, yes,” said Goldenson, “I can’t complain:
Life anywhere — provided it is mine —
Agrees with me; but I observe with pain
That still the people murmur and repine.
It hurts their sense of harmony, no doubt,
To see a persecuted man grow stout.”

“O no, ‘tis not your growing stout,” said Death,
”Which makes these malcontents complain and scold —
They like you to be, somehow, scant of breath.
What they object to is your growing old.
And — though indifferent to lean or fat —
I don’t myself entirely favor *that*.”

With brows that met above the orbs beneath,
And nose that like a soaring hawk appeared,
And lifted lip, uncovering his teeth,
The Mamikellikiller coldly sneered:
“O, so you don’t! Well, how will you assuage
Your spongy passion for the blood of age?”

Death with a clattering convulsion, drew
His coat on, hatted his unmeated pow,
Unbarred the door and, stepping partly through,
Turned and made answer: “I will *show* you how.

I’m going to the Bench you call Supreme
And tap the old women who sit there and dream.”

THE SHAFTER SHAFTED

Well, James McMillan Shafter, you’re a Judge —
  At least you were when last I knew of you;
And if the people since have made you budge
  I did not notice it. I’ve much to do
  Without endeavoring to follow, through
The miserable squabbles, dust and smudge,
The fate of even the veteran contenders
Who fight with flying colors and suspenders.
Being a Judge, ‘tis natural and wrong
  That you should villify the public press —
Save while you are a candidate. That song
  Is easy quite to sing, and I confess
  It wins applause from hearers who have less
Of spiritual graces than belong
To audiences of another kidney —
Men, for example, like Sir Philip Sidney.

Newspapers, so you say, don’t always treat
  The Judges with respect. That may be so
And still no harm done, for I swear I’ll eat
  My legs and in the long hereafter go,
  Snake-like, upon my belly if you’ll show
All Judges are respectable and sweet.
For some of them are rogues and the world’s laughter’s
Directed at some others, for they’re Shafters.

THE MUMMERY

THE TWO CAVEES

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

FITCH *a Pelter of Railrogues*
PICKERING *his Partner, an Enemy to Sin*
OLD NICK *a General Blackwasher*
DEAD CAT *a Missile*
ANTIQUE EGG *Another*
RAILROGUES, DUMP-CARTERS. NAVVIES and Unassorted SHOVELRY in the Lower Distance

Scene — The Brink of a Railway Cut, a Mile Deep.
Time — 1875.

FITCH:

Gods! what a steep declivity! Below
I see the lazy dumpcarts come and go,
Creeping like beetles and about as big.
The delving Paddies —

PICKERING:

Case of *infra dig.*

FITCH:

Loring, light-minded and unmeaning quips
Come with but scant propriety from lips
Fringed with the blue-black evidence of age.
'Twere well to cultivate a style more sage,
For men will fancy, hearing how you pun,
Our foulest missiles are but thrown in fun.

(*Enter Dead Cat.*) Here's one that thoughtfully has come to hand; Slant your fine eye below and see it land. (*Seizes Dead Cat by the tail and swings it in act to throw.*) DEAD CAT (*singing*): Merrily, merrily, round I go —

Over and under and at.
Swing wide and free, swing high and low
The anti-monopoly cat!

O, who wouldn't be in the place of me,
The anti-monopoly cat?
Designed to admonish,
Persuade and astonish
The capitalist and —
FITCH *(letting go):*
Scat! *(Exit Dead Cat.)*

PICKERING:

Huzza! good Deacon, well and truly flung!
Pat Stanford it has grassed, and Mike de Young.
Mike drives a dumpcart for the villains, though
'Twere fitter that he pull it. Well, we owe
The traitor one for leaving us! — some day
We'll get, if not his place, his cart away.
Meantime fling missiles — any kind will do.
(Enter Antique Egg.)
Ha! we can give them an *ovation*, too!

ANTIQUE EGG:

In the valley of the Nile,
Where the Holy Crocodile
Of immeasurable smile
Blossoms like the early rose,
And the Sacred Onion grows —
When the Pyramids were new
And the Sphinx possessed a nose,
By a storkess I was laid
In the cool papyrus shade,
Where the rushes later grew,

That concealed the little Jew,
Baby Mose.

Straining very hard to hatch,
I disrupted there my yolk;
And I felt my yellow streaming
Through my white;
And the dream that I was dreaming
Of posterity was broke
In a night.
Then from the papyrus-patch
By the rising waters rolled,
Passing many a temple old,
I proceeded to the sea.
Memnon sang, one morn, to me,
And I heard Cambyses sass
The tomb of Ozymandias!

FITCH:

O, venerablest orb of all the earth,
God rest the lady fowl that gave thee birth!
Fit missile for the vilest hand to throw —
I freely tender thee mine own. Although
As a bad egg I am myself no slouch,
Thy riper years thy ranker worth avouch.
Now, Pickering, please expose your eye and say
If — whoop! —
(Exit egg.)
I've got the range.

PICKERING:
Hooray! hooray!
A grand good shot, and Teddy Colton's down:
It burst in thunderbolts upon his crown!

Larry O’Crocker drops his pick and flies,
And deafening odors scream along the skies!
Pelt ‘em some more.

FITCH:

There’s nothing left but tar — wish I were a Yahoo.

PICKERING:

Well, you are.
But keep the tar. How well I recollect,
When Mike was in with us — proud, strong, erect —
Mens conscia recti — flinging mud, he stood,
Austerely brave, incomparably good,
Ere yet for filthy lucre he began
To drive a cart as Stanford’s hired man,
That pitch-pot bearing in his hand, Old Nick
Appeared and tarred us all with the same stick.
(Enter Old Nick).
I hope he won’t return and use his arts
To make us part with our immortal parts.

OLD NICK:

Make yourself easy on that score my lamb;
For both your souls I wouldn’t give a damn!
I want my tar-pot — hello! where’s the stick?

FITCH:

Don’t look at *me* that fashion! — look at Pick.

PICKERING:

Forgive me, father — pity my remorse!
Truth is — Mike took that stick to spank his horse.
It fills my pericardium with grief
That I kept company with such a thief.

(*Endeavoring to get his handkerchief, he opens his coat and the tar-stick falls out. Nick picks it up, looks at the culprit reproachfully and withdraws in tears.*)
FITCH (*excitedly*): O Pickering, come hither to the brink —
There's something going on down there, I think!
With many an upward smile and meaning wink
The navvies all are running from the cut
Like lunatics, to right and left —

PICKERING:
Tut, tut —
'Tis only some poor sport or boisterous joke.
Let us sit down and have a quiet smoke.
(*They sit and light cigars.*)
FITCH (*singing*): When first I met Miss Toughie
I smoked a fine cigyar,
An' I was on de dummy
And she was in de cyar.

BOTH (*singing*): An' I was on de dummy
And she was in de cyar.

FITCH (*singing*): I couldn't go to her,
An' she wouldn't come to me;
An' I was as oneasy
As a gander on a tree.

BOTH (*singing*): An' I was as oneasy
As a gander on a tree.

FITCH (*singing*): But purty soon I weakened

An’ lef’ de dummy’s bench,
An’ frew away a ten-cent weed
To win a five-cent wench!

BOTH (*singing*) An’ frew away a ten-cent weed
To win a five-cent wench!

FITCH:

Is there not now a certain substance sold
Under the name of fulminate of gold,
A high explosive, popular for blasting,
Producing an effect immense and lasting?

PICKERING:

Nay, that’s mere superstition. Rocks are rent
And excavations made by argument.
Explosives all have had their day and season;
The modern engineer relies on reason.
He’ll talk a tunnel through a mountain’s flank
And by fair speech cave down the tallest bank.

(*The earth trembles, a deep subterranean explosion is heard and a section of the bank as big as El Capitan starts away and plunges thunderously into the cut. A part of it strikes De Young’s dumpcart abaft the axletree and flings him, hurtling, skyward, a thing of legs and arms, to descend on the distant mountains, where it is cold. Fitch and Pickering pull themselves out of the débris and stand ungraveling their eyes and noses.*) FITCH:

Well, since I’m down here I will help to grade,
And do dirt-throwing henceforth with a spade.

PICKERING:

God bless my soul! it gave me quit a start. Well, fate is fate — I guess I’ll drive this cart. (*Curtain.*)

METEMPSYCHOSIS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ST. JOHN *a Presidential Candidate*
MCDONALD *a Defeated Aspirant*
MRS. HAYES *an Ex-President*
PITTS-STEVENS *a Water Nymph*

Scene — A Small Lake in the Alleghany Mountains.

ST. JOHN:

Hours I've immersed my muzzle in this tarn
And, quaffing copious potations, tried
To suck it dry; but ever as I pumped
Its waters into my distended skin
The labor of my zeal extruded them
In perspiration from my pores; and so,
Rilling the marginal declivity,
They fell again into their source. Ah, me!
Could I but find within these ancient hills
Some long extinct volcano, by the rains
Of countless ages in its crater brimmed
Like a full goblet, I would lay me down
Prone on the outer slope, and o'er its edge
Arching my neck, I'd siphon out its store
And flood the valleys with my sweat for aye.
So should I be accounted as a god,
Even as Father Nilus is. What's that?
Methought I heard some sawyer draw his file
With jarring, stridulous cacophany
Across his notchy blade, to set its teeth
And mine on edge. Ha! there it goes again!

Song, within.

Cold water's the milk of the mountains,

And Nature’s our wet-nurse. O then,
Glue thou thy blue lips to her fountains
Forever and ever, amen!

ST. JOHN:

Why surely there’s congenial company
Aloof — the spirit, I suppose, that guards
This sacred spot; perchance some water-nymph
Who laving in the crystal flood her limbs
Has taken cold, and so, with raucous voice
Afflicts the sensitive membrane of mine ear
The while she sings my sentiments.
(Enter Pitts-Stevens.)
Hello!
What fiend is this?

PITTS-STEVENS:

‘Tis I, be not afraid.

ST. JOHN:

And who, thou antiquated crone, art thou?
I ne’er forget a face, but names I can’t
So well remember. I have seen thee oft.
When in the middle season of the night,
Curved with a cucumber, or knotted hard
With an eclectic pie, I’ve striven to keep
My head and heels asunder, thou has come,
With sociable familiarity,
Into my dream, but not, alas, to bless.

PITTS-STEVENS:

My name’s Pitts-Stevens, age just seventeen years;
Talking teetotaler, professional
Beauty.

ST. JOHN:

What dost them here?

PITTS-STEVENS:

I’m come, fair sir,
With paint and brush to blazon on these rocks
The merits of my master’s nostrum — so:
(Paints rapidly.)
“McDonald’s Vinegar Bitters!”

ST. JOHN:

What are they?

PITTS-STEVENS:

A woman suffering from widowhood
Took a full bottle and was cured. A man
There was — a murderer; the doctors all
Had given him up — he’d but an hour to live.
He swallowed half a glassful. He is dead,
But not of Vinegar Bitters. A wee babe
Lay sick and cried for it. The mother gave
That innocent a spoonful and it smoothed
Its pathway to the tomb. ‘Tis warranted
To cause a boy to strike his father, make
A pig squeal, start the hair upon a stone,

Or play the fiddle for a country dance.
(Enter McDonald, reading a Sunday-school book.)
Good morrow, sir; I trust you're well.

MCDONALD:

H'lo, Pitts!
Observe, good friends, I have a volume here
Myself am author of — a noble book
To train the infant mind (delightful task!)
It tells how one Samantha Brown, age, six,
A gutter-bunking slave to rum, was saved
By Vinegar Bitters, went to church and now
Has an account at the Pacific Bank.
I'll read the whole work to you.

ST JOHN:
Heaven forbid!
I've elsewhere an engagement.

PITTS-STEVENS:
I am deaf.

MCDONALD *(reading regardless):*
"Once on a time there lived" —— *(Enter Mrs. Hayes.)* Behold our queen!

ALL:

Her eyes upon the ground
Before her feet she low'rs,
Walking, in thought profound,
As 'twere, upon all fours.
Her visage is austere,
Her gait a high parade;
At every step you hear

The sloshing lemonade!

MRS. HAYES *(to herself):*

Once, sitting in the White House, hard at work
Signing State papers (Rutherford was there,
Knitting some hose) a sudden glory fell
Upon my paper. I looked up and saw
An angel, holding in his hand a rod
Wherewith he struck me. Smarting with the blow
I rose and (cuffing Rutherford) inquired:
“Wherefore this chastisement?” The angel said:
“Four years you have been President, and still
There’s rum!” — then flew to Heaven. Contrite, I swore
Such oath as lady Methodist might take,
My second term should medicine my first.
The people would not have it that way; so
I seek some candidate who’ll take my soul —
My spirit of reform, fresh from my breast,
And give me his instead; and thus equipped
With my imperious and fiery essence,
Drive the Drink-Demon from the land and fill
The people up with water till their teeth
Are all afloat.

(*St. John discovers himself.*)
What, *you*?

ST. JOHN:

Aye, Madam, I’ll
Swap souls with you and lead the cold sea-green
Amphibians of Prohibition on,
Pallid of nose and webbed of foot, swim-bladdered,
Gifted with gills, invincible!

MRS. HAYES:

Enough,
Stand forth and consummate the interchange.

(*While McDonald and Pitts-Stevens modestly turn their backs, the latter blushing a delicate shrimp-pink, St. John and Mrs. Hayes effect an exchange of immortal parts. When the transfer is complete McDonald turns and advances, uncorking a bottle of Vinegar Bitters*.) MCDONALD (*chanting*): Nectar compounded of simples
Cocted in Stygian shades —
Acids of wrinkles and pimples
From faces of ancient maids —
Acrid precipitates sunken
From tempers of scolding wives
Whose husbands, uncommonly drunken,
Are commonly found in dives, —
With this I baptize and appoint thee
(*to St. John*.)
To marshal the vinophobe ranks.
In the name of Dambosh I anoint thee
(*pours the liquid down St. John's back*.)
As King of aquatical cranks!

(*The liquid blisters the royal back, and His Majesty starts on a dead run, energetically exclaiming. Exit St. John*.) MRS. HAYES:

My soul! My soul! I'll never get it back Unless I follow nimbly on his track. (*Exit Mrs. Hayes*.) PITTS-STEVENS:

O my! he's such a beautiful young man! I'll follow, too, and catch him if I can. (*Exit Pitts-Stevens*.) MCDONALD:

He scarce is visible, his dust so great!
Methinks for so obscure a candidate

He runs quite well. But as for Prohibition —
I mean myself to hold the first position.

(*Produces a pocket flask, topes a cruel quantity of double-distilled thunder-and-lightning out of it, smiles so grimly as to darken all the stage and sings*):

Though fortunes vary let all be merry,
And then if e'er a disaster befall,
At Styx's ferry is Charon's wherry
In easy call.

Upon a ripple of golden tipple
That tipsy ship'll convey you best.
To king and cripple, the bottle's the nipple
Of Nature's breast!

(*Curtain*.)

SLICKENS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HAYSEED *a Granger*
NOZZLE *a Miner*
RINGDIVVY *a Statesman*
FEEGOBBLE *a Lawyer*
JUNKET *a Committee*

Scene — Yuba Dam.
Feegobble, *Ringdivvy*, *Nozzle*.

NOZZLE:

My friends, since ‘51 I have pursued
The evil tenor of my watery way,
Removing hills as by an act of faith —

RINGDIVVY:

Just so; the steadfast faith of those who hold,
In foreign lands beyond the Eastern sea,
The shares in your concern — a simple, blind,
Unreasoning belief in dividends,
Still stimulated by assessments which,
When the skies fall, ensnaring all the larks,
Will bring, no doubt, a very great return.

ALL (*singing*): O the beautiful assessment,
The exquisite assessment,
The regular assessment,
That makes the water flow.

RINGDIVVY:

The rascally-assessment!

FEEGOBBLE:

The murderous assessment!

NOZZLE:

The glorious assessment
That makes my mare to go!

FEEGOBBLE:

But, Nozzle, you, I think, were on the point
Of making a remark about some rights —
Some certain vested rights you have acquired
By long immunity; for still the law
Holds that if one do evil undisturbed
His right to do so ripens with the years;
And one may be a villain long enough
To make himself an honest gentleman.

ALL (*singing*): Hail, holy law,
The soul with awe
Bows to thy dispensation.

NOZZLE:

It breaks my jaw!

RINGDIVVY:

It qualms my maw!

FEEGOBBLE:

It feeds my jaw,
It crams my maw,
It is my soul's salvation!

NOZZLE:

Why, yes, I've floated mountains to the sea
For lo! these many years; though some, they say,
Do strand themselves along the bottom lands
And cover up a village here and there,
And here and there a ranch. 'Tis said, indeed,
The granger with his female and his young
Do not infrequently go to the dickens
By premature burial in slickens.

ALL (*singing*): Could slickens forever
Choke up the river,
And slime's endeavor
Be tried on grain,
How small the measure
Of granger's treasure,
How keen his pain!

RINGDIVVY:

"A consummation devoutly to be wished!"
These rascal grangers would long since have been
Submerged in slimes, to the last man of them,
But for the fact that all their wicked tribes
Affect our legislation with their bribes.

ALL (*singing*): O bribery's great —

’Tis a pillar of State,
And the people they are free.

FEEGOBBLE:

It smashes my slate!

NOZZLE:

It is thievery straight!

RINGDIVVY:

But it’s been the making of me!

NOZZLE:

I judge by certain shrewd sensations here
In these callosities I call my thumbs —
thrilling sense as of ten thousand pins,
Red-hot and penetrant, transpiercing all
The cuticle and tickling through the nerves —
That some malign and awful thing draws near.

(*Enter Hayseed.*) Good Lord! here are the ghosts and spooks of all
The grangers I have decently interred,
Rolled into one!

FEEGOBBLE:

Plead, phantom.

RINGDIVVY:

You’ve the floor.

HAYSEED:

From the margin of the river
(Bitter Creek, they sometimes call it)
Where I cherished once the pumpkin,
And the summer squash promoted,
Harvested the sweet potato,
Dallied with the fatal melon
And subdued the fierce cucumber,
I’ve been driven by the slickens,
Driven by the slimes and tailings!
All my family — my Polly
Ann and all my sons and daughters,
Dog and baby both included —
All were swamped in seas of slickens,
Buried fifty fathoms under,
Where they lie, prepared to play their
Gentle prank on geologic
Gents that shall exhume them later,
In the dim and distant future,
Taking them for melancholy
Relics antedating Adam.
I alone got up and dusted.

NOZZLE:

Avaunt! you horrid and infernal cuss!
What dire distress have you prepared for us?

RINGDIVVY:

Were I a buzzard stooping from the sky
My craw with filth to fill,
Into your honorable body I
Would introduce a bill.

FEEGOBBLE:

Defendant, hence, or, by the gods, I’ll brain thee! —
Unless you saved some turneps to retain me.

HAYSEED:

As I was saying, I got up and dusted,
My ranch a graveyard and my business busted!
But hearing that a fellow from the City,
Who calls himself a Citizens’ Committee,
Was coming up to play the very dickens,
With those who cover up our farms with slickens,
And make himself — unless I am in error —
To all such miscreants a holy terror,
I thought if I would join the dialogue
I maybe might get payment for my dog.

ALL (*Singing*): O the dog is the head of Creation,
Prime work of the Master’s hand;
He hasn’t a known occupation,
Yet lives on the fat of the land.
Adipose, indolent, sleek and orbicular,
Sun-soaken, door matted, cross and particular,
Men, women, children, all coddle and wait on him,
Then, accidentally shutting the gate on him,
Miss from their calves, ever after, the rifted out
Mouthful of tendons that doggy has lifted out!
(*Enter Junket*.)

JUNKET:

Well met, my hearties! I must trouble you
Jointly and severally to provide
A comfortable carriage, with relays
Of hardy horses. This Committee means
To move in state about the country here.
I shall expect at every place I stop
Good beds, of course, and everything that's nice,
With bountiful repast of meat and wine.
For this Committee comes to sea and mark
And inwardly digest.

HAYSEED:

Digest my dog!

NOZZLE:

First square my claim for damages: the gold
Escaping with the slickens keeps me poor!

RINGDIVVY:

I merely would remark that if you'd grease
My itching palm it would more glibly glide
Into the public pocket.

FEEGOBBLE:

Sir, the wheels
Of justice move but slowly till they're oiled.
I have some certain writs and warrants here,

Prepared against your advent. You recall
The tale of Zaccheus, who did climb a tree,
And Jesus said: “Come down”?

JUNKET:

Why, bless your souls!
I’ve got no money; I but came to see
What all this noisy babble is about,
Make a report and file the same away.

NOZZLE, RINGDIVVY, FEEGOBBLE, HAYSEED:

How’ll that help *us*? Reports are not our style
Of provender!

JUNKET:

Well, you can gnaw the file.
(*Curtain.*)

PEACEABLE EXPULSION

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MOUNTWAVE *a Politician*
HARDHAND *a Workingman*
TOK BAK *a Chinaman*
SATAN *a Friend to Mountwave*

CHORUS OF FOREIGN VOTERS.

MOUNTWAVE:

My friend, I beg that you will lend your ears
(I know ‘tis asking a good deal of you)
While I for your instruction nominate
Some certain wrongs you suffer. Men like you
Imperfectly are sensible of all
The miseries they actually feel.
Hence, Providence has prudently raised up
Clear-sighted men like me to diagnose
Their cases and inform them where they’re hurt.
The wounds of honest workingmen I’ve made
A specialty, and probing them’s my trade.

HARDHAND:

Well, Mister, s’pose you let yer bossest eye
Camp on my mortal part awhile; then you
Jes’ toot my sufferin’s an’ tell me what’s
The fashionable caper now in writhes —
The very swellest wiggle.

MOUNTWAVE:

Well, my lad,
‘Tis plain as is the long, conspicuous nose
Borne, ponderous and pendulous, between
The elephant’s remarkable eye-teeth
(*Enter Tok Bak.*)
That Chinese competition’s what ails *you*.

BOTH (*Singing*): O pig-tail Celestial,
O barbarous bestial,
Abominable Chinee!
Simian fellow man,
Primitive yellow man,
Joshian devotee!
Shoe-and-cigar machine,
Oleomargarine
You are, and butter are we —
Fat of the land are we,
Salt of the earth;
In God’s image planned to be —
Noble in birth!
You, on the contrary,
Modeled upon very
Different lines indeed,
Show in conspicuous,
Base and ridiculous
Ways your inferior breed.
Wretched apology,
Shame of ethnology,
Monster unspeakably low!
Fit to be buckshotted —
Be you ‘steboycotted.
Vanish — vamoose — mosy — Go!

TOK BAK:

You listen me! You beatee the big dlum
An’ tell me go to Flowly Kingdom Come.
You all too muchee fool. You chinnee heap.
Such talkee like my washee — belly cheap!
(*Enter Satan.*)
You dlive me outee clunty towns all way;
Why you no tackle me Safflisco, hay?

SATAN:

Methought I heard a murmuring of tongues
Sound through the ceiling of the hollow earth,
As if the anti-coolie ques —— ha! friends,
Well met. You see I keep my ancient word:
Where two or three are gathered in my name,
There am I in their midst.

MOUNTWAVE:

O monstrous thief!
To quote the words of Shakespeare as your own.
I know his work.

HARDHAND:

Who’s Shakespeare? — what’s his trade?
I’ve heard about the work o’ that galoot
Till I’m jest sick!

TOK BAK:

Go Sunny school — you’ll know
Mo’ Bible. Bime by pleach — hell-talkee. Tell
‘Bout Abel — mebby so he live too cheap.
He mebby all time dig on lanch — no dlink,
No splee — no go plocession fo’ make vote —
No sendee money out of clunty fo’
To helpee Ilishmen. Cain killum. Josh
He catchee at it, an’ he belly mad —
Say: “Allee Melicans boycottee Cain.”
Not muchee — you no pleachee that:
You all same lie.

MOUNTWAVE:

This cuss must be expelled. (*Draws pistol.*) MOUNTWAVE, HARDHAND, SATAN (*singing*): For Chinese expulsion, hurrah!
To mobbing and murder, all hail!
Away with your justice and law —
We’ll make every pagan turn tail.

CHORUS OF FOREIGN VOTERS:

Bedad! oof dot tief o’ze vorld —
Zat Ivan Tchanay vos got hurled
In Hella, da debil he say:
”Wor be yer return pairmit, hey?”
Und gry as ‘e shaka da boot:
”Zis haythen haf nevaire been oot!”

HARDHAND:

Too many cooks are working at this broth —
I think, by thunder, t’will be mostly froth!
I’m cussed ef I can sarvy, up to date,

What good this dern fandango does the State.

MOUNTWAVE:

The State’s advantage, sir, you may not see,
But think how good it is for me.

SATAN:

And me.
(*Curtain*.)

ASPIRANTS THREE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

QUICK:
DE YOUNG *a Brother to Mushrooms*

DEAD:
SWIFT *an Heirloom*
ESTEE *a Relic*

IMMORTALS: THE SPIRIT OF BROKEN HOPES. THE AUTHOR.

MISCELLANEOUS: A TROUPE OF COFFINS. THE MOON. VARIOUS COLORED FIRES.

Scene — The Political Graveyard at Bone Mountain.

DE YOUNG:

This is the spot agreed upon. Here rest
The sainted statesman who upon the field
Of honor have at various times laid down
Their own, and ended, ignominious,
Their lives political. About me, lo!
Their silent headstones, gilded by the moon,
Half-full and near her setting — midnight. Hark!
Through the white mists of this portentous night
(Which throng in moving shapes about my way,
As they were ghosts of candidates I've slain,
To fray their murderer) my open ear,
Spacious to maw the noises of the world,
Engulfs a footstep.
(*Enter Estee from his tomb.*)
Ah, 'tis he, my foe,

True to appointment; and so here we fight —
Though truly ‘twas my firm belief that he
Would send regrets, or I had not been here.

ESTEE:

O moon that hast so oft surprised the deeds
Whereby I rose to greatness! — tricksy orb,
The type and symbol of my politics,
Now draw my ebbing fortunes to their flood,
As, by the magic of a poultice, boils
That burn ambitions with defeated fires
Are lifted into eminence.
(*Sees De Young.*)
What? you!
Faith, if I had suspected you would come
From the fair world of politics wherein
So lately you were whelped, and which, alas,
I vainly to revisit strive, though still
Rapped on the rotting head and bidden sleep
Till Resurrection’s morn, — if I had thought
You would accept the challenge that I flung
I would have seen you damned ere I came forth
In the night air, shroud-clad and shivering,
To fight so mean a thing! But since you’re here,
Draw and defend yourself. By gad, we’ll *see*
Who’ll be Postmaster-General!

DE YOUNG:

We will —
I’ll fight (for I am lame) with any blue
And redolent remain that dares aspire
To wreck the Grand Old Grandson’s cabinet.
Here’s at you, nosegay!

(*They draw tongues and are about to fight, when from an adjacent whited sepulcher, enter Swift.*) SWIFT:

Hold! put up your tongues!
Within the confines of this sacred spot
Broods such a holy calm as none may break
By clash of weapons, without sacrilege.
(*Beats down their tongues with a bone.*)
Madmen! what profits it? For though you fought
With such heroic skill that both survived,
Yet neither should achieve the prize, for I
Would wrest it from him. Let us not contend,
But friendliwise by stipulation fix
A slate for mutual advantage. Why,
Having the pick and choice of seats, should we
Forego them all but one? Nay, we'll take three,
And part them so among us that to each
Shall fall the fittest to his powers. In brief,
Let us establish a Portfolio Trust.

ESTEE:

Agreed.

DE YOUNG:

Aye, truly, 'tis a greed — and one
The offices imperfectly will sate,
But I'll stand in.

SWIFT:

Well, so ‘tis understood,
As you’re the junior member of the Trust,
Politically younger and undead,
Speak, Michael: what portfolio do you choose?

DE YOUNG:

I’ve thought the Postal service best would serve
My interest; but since I have my pick,
I’ll take the War Department. It is known
Throughout the world, from Market street to Pine,
(For a Chicago journal told the tale)
How in this hand I lately took my life
And marched against great Buckley, thundering
My mandate that he count the ballots fair!
Earth heard and shrank to half her size! Yon moon,
Which rivaled then a liver’s whiteness, paused
That night at Butchertown and daubed her face
With sheep’s blood! Then my serried rank I drew
Back to my stronghold without loss. To mark
My care in saving human life and limb,
The Peace Society bestowed on me
Its leather medal and the title, too,
Of Colonel. Yes, my genius is for war. Good land!
I naturally dote on a brass band!

(*Sings.*) O, give me a life on the tented field,
Where the cannon roar and ring,
Where the flag floats free and the foemen yield
And bleed as the bullets sing.
But be it not mine to wage the fray
Where matters are ordered the other way,
For that is a different thing.

O, give me a life in the fierce campaign —
Let it be the life of my foe:

I'd rather fall upon him than the plain;
  That service I'd fain forego.
O, a warrior's life is fine and free,
But a warrior's death — ah me! ah me!
  That's a different thing, you know.

ESTEE:

Some claim I might myself advance to that
Portfolio. When Rebellion raised its head,
And you, my friends, stayed meekly in your shirts,
I marched with banners to the party stump,
Spat on my hands, made faces fierce as death,
Shook my two fists at once and introduced
Brave resolutions terrible to read!
Nay, only recently, as you do know,
I conquered Treason by the word of mouth,
And slew, with Samson's weapon, the whole South!

SWIFT:

   You once fought Stanford, too.

ESTEE:

          Enough of that —
Give me the Interior and I'll devote
My mind to agriculture and improve
The breed of cabbages, especially
The *Brassica Celeritatis*, named
For *you* because in days of long ago
You sold it at your market stall, — and, faith,
'Tis said you were an honest huckster then.
I'll be Attorney-General if you

Prefer; for know I am a lawyer too!

SWIFT:

I never have heard that! — did you, De Young?

DE YOUNG:

Never, so help me! And I swear I’ve heard
A score of Judges say that he is not.

SWIFT (*to Estee*): You take the Interior. I might aspire
To military station too, for once
I led my party into Pixley’s camp,
And he paroled me. I defended, too,
The State of Oregon against the sharp
And bloody tooth of the Australian sheep.
But I’ve an aptitude exceeding neat
For bloodless battles of diplomacy.
My cobweb treaty of Exclusion once,
Through which a hundred thousand coolies sailed,
Was much admired, but most by Colonel Bee.
Though born a tinker I’m a diplomat
From old Missouri, and I — ha! what’s that?

(*Exit Moon. Enter Blue Lights on all the tombs, and a circle of Red Fire on the grass; in the center the Spirit of Broken Hopes, and round about, a Troupe of Coffins, dancing and singing.*) CHORUS OF COFFINS:

Two bodies dead and one alive —
  Yo, ho, merrily all!
Now for boodle strain and strive —
  Buzzards all a-warble, O!
Prophets three, agape for bread;
Raven with a stone instead —

Providential raven!
Judges two and Colonel one —
Run, run, rustics, run!
But it’s O, the pig is shaven,
And oily, oily all!

(*Exeunt Coffins, dancing. The Spirit of Broken Hopes advances, solemnly pointing at each of the Three Worthies in turn.*) SPIRIT OF BROKEN HOPES:

Governor, Governor, editor man,
Rusty, musty, spick-and-span,
Harlequin, harridan, dicky-dout,
Demagogue, charlatan — o, u, t, OUT!
(*De Young falls and sleeps.*)

Antimonopoler, diplomat,
Railroad lackey, political rat,
One, two, three — SCAT!
(*Swift falls and sleeps.*)

Boycotting chin-worker, working to woo
Fortune, the fickle, to smile upon *you*,
Jo-coated acrobat, shuttle-cock — SHOO!
(*Estee falls and sleeps.*)

Now they lie in slumber sweet,
Now the charm is all complete,
Hasten I with flying feet
Where beyond the further sea
A babe upon its mother’s knee
Is gazing into skies afar
And crying for a golden star.
I’ll drag a cloud across the blue
And break that infant’s heart in two!

(*Exeunt the Spirit of Broken Hopes and the Red and Blue Fires. Re-enter Moon.*) ESTEE (*waking*): Why, this is strange! I dreamed I know not what,

It seemed that certain apparitions were,
Which sang uncanny words, significant
And yet ambiguous — half-understood —
Portending evil; and an awful spook,
Even as I stood with my accomplices,
Counted me out, as children do in play.
Is that you, Mike?

DE YOUNG *(waking):*
It was.
SWIFT *(waking):*

Am I all that?
Then I'll reform my ways.
(Reforms his ways.)
Ah! had I known
How sweet it is to be an honest man
I never would have stooped to turn my coat
For public favor, as chameleons take
The hue (as near as they can judge) of that
Supporting them. Henceforth I'll buy
With money all the offices I need,
And know the pleasure of an honest life,
Or stay forever in this dismal place.
Now that I'm good, it will no longer do
To make a third with such, a wicked two.
(Returns to his tomb.)

DE YOUNG:

Prophetic dream! by some good angel sent
To make me with a quiet life content.
The question shall no more my bosom irk,
To go to Washington or go to work.
From Fame's debasing struggle I'll withdraw,
And taking up the pen lay down the law.
I'll leave this rogue, lest my example make
An honest man of him — his heart would break.

(Exit De Young.)

ESTEE:

Out of my company these converts flee,
But that advantage is denied to me:
My curst identity's confining skin
Nor lets me out nor tolerates me in.
Well, since my hopes eternally have fled,
And, dead before, I'm more than ever dead,
To find a grander tomb be now my task,
And pack my pork into a stolen cask.
(Exit, searching. Loud calls for the Author, who appears, bowing and smiling.)
AUTHOR *(singing):*

Jack Satan's the greatest of gods,
And Hell is the best of abodes.
'Tis reached, through the Valley of Clods,
By seventy different roads.
Hurrah for the Seventy Roads!
Hurrah for the clods that resound
With a hollow, thundering sound!
Hurrah for the Best of Abodes!

We'll serve him as long as we've breath —
Jack Satan the greatest of gods.
To all of his enemies, death! —
A home in the Valley of Clods.
Hurrah for the thunder of clods
That smother the soul of his foe!
Hurrah for the spirits that go
To dwell with the Greatest of Gods;
(Curtain falls to faint odor of mortality. Exit the Gas.)

THE BIRTH OF THE RAIL

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LELAND, THE KID *a Road Agent*
COWBOY CHARLEY *Same Line of Business*
HAPPY HUNTY *Ditto in All Respects*
SOOTYMUG *a Devil*

Scene — the Dutch Flat Stage Road, at 12 P.M., on a Night of 1864.

COWBOY CHARLEY:

My boss, I fear she is delayed to-night.
Already it is past the hour, and yet
My ears have reached no sound of wheels; no note
Melodious, of long, luxurious oaths
Betokens the traditional dispute
(Unsettled from the dawn of time) between
The driver and off wheeler; no clear chant
Nor carol of Wells Fargo's messenger
Unbosoming his soul upon the air —
his prowess to the tender-foot,
And how at divers times in sundry ways
He strewed the roadside with our carcasses.
Clearly, the stage will not come by to-night.

LELAND, THE KID:

I now remember that but yesterday
I saw three ugly looking fellows start
From Colfax with a gun apiece, and they
Did seem on business of importance bent.
Furtively casting all their eyes about
And covering their tracks with all the care

That business men do use. I think perhaps
They were Directors of that rival line,
The great Pacific Mail. If so, they have
Indubitably taken in that coach,
And we are overreached. Three times before
This thing has happened, and if once again
These outside operators dare to cut
Our rates of profit I shall quit the road
And take my money out of this concern.
When robbery no longer pays expense
It loses then its chiefest charm for me,
And I prefer to cheat — you hear me shout!

HAPPY HUNTY:

My chief, you do but echo back my thoughts:
This competition is the death of trade.
‘Tis plain (unless we wish to go to work)
Some other business we must early find.
What shall it be? The field of usefulness
Is yearly narrowing with the advance
Of wealth and population on this coast.
There’s little left that any man can do
Without some other fellow stepping in
And doing it as well. If one essay
To pick a pocket he is sure to feel
(With what disgust I need not say to you)
Another hand inserted in the same.
You crack a crib at dead of night, and lo!
As you explore the dining-room for plate
You find, in session there, a graceless band
Stuffing their coats with spoons, their skins with wine.
And so it goes. Why even undertake
To salt a mine and you will find it rich
With noble specimens placed there before!

LELAND, THE KID:

And yet this line of immigration has
Advantages superior to aught
That elsewhere offers: all these passengers,
If punched with care —

COWBOY CHARLEY:

Significant remark!
It opens up a prospect wide and fair,
Suggesting to the thoughtful mind — *my* mind —
A scheme that is the boss lay-out. Instead
Of stopping passengers, let’s carry them.
Instead of crying out: “Throw up your hands!”
Let’s say: “Walk up and buy a ticket!” Why
Should we unwieldy goods and bullion take,
Watches and all such trifles, when we might
Far better charge their value three times o’er
For carrying them to market?

LELAND, THE KID:

Put it there,
Old son!

HAPPY HUNTY:

You take the cake, my dear. We’ll build
A mighty railroad through this pass, and then
The stage folk will come up to us and squeal,
And say: “It is bad medicine for both:
What will you give or take?” And then we’ll sell.

COWBOY CHARLEY:

Enlarge your notions, little one; this is
No petty, slouching, opposition scheme,
To be bought off like honest men and fools;
Mine eye prophetic pierces through the mists
That cloud the future, and I seem to see
A well-devised and executed scheme
Of wholesale robbery within the law
(Made by ourselves) — great, permanent, sublime,
And strong to grapple with the public throat —
Shaking the stuffing from the public purse,
The tears from bankrupt merchants’ eyes, the blood
From widows’ famished carcasses, the bread
From orphans’ mouths!

HAPPY HUNTY:

Hooray!

LELAND, THE; KID:

Hooray!

ALL:

Hooray!

(They tear the masks from their faces, and discharging their shotguns, throw them into the chapparal. Then they join hands, dance and sing the following song:)

Ah! blessèd to measure
The glittering treasure!
  Ah! blessèd to heap up the gold

Untold
That flows in a wide
And deepening tide —
Rolled, rolled, rolled
From multifold sources,
Converging its courses
Upon our —

LELAND, THE KID:

Just wait a bit, my pards, I thought I heard
A sneaking grizzly cracking the dry twigs.
Such an intrusion might deprive the State
Of all the good that we intend it. Ha!

(Enter Sootymug. He saunters carelessly in and gracefully leans his back against a redwood.)

SOOTYMUG:

My boys, I thought I heard
Some careless revelry,
As if your minds were stirred
By some new devilry.
I too am in that line. Indeed, the mission
On which I come —

HAPPY HUNTY:

Here’s more damned competition! *(Curtain.)*

A BAD NIGHT

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

VILLIAM *a Sen*
NEEDLESON *a Sidniduc*
SMILER *a Scheister*
KI-YI *a Trader*
GRIMGHAST *a Spader*
SARALTHIA *a Love-lorn Nymph*
NELLIBRAC *a Sweetun*

A BODY; A GHOST; AN UNMENTIONABLE THING; SKULLS; HOODOOS; ETC.

Scene — a Cemetery in San Francisco.
Saralthia, Nellibrac, Grimghast.

SARALTHIA:

The red half-moon is dipping to the west,
And the cold fog invades the sleeping land.
Lo! how the grinning skulls in the level light
Litter the place! Methinks that every skull
Is a most lifelike portrait of my Sen,
Drawn by the hand of Death; each fleshless pate,
Cursed with a ghastly grin to eyes unrubbed
With love’s magnetic ointment, seems to mine
To smile an amiable smile like his
Whose amiable smile I — I alone
Am able to distinguish from his leer!
See how the gathering coyotes flit
Through the lit spaces, or with burning eyes
Star the black shadows with a steadfast gaze!
About my feet the poddy toads at play,
Bulbously comfortable, try to hop,

And tumble clumsily with all their warts;
While pranking lizards, sliding up and down
My limbs, as they were public roads, impart
A singularly interesting chill.
The circumstance and passion of the time,
The cast and manner of the place — the spirit
Of this confederate environment,
Command the rights we come to celebrate
Obedient to the Inspired Hag —
The seventh daughter of the seventh daughter,
Who rules all destinies from Minna street,
A dollar a destiny. Here at this grave,
Which for my purposes thou, Jack of Spades —
(To Grimghast)
Corrupter than the thing that reeks below —
Hast opened secretly, we'll work the charm.
Now what's the hour?
(Distant clock strikes thirteen.)
Enough — hale forth the stiff!

(Grimghast by means of a boat-hook stands the coffin on end in the excavation; the lid crumbles, exposing the remains of a man.)
Ha! Master Mouldybones, how fare you, sir?

THE BODY:

Poorly, I thank your ladyship; I miss
Some certain fingers and an ear or two.
There's something, too, gone wrong with my inside,
And my periphery's not what it was.
How can we serve each other, you and I?

NELLIBRAC:

O what a personable man!
(Blushes bashfully, drops her eyes and twists the corner of her apron.)

SARALTHIA:

Yes, dear,
A very proper and alluring male,
And quite superior to Lubin Rroyd,
Who has, however, this distinct advantage —
He is alive.

GRIMGHAST:

Missus, these yer remains
Was the boss singer back in ‘72,
And used to allers git invites to go
Down to Swellmont and sing at every feed.
In t’other Villiam’s time, that was, afore
The gent that you’ve hooked onto bought the place.

THE BODY *(singing):*

Down among the sainted dead
Many years I lay;
Beetles occupied my head,
Moles explored my clay.

There we feasted day and night —
I and bug and beast;
They provided appetite
And I supplied the feast.

The raven is a dicky-bird, SARALTHIA *(singing):*
The jackal is a daisy, NELLIBRAC *(singing):*
The wall-mouse is a worthy third, A SPOOK *(singing):*
But mortals all are crazy.

CHORUS OF SKULLS:

O mortals all are crazy,
Their intellects are hazy;
In the growing moon they shake their shoon
And trip it in the mazy.

But when the moon is waning,
Their senses they’re regaining:
They fall to prayer and from their hair
Remove the straws remaining.

SARALTHIA:

That’s right, Rogues Gallery, pray keep it up:
Your song recalls my Villiam’s “Auld Lang Syne,”
What time he came and (like an amorous bird
That struts before the female of its kind,
Warbling to cave her down the bank) piped high
His cracked falsetto out of reach. Enough —
Now let’s to business. Nellibrac, sweet child,
St. Cloacina’s future devotee,
The time is ripe and rotten — gut the grip!

(Nellibrac brings forward a valise and takes from it five articles of clothing, which, one by one, she lays upon the points of a magic pentagram that has thoughtfully inscribed itself in lines of light on the wet grass. The Body holds its late lamented nose.)

NELLIBRAC *(singing):*

Fragrant socks, by Villiam’s toes
Consecrated to the nose;

Shirt that shows the well worn track
Of the knuckles of his back,

Handkerchief with mottled stains,
Into which he blew his brains;

Collar crying out for soap —
Prophet of the future rope;

An unmentionable thing
It would sicken me to sing.

UNMENTIONABLE THING *(aside):*

What! *I* unmentionable? Just you wait!
In all the family journals of the State
You'll sometime see that I'm described at length,
With supereditorial grace and strength.

SARALTHIA *(singing):*

Throw them in the open tomb
They will cause his love to bloom
With an amatory boom!

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE HOODOOS:

Hoodoo, hoodoo, voudou-vet
Villiam struggles in the net!
By the power and intent
Of the charm his strength is spent!
By the virtue in each rag
Blessed by the Inspired Hag
He will be a willing victim
Limp as if a donkey kicked him!
By this awful incantation
We decree his animation —

By the magic of our art
Warm the cockles of his heart,
Villiam, if alive or dead,
Thou Saralthia shalt wed!

(They cast the garments into the grave and push over the coffin. Grimghast fills up the hole. Hoodoos gradually become apparent in a phosphorescent light about the grave, holding one another's back-hair and dancing in a circle.)

HOODOO SONG AND DANCE:

O we're the larrikin hoodoos!
The chirruping, lirruping hoodoos!
We mix things up that the Fates ordain,
Bring back the past and the present detain,
Postpone the future and sometimes tether
The three and drive them abreast together —
We rollicking, frolicking hoodoos!

To us all things are the same as none
And nothing is that is under the sun.
Seven's a dozen and never is then,
Whether is what and what is when,
A man is a tree and a cuckoo a cow
For gold galore and silver enow
To magical, mystical hoodoos!

SARALTHIA:

What monstrous shadow darkens all the place, *(Enter Smyler.)*

Flung like a doom athwart — ha! — thou?
Portentous presence, art thou not the same
That stalks with aspect horrible among
Small youths and maidens, baring snaggy teeth,
Champing their tender limbs till crimson spume,
Flung from, thy lips in cursing God and man,
Incarnadines the land?

SMYLER:

Thou dammid slut!
(Exit Smyler.)

NELLIBRAC:

O what a pretty man!

SARALTHIA

Now who is next?
Of tramps and casuals this graveyard seems
Prolific to a fault!

(Enter Needleson, exhaling, prophetically, an odor of decayed eggs and, actually, one of unlaundried linen. He darts an intense regard at an adjacent marble angel and places his open hand behind his ear.)

NEEDLESON:

Hay? *(Exit Needleson.)*

NELLIBRAC:

Sweet, sweet male!
I yearn to play at Copenhagen with him!

(Blushes diligently and energetically.)

CHORUS OF SKULLS:

Hoodoos, hoodoos, disappear —
Some dread deity draws near!

(Exeunt Hoodos.)

Smitten with a sense of doom,
The dead are cowering in the tomb,
Seas are calling, stars are falling
And appalling is the gloom!
Fragmentary flames are flung
Through the air the trees among!
Lo! each hill inclines its head —
Earth is bending ‘neath his thread!

(On the contrary, enter Villiam on a chip, navigating an odor of mignonette. Saralthia springs forward to put him in her pocket, but he is instantly retracted by an invisible string. She falls headlong, breaking her heart. Reënter Villiam, Needleson, Smyler. All gather about Saralthia, who loudly laments her accident. The Spirit of Tar-and Feathers, rising like a black smoke in their midst, executes a monstrous wink of graphic and vivid significance, then contemplates them with an obviously baptismal intention. The cross on Lone Mountain takes fire, splendoring the Peninsula. Tableau. Curtain.)

ON STONE

As in a dream, strange epitaphs I see,
Inscribed on yet unquarried stone,
Where wither flowers yet unstrown —
The Campo Santo of the time to be.

A WREATH OF IMMORTELLES

* * * * *

LORING PICKERING

(After Pope)

Here rests a writer, great but not immense,
Born destitute of feeling and of sense.
No power he but o’er his brain desired —
How not to suffer it to be inspired.
Ideas unto him were all unknown,
Proud of the words which, only, were his own.
So unreflecting, so confused his mind,
Torpid in error, indolently blind,
A fever Heaven, to quicken him, applied,
But, rather than revive, the sluggard died.

*

A WATER-PIRATE

Pause, stranger — whence you lightly tread
Bill Carr’s immoral part has fled.
For him no heart of woman burned,
But all the rivers’ heads he turned.
Alas! he now lifts up his eyes
In torment and for water cries,
Entreating that he may procure
One drop to cool his parched McClure!

*

C.P. BERRY

Here's crowbait! — ravens, too, and daws
Flock hither to advance their caws,
And, with a sudden courage armed,
Devour the foe who once alarmed —
In life and death a fair deceit:
Nor strong to harm nor good to eat.
King bogey of the scarecrow host,
When known the least affrighting most,
Though light his hand (his mind was dark)
He left on earth a straw Berry mark.

*

THE REV. JOSEPH

He preached that sickness he could floor
  By prayer and by commanding;
When sick himself he sent for four
  Physicians in good standing.
He was struck dead despite their care,
  For, fearing their dissension,
He secretly put up a prayer,
  Thus drawing God’s attention.

*

Cynic perforce from studying mankind
In the false volume of his single mind,
He damned his fellows for his own unworth,
And, bad himself, thought nothing good on earth.
Yet, still so judging and so erring still,
Observing well, but understanding ill,
His learning all was got by dint of sight,
And what he learned by day he lost by night.
When hired to flatter he would never cease
Till those who’d paid for praises paid for peace.
Not wholly miser and but half a knave,
He yearned to squander but he lived to save,
And did not, for he could not, cheat the grave.
Hic jacet Pixley, scribe and muleteer:
Step lightly, stranger, anywhere but here.

*

McAllister, of talents rich and rare,
  Lies at this spot at finish of his race.
Alike to him if it is here or there:

The one spot that he cared for was the ace.

*

Here lies Joseph Redding, who gave us the catfish.
He dined upon every fish except that fish.
‘Twas touching to hear him expounding his fad
With a heart full of zeal and a mouth full of shad.
The catfish miaowed with unspeakable woe
When Death, the lone fisherman, landed their Jo.

*

Judge Sawyer, whom in vain the people tried
To push from power, here is laid aside.
Death only from the bench could ever start
The sluggish load of his immortal part.

*

John Irish went, one luckless day,
To loaf and fish at San Jose.
He got no loaf, he got no fish:
They brained him with an empty dish!
They laid him in this place asleep —
O come, ye crocodiles, and weep.

*

In Sacramento City here
This wooden monument we rear
In memory of Dr. May,
Whose smile even Death could not allay.
He’s buried, Heaven alone knows where,
And only the hyenas care;
This May-pole merely marks the spot

Where, ere the wretch began to rot,
Fame’s trumpet, with its brazen bray,
Bawled; “Who (and why) was Dr. May?”

*

Dennis Spencer’s mortal coil
Here is laid away to spoil —
Great riparian, who said
Not a stream should leave its bed.
Now his soul would like a river
Turned upon its parching liver.

*

For those this mausoleum is erected
Who Stanford to the Upper House elected.
Their luck is less or their promotion slower,
For, dead, they were elected to the Lower.

*

Beneath this stone lies Reuben Lloyd,
Of breath deprived, of sense devoid.
The Templars’ Captain-General, he
So formidable seemed to be,
That had he not been on his back
Death ne’er had ventured to attack.

*

Here lies Barnes in all his glory —
Master he of oratOry.
When he died the people weeping,
(For they thought him only sleeping)
Cried: “Although he now is quiet

And his tongue is not a riot,
Soon, the spell that binds him breaking,
He a motion will be making.
Then, alas, he'll rise and speak
In support of it a week."

*

Rash mortal! stay thy feet and look around —
This vacant tomb as yet is holy ground;
But soon, alas! Jim Fair will occupy
These premises — then, holiness, good-bye!

*

Here Salomon's body reposes;
Bring roses, ye rebels, bring roses.
Set all of your drumsticks a-rolling,
Discretion and Valor extrolling:
Discretion — he always retreated —
And Valor — the dead he defeated.
Brings roses, ye loyal, bring roses:
As patriot here he reposes.

*

When Waterman ended his bright career
He left his wet name to history here.
To carry it with him he did not care:
'Twould tantalize spirits of statesmen There.

*

Here lie the remains of Fred Emerson Brooks,
A poet, as every one knew by his looks
Who hadn't unluckily met with his books.

On civic occasions he sprang to the fore
With poems consisting of stanzas three score.
The men whom they deafened enjoyed them the more.

Of reason his fantasy knew not the check:
All forms of inharmony came at his beck.
The weight of his ignorance fractured his neck.

In this peaceful spot, so the grave-diggers say,
With pen, ink and paper they laid him away —
The Poet-elect of the Judgment Day.

*

George Perry here lies stiff and stark,
With stone at foot and stone at head.
His heart was dark, his mind was dark —
“Ignorant ass!” the people said.

Not ignorant but skilled, alas,
In all the secrets of his trade:
He knew more ways to be an ass
Than any ass that ever brayed.

*

Here lies the last of Deacon Fitch,
Whose business was to melt the pitch.
Convenient to this sacred spot
Lies Sammy, who applied it, hot.
‘Tis hard — so much alike they smell —

One’s grave from t’other’s grave to tell,
But when his tomb the Deacon’s burst
(Of two he’ll always be the first)
He’ll see by studying the stones
That he’s obtained his proper bones,
Then, seeking Sammy’s vault, unlock it,
And put that person in his pocket.

*

Beneath this stone O’Donnell’s tongue’s at rest —
Our noses by his spirit still addressed.
Living or dead, he’s equally Satanic —
His noise a terror and his smell a panic.

*

When Gabriel blows a dreadful blast
And swears that Time’s forever past,
Days, weeks, months, years all one at last,
Then Asa Fiske, laid here, distressed,
Will beat (and skin his hand) his breast:
There’ll be no rate of interest!

*

Step lightly, stranger: here Jerome B. Cox
Is for the second time in a bad box.
He killed a man — the labor party rose
And showed him by its love how killing goes.

*

When Vrooman here lay down to sleep,
The other dead awoke to weep.
“Since he no longer lives,” they said

“Small honor comes of being dead.”

*

Here Porter Ashe is laid to rest
Green grows the grass upon his breast.
This patron of the turf, I vow,
Ne’er served it half so well as now.

*

Like a cold fish escaping from its tank,
Hence fled the soul of Joe Russel, crank.
He cried: “Cold water!” roaring like a beast.
‘Twas thrown upon him and the music ceased.

*

Here Estee rests. He shook a basket,
When, like a jewel from its casket,
Fell Felton out. Said Estee, shouting
With mirth; “I’ve given you an outing.”
Then told him to go back. He wouldn’t.
Then tried to *put* him back. He couldn’t.
So Estee died (his blood congealing
In Felton’s growing shadow) squealing.

*

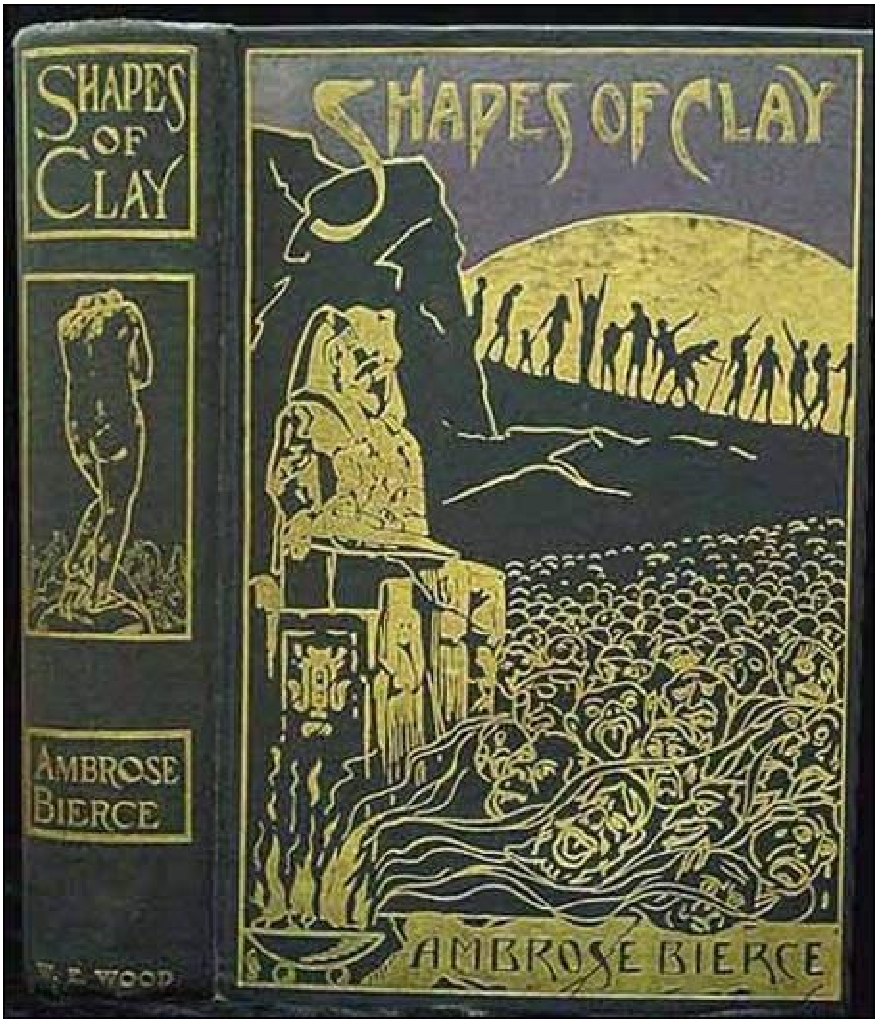
Mourn here for one Bruner, called Elwood.
He doesn’t — he never did — smell good
  To noses of critics and scholars.
If now he’d an office to sell could
He sell it? O, no — where (in Hell) could
  He find a cool four hundred dollars?

*

Here Stanford lies, who thought it odd
That he should go to meet his God.
He looked, until his eyes grew dim,
For God to hasten to meet him.

SHAPES OF CLAY

W.E. Wood of San Francisco published Ambrose Bierce's second collection of poetry, *Shapes of Clay*, in 1903. Like many of his other works, this volume collected pieces previously published in newspapers and magazines. Bierce revised and altered much of his work when it appeared in book form. He once said that an author has the right "to have his fugitive work in newspapers and periodicals put into a more permanent form during his lifetime if he can." Herman Scheffauer reviewed *Shapes of Clay* in the June 1904 issue of *Sunset Magazine*, remarking that the poems and verse "are diverse in subject and treatment, serious, sentimental, satiric and humorous; some of his greatest work is here, some of his best and some of his minor. In all, however, the master-touch is visible and palpable…"


SHAPES OF CLAY
AMBROSE BIERCE
W. E. WOOD
SHAPES OF CLAY
AMBROSE BIERCE

First edition, second issue, 1903 W.E. Wood

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DEDICATION.

WITH PRIDE IN THEIR WORK, FAITH IN THEIR FUTURE AND AFFECTION FOR THEMSELVES, AN OLD WRITER DEDICATES THIS BOOK TO HIS YOUNG FRIENDS AND PUPILS, GEORGE STERLING AND HERMAN SCHEFFAUER. A.B.

PREFACE.

Some small part of this book being personally censorious, and in that part the names of real persons being used without their assent, it seems fit that a few words be said of the matter in sober prose. What it seems well to say I have already said with sufficient clarity in the preface of another book, somewhat allied to this by that feature of its character. I quote from "Black Beetles in Amber:"

"Many of the verses in this book are republished, with considerable alterations, from various newspapers. Of my motives in writing and in now republishing I do not care to make either defence or explanation, except with reference to those who since my first censure of them have passed away. To one having only a reader's interest in the matter it may easily seem that the verses relating to those might properly have been omitted from this collection. But if these pieces, or indeed, if any considerable part of my work in literature, have the intrinsic worth which by this attempt to preserve some of it I have assumed, their permanent suppression is impossible, and it is only a question of when and by whom they will be republished. Some one will surely search them out and put them in circulation.

"I conceive it the right of an author to have his fugitive work collected in his lifetime; and this seems to me especially true of one whose work, necessarily engendering animosities, is peculiarly exposed to challenge as unjust. That is a charge that can best be examined before time has effaced the evidence. For the death of a man of whom I have written what I may venture to think worthy to live I am no way responsible; and however sincerely I may regret it, I can hardly consent that it shall affect my literary fortunes. If the satirist who does not accept the remarkable doctrine that, while condemning the sin he should spare the sinner, were bound to let the life of his work be coterminous with that of his subject his were a lot of peculiar hardship.

"Persuaded of the validity of all this I have not hesitated to reprint even certain 'epitaphs' which, once of the living, are now of the dead, as all the others must eventually be. The objection inheres in all forms of applied satire — my understanding of whose laws and liberties is at least derived from reverent study of the masters. That in respect of matters herein mentioned I have but followed their practice can be shown by abundant instance and example."

In arranging these verses for publication I have thought it needless to classify them according to character, as "Serious," "Comic," "Sentimental," "Satirical," and so forth. I do the reader the honor to think that he will readily discern the nature of what he is reading; and I entertain the hope that his mood will accommodate itself without disappointment to that of his author.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

THE PASSING SHOW.

I.

I know not if it was a dream. I viewed
  A city where the restless multitude,
    Between the eastern and the western deep
  Had roared gigantic fabrics, strong and rude.

Colossal palaces crowned every height;
  Towers from valleys climbed into the light;
    O’er dwellings at their feet, great golden domes
  Hung in the blue, barbarically bright.

But now, new-glimmering to-east, the day
  Touched the black masses with a grace of gray,
    Dim spires of temples to the nation’s God
  Studding high spaces of the wide survey.

Well did the roofs their solemn secret keep
  Of life and death stayed by the truce of sleep,
    Yet whispered of an hour-when sleepers wake,
  The fool to hope afresh, the wise to weep.

The gardens greened upon the builded hills
  Above the tethered thunders of the mills
    With sleeping wheels unstirred to service yet
  By the tamed torrents and the quickened rills.

A hewn acclivity, reprieved a space,
  Looked on the builder’s blocks about his base

And bared his wounded breast in sign to say:
”Strike! ‘t is my destiny to lodge your race.

“‘T was but a breath ago the mammoth browsed
Upon my slopes, and in my caves I housed
Your shaggy fathers in their nakedness,
While on their foeman’s offal they caroused.”

Ships from afar afforested the bay.
Within their huge and chambered bodies lay
The wealth of continents; and merrily sailed
The hardy argosies to far Cathay.

Beside the city of the living spread —
Strange fellowship! — the city of the dead;
And much I wondered what its humble folk,
To see how bravely they were housed, had said.

Noting how firm their habitations stood,
Broad-based and free of perishable wood —
How deep in granite and how high in brass
The names were wrought of eminent and good,

I said: “When gold or power is their aim,
The smile of beauty or the wage of shame,
Men dwell in cities; to this place they fare
When they would conquer an abiding fame.”

From the red East the sun — a solemn rite —
Crowned with a flame the cross upon a height
Above the dead; and then with all his strength
Struck the great city all aroar with light!

II.

I know not if it was a dream. I came

Unto a land where something seemed the same
That I had known as ‘t were but yesterday,
But what it was I could not rightly name.

It was a strange and melancholy land.
Silent and desolate. On either hand
Lay waters of a sea that seemed as dead,
And dead above it seemed the hills to stand,

Grayed all with age, those lonely hills — ah me,
How worn and weary they appeared to be!
Between their feet long dusty fissures clove
The plain in aimless windings to the sea.

One hill there was which, parted from the rest,
Stood where the eastern water curved a-west.
Silent and passionless it stood. I thought
I saw a scar upon its giant breast.

The sun with sullen and portentous gleam
Hung like a menace on the sea’s extreme;
Nor the dead waters, nor the far, bleak bars
Of cloud were conscious of his failing beam.

It was a dismal and a dreadful sight,
That desert in its cold, uncanny light;
No soul but I alone to mark the fear
And imminence of everlasting night!

All presages and prophecies of doom
Glimmered and babbled in the ghastly gloom,
And in the midst of that accursèd scene
A wolf sat howling on a broken tomb.

ELIXER VITAE.

Of life’s elixir I had writ, when sleep
  (Pray Heaven it spared him who the writing read!)
  Sealed upon my senses with so deep
  A stupefaction that men thought me dead.
  The centuries stole by with noiseless tread,
  Like spectres in the twilight of my dream;
  I saw mankind in dim procession sweep
  Through life, oblivion at each extreme.
  Meanwhile my beard, like Barbarossa’s growing,
  Loaded my lap and o’er my knees was flowing.

The generations came with dance and song,
  And each observed me curiously there.
  Some asked: “Who was he?” Others in the throng
  Replied: “A wicked monk who slept at prayer.”
  Some said I was a saint, and some a bear —
  These all were women. So the young and gay,
  Visibly wrinkling as they fared along,
  Doddered at last on failing limbs away;
  Though some, their footing in my beard entangled,
  Fell into its abysses and were strangled.

At last a generation came that walked
  More slowly forward to the common tomb,
  Then altogether stopped. The women talked
  Excitedly; the men, with eyes agloom
  Looked darkly on them with a look of doom;
  And one cried out: “We are immortal now —
  How need we these?” And a dread figure stalked,
  Silent, with gleaming axe and shrouded brow,
  And all men cried: “Decapitate the women,
  Or soon there’ll be no room to stand or swim in!”

So (in my dream) each lovely head was chopped
From its fair shoulders, and but men alone
Were left in all the world. Birth being stopped,
Enough of room remained in every zone,
And Peace ascended Woman’s vacant throne.
Thus, life’s elixir being found (the quacks
Their bread-and-butter in it gladly sopped)
’Twas made worth having by the headsman’s axe.
Seeing which, I gave myself a hearty shaking,
And crumbled all to powder in the waking.

CONVALESCENT.

What! “Out of danger?” Can the slighted Dame
Or canting Pharisee no more defame?
Will Treachery caress my hand no more,
Nor Hatred He alurk about my door? —
Ingratitude, with benefits dismissed,
Not close the loaded palm to make a fist?
Will Envy henceforth not retaliate
For virtues it were vain to emulate?
Will Ignorance my knowledge fail to scout,
Not understanding what ‘tis all about,
Yet feeling in its light so mean and small
That all his little soul is turned to gall?

What! “Out of danger?” Jealousy disarmed?
Greed from exaction magically charmed?
Ambition stayed from trampling whom it meets,
Like horses fugitive in crowded streets?
The Bigot, with his candle, book and bell,
Tongue-tied, unlunged and paralyzed as well?
The Critic righteously to justice haled,
His own ear to the post securely nailed —
What most he dreads unable to inflict,
And powerless to hawk the faults he’s picked?
The liar choked upon his choicest lie,
And impotent alike to villify
Or flatter for the gold of thrifty men
Who hate his person but employ his pen —
Who love and loathe, respectively, the dirt
Belonging to his character and shirt?

What! “Out of danger?” — Nature’s minions all,

Like hounds returning to the huntsman’s call,
Obedient to the unwelcome note
That stays them from the quarry’s bursting throat? —
Famine and Pestilence and Earthquake dire,
Torrent and Tempest, Lightning, Frost and Fire,
The soulless Tiger and the mindless Snake,
The noxious Insect from the stagnant lake
(Automaton malevolences wrought
Out of the substance of Creative Thought) —
These from their immemorial prey restrained,
Their fury baffled and their power chained?

I’m safe? Is that what the physician said?
What! “Out of danger?” Then, by Heaven, I’m dead!

AT THE CLOSE OF THE CANVASS.

‘Twas a Venerable Person, whom I met one Sunday morning,
  All appareled as a prophet of a melancholy sect;
  And in a jeremaid of objurgatory warning
  He lifted up his *jodel* to the following effect:

O ye sanguinary statesmen, intermit your verbal tussles
  O ye editors and orators, consent to hear my lay!
  And a little while the digital and maxillary muscles
  And attend to what a Venerable Person has to say.

Cease your writing, cease your shouting, cease your wild unearthly lying;
  Cease to bandy such expressions as are never, never found
  In the letter of a lover; cease “exposing” and “replying” —
  Let there be abated fury and a decrement of sound.

For to-morrow will be Monday and the fifth day of November —
  Only day of opportunity before the final rush.
  Carpe diem! go conciliate each person who’s a member
    Of the other party — do it while you can without a blush.

“Lo! the time is close upon you when the madness of the season
    Having howled itself to silence, like a Minnesota ‘clone,
  Will at last be superseded by the still, small voice of reason,
    When the whelpage of your folly you would willingly disown.

“Ah, ‘tis mournful to consider what remorses will be thronging,
    With a consciousness of having been so ghastly indiscreet,
  When by accident untoward two ex-gentlemen belonging
    To the opposite political denominations meet!

“Yes, ‘tis melancholy, truly, to forecast the fierce, unruly
    Supersurging of their blushes, like the flushes upon high
  When Aurora Borealis lights her circumpolar palace
    And in customary manner sets her banner in the sky.

“Each will think: ‘This falsifier knows that I too am a liar.
  Curse him for a son of Satan, all unholily compound!
  Curse my leader for another! Curse that pelican, my mother!
  Would to God that I when little in my victual had been drowned!’”

Then that Venerable Person went away without returning
  And, the madness of the season having also taken flight,
  All the people soon were blushing like the skies to crimson burning
  When Aurora Borealis fires her premises by night.

NOVUM ORGANUM.

In Bacon see the culminating prime
  Of Anglo-Saxon intellect and crime.
  He dies and Nature, settling his affairs,
  Parts his endowments among us, his heirs:
  To every one a pinch of brain for seed,
  And, to develop it, a pinch of greed.
  Each thrifty heir, to make the gift suffice,
  Buries the talent to manure the vice.

GEOTHEOS.

As sweet as the look of a lover
Saluting the eyes of a maid,
That blossom to blue as the maid
Is ablush to the glances above her,
The sunshine is gilding the glade
And lifting the lark out of shade.

Sing therefore high praises, and therefore
Sing songs that are ancient as gold,
Of Earth in her garments of gold;
Nor ask of their meaning, nor wherefore
They charm as of yore, for behold!
The Earth is as fair as of old.

Sing songs of the pride of the mountains,
And songs of the strength of the seas,
And the fountains that fall to the seas
From the hands of the hills, and the fountains
That shine in the temples of trees,
In valleys of roses and bees.

Sing songs that are dreamy and tender,
Of slender Arabian palms,
And shadows that circle the palms,
Where caravans, veiled from the splendor,
Are kneeling in blossoms and balms,
In islands of infinite calms.

Barbaric, O Man, was thy runing

When mountains were stained as with wine
By the dawning of Time, and as wine
Were the seas, yet its echoes are crooning,
Achant in the gusty pine
And the pulse of the poet’s line.

YORICK.

Hard by an excavated street one sat
  In solitary session on the sand;
  And ever and anon he spake and spat
  And spake again — a yellow skull in hand,
  To which that retrospective Pioneer
  Addressed the few remarks that follow here:

“Who are you? Did you come ‘der blains agross,’
  Or ‘Horn aroundt’? In days o’ ‘49
  Did them thar eye-holes see the Southern Cross
  From the Antarctic Sea git up an’ shine?
  Or did you drive a bull team ‘all the way
  From Pike,’ with Mr. Joseph Bowers? — say!

“Was you in Frisco when the water came
  Up to Montgum’ry street? and do you mind
  The time when Peters run the faro game —
  Jim Peters from old Mississip — behind
  Wells Fargo’s, where he subsequent was bust
  By Sandy, as regards both bank and crust?

“I wonder was you here when Casey shot
  James King o’ William? And did you attend
  The neck-tie dance ensuin’? *I* did not,
  But j’ined the rush to Go Creek with my friend
  Ed’ard McGowan; for we was resolved
  In sech diversions not to be involved.

“Maybe I knowed you; seems to me I’ve seed

Your face afore. I don’t forget a face,
But names I disremember — I’m that breed
Of owls. I’m talking some’at into space
An’ maybe my remarks is too derned free,
Seein’ yer name is unbeknown to me.

“Ther’ was a time, I reckon, when I knowed
Nigh onto every dern galoot in town.
That was as late as ‘50. Now she’s growed
Surprisin’! Yes, me an’ my pardner, Brown,
Was wide acquainted. If ther’ was a cuss
We didn’t know, the cause was — he knowed us.

“Maybe you had that claim adjoinin’ mine
Up thar in Calaveras. Was it you
To which Long Mary took a mighty shine,
An’ throwed squar’ off on Jake the Kangaroo?
I guess if she could see ye now she’d take
Her chance o’ happiness along o’ Jake.

“You ain’t so purty now as you was then:
Yer eyes is nothin’ but two prospect holes,
An’ women which are hitched to better men
Would hardly for sech glances damn their souls,
As Lengthie did. By G —— ! I *hope* it’s you,
For” *(kicks the skull)* “I’m Jake the Kangaroo.”

A VISION OF DOOM.

I stood upon a hill. The setting sun
Was crimson with a curse and a portent,
And scarce his angry ray lit up the land
That lay below, whose lurid gloom appeared
Freaked with a moving mist, which, reeking up
From dim tarns hateful with some horrid ban,
Took shapes forbidden and without a name.
Gigantic night-birds, rising from the reeds
With cries discordant, startled all the air,
And bodiless voices babbled in the gloom —
The ghosts of blasphemies long ages stilled,
And shrieks of women, and men's curses. All
These visible shapes, and sounds no mortal ear
Had ever heard, some spiritual sense
Interpreted, though brokenly; for I
Was haunted by a consciousness of crime,
Some giant guilt, but whose I knew not. All
These things malign, by sight and sound revealed,
Were sin-begotten; that I knew — no more —
And that but dimly, as in dreadful dreams
The sleepy senses babble to the brain
Imperfect witness. As I stood a voice,
But whence it came I knew not, cried aloud
Some words to me in a forgotten tongue,
Yet straight I knew me for a ghost forlorn,
Returned from the illimited inane.
Again, but in a language that I knew,
As in reply to something which in me
Had shaped itself a thought, but found no words,
It spake from the dread mystery about:
"Immortal shadow of a mortal soul
That perished with eternity, attend.
What thou beholdest is as void as thou:
The shadow of a poet's dream — himself

As thou, his soul as thine, long dead,
But not like thine outlasted by its shade.
His dreams alone survive eternity
As pictures in the unsubstantial void.
Excepting thee and me (and we because
The poet wove us in his thought) remains
Of nature and the universe no part
Or vestige but the poet’s dreams. This dread,
Unspeakable land about thy feet, with all
Its desolation and its terrors — lo!
’T is but a phantom world. So long ago
That God and all the angels since have died
That poet lived — yourself long dead — his mind
Filled with the light of a prophetic fire,
And standing by the Western sea, above
The youngest, fairest city in the world,
Named in another tongue than his for one
Ensainted, saw its populous domain
Plague-smitten with a nameless shame. For there
Red-handed murder rioted; and there
The people gathered gold, nor cared to loose
The assassin’s fingers from the victim’s throat,
But said, each in his vile pursuit engrossed:
’Am I my brother’s keeper? Let the Law
Look to the matter.’ But the Law did not.
And there, O pitiful! the babe was slain
Within its mother’s breast and the same grave
Held babe and mother; and the people smiled,
Still gathering gold, and said: ‘The Law, the Law,’
Then the great poet, touched upon the lips
With a live coal from Truth’s high altar, raised
His arms to heaven and sang a song of doom —
Sang of the time to be, when God should lean
Indignant from the Throne and lift his hand,
And that foul city be no more! — a tale,
A dream, a desolation and a curse!
No vestige of its glory should survive
In fact or memory: its people dead,
Its site forgotten, and its very name

Disputed."

"Was the prophecy fulfilled?"
The sullen disc of the declining sun
Was crimson with a curse and a portent,
And scarce his angry ray lit up the land
That lay below, whose lurid gloom appeared
Freaked with a moving mist, which, reeking up
From dim tarns hateful with a horrid ban,
Took shapes forbidden and without a name.
Gigantic night-birds, rising from the reeds
With cries discordant, startled all the air,
And bodiless voices babbled in the gloom.
But not to me came any voice again;
And, covering my face with thin, dead hands,
I wept, and woke, and cried aloud to God!

POLITICS.

That land full surely hastens to its end
Where public sycophants in homage bend
The populace to flatter, and repeat
The doubled echoes of its loud conceit.
Lowly their attitude but high their aim,
They creep to eminence through paths of shame,
Till fixed securely in the seats of pow’r,
The dupes they flattered they at last devour.

POESY.

Successive bards pursue Ambition’s fire
  That shines, Oblivion, above thy mire.
  The latest mounts his predecessor’s trunk,
  And sinks his brother ere himself is sunk.
  So die ingloriously Fame’s *élite*,
  But dams of dunces keep the line complete.

IN DEFENSE.

You may say, if you please, Johnny Bull, that our girls
Are crazy to marry your dukes and your earls;
But I’ve heard that the maids of your own little isle
Greet bachelor lords with a favoring smile.

Nay, titles, ‘tis said in defense of our fair,
Are popular here because popular there;
And for them our ladies persistently go
Because ‘tis exceedingly English, you know.

Whatever the motive, you’ll have to confess
The effort’s attended with easy success;
And — pardon the freedom—’tis thought, over here,
’Tis mortification you mask with a sneer.

It’s all very well, sir, your scorn to parade
Of the high nasal twang of the Yankee maid,
But, ah, to my lord when he dares to propose
No sound is so sweet as that “Yes” from the nose.

Our ladies, we grant, walk alone in the street
(Observe, by-the-by, on what delicate feet!)
’Tis a habit they got here at home, where they say
The men from politeness go seldom astray.

Ah, well, if the dukes and the earls and that lot
Can stand it (God succor them if they cannot!)
Your commoners ought to assent, I am sure,
And what they ‘re not called on to suffer, endure.

“‘Tis nothing but money?” “Your nobles are bought?”
  As to that, I submit, it is commonly thought
  That England’s a country not specially free
  Of Croesi and (if you’ll allow it) Croesae.

You’ve many a widow and many a girl
  With money to purchase a duke or an earl.
  ’Tis a very remarkable thing, you’ll agree,
  When goods import buyers from over the sea.

Alas for the woman of Albion’s isle!
  She may simper; as well as she can she may smile;
  She may wear pantalettes and an air of repose —
  But my lord of the future will talk through his nose.

AN INVOCATION.

[Read at the Celebration of Independence Day in San Francisco, in 1888.]

Goddess of Liberty! O thou
Whose tearless eyes behold the chain,
And look unmoved upon the slain,
Eternal peace upon thy brow, —

Before thy shrine the races press,
Thy perfect favor to implore —
The proudest tyrant asks no more,
The ironed anarchist no less.

Thine altar-coals that touch the lips
Of prophets kindle, too, the brand
By Discord flung with wanton hand
Among the houses and the ships.

Upon thy tranquil front the star
Burns bleak and passionless and white,
Its cold inclemency of light
More dreadful than the shadows are.

Thy name we do not here invoke
Our civic rites to sanctify:
Enthroned in thy remoter sky,
Thou heedest not our broken yoke.

Thou carest not for such as we:
Our millions die to serve the still

And secret purpose of thy will.
They perish — what is that to thee?

The light that fills the patriot’s tomb
Is not of thee. The shining crown
Compassionately offered down
To those who falter in the gloom,

And fall, and call upon thy name,
And die desiring—’tis the sign
Of a diviner love than thine,
Rewarding with a richer fame.

To him alone let freemen cry
Who hears alike the victor’s shout,
The song of faith, the moan of doubt,
And bends him from his nearer sky.

God of my country and my race!
So greater than the gods of old —
So fairer than the prophets told
Who dimly saw and feared thy face, —

Who didst but half reveal thy will
And gracious ends to their desire,
Behind the dawn’s advancing fire
Thy tender day-beam veiling still, —

To whom the unceasing suns belong,
And cause is one with consequence, —
To whose divine, inclusive sense
The moan is blended with the song, —

Whose laws, imperfect and unjust,
Thy just and perfect purpose serve:
The needle, howsoe’er it swerve,

Still warranting the sailor's trust, —

God, lift thy hand and make us free
To crown the work thou hast designed.
O, strike away the chains that bind
Our souls to one idolatry!

The liberty thy love hath given
We thank thee for. We thank thee for
Our great dead fathers' holy war
Wherein our manacles were riven.

We thank thee for the stronger stroke
Ourselves delivered and incurred
When — thine incitement half unheard —
The chains we riveted we broke.

We thank thee that beyond the sea
The people, growing ever wise,
Turn to the west their serious eyes
And dumbly strive to be as we.

As when the sun's returning flame
Upon the Nileside statue shone,
And struck from the enchanted stone
The music of a mighty fame,

Let Man salute the rising day
Of Liberty, but not adore.
'Tis Opportunity — no more —
A useful, not a sacred, ray.

It bringeth good, it bringeth ill,
As he possessing shall elect.

He maketh it of none effect
Who walketh not within thy will.

Give thou or more or less, as we
Shall serve the right or serve the wrong.
Confirm our freedom but so long
As we are worthy to be free.

But when (O, distant be the time!)
Majorities in passion draw
Insurgent swords to murder Law,
And all the land is red with crime;

Or — nearer menace! — when the band
Of feeble spirits cringe and plead
To the gigantic strength of Greed,
And fawn upon his iron hand; —

Nay, when the steps to state are worn
In hollows by the feet of thieves,
And Mammon sits among the sheaves
And chuckles while the reapers mourn;

Then stay thy miracle! — replace
The broken throne, repair the chain,
Restore the interrupted reign
And veil again thy patient face.

Lo! here upon the world’s extreme
We stand with lifted arms and dare
By thine eternal name to swear
Our country, which so fair we deem —

Upon whose hills, a bannered throng,
The spirits of the sun display
Their flashing lances day by day

And hear the sea’s pacific song —

Shall be so ruled in right and grace
That men shall say: “O, drive afield
The lawless eagle from the shield,
And call an angel to the place!”

RELIGION.

Hassan Bedreddin, clad in rags, ill-shod,
  Sought the great temple of the living God.
    The worshippers arose and drove him forth,
  And one in power beat him with a rod.

“Allah,” he cried, “thou seest what I got;
  Thy servants bar me from the sacred spot.”
    ”Be comforted,” the Holy One replied;
  ”It is the only place where I am not.”

A MORNING FANCY.

I drifted (or I seemed to) in a boat
Upon the surface of a shoreless sea
Whereon no ship nor anything did float,
Save only the frail bark supporting me;
And that — it was so shadowy — seemed to be
Almost from out the very vapors wrought
Of the great ocean underneath its keel;
And all that blue profound appeared as naught
But thicker sky, translucent to reveal,
Miles down, whatever through its spaces glided,
Or at the bottom traveled or abided.

Great cities there I saw — of rich and poor,
The palace and the hovel; mountains, vales,
Forest and field, the desert and the moor,
Tombs of the good and wise who'd lived in jails,
And seas of denser fluid, white with sails
Pushed at by currents moving here and there
And sensible to sight above the flat
Of that opaquer deep. Ah, strange and fair
The nether world that I was gazing at
With beating heart from that exalted level,
And — lest I founder — trembling like the devil!

The cities all were populous: men swarmed
In public places — chattered, laughed and wept;
And savages their shining bodies warmed
At fires in primal woods. The wild beast leapt
Upon its prey and slew it as it slept.
Armies went forth to battle on the plain
So far, far down in that unfathomed deep

The living seemed as silent as the slain,
Nor even the widows could be heard to weep.
One might have thought their shaking was but laughter;
And, truly, most were married shortly after.

Above the wreckage of that silent fray
Strange fishes swam in circles, round and round —
Black, double-finned; and once a little way
A bubble rose and burst without a sound
And a man tumbled out upon the ground.
Lord! ‘twas an eerie thing to drift apace
On that pellucid sea, beneath black skies
And o’er the heads of an undrowning race;
And when I woke I said — to her surprise
Who came with chocolate, for me to drink it:
”The atmosphere is deeper than you think it.”

VISIONS OF SIN.

KRASLAJORSK, SIBERIA, March 29.

“My eyes are better, and I shall travel slowly toward home.”
DANENHOWER.

From the regions of the Night,
Coming with recovered sight —
From the spell of darkness free,
What will Danenhower see?

He will see when he arrives,
Doctors taking human lives.
He will see a learned judge
Whose decision will not budge
Till both litigants are fleeced
And his palm is duly greased.
Lawyers he will see who fight
Day by day and night by night;
Never both upon a side,
Though their fees they still divide.
Preachers he will see who teach
That it is divine to preach —
That they fan a sacred fire
And are worthy of their hire.
He will see a trusted wife

(Pride of some good husband’s life)
Enter at a certain door
And — but he will see no more.
He will see Good Templars reel —
See a prosecutor steal,

  And a father beat his child.
  He’ll perhaps see Oscar Wilde.

From the regions of the Night
  Coming with recovered sight —
  From the bliss of blindness free,
  That’s what Danenhower’ll see.

1882.

THE TOWN OF DAE.

Swains and maidens, young and old,
You to me this tale have told.

Where the squalid town of Dae
Irks the comfortable sea,
Spreading webs to gather fish,
As for wealth we set a wish,
Dwelt a king by right divine,
Sprung from Adam’s royal line,
Town of Dae by the sea,
Divers kinds of kings there be.

Name nor fame had Picklepip:
Ne’er a soldier nor a ship
Bore his banners in the sun;
Naught knew he of kingly sport,
And he held his royal court
Under an inverted tun.
Love and roses, ages through,
Bloom where cot and trellis stand;
Never yet these blossoms grew —
Never yet was room for two —
In a cask upon the strand.

So it happened, as it ought,
That his simple schemes he wrought
Through the lagging summer’s day
In a solitary way.
So it happened, as was best,
That he took his nightly rest
With no dreadful incubus

This way eyed and that way tressed,
Featured thus, and thus, and thus,
Lying lead-like on a breast
By cares of State enough oppressed.
Yet in dreams his fancies rude
Claimed a lordly latitude.
Town of Dae by the sea,
Dreamers mate above their state
And waken back to their degree.

Once to cask himself away
He prepared at close of day.
As he tugged with swelling throat
At a most unkingly coat —
Not to get it off, but on,
For the serving sun was gone —
Passed a silk-appareled sprite
Toward her castle on the height,
Seized and set the garment right.
Turned the startled Picklepip —
Splendid crimson cheek and lip!
Turned again to sneak away,

But she bade the villain stay,
Bade him thank her, which he did
With a speech that slipped and slid,
Sprawled and stumbled in its gait
As a dancer tries to skate.
Town of Dae by the sea,
In the face of silk and lace
Rags too bold should never be.

Lady Minnow cocked her head:
”Mister Picklepip,” she said,
”Do you ever think to wed?”
Town of Dae by the sea,
No fair lady ever made a

  Wicked speech like that to me!

Wretched little Picklepip
 Said he hadn't any ship,
 Any flocks at his command,
 Nor to feed them any land;
 Said he never in his life
 Owned a mine to keep a wife.
 But the guilty stammer so
 That his meaning wouldn't flow;
 So he thought his aim to reach
 By some figurative speech:
 Said his Fate had been unkind
 Had pursued him from behind
  (How the mischief could it else?)

Came upon him unaware,
 Caught him by the collar — there
 Gushed the little lady's glee
  Like a gush of golden bells:
 "Picklepip, why, that is *me*!"
  Town of Dae by the sea,
 Grammar's for great scholars — she
  Loved the summer and the lea.

Stupid little Picklepip
 Allowed the subtle hint to slip —
 Maundered on about the ship
 That he did not chance to own;
  Told this grievance o'er and o'er,
  Knowing that she knew before;
 Told her how he dwelt alone.
 Lady Minnow, for reply,
 Cut him off with "So do I!"
 But she reddened at the fib;
 Servitors had she, *ad lib.*
  Town of Dae by the sea,

In her youth who speaks no truth
Ne’er shall young and honest be.

Witless little Picklepip
Manned again his mental ship
And veered her with a sudden shift.
Painted to the lady’s thought
How he wrestled and he wrought

Stoutly with the swimming drift
By the kindly river brought
From the mountain to the sea,
Fuel for the town of Dae.
Tedious tale for lady’s ear:
From her castle on the height,
She had watched her water-knight
Through the seasons of a year,
Challenge more than met his view
And conquer better than he knew.
Now she shook her pretty pate
And stamped her foot—’t was growing late:
”Mister Picklepip, when I
Drifting seaward pass you by;
When the waves my forehead kiss
And my tresses float above —
Dead and drowned for lack of love —
You’ll be sorry, sir, for this!”
And the silly creature cried —
Feared, perchance, the rising tide.
Town of Dae by the sea,
Madam Adam, when she had ‘em,
May have been as bad as she.

Fiat lux! Love’s lumination
Fell in floods of revelation!
Blinded brain by world aglare,
Sense of pulses in the air,

Sense of swooning and the beating
  Of a voice somewhere repeating
  Something indistinctly heard!
    And the soul of Picklepip
    Sprang upon his trembling lip,
  But he spake no further word
  Of the wealth he did not own;
  In that moment had outgrown
  Ship and mine and flock and land —
  Even his cask upon the strand.
  Dropped a stricken star to earth,
  Type of wealth and worldly worth.
  Clomb the moon into the sky,
  Type of love’s immensity!
  Shaking silver seemed the sea,
  Throne of God the town of Dae!
    Town of Dae by the sea,
  From above there cometh love,
    Blessing all good souls that be.

AN ANARCHIST.

False to his art and to the high command
God laid upon him, Markham’s rebel hand
Beats all in vain the harp he touched before:
It yields a jingle and it yields no more.
No more the strings beneath his finger-tips
Sing harmonies divine. No more his lips,
Touched with a living coal from sacred fires,
Lead the sweet chorus of the golden wires.
The voice is raucous and the phrases squeak;
They labor, they complain, they sweat, they reek!
The more the wayward, disobedient song
Errs from the right to celebrate the wrong,
More diligently still the singer strums,
To drown the horrid sound, with all his thumbs.
Gods, what a spectacle! The angels lean
Out of high Heaven to view the sorry scene,
And Israfel, “whose heart-strings are a lute,”
Though now compassion makes their music mute,
Among the weeping company appears,
Pearls in his eyes and cotton in his ears.

AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE.

Once I “dipt into the future far as human eye could see,”
And saw — it was not Sandow, nor John Sullivan, but she —
The Emancipated Woman, who was weeping as she ran
Here and there for the discovery of Expurgated Man.
But the sun of Evolution ever rose and ever set,
And that tardiest of mortals hadn’t evoluted yet.
Hence the tears that she cascaded, hence the sighs that tore apart
All the tendinous connections of her indurated heart.
Cried Emancipated Woman, as she wearied of the search:
”In Advancing I have left myself distinctly in the lurch!
Seeking still a worthy partner, from the land of brutes and dudes
I have penetrated rashly into manless solitudes.
Now without a mate of any kind where am I? — that’s to say,
Where shall I be to-morrow? — where exert my rightful sway
And the purifying strength of my emancipated mind?
Can solitude be lifted up, vacuity refined?
Calling, calling from the shadows in the rear of my Advance —
From the Region of Unprogress in the Dark Domain of Chance —
Long I heard the Unevolvable beseeching my return
To share the degradation he’s reluctant to unlearn.
But I fancy I detected — though I pray it wasn’t that —
A low reverberation, like an echo in a hat.
So I’ve held my way regardless, evoluting year by year,
Till I’m what you now behold me — or would if you were here —
A condensed Emancipation and a Purifier proud
An Independent Entity appropriately loud!
Independent? Yes, in spirit, but (O, woful, woful state!)
Doomed to premature extinction by privation of a mate —
To extinction or reversion, for Unexpurgated Man
Still awaits me in the backward if I sicken of the van.
O the horrible dilemma! — to be odiously linked
With an Undeveloped Species, or become a Type Extinct!”

As Emancipated Woman wailed her sorrow to the air,
  Stalking out of desolation came a being strange and rare —
  Plato’s Man! — bipedal, featherless from mandible to rump,
  Its wings two quilless flippers and its tail a plumeless stump.
  First it scratched and then it clucked, as if in hospitable terms
  It invited her to banquet on imaginary worms.
  Then it strutted up before her with a lifting of the head,
  And in accents of affection and of sympathy it said:
  ”My estate is some ‘at ‘umble, but I’m qualified to draw
  Near the hymeneal altar and whack up my heart and claw
  To Emancipated Anything as walks upon the earth;
  And them things is at your service for whatever they are worth.
  I’m sure to be congenial, marm, nor e’er deserve a scowl —
  I’m Emancipated Rooster, I am Expurgated Fowl!”

From the future and its wonders I withdrew my gaze, and then
  Wrote this wild unfestive prophecy about the Coming Hen.

ARMA VIRUMQUE.

“Ours is a Christian Army”; so he said
A regiment of bangomen who led.
”And ours a Christian Navy,” added he
Who sailed a thunder-junk upon the sea.
Better they know than men unwarlike do
What is an army and a navy, too.
Pray God there may be sent them by-and-by
The knowledge what a Christian is, and why.
For somewhat lamely the conception runs
Of a brass-buttoned Jesus firing guns.

ON A PROPOSED CREMATORY.

When a fair bridge is builded o’er the gulf
Between two cities, some ambitious fool,
Hot for distinction, pleads for earliest leave
To push his clumsy feet upon the span,
That men in after years may single him,
Saying: “Behold the fool who first went o’er!”
So be it when, as now the promise is,
Next summer sees the edifice complete
Which some do name a crematorium,
Within the vantage of whose greater maw’s
Quicker digestion we shall cheat the worm
And circumvent the handed mole who loves,
With tunnel, adit, drift and roomy stope,
To mine our mortal parts in all their dips
And spurs and angles. Let the fool stand forth
To link his name with this fair enterprise,
As first decarcassed by the flame. And if
With rival greedings for the fiery fame
They push in clamoring multitudes, or if
With unaccustomed modesty they all
Hold off, being something loth to qualify,
Let me select the fittest for the rite.
By heaven! I’ll make so warrantable, wise
And excellent censure of their true deserts,
And such a searching canvass of their claims,
That none shall bait the ballot. I’ll spread my choice
Upon the main and general of those
Who, moved of holy impulse, pulpit-born,
Protested ‘twere a sacrilege to burn
God’s gracious images, designed to rot,
And bellowed for the right of way for each
Distempered carrion through the water pipes.
With such a sturdy, boisterous exclaim

They did discharge themselves from their own throats
Against the splintered gates of audience
’Twere wholesomer to take them in at mouth
Than ear. These shall burn first: their ignible
And seasoned substances — trunks, legs and arms,
Blent indistinguishable in a mass,
Like winter-woven serpents in a pit —
None vantaged of his fellow-fools in point
Of precedence, and all alive — shall serve
As fueling to fervor the retort
For after cineration of true men.

A DEMAND.

You promised to paint me a picture,
Dear Mat,
And I was to pay you in rhyme.
Although I am loth to inflict your
Most easy of consciences, I’m
Of opinion that fibbing is awful,
And breaking a contract unlawful,
Indictable, too, as a crime,
A slight and all that.

If, Lady Unbountiful, any
Of that
By mortals called pity has part
In your obdurate soul — if a penny
You care for the health of my heart,
By performing your undertaking
You’ll succor that organ from breaking —
And spare it for some new smart,
As puss does a rat.

Do you think it is very becoming,
Dear Mat,
To deny me my rights evermore
And — bless you! if I begin summing
Your sins they will make a long score!
You never were generous, madam,
If you had been Eve and I Adam
You’d have given me naught but the core,
And little of that.

Had I been content with a Titian,

A cat
By Landseer, a meadow by Claude,
No doubt I'd have had your permission
To take it — by purchase abroad.
But why should I sail o'er the ocean
For Landseers and Claudes? I've a notion
All's bad that the critics belaud.
I wanted a Mat.

Presumption's a sin, and I suffer
For that:
But still you *did* say that sometime,
If I'd pay you enough (here's enougher —
That's more than enough) of rhyme
You'd paint me a picture. I pay you
Hereby in advance; and I pray you
Condone, while you can, your crime,
And send me a Mat.

But if you don't do it I warn you,
Dear Mat,
I'll raise such a clamor and cry
On Parnassus the Muses will scorn you
As mocker of poets and fly
With bitter complaints to Apollo:
"Her spirit is proud, her heart hollow,
Her beauty" — they'll hardly deny,
On second thought, *that*!

THE WEATHER WIGHT.

The way was long, the hill was steep,
  My footing scarcely I could keep.

The night enshrouded me in gloom,
  I heard the ocean’s distant boom —

The trampling of the surges vast
  Was borne upon the rising blast.

“God help the mariner,” I cried,
  ”Whose ship to-morrow braves the tide!”

Then from the impenetrable dark
  A solemn voice made this remark:

“For this locality — warm, bright;
  Barometer unchanged; breeze light.”

“Unseen consoler-man,” I cried,
  ”Whoe’er you are, where’er abide,

“Thanks — but my care is somewhat less
  For Jack’s, than for my own, distress.

“Could I but find a friendly roof,
  Small odds what weather were aloof.

“For he whose comfort is secure

  Another’s woes can well endure.”

“The latch-string’s out,” the voice replied,
  ”And so’s the door — jes’ step inside.”

Then through the darkness I discerned
  A hovel, into which I turned.

Groping about beneath its thatch,
  I struck my head and then a match.

A candle by that gleam betrayed
  Soon lent paraffinaceous aid.

A pallid, bald and thin old man
  I saw, who this complaint began:

“Through summer suns and winter snows
  I sets observin’ of my toes.

“I rambles with increasin’ pain
  The path of duty, but in vain.

“Rewards and honors pass me by —
  No Congress hears this raven cry!”

Filled with astonishment, I spoke:
  ”Thou ancient raven, why this croak?

“With observation of your toes
  What Congress has to do, Heaven knows!

"And swallow me if e'er I knew
  That one could sit and ramble too!"

To answer me that ancient swain
  Took up his parable again:

"Through winter snows and summer suns
  A Weather Bureau here I runs.

"I calls the turn, and can declare
  Jes' when she'll storm and when she'll fair.

"Three times a day I sings out clear
  The probs to all which wants to hear.

"Some weather stations run with light
  Frivolity is seldom right.

"A scientist from times remote,
  In Scienceville my birth is wrote.

"And when I h'ist the 'rainy' sign
  Jes' take your clo'es in off the line."

"Not mine, O marvelous old man,
  The methods of your art to scan,

"Yet here no instruments there be —
  Nor 'ometer nor 'scope I see.

"Did you (if questions you permit)
  At the asylum leave your kit?"

That strange old man with motion rude
  Grew to surprising altitude.

“Tools (and sarcazzems too) I scorns —
  I tells the weather by my corns.

“No doors and windows here you see —
  The wind and m’isture enters free.

“No fires nor lights, no wool nor fur
  Here falsifies the tempercher.

“My corns unleathered I expose
  To feel the rain’s foretellin’ throes.

“No stockin’ from their ears keeps out
  The comin’ tempest’s warnin’ shout.

“Sich delicacy some has got
  They know next summer’s to be hot.

“This here one says (for that he’s best):
  ’Storm center passin’ to the west.’

“This feller’s vitals is transfixed
  With frost for Janawary sixt’.

“One chap jes’ now is occy’pied
  In fig’rin on next Fridy’s tide.

“I’ve shaved this cuss so thin and true
He’ll spot a fog in South Peru.

“Sech are my tools, which ne’er a swell
Observatory can excel.

“By long a-studyin’ their throbs
I catches onto all the probs.”

Much more, no doubt, he would have said,
But suddenly he turned and fled;

For in mine eye’s indignant green
Lay storms that he had not foreseen,

Till all at once, with silent squeals,
His toes “caught on” and told his heels.

T.A.H.

Yes, he was that, or that, as you prefer —
Did so and so, though, faith, it wasn't all;
Lived like a fool, or a philosopher.
And had whatever's needful for a fall.
As rough inflections on a planet merge
In the true bend of the gigantic sphere,
Nor mar the perfect circle of its verge,
So in the survey of his worth the small
Asperities of spirit disappear,
Lost in the grander curves of character.
He lately was hit hard: none knew but I
The strength and terror of that ghastly stroke —
Not even herself. He uttered not a cry,
But set his teeth and made a revelry;
Drank like a devil — staining sometimes red
The goblet's edge; diced with his conscience; spread,
Like Sisyphus, a feast for Death, and spoke
His welcome in a tongue so long forgot
That even his ancient guest remembered not
What race had cursed him in it. Thus my friend
Still conjugating with each failing sense
The verb "to die" in every mood and tense,
Pursued his awful humor to the end.
When like a stormy dawn the crimson broke
From his white lips he smiled and mutely bled,
And, having meanly lived, is grandly dead.

MY MONUMENT.

It is pleasant to think, as I’m watching my ink
A-drying along my paper,
That a monument fine will surely be mine
When death has extinguished my taper.

From each rhyming scribe of the journalist tribe
Purged clean of all sentiments narrow,
A pebble will mark his respect for the stark
Stiff body that’s under the barrow.

By fellow-bards thrown, thus stone upon stone
Will make my celebrity deathless.
O, I wish I could think, as I gaze at my ink,
They’d wait till my carcass is breathless.

MAD.

O ye who push and fight
To hear a wanton sing —
Who utter the delight
That has the bogus ring, —

O men mature in years,
In understanding young,
The membranes of whose ears
She tickles with her tongue, —

O wives and daughters sweet,
Who call it love of art
To kiss a woman’s feet
That crush a woman’s heart, —

O prudent dams and sires,
Your docile young who bring
To see how man admires
A sinner if she sing, —

O husbands who impart
To each assenting spouse
The lesson that shall start
The buds upon your brows, —

All whose applauding hands
Assist to rear the fame
That throws o’er all the lands
The shadow of its shame, —

Go drag her car! — the mud

Through which its axle rolls
Is partly human blood
And partly human souls.

Mad, mad! — your senses whirl
Like devils dancing free,
Because a strolling girl
Can hold the note high C.

For this the avenging rod
Of Heaven ye dare defy,
And tear the law that God
Thundered from Sinai!

HOSPITALITY.

Why ask me, Gastrogogue, to dine
  (Unless to praise your rascal wine)
  Yet never ask some luckless sinner
  Who needs, as I do not, a dinner?

FOR A CERTAIN CRITIC.

Let lowly themes engage my humble pen —
Stupidities of critics, not of men.
Be it mine once more the maunderings to trace
Of the expounders' self-directed race —
Their wire-drawn fancies, finically fine,
Of diligent vacuity the sign.
Let them in jargon of their trade rehearse
The moral meaning of the random verse
That runs spontaneous from the poet's pen
To be half-blotted by ambitious men
Who hope with his their meaner names to link
By writing o'er it in another ink
The thoughts unreal which they think they think,
Until the mental eye in vain inspects
The hateful palimpsest to find the text.

The lark ascending heavenward, loud and long
Sings to the dawning day his wanton song.
The moaning dove, attentive to the sound,
Its hidden meaning hastens to expound:
Explains its principles, design — in brief,
Pronounces it a parable of grief!

The bee, just pausing ere he daubs his thigh
With pollen from a hollyhock near by,
Declares he never heard in terms so just
The labor problem thoughtfully discussed!
The browsing ass looks up and clears his whistle
To say: "A monologue upon the thistle!"
Meanwhile the lark, descending, folds his wing
And innocently asks: "What! — did I sing?"

O literary parasites! who thrive
  Upon the fame of better men, derive
  Your sustenance by suction, like a leech,
  And, for you preach of them, think masters preach, —
  Who find it half is profit, half delight,
  To write about what you could never write, —
  Consider, pray, how sharp had been the throes
  Of famine and discomfiture in those
  You write of if they had been critics, too,
  And doomed to write of nothing but of you!

Lo! where the gaping crowd throngs yonder tent,
  To see the lion resolutely bent!
  The prosing showman who the beast displays
  Grows rich and richer daily in its praise.
  But how if, to attract the curious yeoman,
  The lion owned the show and showed the showman?

RELIGIOUS PROGRESS.

Every religion is important. When men rise above existing conditions a new religion comes in, and it is better than the old one. — *Professor Howison.*

Professor dear, I think it queer
  That all these good religions
 (‘Twixt you and me, some two or three
  Are schemes for plucking pigeons) —

I mean ‘tis strange that every change
  Our poor minds to unfetter
 Entails a new religion — true
  As t’ other one, and better.

From each in turn the truth we learn,
  That wood or flesh or spirit
 May justly boast it rules the roast
  Until we cease to fear it.

Nay, once upon a time long gone
  Man worshipped Cat and Lizard:
 His God he’d find in any kind
  Of beast, from a to izzard.

When risen above his early love
  Of dirt and blood and slumber,
 He pulled down these vain deities,
  And made one out of lumber.

“Far better that than even a cat,”

The Howisons all shouted;
”When God is wood religion’s good!”
But one poor cynic doubted.

“A timber God — that’s very odd!”
Said Progress, and invented
The simple plan to worship Man,
Who, kindly soul! consented.

But soon our eye we lift asky,
Our vows all unregarded,
And find (at least so says the priest)
The Truth — and Man’s discarded.

Along our line of march recline
Dead gods devoid of feeling;
And thick about each sun-cracked lout
Dried Howisons are kneeling.

MAGNANIMITY.

“To the will of the people we loyally bow!”
  That’s the minority shibboleth now.
  O noble antagonists, answer me flat —
  What would you do if you didn’t do that?

TO HER.

O, Sinner A, to me unknown
  Be such a conscience as your own!
  To ease it you to Sinner B
  Confess the sins of Sinner C.

TO A SUMMER POET.

Yes, the Summer girl is flirting on the beach,
With a him.
And the damboy is a-climbing for the peach,
On the limb;
Yes, the bullfrog is a-croaking
And the dudelet is a-smoking
Cigarettes;
And the hackman is a-hacking
And the showman is a-cracking
Up his pets;
Yes, the Jersey 'skeeter flits along the shore
And the snapdog — we have heard it o'er and o'er;
Yes, my poet,
Well we know it —
Know the spooners how they spoon
In the bright
Dollar light
Of the country tavern moon;
Yes, the caterpillars fall
From the trees (we know it all),
And with beetles all the shelves
Are alive.

Please unbuttonhole us — O,
Have the grace to let us go,
For we know
How you Summer poets thrive,
By the recapitulation
And insistent iteration
Of the wondrous doings incident to Life Among
Ourselves!
So, I pray you stop the fervor and the fuss.

For you, poor human linnet,
There’s a half a living in it,
But there’s not a copper cent in it for us!

ARTHUR McEWEN.

Posterity with all its eyes
Will come and view him where he lies.
Then, turning from the scene away
With a concerted shrug, will say:
”H’m, Scarabaeus Sisyphus —
What interest has that to us?
We can’t admire at all, at all,
A tumble-bug without its ball.”
And then a sage will rise and say:
”Good friends, you err — turn back, I pray:
This freak that you unwisely shun
Is bug and ball rolled into one.”

CHARLES AND PETER.

Ere Gabriel’s note to silence died
  All graves of men were gaping wide.

Then Charles A. Dana, of “The Sun,”
  Rose slowly from the deepest one.

“The dead in Christ rise first, ‘t is writ,”
  Quoth he—”ick, bick, ban, doe, — I’m It!”

(His headstone, footstone, counted slow,
  Were “ick” and “bick,” he “ban” and “doe”:

Of beating Nick the subtle art
  Was part of his immortal part.)

Then straight to Heaven he took his flight,
  Arriving at the Gates of Light.

There Warden Peter, in the throes
  Of sleep, lay roaring in the nose.

“Get up, you sluggard!” Dana cried —
  ”I’ve an engagement there inside.”

The Saint arose and scratched his head.
  ”I recollect your face,” he said.

“(And, pardon me, ‘t is rather hard),

But — —” Dana handed him a card.

“Ah, yes, I now remember — bless
My soul, how dull I am I — yes, yes,

“We’ve nothing better here than bliss.
Walk in. But I must tell you this:

“We’ve rest and comfort, though, and peace.”
”H’m — puddles,” Dana said, “for geese.

“Have you in Heaven no Hell?” “Why, no,”
Said Peter, “nor, in truth, below.

“‘T is not included in our scheme —
’T is but a preacher’s idle dream.”

The great man slowly moved away.
”I’ll call,” he said, “another day.

“On earth I played it, o’er and o’er,
And Heaven without it were a bore.”

“O, stuff! — come in. You’ll make,” said Pete,
”A hell where’er you set your feet.”

1885.

CONTEMPLATION.

I muse upon the distant town
In many a dreamy mood.
Above my head the sunbeams crown
The graveyard’s giant rood.
The lupin blooms among the tombs.
The quail recalls her brood.

Ah, good it is to sit and trace
The shadow of the cross;
It moves so still from place to place
O’er marble, bronze and moss;
With graves to mark upon its arc
Our time’s eternal loss.

And sweet it is to watch the bee
That reve’s in the rose,
And sense the fragrance floating free
On every breeze that blows
O’er many a mound, where, safe and sound,
Mine enemies repose.

CREATION.

God dreamed — the suns sprang flaming into place,
  And sailing worlds with many a venturous race!
  He woke — His smile alone illumined space.

BUSINESS.

Two villains of the highest rank
  Set out one night to rob a bank.
  They found the building, looked it o’er,
  Each window noted, tried each door,
  Scanned carefully the lidded hole
  For minstrels to cascade the coal —
  In short, examined five-and-twenty
  Good paths from poverty to plenty.
  But all were sealed, they saw full soon,
  Against the minions of the moon.
  ”Enough,” said one: “I’m satisfied.”
  The other, smiling fair and wide,
  Said: “I’m as highly pleased as you:
  No burglar ever can get through.
  Fate surely prospers our design —
  The booty all is yours and mine.”
  So, full of hope, the following day
  To the exchange they took their way
  And bought, with manner free and frank,
  Some stock of that devoted bank;
  And they became, inside the year,
  One President and one Cashier.

Their crime I can no further trace —
  The means of safety to embrace,
  I overdrew and left the place.

A POSSIBILITY.

If the wicked gods were willing
(Pray it never may be true!)
That a universal chilling
Should ensue
Of the sentiment of loving, —
If they made a great undoing
Of the plan of turtle-doving,
Then farewell all poet-lore,
Evermore.
If there were no more of billing
There would be no more of cooing
And we all should be but owls —
Lonely fowls
Blinking wonderfully wise,
With our great round eyes —
Sitting singly in the gloaming and no longer two and two,
As unwilling to be wedded as unpracticed how to woo;
With regard to being mated,
Asking still with aggravated
Ungrammatical acerbity: “To who? To who?”

TO A CENSOR.

“The delay granted by the weakness and good nature of
our judges is responsible for half the murders.” — *Daily Newspaper*.

Delay responsible? Why, then; my friend,
Impeach Delay and you will make an end.
Thrust vile Delay in jail and let it rot
For doing all the things that it should not.
Put not good-natured judges under bond,
But make Delay in damages respond.
Minos, Aeacus, Rhadamanthus, rolled
Into one pitiless, unsmiling scold —
Unsparing censor, be your thongs uncurled
To “lash the rascals naked through the world.”
The rascals? Nay, Rascality’s the thing
Above whose back your knotted scourges sing.
Your satire, truly, like a razor keen,
”Wounds with a touch that’s neither felt nor seen;”
For naught that you assail with falchion free
Has either nerves to feel or eyes to see.
Against abstractions evermore you charge
You hack no helmet and you need no targe.
That wickedness is wrong and sin a vice,
That wrong’s not right and foulness never nice,
Fearless affirm. All consequences dare:
Smite the offense and the offender spare.
When Ananias and Sapphira lied
Falsehood, had you been there, had surely died.
When money-changers in the Temple sat,
At money-changing you’d have whirled the “cat”
(That John-the-Baptist of the modern pen)
And all the brokers would have cried amen!

Good friend, if any judge deserve your blame
  Have you no courage, or has he no name?
  Upon his method will you wreak your wrath,
  Himself all unmolested in his path?
  Fall to! fall to! — your club no longer draw
  To beat the air or flail a man of straw.
  Scorn to do justice like the Saxon thrall
  Who cuffed the offender’s shadow on a wall.
  Let rascals in the flesh attest your zeal —
  Knocked on the mazzard or tripped up at heel!

We know that judges are corrupt. We know
  That crimes are lively and that laws are slow.
  We know that lawyers lie and doctors slay;
  That priests and preachers are but birds of pray;
  That merchants cheat and journalists for gold
  Flatter the vicious while at vice they scold.
  ’Tis all familiar as the simple lore
  That two policemen and two thieves make four.

But since, while some are wicked, some are good,
  (As trees may differ though they all are wood)
  Names, here and there, to show whose head is hit,
  The bad would sentence and the good acquit.
  In sparing everybody none you spare:
  Rebukes most personal are least unfair.
  To fire at random if you still prefer,
  And swear at Dog but never kick a cur,
  Permit me yet one ultimate appeal
  To something that you understand and feel:
  Let thrift and vanity your heart persuade —
  You might be read if you would learn your trade.

Good brother cynics (you have doubtless guessed
  Not one of you but all are here addressed)
  Remember this: the shaft that seeks a heart
  Draws all eyes after it; an idle dart

Shot at some shadow flutters o’er the green,
Its flight unheeded and its fall unseen.

THE HESITATING VETERAN.

When I was young and full of faith
   And other fads that youngsters cherish
 A cry rose as of one that saith
   With unction: “Help me or I perish!”
 ’Twas heard in all the land, and men
   The sound were each to each repeating.
 It made my heart beat faster then
   Than any heart can now be beating.

For the world is old and the world is gray —
   Grown prudent and, I guess, more witty.
 She’s cut her wisdom teeth, they say,
   And doesn’t now go in for Pity.
 Besides, the melancholy cry
   Was that of one, ‘tis now conceded,
 Whose plight no one beneath the sky
   Felt half so poignantly as he did.

Moreover, he was black. And yet
   That sentimental generation
 With an austere compassion set
   Its face and faith to the occasion.
 Then there were hate and strife to spare,
   And various hard knocks a-plenty;
 And I (‘twas more than my true share,
   I must confess) took five-and-twenty.

That all is over now — the reign
   Of love and trade stills all dissensions,
 And the clear heavens arch again
   Above a land of peace and pensions.

The black chap — at the last we gave
Him everything that he had cried for,
Though many white chaps in the grave
’Twould puzzle to say what they died for.

I hope he’s better off — I trust
That his society and his master’s
Are worth the price we paid, and must
Continue paying, in disasters;
But sometimes doubts press thronging round
(‘Tis mostly when my hurts are aching)
If war for union was a sound
And profitable undertaking.

‘Tis said they mean to take away
The Negro’s vote for he’s unlettered.
’Tis true he sits in darkness day
And night, as formerly, when fettered;
But pray observe — howe’er he vote
To whatsoever party turning,
He’ll be with gentlemen of note
And wealth and consequence and learning.
With Hales and Morgans on each side,
How could a fool through lack of knowledge,
Vote wrong? If learning is no guide
Why ought one to have been in college?
O Son of Day, O Son of Night!
What are your preferences made of?
I know not which of you is right,
Nor which to be the more afraid of.

The world is old and the world is bad,
And creaks and grinds upon its axis;
And man’s an ape and the gods are mad! —
There’s nothing sure, not even our taxes.
No mortal man can Truth restore,

  Or say where she is to be sought for.
I know what uniform I wore —
  O, that I knew which side I fought for!

A YEAR'S CASUALTIES.

Slain as they lay by the secret, slow,
  Pitiless hand of an unseen foe,
  Two score thousand old soldiers have crossed
  The river to join the loved and lost.
  In the space of a year their spirits fled,
  Silent and white, to the camp of the dead.

One after one, they fall asleep
  And the pension agents awake to weep,
  And orphaned statesmen are loud in their wail
  As the souls flit by on the evening gale.
  O Father of Battles, pray give us release
  From the horrors of peace, the horrors of peace!

INSPIRATION.

O hoary sculptor, stay thy hand:
  I fain would view the lettered stone.
 What carvest thou? — perchance some grand
  And solemn fancy all thine own.
 For oft to know the fitting word
  Some humble worker God permits.
   ”Jain Ann Meginnis,
     Agid 3rd.
   He givith His beluved fits.”

TO-DAY.

I saw a man who knelt in prayer,
And heard him say:
”I’ll lay my inmost spirit bare
To-day.

“Lord, for to-morrow and its need
I do not pray;
Let me upon my neighbor feed
To-day.

“Let me my duty duly shirk
And run away
From any form or phase of work
To-day.

“From Thy commands exempted still
Let me obey
The promptings of my private will
To-day.

“Let me no word profane, no lie
Unthinking say
If anyone is standing by
To-day.

“My secret sins and vices grave
Let none betray;
The scoffer’s jeers I do not crave
To-day.

“And if to-day my fortune all
Should ebb away,
Help me on other men’s to fall
To-day.

“So, for to-morrow and its mite
I do not pray;
Just give me everything in sight
To-day.”

I cried: “Amen!” He rose and ran
Like oil away.
I said: “I’ve seen an honest man
To-day.”

AN ALIBI.

A famous journalist, who long
Had told the great unheaded throng
Whate’er they thought, by day or night.
Was true as Holy Writ, and right,
Was caught in — well, on second thought,
It is enough that he was caught,
And being thrown in jail became
The fuel of a public flame.

“*Vox populi vox Dei*,” said
The jailer. Inxling bent his head
Without remark: that motto good
In bold-faced type had always stood
Above the columns where his pen
Had rioted in praise of men
And all they said — provided he
Was sure they mostly did agree.
Meanwhile a sharp and bitter strife
To take, or save, the culprit’s life
Or liberty (which, I suppose,
Was much the same to him) arose
Outside. The journal that his pen
Adorned denounced his crime — but then
Its editor in secret tried
To have the indictment set aside.
The opposition papers swore
His father was a rogue before,
And all his wife’s relations were
Like him and similar to her.
They begged their readers to subscribe
A dollar each to make a bribe
That any Judge would feel was large

Enough to prove the gravest charge —
Unless, it might be, the defense
Put up superior evidence.
The law’s traditional delay
Was all too short: the trial day
Dawned red and menacing. The Judge
Sat on the Bench and wouldn’t budge,
And all the motions counsel made
Could not move *him* — and there he stayed.
”The case must now proceed,” he said,
”While I am just in heart and head,
It happens — as, indeed, it ought —
Both sides with equal sums have bought
My favor: I can try the cause
Impartially.” (Prolonged applause.)

The prisoner was now arraigned
And said that he was greatly pained
To be suspected — *he*, whose pen
Had charged so many other men
With crimes and misdemeanors! “Why,”
He said, a tear in either eye,
”If men who live by crying out
’Stop thief!’ are not themselves from doubt
Of their integrity exempt,
Let all forego the vain attempt
To make a reputation! Sir,
I’m innocent, and I demur.”
Whereat a thousand voices cried
Amain he manifestly lied —
Vox populi as loudly roared
As bull by *picadores* gored,
In his own coin receiving pay
To make a Spanish holiday.

The jury — twelve good men and true —
Were then sworn in to see it through,
And each made solemn oath that he

As any babe unborn was free
From prejudice, opinion, thought,
Respectability, brains — aught
That could disqualify; and some
Explained that they were deaf and dumb.
A better twelve, his Honor said,
Was rare, except among the dead.
The witnesses were called and sworn.
The tales they told made angels mourn,
And the Good Book they'd kissed became
Red with the consciousness of shame.

Whenever one of them approached
The truth, "That witness wasn't coached,
Your Honor!" cried the lawyers both.
"Strike out his testimony," quoth
The learned judge: "This Court denies
Its ear to stories which surprise.
I hold that witnesses exempt
From coaching all are in contempt."
Both Prosecution and Defense
Applauded the judicial sense,
And the spectators all averred
Such wisdom they had never heard:
'Twas plain the prisoner would be
Found guilty in the first degree.
Meanwhile that wight's pale cheek confessed
The nameless terrors in his breast.
He felt remorseful, too, because
He wasn't half they said he was.
"If I'd been such a rogue," he mused
On opportunities unused,
"I might have easily become
As wealthy as Methusalum."
This journalist adorned, alas,
The middle, not the Bible, class.

With equal skill the lawyers’ pleas
Attested their divided fees.
Each gave the other one the lie,
Then helped him frame a sharp reply.

Good Lord! it was a bitter fight,
And lasted all the day and night.
When once or oftener the roar
Had silenced the judicial snore
The speaker suffered for the sport
By fining for contempt of court.
Twelve jurors’ noses good and true
Unceasing sang the trial through,
And even *vox populi* was spent
In rattles through a nasal vent.
Clerk, bailiff, constables and all
Heard Morpheus sound the trumpet call
To arms — his arms — and all fell in
Save counsel for the Man of Sin.
That thaumaturgist stood and swayed
The wand their faculties obeyed —
That magic wand which, like a flame.
Leapt, wavered, quivered and became
A wonder-worker — known among
The ignoble vulgar as a Tongue.

How long, O Lord, how long my verse
Runs on for better or for worse
In meter which o’ermasters me,
Octosyllabically free! —
A meter which, the poets say,
No power of restraint can stay; —
A hard-mouthed meter, suited well
To him who, having naught to tell,
Must hold attention as a trout
Is held, by paying out and out
The slender line which else would break

Should one attempt the fish to take.
Thus tavern guides who've naught to show
But some adjacent curio
By devious trails their patrons lead
And make them think 't is far indeed.
Where was I?

While the lawyer talked
The rogue took up his feet and walked:
While all about him, roaring, slept,
Into the street he calmly stepped.
In very truth, the man who thought
The people's voice from heaven had caught
God's inspiration took a change
Of venue — it was passing strange!
Straight to his editor he went
And that ingenious person sent
A Negro to impersonate
The fugitive. In adequate
Disguise he took his vacant place
And buried in his arms his face.
When all was done the lawyer stopped
And silence like a bombshell dropped
Upon the Court: judge, jury, all
Within that venerable hall
(Except the deaf and dumb, indeed,
And one or two whom death had freed)
Awoke and tried to look as though
Slumber was all they did not know.

And now that tireless lawyer-man
Took breath, and then again began:
"Your Honor, if you did attend
To what I've urged (my learned friend
Nodded concurrence) to support
The motion I have made, this court
May soon adjourn. With your assent

I’ve shown abundant precedent
For introducing now, though late,
New evidence to exculpate
My client. So, if you’ll allow,
I’ll prove an *alibi*!” “What? — how?”
Stammered the judge. “Well, yes, I can’t
Deny your showing, and I grant
The motion. Do I understand
You undertake to prove — good land! —
That when the crime — you mean to show
Your client wasn’t *there*?” “O, no,
I cannot quite do that, I find:
My *alibi’s* another kind
Of *alibi*, — I’ll make it clear,
Your Honor, that he isn’t *here*.”
The Darky here upreared his head,
Tranquillity affrighted fled
And consternation reigned instead!

REBUKE.

When Admonition's hand essays
Our greed to curse,
Its lifted finger oft displays
Our missing purse.

J.F.B.

How well this man unfolded to our view
The world’s beliefs of Death and Heaven and Hell —
This man whose own convictions none could tell,
Nor if his maze of reason had a clew.
Dogmas he wrote for daily bread, but knew
The fair philosophies of doubt so well
That while we listened to his words there fell
Some that were strangely comforting, though true.
Marking how wise we grew upon his doubt,
We said: “If so, by groping in the night,
He can proclaim some certain paths of trust,
How great our profit if he saw about
His feet the highways leading to the light.”
Now he sees all. Ah, Christ! his mouth is dust!

THE DYING STATESMAN.

It is a politician man —
He draweth near his end,
And friends weep round that partisan,
Of every man the friend.

Between the Known and the Unknown
He lieth on the strand;
The light upon the sea is thrown
That lay upon the land.

It shineth in his glazing eye,
It burneth on his face;
God send that when we come to die
We know that sign of grace!

Upon his lips his blessed sprite
Poiseth her joyous wing.
”How is it with thee, child of light?
Dost hear the angels sing?”

“The song I hear, the crown I see,
And know that God is love.
Farewell, dark world — I go to be
A postmaster above!”

For him no monumental arch,
But, O, ‘tis good and brave
To see the Grand Old Party march
To office o’er his grave!

THE DEATH OF GRANT.

Father! whose hard and cruel law
Is part of thy compassion’s plan,
Thy works presumptuously we scan
For what the prophets say they saw.

Unbidden still the awful slope
Walling us in we climb to gain
Assurance of the shining plain
That faith has certified to hope.

In vain! — beyond the circling hill
The shadow and the cloud abide.
Subdue the doubt, our spirits guide
To trust the Record and be still.

To trust it loyally as he
Who, heedful of his high design,
Ne’er raised a seeking eye to thine,
But wrought thy will unconsciously,

Disputing not of chance or fate,
Nor questioning of cause or creed;
For anything but duty’s deed
Too simply wise, too humbly great.

The cannon syllabled his name;
His shadow shifted o’er the land,
Portentous, as at his command
Successive cities sprang to flame!

He fringed the continent with fire,
  The rivers ran in lines of light!
  Thy will be done on earth — if right
 Or wrong he cared not to inquire.

His was the heavy hand, and his
  The service of the despot blade;
  His the soft answer that allayed
 War’s giant animosities.

Let us have peace: our clouded eyes,
  Fill, Father, with another light,
  That we may see with clearer sight
 Thy servant’s soul in Paradise.

THE FOUNTAIN REFILLED.

Of Hans Pietro Shanahan
  (Who was a most ingenious man)
  The Muse of History records
  That he’d get drunk as twenty lords.

He’d get so truly drunk that men
  Stood by to marvel at him when
  His slow advance along the street
  Was but a vain cycloidal feat.

And when ‘twas fated that he fall
  With a wide geographical sprawl,
  They signified assent by sounds
  Heard (faintly) at its utmost bounds.

And yet this Mr. Shanahan
  (Who was a most ingenious man)
  Cast not on wine his thirsty eyes
  When it was red or otherwise.

All malt, or spirituous, tope
  He loathed as cats dissent from soap;
  And cider, if it touched his lip,
  Evoked a groan at every sip.

But still, as heretofore explained,
  He not infrequently was grained.
  (I’m not of those who call it “corned.”
  Coarse speech I’ve always duly scorned.)

Though truth to say, and that’s but right,
  Strong drink (it hath an adder’s bite!)
  Was what had put him in the mud,
  The only kind he used was blood!

Alas, that an immortal soul
  Addicted to the flowing bowl,
  The emptied flagon should again
  Replenish from a neighbor’s vein.

But, Mr. Shanahan was so
  Constructed, and his taste that low.
  Nor more deplorable was he
  In kind of thirst than in degree;

For sometimes fifty souls would pay
  The debt of nature in a day
  To free him from the shame and pain
  Of dread Sobriety’s misreign.

His native land, proud of its sense
  Of his unique inabstinence,
  Abated something of its pride
  At thought of his unfilled inside.

And some the boldness had to say
  ’Twere well if he were called away
  To slake his thirst forevermore
  In oceans of celestial gore.

But Hans Pietro Shanahan
  (Who was a most ingenious man)
  Knew that his thirst was mortal; so
  Remained unsainted here below —

Unsainted and unsaintly, for
He neither went to glory nor
To abdicate his power deigned
Where, under Providence, he reigned,

But kept his Boss’s power accurst
To serve his wild uncommon thirst.
Which now had grown so truly great
It was a drain upon the State.

Soon, soon there came a time, alas!
When he turned down an empty glass —
All practicable means were vain
His special wassail to obtain.

In vain poor Decimation tried
To furnish forth the needful tide;
And Civil War as vainly shed
Her niggard offering of red.

Poor Shanahan! his thirst increased
Until he wished himself deceased,
Invoked the firearm and the knife,
But could not die to save his life!

He was so dry his own veins made
No answer to the seeking blade;
So parched that when he would have passed
Away he could not breathe his last.

‘Twas then, when almost in despair,
(Unlaced his shoon, unkempt his hair)
He saw as in a dream a way

To wet afresh his mortal clay.

Yes, Hans Pietro Shanahan
(Who was a most ingenious man)
Saw freedom, and with joy and pride
”Thalassa! (or Thalatta!)” cried.

Straight to the Aldermen went he,
With many a “pull” and many a fee,
And many a most corrupt “combine”
(The Press for twenty cents a line

Held out and fought him — O, God, bless
Forevermore the holy Press!)
Till he had franchises complete
For trolley lines on every street!

The cars were builded and, they say,
Were run on rails laid every way —
Rhomboidal roads, and circular,
And oval — everywhere a car —

Square, dodecagonal (in great
Esteem the shape called Figure 8)
And many other kinds of shapes
As various as tails of apes.

No other group of men’s abodes
E’er had such odd electric roads,
That winding in and winding out,
Began and ended all about.

No city had, unless in Mars,
That city’s wealth of trolley cars.

They ran by day, they flew by night,
And O, the sorry, sorry sight!

And Hans Pietro Shanahan
(Who was a most ingenious man)
Incessantly, the Muse records,
Lay drunk as twenty thousand lords!

LAUS LUCIS.

Theosophists are about to build a “Temple for the revival of the Mysteries of Antiquity.” — *Vide the Newspapers, passim.*

Each to his taste: some men prefer to play
At mystery, as others at piquet.
Some sit in mystic meditation; some
Parade the street with tambourine and drum.
One studies to decipher ancient lore
Which, proving stuff, he studies all the more;
Another swears that learning is but good
To darken things already understood,
Then writes upon Simplicity so well
That none agree on what he wants to tell,
And future ages will declare his pen
Inspired by gods with messages to men.
To found an ancient order those devote
Their time — with ritual, regalia, goat,
Blankets for tossing, chairs of little ease
And all the modern inconveniences;
These, saner, frown upon unmeaning rites
And go to church for rational delights.
So all are suited, shallow and profound,
The prophets prosper and the world goes round.
For me — unread in the occult, I’m fain
To damn all mysteries alike as vain,
Spurn the obscure and base my faith upon
The Revelations of the good St. John.

1897.

NANINE.

We heard a song-bird trilling —
’T was but a night ago.
Such rapture he was rilling
As only we could know.

This morning he is flinging
His music from the tree,
But something in the singing
Is not the same to me.

His inspiration fails him,
Or he has lost his skill.
Nanine, Nanine, what ails him
That he should sing so ill?

Nanine is not replying —
She hears no earthly song.
The sun and bird are lying
And the night is, O, so long!

TECHNOLOGY.

‘Twas a serious person with locks of gray
And a figure like a crescent;
His gravity, clearly, had come to stay,
But his smile was evanescent.

He stood and conversed with a neighbor, and
With (likewise) a high falsetto;
And he stabbed his forefinger into his hand
As if it had been a stiletto.

His words, like the notes of a tenor drum,
Came out of his head unblended,
And the wonderful altitude of some
Was exceptionally splendid.

While executing a shake of the head,
With the hand, as it were, of a master,
This agonizing old gentleman said:
"’Twas a truly sad disaster!

“Four hundred and ten longs and shorts in all,
Went down” — he paused and snuffled.
A single tear was observed to fall,
And the old man’s drum was muffled.

“A very calamitous year,” he said.
And again his head-piece hoary
He shook, and another pearl he shed,
As if he wept *con amore.*

“O lacrymose person,” I cried, “pray why
Should these failures so affect you?
With speculators in stocks no eye
That’s normal would ever connect you.”

He focused his orbs upon mine and smiled
In a sinister sort of manner.
”Young man,” he said, “your words are wild:
I spoke of the steamship ‘Hanner.’

“For she has went down in a howlin’ squall,
And my heart is nigh to breakin’ —
Four hundred and ten longs and shorts in all
Will never need undertakin’!

“I’m in the business myself,” said he,
”And you’ve mistook my expression;
For I uses the technical terms, you see,
Employed in my perfession.”

That old undertaker has joined the throng
On the other side of the River,
But I’m still unhappy to think I’m a “long,”
And a tape-line makes me shiver.

A REPLY TO A LETTER.

O nonsense, parson — tell me not they thrive
And jubilate who follow your dictation.
The good are the unhappiest lot alive —
I know they are from careful observation.
If freedom from the terrors of damnation
Lengthens the visage like a telescope,
And lacrymation is a sign of hope,
Then I'll continue, in my dreadful plight,
To tread the dusky paths of sin, and grope
Contentedly without your lantern's light;
And though in many a bog beslubbered quite,
Refuse to flay me with ecclesiastic soap.

You say 'tis a sad world, seeing I'm condemned,
With many a million others of my kidney.
Each continent's Hammed, Japheted and Shemmed
With sinners — worldlings like Sir Philip Sidney
And scoffers like Voltaire, who thought it bliss
To simulate respect for Genesis —
Who bent the mental knee as if in prayer,
But mocked at Moses underneath his hair,
And like an angry gander bowed his head to hiss.

Seeing such as these, who die without contrition,
Must go to — beg your pardon, sir — perdition,
The sons of light, you tell me, can't be gay,
But count it sin of the sort called omission
The groan to smother or the tear to stay
Or fail to — what is that they live by? — pray.
So down they flop, and the whole serious race is
Put by divine compassion on a praying basis.

Well, if you take it so to heart, while yet
Our own hearts are so light with nature's leaven,
You'll weep indeed when we in Hades sweat,
And you look down upon us out of Heaven.
In fancy, lo! I see your wailing shades
Thronging the crystal battlements. Cascades
Of tears spring singing from each golden spout,
Run roaring from the verge with hoarser sound,
Dash downward through the glimmering profound,
Quench the tormenting flame and put the Devil out!

Presumptuous ass! to you no power belongs
To pitchfork me to Heaven upon the prongs
Of a bad pen, whose disobedient sputter,
With less of ink than incoherence fraught
Befits the folly that it tries to utter.
Brains, I observe, as well as tongues, can stutter:
You suffer from impediment of thought.

When next you "point the way to Heaven," take care:
Your fingers all being thumbs, point, Heaven knows where!
Farewell, poor dunce! your letter though I blame,
Bears witness how my anger I can tame:
I've called you everything except your hateful name!

TO OSCAR WILDE.

Because from Folly’s lips you got
Some babbled mandate to subdue
The realm of Common Sense, and you
Made promise and considered not —

Because you strike a random blow
At what you do not understand,
And beckon with a friendly hand
To something that you do not know,

I hold no speech of your desert,
Nor answer with porrected shield
The wooden weapon that you wield,
But meet you with a cast of dirt.

Dispute with such a thing as you —
Twin show to the two-headed calf?
Why, sir, if I repress my laugh,
’T is more than half the world can do.

1882.

PRAYER.

Fear not in any tongue to call
  Upon the Lord — He’s skilled in all.
  But if He answereth my plea
  He speaketh one unknown to me.

A BORN LEADER OF MEN.

Tuckerton Tamerlane Morey Mahosh
Is a statesman of world-wide fame,
With a notable knack at rhetorical bosh
To glorify somebody’s name —
Somebody chosen by Tuckerton’s masters
To succor the country from divers disasters
Portentous to Mr. Mahosh.

Percy O’Halloran Tarpy Cabee
Is in the political swim.
He cares not a button for men, not he:
Great principles captivate him —
Principles cleverly cut out and fitted
To Percy’s capacity, duly submitted,
And fought for by Mr. Cabee.

Drusus Turn Swinnerton Porfer Fitzurse
Holds office the most of his life.
For men nor for principles cares he a curse,
But much for his neighbor’s wife.
The Ship of State leaks, but *he* doesn’t pump any,
Messrs. Mahosh, Cabee & Company
Pump for good Mr. Fitzurse.

TO THE BARTHOLDI STATUE.

O Liberty, God-gifted —
Young and immortal maid —
In your high hand uplifted;
The torch declares your trade.

Its crimson menace, flaming
Upon the sea and shore,
Is, trumpet-like, proclaiming
That Law shall be no more.

Austere incendiary,
We’re blinking in the light;
Where is your customary
Grenade of dynamite?

Where are your staves and switches
For men of gentle birth?
Your mask and dirk for riches?
Your chains for wit and worth?

Perhaps, you’ve brought the halters
You used in the old days,
When round religion’s altars
You stabled Cromwell’s bays?

Behind you, unsuspected,
Have you the axe, fair wench,
Wherewith you once collected
A poll-tax from the French?

America salutes you —
  Preparing to disgorge.
 Take everything that suits you,
  And marry Henry George.

1894

AN UNMERRY CHRISTMAS.

Christmas, you tell me, comes but once a year.
One place it never comes, and that is here.
Here, in these pages no good wishes spring,
No well-worn greetings tediously ring —
For Christmas greetings are like pots of ore:
The hollower they are they ring the more.
Here shall no holly cast a spiny shade,
Nor mistletoe my solitude invade,
No trinket-laden vegetable come,
No jorum steam with Sheolate of rum.
No shrilling children shall their voices rear.
Hurrah for Christmas without Christmas cheer!

No presents, if you please — I know too well
What Herbert Spencer, if he didn’t tell
(I know not if he did) yet might have told
Of present-giving in the days of old,
When Early Man with gifts propitiated
The chiefs whom most he doubted, feared and hated,
Or tendered them in hope to reap some rude
Advantage from the taker’s gratitude.
Since thus the Gift its origin derives
(How much of its first character survives
You know as well as I) my stocking’s tied,
My pocket buttoned — with my soul inside.
I save my money and I save my pride.

Dinner? Yes; thank you — just a human body
Done to a nutty brown, and a tear toddy
To give me appetite; and as for drink,
About a half a jug of blood, I think,

Will do; for still I love the red, red wine,
Coagulating well, with wrinkles fine
Fretting the satin surface of its flood.
O tope of kings — divine Falernian — blood!

Duse take the shouting fowls upon the limb,
The kneeling cattle and the rising hymn!
Has not a pagan rights to be regarded —
His heart assaulted and his ear bombarded
With sentiments and sounds that good old Pan
Even in his demonium would ban?

No, friends — no Christmas here, for I have sworn
To keep my heart hard and my knees unworn.
Enough you have of jester, player, priest:
I as the skeleton attend your feast,
In the mad revelry to make a lull
With shaken finger and with bobbing skull.
However you my services may flout,
Philosophy disdain and reason doubt,
I mean to hold in customary state,
My dismal revelry and celebrate
My yearly rite until the crack o’ doom,
Ignore the cheerful season’s warmth and bloom
And cultivate an oasis of gloom.

BY A DEFEATED LITIGANT.

Liars for witnesses; for lawyers brutes
  Who lose their tempers to retrieve their suits;
  Cowards for jurors; and for judge a clown
  Who ne’er took up the law, yet lays it down;
  Justice denied, authority abused,
  And the one honest person the accused —
  Thy courts, my country, all these awful years,
  Move fools to laughter and the wise to tears.

AN EPITAPH.

Here lies Greer Harrison, a well cracked louse —
So small a tenant of so big a house!
He joyed in fighting with his eyes (his fist
Prudently pendent from a peaceful wrist)
And loved to loll on the Parnassian mount,
His pen to suck and all his thumbs to count, —
What poetry he'd written but for lack
Of skill, when he had counted, to count back!
Alas, no more he'll climb the sacred steep
To wake the lyre and put the world to sleep!
To his rapt lip his soul no longer springs
And like a jaybird from a knot-hole sings.
No more the clubmen, pickled with his wine,
Spread wide their ears and hiccough "That's divine!"
The genius of his purse no longer draws
The pleasing thunders of a paid applause.
All silent now, nor sound nor sense remains,
Though riddances of worms improve his brains.
All his no talents to the earth revert,
And Fame concludes the record: "Dirt to dirt!"

THE POLITICIAN.

“Let Glory’s sons manipulate
 The tiller of the Ship of State.
 Be mine the humble, useful toil
 To work the tiller of the soil.”

AN INSCRIPTION

For a Proposed Monument in Washington to Him who Made it Beautiful.

Erected to “Boss” Shepherd by the dear
Good folk he lived and moved among in peace —
Guarded on either hand by the police,
With soldiers in his front and in his rear.

FROM VIRGINIA TO PARIS.

The polecat, sovereign of its native wood,
Dashes damnation upon bad and good;
The health of all the upas trees impairs
By exhalations deadlier than theirs;
Poisons the rattlesnake and warts the toad —
The creeks go rotten and the rocks corrode!
She shakes o’er breathless hill and shrinking dale
The horrid aspergillus of her tail!
From every saturated hair, till dry,
The spargent fragrances divergent fly,
Deafen the earth and scream along the sky!

Removed to alien scenes, amid the strife
Of urban odors to ungladden life —
Where gas and sewers and dead dogs conspire
The flesh to torture and the soul to fire —
Where all the “well defined and several stinks”
Known to mankind hold revel and high jinks —
Humbled in spirit, smitten with a sense
Of lost distinction, leveled eminence,
She suddenly resigns her baleful trust,
Nor ever lays again our mortal dust.
Her powers atrophied, her vigor sunk,
She lives deodorized, a sweeter skunk.

A MUTE INGLORIOUS MILTON.

“O, I’m the Unaverage Man,
  But you never have heard of me,
 For my brother, the Average Man, outran
  My fame with rapiditee,
  And I’m sunk in Oblivion’s sea,
 But my bully big brother the world can span
  With his wide notorietee.
 I do everything that I can
  To make ‘em attend to me,
 But the papers ignore the Unaverage Man
  With a weird uniformitee.”

So sang with a dolorous note
  A voice that I heard from the beach;
 On the sable waters it seemed to float
  Like a mortal part of speech.
 The sea was Oblivion’s sea,
  And I cried as I plunged to swim:
 ”The Unaverage Man shall reside with me.”
  But he didn’t — I stayed with him!

THE FREE TRADER’S LAMENT.

Oft from a trading-boat I purchased spice
  And shells and corals, brought for my inspection
 From the fair tropics — paid a Christian price
 And was content in my fool’s paradise,
  Where never had been heard the word “Protection.”

‘T was my sole island; there I dwelt alone —
  No customs-house, collector nor collection,
 But a man came, who, in a pious tone
 Condoled with me that I had never known
  The manifest advantage of Protection.

So, when the trading-boat arrived one day,
  He threw a stink-pot into its mid-section.
 The traders paddled for their lives away,
 Nor came again into that haunted bay,
  The blessed home thereafter of Protection.

Then down he sat, that philanthropic man,
  And spat upon some mud of his selection,
 And worked it, with his knuckles in a pan,
 To shapes of shells and coral things, and span
  A thread of song in glory of Protection.

He baked them in the sun. His air devout
  Enchanted me. I made a genuflexion:
 ”God help you, gentle sir,” I said. “No doubt,”
 He answered gravely, “I’ll get on without
  Assistance now that we have got Protection.”

Thenceforth I bought his wares — at what a price

  For shells and corals of such imperfection!
”Ah, now,” said he, “your lot is truly nice.”
But still in all that isle there was no spice
  To season to my taste that dish, Protection.

SUBTERRANEAN PHANTASIES.

I died. As meekly in the earth I lay,
With shriveled fingers reverently folded,
The worm — uncivil engineer! — my clay
Tunneled industriously, and the mole did.
My body could not dodge them, but my soul did;
For that had flown from this terrestrial ball
And I was rid of it for good and all.

So there I lay, debating what to do —
What measures might most usefully be taken
To circumvent the subterranean crew
Of anthropophagi and save my bacon.
My fortitude was all this while unshaken,
But any gentleman, of course, protests
Against receiving uninvited guests.

However proud he might be of his meats,
Not even Apicius, nor, I think, Lucullus,
Wasted on tramps his culinary sweets;
"*Aut Caesar*," say judicious hosts, "*aut nullus*."
And though when Marcius came unbidden Tullus
Aufidius feasted him because he starved,
Marcius by Tullus afterward was carved.

We feed the hungry, as the book commands
(For men might question else our orthodoxy)
But do not care to see the outstretched hands,
And so we minister to them by proxy.
When Want, in his improper person, knocks he
Finds we're engaged. The graveworm's very fresh
To think we like his presence in the flesh.

So, as I said, I lay in doubt; in all
That underworld no judges could determine
My rights. When Death approaches them they fall,
And falling, naturally soil their ermine.
And still below ground, as above, the vermin
That work by dark and silent methods win
The case — the burial case that one is in.

Cases at law so slowly get ahead,
Even when the right is visibly unclouded,
That if all men are classed as quick and dead,
The judges all are dead, though some unshrouded.
Pray Jove that when they're actually crowded
On Styx's brink, and Charon rows in sight,
His bark prove worse than Cerberus's bite.

Ah! Cerberus, if you had but begot
A race of three-mouthed dogs for man to nourish
And woman to caress, the muse had not
Lamented the decay of virtues currish,
And triple-hydrophobia now would flourish,
For barking, biting, kissing to employ
Canine repeaters were indeed a joy.

Lord! how we cling to this vile world! Here I,
Whose dust was laid ere I began this carping,
By moles and worms and such familiar fry
Run through and through, am singing still and harping
Of mundane matters — flatting, too, and sharping.
I hate the Angel of the Sleeping Cup:
So I'm for getting — and for shutting — up.

IN MEMORIAM

Beauty (they called her) wasn’t a maid
  Of many things in the world afraid.
  She wasn’t a maid who turned and fled
  At sight of a mouse, alive or dead.
  She wasn’t a maid a man could “shoo”
  By shouting, however abruptly, “Boo!”
  She wasn’t a maid who’d run and hide
  If her face and figure you idly eyed.
  She was’nt a maid who’d blush and shake
  When asked what part of the fowl she’d take.
  (I blush myself to confess she preferred,
  And commonly got, the most of the bird.)
  She wasn’t a maid to simper because
  She was asked to sing — if she ever was.

In short, if the truth must be displayed
  In puris — Beauty wasn’t a maid.
  Beauty, furry and fine and fat,
  Yawny and clawy, sleek and all that,
  Was a pampered and spoiled Angora cat!

I loved her well, and I’m proud that she
  Wasn’t indifferent, quite, to me;
  In fact I have sometimes gone so far
  (You know, mesdames, how silly men are)
  As to think she preferred — excuse the conceit —
  My legs upon which to sharpen her feet.
  Perhaps it shouldn’t have gone for much,
  But I started and thrilled beneath her touch!

Ah, well, that’s ancient history now:
  The fingers of Time have touched my brow,

And I hear with never a start to-day
That Beauty has passed from the earth away.
Gone! — her death-song (it killed her) sung.
Gone! — her fiddlestrings all unstrung.
Gone to the bliss of a new *régime*
Of turkey smothered in seas of cream;
Of roasted mice (a superior breed,
To science unknown and the coarser need
Of the living cat) cooked by the flame
Of the dainty soul of an erring dame
Who gave to purity all her care,
Neglecting the duty of daily prayer, —
Crisp, delicate mice, just touched with spice
By the ghost of a breeze from Paradise;
A very digestible sort of mice.

Let scoffers sneer, I propose to hold
That Beauty has mounted the Stair of Gold,
To eat and eat, forever and aye,
On a velvet rug from a golden tray.
But the human spirit — that is my creed —
Rots in the ground like a barren seed.
That is my creed, abhorred by Man
But approved by Cat since time began.
Till Death shall kick at me, thundering “Scat!”
I shall hold to that, I shall hold to that.

THE STATESMEN.

How blest the land that counts among
Her sons so many good and wise,
To execute great feats of tongue
When troubles rise.

Behold them mounting every stump
Our liberty by speech to guard.
Observe their courage: — see them jump
And come down hard!

“Walk up, walk up!” each cries aloud,
”And learn from me what you must do
To turn aside the thunder cloud,
The earthquake too.

“Beware the wiles of yonder quack
Who stuffs the ears of all that pass.
I — I alone can show that black
Is white as grass.”

They shout through all the day and break
The silence of the night as well.
They’d make — I wish they’d *go* and make —
Of Heaven a Hell.

A advocates free silver, B
Free trade and C free banking laws.
Free board, clothes, lodging would from me
Win warm applause.

Lo, D lifts up his voice: “You see
The single tax on land would fall
On all alike.” More evenly
No tax at all.

“With paper money” bellows E
”We’ll all be rich as lords.” No doubt —
And richest of the lot will be
The chap without.

As many “cures” as addle wits
Who know not what the ailment is!
Meanwhile the patient foams and spits
Like a gin fizz.

Alas, poor Body Politic,
Your fate is all too clearly read:
To be not altogether quick,
Nor very dead.

You take your exercise in squirms,
Your rest in fainting fits between.
’T is plain that your disorder’s worms —
Worms fat and lean.

Worm Capital, Worm Labor dwell
Within your maw and muscle’s scope.
Their quarrels make your life a Hell,
Your death a hope.

God send you find not such an end
To ills however sharp and huge!

God send you convalesce! God send
    You vermifuge.

THE BROTHERS.

Scene — *A lawyer's dreadful den. Enter stall-fed citizen.*

LAWYER.—'Mornin'. How-de-do?

CITIZEN. — Sir, same to you.
Called as counsel to retain you
In a case that I'll explain you.
Sad, *so* sad! Heart almost broke.
Hang it! where's my kerchief? Smoke?
Brother, sir, and I, of late,
Came into a large estate.
Brother's — h'm, ha, — rather queer
Sometimes (tapping forehead) here.
What he needs — you know — a "writ" —
Something, eh? that will permit
Me to manage, sir, in fine,
His estate, as well as mine.
'Course he'll *kick*; 't will break, I fear,
His loving heart — excuse this tear.

LAWYER. — Have you nothing more?
All of this you said before —
When last night I took your case.

CITIZEN. — Why, sir, your face
Ne'er before has met my view!

LAWYER. — Eh? The devil! True:
My mistake — it was your brother.
But you're very like each other.

THE CYNIC’S BEQUEST

In that fair city, Ispahan,
  There dwelt a problematic man,
  Whose angel never was released,
  Who never once let out his beast,
  But kept, through all the seasons’ round,
  Silence unbroken and profound.
  No Prophecy, with ear applied
  To key-hole of the future, tried
  Successfully to catch a hint
  Of what he’d do nor when begin ‘t;
  As sternly did his past defy
  Mild Retrospection’s backward eye.
  Though all admired his silent ways,
  The women loudest were in praise:
  For ladies love those men the most
  Who never, never, never boast —
  Who ne’er disclose their aims and ends
  To naughty, naughty, naughty friends.

Yet, sooth to say, the fame outran
  The merit of this doubtful man,
  For taciturnity in him,
  Though not a mere caprice or whim,
  Was not a virtue, such as truth,
  High birth, or beauty, wealth or youth.

‘Twas known, indeed, throughout the span
  Of Ispahan, of Gulistan —
  These utmost limits of the earth
  Knew that the man was dumb from birth.

Unto the Sun with deep salaams

The Parsee spreads his morning palms
(A beacon blazing on a height
Warms o’er his piety by night.)
The Moslem deprecates the deed,
Cuts off the head that holds the creed,
Then reverently goes to grass,
Muttering thanks to Balaam’s Ass
For faith and learning to refute
Idolatry so dissolute!
But should a maniac dash past,
With straws in beard and hands upcast,
To him (through whom, whene’er inclined
To preach a bit to Madmankind,
The Holy Prophet speaks his mind)
Our True Believer lifts his eyes
Devoutly and his prayer applies;
But next to Solyman the Great
Reveres the idiot’s sacred state.
Small wonder then, our worthy mute
Was held in popular repute.
Had he been blind as well as mum,
Been lame as well as blind and dumb,
No bard that ever sang or soared
Could say how he had been adored.
More meagerly endowed, he drew
An homage less prodigious. True,
No soul his praises but did utter —
All plied him with devotion’s butter,
But none had out—’t was to their credit —
The proselyting sword to spread it.
I state these truths, exactly why
The reader knows as well as I;
They’ve nothing in the world to do
With what I hope we’re coming to
If Pegasus be good enough
To move when he has stood enough.
Egad! his ribs I would examine
Had I a sharper spur than famine,
Or even with that if ‘twould incline

To examine his instead of mine.
Where was I? Ah, that silent man
Who dwelt one time in Ispahan —
He had a name — was known to all
As Meerza Solyman Zingall.

There lived afar in Astrabad,
A man the world agreed was mad,
So wickedly he broke his joke
Upon the heads of duller folk,
So miserly, from day to day,
He gathered up and hid away
In vaults obscure and cellars haunted
What many worthy people wanted,
A stingy man! — the tradesmen's palms
Were spread in vain: "I give no alms
Without inquiry" — so he'd say,
And beat the needy duns away.
The bastinado did, 'tis true,
Persuade him, now and then, a few
Odd tens of thousands to disburse
To glut the taxman's hungry purse,
But still, so rich he grew, his fear
Was constant that the Shah might hear.
(The Shah had heard it long ago,
And asked the taxman if 'twere so,
Who promptly answered, rather airish,
The man had long been on the parish.)
The more he feared, the more he grew
A cynic and a miser, too,
Until his bitterness and pelf
Made him a terror to himself;
Then, with a razor's neckwise stroke,
He tartly cut his final joke.
So perished, not an hour too soon,
The wicked Muley Ben Maroon.

From Astrabad to Ispahan
At camel speed the rumor ran
That, breaking through tradition hoar,
And throwing all his kinsmen o’er,
The miser’d left his mighty store
Of gold — his palaces and lands —
To needy and deserving hands
(Except a penny here and there
To pay the dervishes for prayer.)
’Twas known indeed throughout the span
Of earth, and into Hindostan,
That our beloved mute was the
Residuary legatee.
The people said ‘twas very well,
And each man had a tale to tell
Of how he’d had a finger in ‘t
By dropping many a friendly hint
At Astrabad, you see. But ah,
They feared the news might reach the Shah!
To prove the will the lawyers bore ‘t
Before the Kadi’s awful court,
Who nodded, when he heard it read,
Confirmingly his drowsy head,
Nor thought, his sleepiness so great,
Himself to gobble the estate.
”I give,” the dead had writ, “my all
To Meerza Solyman Zingall
Of Ispahan. With this estate
I might quite easily create
Ten thousand ingrates, but I shun
Temptation and create but one,
In whom the whole unthankful crew
The rich man’s air that ever drew
To fat their pauper lungs I fire
Vicarious with vain desire!
From foul Ingratitude’s base rout
I pick this hapless devil out,
Bestowing on him all my lands,
My treasures, camels, slaves and bands

  Of wives — I give him all this loot,
  And throw my blessing in to boot.
  Behold, O man, in this bequest
  Philanthropy's long wrongs redressed:
  To speak me ill that man I dower
  With fiercest will who lacks the power.
  Allah il Allah! now let him bloat
  With rancor till his heart's afloat,
  Unable to discharge the wave
  Upon his benefactor's grave!"

Forth in their wrath the people came
  And swore it was a sin and shame
  To trick their blessed mute; and each
  Protested, serious of speech,
  That though *he'd* long foreseen the worst
  He'd been against it from the first.
  By various means they vainly tried
  The testament to set aside,
  Each ready with his empty purse
  To take upon himself the curse;
  For *they* had powers of invective
  Enough to make it ineffective.
  The ingrates mustered, every man,
  And marched in force to Ispahan
  (Which had not quite accommodation)
  And held a camp of indignation.

The man, this while, who never spoke —
  On whom had fallen this thunder-stroke
  Of fortune, gave no feeling vent
  Nor dropped a clue to his intent.
  Whereas no power to him came
  His benefactor to defame,
  Some (such a length had slander gone to)
  Even whispered that he didn't want to!
  But none his secret could divine;
  If suffering he made no sign,

Until one night as winter neared
From all his haunts he disappeared —
Evanished in a doubtful blank
Like little crayfish in a bank,
Their heads retracting for a spell,
And pulling in their holes as well.

All through the land of Gul, the stout
Young Spring is kicking Winter out.
The grass sneaks in upon the scene,
Defacing it with bottle-green.

The stumbling lamb arrives to ply
His restless tail in every eye,
Eats nasty mint to spoil his meat
And make himself unfit to eat.
Madly his throat the bulbul tears —
In every grove blasphemes and swears
As the immodest rose displays
Her shameless charms a dozen ways.
Lo! now, throughout the utmost span
Of Ispahan — of Gulistan —
A big new book’s displayed in all
The shops and cumbers every stall.
The price is low — the dealers say ‘tis —
And the rich are treated to it gratis.
Engraven on its foremost page
These title-words the eye engage:
”The Life of Muley Ben Maroon,
Of Astrabad — Rogue, Thief, Buffoon
And Miser — Liver by the Sweat
Of Better Men: A Lamponette
Composed in Rhyme and Written all
By Meerza Solyman Zingall!”

CORRECTED NEWS.

‘T was a maiden lady (the newspapers say)
Pious and prim and a bit gone-gray.
She slept like an angel, holy and white,
Till ten o’ the clock in the shank o’ the night
(When men and other wild animals prey)
And then she cried in the viewless gloom:
”There’s a man in the room, a man in the room!”
And this maiden lady (they make it appear)
Leapt out of the window, five fathom sheer!

Alas, that lying is such a sin
When newspaper men need bread and gin
And none can be had for less than a lie!
For the maiden lady a bit gone-gray
Saw the man in the room from across the way,
And leapt, not out of the window but in —
Ten fathom sheer, as I hope to die!

AN EXPLANATION.

“I never yet exactly could determine
  Just how it is that the judicial ermine
  Is kept so safely from predacious vermin.”

“It is not so, my friend: though in a garret
  ’Tis kept in camphor, and you often air it,
  The vermin will get into it and wear it.”

JUSTICE.

Jack Doe met Dick Roe, whose wife he loved,
And said: “I will get the best of him.”
So pulling a knife from his boot, he shoved
It up to the hilt in the breast of him.

Then he moved that weapon forth and back,
Enlarging the hole he had made with it,
Till the smoking liver fell out, and Jack
Merrily, merrily played with it.

Then he reached within and he seized the slack
Of the lesser bowel, and, traveling
Hither and thither, looked idly back
On that small intestine, raveling.

The wretched Richard, with many a grin
Laid on with exceeding suavity,
Curled up and died, and they ran John in
And charged him with sins of gravity.

The case was tried and a verdict found:
The jury, with great humanity,
Acquitted the prisoner on the ground
Of extemporary insanity.

MR. FINK’S DEBATING DONKEY.

Of a person known as Peters I will humbly crave your leave
  An unusual adventure into narrative to weave —
  Mr. William Perry Peters, of the town of Muscatel,
  A public educator and an orator as well.
  Mr. Peters had a weakness which, ‘tis painful to relate,
  Was a strong predisposition to the pleasures of debate.
  He would foster disputation wheresoever he might be;
  In polygonal contention none so happy was as he.
  ’Twas observable, however, that the exercises ran
  Into monologue by Peters, that rhetorical young man.
  And the Muscatelian rustics who assisted at the show,
  By involuntary silence testified their overthrow —
  Mr. Peters, all unheedful of their silence and their grief,
  Still effacing every vestige of erroneous belief.
  O, he was a sore affliction to all heretics so bold
  As to entertain opinions that he didn’t care to hold.

One day—’t was in pursuance of a pedagogic plan
  For the mental elevation of Uncultivated Man —
  Mr. Peters, to his pupils, in dismissing them, explained
  That the Friday evening following (unless, indeed, it rained)
  Would be signalized by holding in the schoolhouse a debate
  Free to all who their opinions might desire to ventilate
  On the question, “Which is better, as a serviceable gift,
  Speech or hearing, from barbarity the human mind to lift?”
  The pupils told their fathers, who, forehanded always, met
  At the barroom to discuss it every evening, dry or wet,
  They argued it and argued it and spat upon the stove,
  And the non-committal “barkeep” on their differences throve.
  And I state it as a maxim in a loosish kind of way:
  You’ll have the more to back your word the less you have to say.
  Public interest was lively, but one Ebenezer Fink

Of the Rancho del Jackrabbit, only seemed to sit and think.

On the memorable evening all the men of Muscatel
Came to listen to the logic and the eloquence as well —
All but William Perry Peters, whose attendance there, I fear.
Was to wreak his ready rhetoric upon the public ear,
And prove (whichever side he took) that hearing wouldn’t lift
The human mind as ably as the other, greater gift.
The judges being chosen and the disputants enrolled,
The question he proceeded *in extenso* to unfold:
”*Resolved* — The sense of hearing lifts the mind up out of reach
Of the fogs of error better than the faculty of speech.”
This simple proposition he expounded, word by word,
Until they best understood it who least perfectly had heard.
Even the judges comprehended as he ventured to explain —
The impact of a spit-ball admonishing in vain.
Beginning at a period before Creation’s morn,
He had reached the bounds of tolerance and Adam yet unborn.
As down the early centuries of pre-historic time
He tracked important principles and quoted striking rhyme,
And Whisky Bill, prosaic soul! proclaiming him a jay,
Had risen and like an earthquake, “reeled unheededly away,”
And a late lamented cat, when opportunity should serve,
Was preparing to embark upon her parabolic curve,
A noise arose outside — the door was opened with a bang
And old Ebenezer Fink was heard ejaculating “G’lang!”
Straight into that assembly gravely marched without a wink
An ancient ass — the property it was of Mr. Fink.
Its ears depressed and beating time to its infestive tread,
Silent through silence moved amain that stately quadruped!
It stopped before the orator, and in the lamplight thrown
Upon its tail they saw that member weighted with a stone.
Then spake old Ebenezer: “Gents, I heern o’ this debate
On w’ether v’ice or y’ears is best the mind to elevate.
Now ‘yer’s a bird ken throw some light uponto that tough theme:
He has ‘em both, I’m free to say, oncommonly extreme.
He wa’n’t invited for to speak, but he will not refuse
(If t’other gentleman ken wait) to exposay his views.”

Ere merriment or anger o’er amazement could prevail;
He cut the string that held the stone on that canary’s tail.
Freed from the weight, that member made a gesture of delight,
Then rose until its rigid length was horizontal quite.
With lifted head and level ears along his withers laid,
Jack sighed, refilled his lungs and then — to put it mildly — brayed!
He brayed until the stones were stirred in circumjacent hills,
And sleeping women rose and fled, in divers kinds of frills.
’T is said that awful bugle-blast — to make the story brief —
Wafted William Perry Peters through the window, like a leaf!

Such is the tale. If anything additional occurred
’Tis not set down, though, truly, I remember to have heard
That a gentleman named Peters, now residing at Soquel,
A considerable distance from the town of Muscatel,
Is opposed to education, and to rhetoric, as well.

TO MY LAUNDRESS.

Saponacea, wert thou not so fair
I’d curse thee for thy multitude of sins —
For sending home my clothes all full of pins —
A shirt occasionally that’s a snare
And a delusion, got, the Lord knows where,
The Lord knows why — a sock whose outs and ins
None know, nor where it ends nor where begins,
And fewer cuffs than ought to be my share.
But when I mark thy lilies how they grow,
And the red roses of thy ripening charms,
I bless the lovelight in thy dark eyes dreaming.
I’ll never pay thee, but I’d gladly go
Into the magic circle of thine arms,
Supple and fragrant from repeated steaming.

FAME.

One thousand years I slept beneath the sod,
My sleep in 1901 beginning,
Then, by the action of some scurvy god
Who happened then to recollect my sinning,
I was revived and given another inning.
On breaking from my grave I saw a crowd —
A formless multitude of men and women,
Gathered about a ruin. Clamors loud
I heard, and curses deep enough to swim in;
And, pointing at me, one said: “Let’s put *him* in.”
Then each turned on me with an evil look,
As in my ragged shroud I stood and shook.

“Nay, good Posterity,” I cried, “forbear!
If that’s a jail I fain would be remaining
Outside, for truly I should little care
To catch my death of cold. I’m just regaining
The life lost long ago by my disdaining
To take precautions against draughts like those
That, haply, penetrate that cracked and splitting
Old structure.” Then an aged wight arose
From a chair of state in which he had been sitting,
And with preliminary coughing, spitting
And wheezing, said: “‘T is not a jail, we’re sure,
Whate’er it may have been when it was newer.

“‘T was found two centuries ago, o’ergrown
With brush and ivy, all undoored, ungated;
And in restoring it we found a stone
Set here and there in the dilapidated
And crumbling frieze, inscribed, in antiquated
Big characters, with certain uncouth names,

Which we conclude were borne of old by awful
Rapscallions guilty of all sinful games —
Vagrants engaged in purposes unlawful,
And orators less sensible than jawful.
So each ten years we add to the long row
A name, the most unworthy that we know."

"But why," I asked, "put *me* in?" He replied:
"You look it" — and the judgment pained me greatly;
Right gladly would I then and there have died,
But that I'd risen from the grave so lately.
But on examining that solemn, stately
Old ruin I remarked: "My friend, you err —
The truth of this is just what I expected.
This building in its time made quite a stir.
I lived (was famous, too) when 't was erected.
The names here first inscribed were much respected.
This is the Hall of Fame, or I'm a stork,
And this goat pasture once was called New York."

OMNES VANITAS.

Alas for ambition's possessor!
  Alas for the famous and proud!
 The Isle of Manhattan's best dresser
  Is wearing a hand-me-down shroud.

The world has forgotten his glory;
  The wagoner sings on his wain,
 And Chauncey Depew tells a story,
  And jackasses laugh in the lane.

ASPIRATION.

No man can truthfully say that he would not like to be President. — *William C. Whitney*.

Lo! the wild rabbit, happy in the pride
Of qualities to meaner beasts denied,
Surveys the ass with reverence and fear,
Adoring his superior length of ear,
And says: “No living creature, lean or fat,
But wishes in his heart to be like That!”

DEMOCRACY.

Let slaves and subjects with unvaried psalms
  Before their sovereign execute salaams;
  The freeman scorns one idol to adore —
  Tom, Dick and Harry and himself are four.

THE NEW ULALUME.

The skies they were ashen and sober,
  The leaves they were crisped and sere, —
  ” “ “ withering “ “
 It was night in the lonesome October
  Of my most immemorial year;
 It was hard by the dim lake of Auber, —
 ” “ down “ “ dark tarn “ “
  In the misty mid region of Weir, —
  ” “ ghoul-haunted woodland “ “

CONSOLATION.

Little’s the good to sit and grieve
  Because the serpent tempted Eve.
  Better to wipe your eyes and take
  A club and go out and kill a snake.

What do you gain by cursing Nick
  For playing her such a scurvy trick?
  Better go out and some villain find
  Who serves the devil, and beat him blind.

But if you prefer, as I suspect,
  To philosophize, why, then, reflect:
  If the cunning rascal upon the limb
  Hadn’t tempted her she’d have tempted him.

FATE.

Alas, alas, for the tourist’s guide! —
  He turned from the beaten trail aside,
  Wandered bewildered, lay down and died.

O grim is the Irony of Fate:
  It switches the man of low estate
  And loosens the dogs upon the great.

It lights the fireman to roast the cook;
  The fisherman squirms upon the hook,
  And the flirt is slain with a tender look.

The undertaker it overtakes;
  It saddles the cavalier, and makes
  The haughtiest butcher into steaks.

Assist me, gods, to balk the decree!
  Nothing I’ll do and nothing I’ll be,
  In order that nothing be done to me.

PHILOSOPHER BIMM.

Republicans think Jonas Bimm
A Democrat gone mad,
And Democrats consider him
Republican and bad.

The Tough reviles him as a Dude
And gives it him right hot;
The Dude condemns his crassitude
And calls him *sans culottes.*

Derided as an Anglophile
By Anglophobes, forsooth,
As Anglophobe he feels, the while,
The Anglophilic tooth.

The Churchman calls him Atheist;
The Atheists, rough-shod,
Have ridden o'er him long and hissed
"The wretch believes in God!"

The Saints whom clergymen we call
Would kill him if they could;
The Sinners (scientists and all)
Complain that he is good.

All men deplore the difference
Between themselves and him,
And all devise expedients
For paining Jonas Bimm.

I too, with wild demoniac glee,
Would put out both his eyes;
For Mr. Bimm appears to me
Insufferably wise!

REMINDED.

Beneath my window twilight made
  Familiar mysteries of shade.
  Faint voices from the darkening down
  Were calling vaguely to the town.
  Intent upon a low, far gleam
  That burned upon the world’s extreme,
  I sat, with short reprieve from grief,
  And turned the volume, leaf by leaf,
  Wherein a hand, long dead, had wrought
  A million miracles of thought.
  My fingers carelessly unclung
  The lettered pages, and among
  Them wandered witless, nor divined
  The wealth in which, poor fools, they mined.
  The soul that should have led their quest
  Was dreaming in the level west,
  Where a tall tower, stark and still,
  Uplifted on a distant hill,
  Stood lone and passionless to claim
  Its guardian star’s returning flame.

I know not how my dream was broke,
  But suddenly my spirit woke
  Filled with a foolish fear to look
  Upon the hand that clove the book,
  Significantly pointing; next
  I bent attentive to the text,
  And read — and as I read grew old —
  The mindless words: “Poor Tom’s a-cold!”

Ah me! to what a subtle touch
  The brimming cup resigns its clutch

Upon the wine. Dear God, is ‘t writ
That hearts their overburden bear
Of bitterness though thou permit
The pranks of Chance, alurk in nooks,
And striking coward blows from books,
And dead hands reaching everywhere?

SALVINI IN AMERICA.

Come, gentlemen — your gold.
Thanks: welcome to the show.
To hear a story told
In words you do not know.

Now, great Salvini, rise
And thunder through your tears,
Aha! friends, let your eyes
Interpret to your ears.

Gods! ‘t is a goodly game.
Observe his stride — how grand!
When legs like his declaim
Who can misunderstand?

See how that arm goes round.
It says, as plain as day:
”I love,” “The lost is found,”
”Well met, sir,” or, “Away!”

And mark the drawing down
Of brows. How accurate
The language of that frown:
Pain, gentlemen — or hate.

Those of the critic trade
Swear it is all as clear
As if his tongue were made
To fit an English ear.

Hear that Italian phrase!
Greek to your sense, ‘t is true;
But shrug, expression, gaze —
Well, they are Grecian too.

But it is Art! God wot
Its tongue to all is known.
Faith! he to whom ‘t were not
Would better hold his own.

Shakespeare says act and word
Must match together true.
From what you’ve seen and heard,
How can you doubt they do?

Enchanting drama! Mark
The crowd “from pit to dome”,
One box alone is dark —
The prompter stays at home.

Stupendous artist! You
Are lord of joy and woe:
We thrill if you say “Boo,”
And thrill if you say “Bo.”

ANOTHER WAY.

I lay in silence, dead. A woman came
And laid a rose upon my breast and said:
”May God be merciful.” She spoke my name,
And added: “It is strange to think him dead.

“He loved me well enough, but ‘t was his way
To speak it lightly.” Then, beneath her breath:
”Besides” — I knew what further she would say,
But then a footfall broke my dream of death.

To-day the words are mine. I lay the rose
Upon her breast, and speak her name and deem
It strange indeed that she is dead. God knows
I had more pleasure in the other dream.

ART.

For Gladstone’s portrait five thousand pounds
Were paid, ‘t is said, to Sir John Millais.
I cannot help thinking that such fine pay
Transcended reason’s uttermost bounds.

For it seems to me uncommonly queer
That a painted British stateman’s price
Exceeds the established value thrice
Of a living statesman over here.

AN ENEMY TO LAW AND ORDER.

A is defrauded of his land by B,
  Who’s driven from the premises by C.
  D buys the place with coin of plundered E.
  ”That A’s an Anarchist!” says F to G.

TO ONE ACROSS THE WAY.

When at your window radiant you’ve stood
I’ve sometimes thought — forgive me if I’ve erred —
That some slight thought of me perhaps has stirred
Your heart to beat less gently than it should.
I know you beautiful; that you are good
I hope — or fear — I cannot choose the word,
Nor rightly suit it to the thought. I’ve heard
Reason at love’s dictation never could.
Blindly to this dilemma so I grope,
As one whose every pathway has a snare:
If you are minded in the saintly fashion
Of your pure face my passion’s without hope;
If not, alas! I equally despair,
For what to me were hope without the passion?

THE DEBTOR ABROAD.

Grief for an absent lover, husband, friend,
Is barely felt before it comes to end:
A score of early consolations serve
To modify its mouth’s dejected curve.
But woes of creditors when debtors flee
Forever swell the separating sea.
When standing on an alien shore you mark
The steady course of some intrepid bark,
How sweet to think a tear for you abides,
Not all unuseful, in the wave she rides! —
That sighs for you commingle in the gale
Beneficently bellying her sail!

FORESIGHT.

An “actors’ cemetery”! Sure
  The devil never tires
 Of planning places to procure
 The sticks to feed his fires.

A FAIR DIVISION.

Another Irish landlord gone to grass,
  Slain by the bullets of the tenant class!
  Pray, good agrarians, what wrong requires
  Such foul redress? Between you and the squires
  All Ireland’s parted with an even hand —
  For you have all the ire, they all the land.

GENESIS.

God said: “Let there be Man,” and from the clay
Adam came forth and, thoughtful, walked away.
The matrix whence his body was obtained,
An empty, man-shaped cavity, remained
All unregarded from that early time
Till in a recent storm it filled with slime.
Now Satan, envying the Master’s power
To make the meat himself could but devour,
Strolled to the place and, standing by the pool,
Exerted all his will to make a fool.
A miracle! — from out that ancient hole
Rose Morehouse, lacking nothing but a soul.
”To give him that I’ve not the power divine,”
Said Satan, sadly, “but I’ll lend him mine.”
He breathed it into him, a vapor black,
And to this day has never got it back.

LIBERTY.

"'Let there be Liberty!' God said, and, lo!
  The red skies all were luminous. The glow
    Struck first Columbia's kindling mountain peaks
  One hundred and eleven years ago!"

So sang a patriot whom once I saw
  Descending Bunker's holy hill. With awe
    I noted that he shone with sacred light,
  Like Moses with the tables of the Law.

One hundred and eleven years? O small
  And paltry period compared with all
    The tide of centuries that flowed and ebbed
  To etch Yosemite's divided wall!

Ah, Liberty, they sing you always young
  Whose harps are in your adoration strung
    (Each swears you are his countrywoman, too,
  And speak no language but his mother tongue).

And truly, lass, although with shout and horn
  Man has all-hailed you from creation's morn,
    I cannot think you old — I think, indeed,
  You are by twenty centuries unborn.

1886.

THE PASSING OF BOSS SHEPHERD.

The sullen church-bell’s intermittent moan,
  The dirge’s melancholy monotone,
  The measured march, the drooping flags, attest
  A great man’s progress to his place of rest.
  Along broad avenues himself decreed
  To serve his fellow men’s disputed need —
  Past parks he raped away from robbers’ thrift
  And gave to poverty, wherein to lift
  Its voice to curse the giver and the gift —
  Past noble structures that he reared for men
  To meet in and revile him, tongue and pen,
  Draws the long retinue of death to show
  The fit credentials of a proper woe.

“Boss” Shepherd, you are dead. Your hand no more
  Throws largess to the mobs that ramp and roar
  For blood of benefactors who disdain
  Their purity of purpose to explain,
  Their righteous motive and their scorn of gain.
  Your period of dream—’twas but a breath —
  Is closed in the indifference of death.
  Sealed in your silences, to you alike
  If hands are lifted to applaud or strike.
  No more to your dull, inattentive ear
  Praise of to-day than curse of yesteryear.
  From the same lips the honied phrases fall
  That still are bitter from cascades of gall.
  We note the shame; you in your depth of dark
  The red-writ testimony cannot mark
  On every honest cheek; your senses all
  Locked, *incommunicado*, in your pall,
  Know not who sit and blush, who stand and bawl.

“Seven Grecian cities claim great Homer dead,
Through which the living Homer begged his
bread.”
So sang, as if the thought had been his own,
An unknown bard, improving on a known.
”Neglected genius!” — that is sad indeed,
But malice better would ignore than heed,
And Shepherd’s soul, we rightly may suspect,
Prayed often for the mercy of neglect
When hardly did he dare to leave his door
Without a guard behind him and before
To save him from the gentlemen that now
In cheap and easy reparation bow
Their corrigible heads above his corse
To counterfeit a grief that’s half remorse.

The pageant passes and the exile sleeps,
And well his tongue the solemn secret keeps
Of the great peace he found afar, until,
Death’s writ of extradition to fulfill,
They brought him, helpless, from that friendly zone
To be a show and pastime in his own —
A final opportunity to those
Who fling with equal aim the stone and rose;
That at the living till his soul is freed,
This at the body to conceal the deed!

Lone on his hill he’s lying to await
What added honors may befit his state —
The monument, the statue, or the arch
(Where knaves may come to weep and dupes to march)
Builded by clowns to brutalize the scenes
His genius beautified. To get the means,
His newly good traducers all are dunned
For contributions to the conscience fund.

If each subscribe (and pay) one cent ‘twill rear
A structure taller than their tallest ear.

Washington, May 4, 1903.

TO MAUDE.

Not as two errant spheres together grind
  With monstrous ruin in the vast of space,
  Destruction born of that malign embrace,
 Their hapless peoples all to death consigned —
 Not so when our intangible worlds of mind,
  Even mine and yours, each with its spirit race
  Of beings shadowy in form and face,
 Shall drift together on some blessed wind.
 No, in that marriage of gloom and light
  All miracles of beauty shall be wrought,
   Attesting a diviner faith than man’s;
 For all my sad-eyed daughters of the night
  Shall smile on your sweet seraphim of thought,
   Nor any jealous god forbid the banns.

THE BIRTH OF VIRTUE.

When, long ago, the young world circling flew
  Through wider reaches of a richer blue,
  New-eyed, the men and maids saw, manifest,
  The thoughts untold in one another’s breast:
  Each wish displayed, and every passion learned —
  A look revealed them as a look discerned.
  But sating Time with clouds o’ercast their eyes;
  Desire was hidden, and the lips framed lies.
  A goddess then, emerging from the dust,
  Fair Virtue rose, the daughter of Distrust.

STONEMAN IN HEAVEN.

The Seraphs came to Christ, and said: “Behold!
  The man, presumptuous and overbold,
  Who boasted that his mercy could excel
  Thine own, is dead and on his way to Hell.”

Gravely the Saviour asked: “What did he do
  To make his impious assertion true?”

“He was a Governor, releasing all
  The vilest felons ever held in thrall.
  No other mortal, since the dawn of time,
  Has ever pardoned such a mass of crime!”

Christ smiled benignly on the Seraphim:
  ”Yet I am victor, for I pardon *him*.”

THE SCURRIL PRESS.

TOM JONESMITH *(loquitur)*: I’ve slept right through
The night — a rather clever thing to do.
How soundly women sleep *(looks at his wife.)*
They’re all alike. The sweetest thing in life
Is woman when she lies with folded tongue,
Its toil completed and its day-song sung.
(*Thump*) That’s the morning paper. What a bore
That it should be delivered at the door.
There ought to be some expeditious way
To get it *to* one. By this long delay
The fizz gets off the news *(a rap is heard)*.
That’s Jane, the housemaid; she’s an early bird;
She’s brought it to the bedroom door, good soul.
(Gets up and takes it in.) Upon the whole
The system’s not so bad a one. What’s here?
Gad, if they’ve not got after — listen dear
(To sleeping wife) — young Gastrotheos! Well,
If Freedom shrieked when Kosciusko fell
She’ll shriek again — with laughter — seeing how
They treated Gast. with her. Yet I’ll allow
’T is right if he goes dining at The Pup
With Mrs. Thing.

WIFE *(briskly, waking up)*:
With her? The hussy! Yes, it serves him right.

JONESMITH (*continuing to “seek the light”*):
What’s this about old Impycu? That’s good!
Grip — that’s the funny man — says Impy should
Be used as a decoy in shooting tramps.
I knew old Impy when he had the “stamps”

To buy us all out, and he wasn't then
So bad a chap to have about. Grip's pen
Is just a tickler! — and the world, no doubt,
Is better with it than it was without.
What? thirteen ladies — Jumping Jove! we know
Them nearly all! — who gamble at a low
And very shocking game of cards called "draw"!
O cracky, how they'll squirm! ha-ha! haw-haw!
Let's see what else (*wife snores*). Well, I'll be blest!
A woman doesn't understand a jest.
Hello! What, what? the scurvy wretch proceeds
To take a fling at *me*, condemn him! (*reads*):
Tom Jonesmith — my name's Thomas, vulgar cad! — *Of*
the new Shavings Bank — the man's gone mad!
That's libelous; I'll have him up for that — *Has*
had his corns cut. Devil take the rat!
What business is 't of his, I'd like to know?
He didn't have to cut them. Gods! what low
And scurril things our papers have become!
You skim their contents and you get but scum.
Here, Mary, (*waking wife*) I've been attacked
In this vile sheet. By Jove, it is a fact!

WIFE (*reading it*): How wicked! Who do you
Suppose 't was wrote it?

JONESMITH: Who? why, who
But Grip, the so-called funny man — he wrote
Me up because I'd not discount his note.
(*Blushes like sunset at the hideous lie —*
He'll think of one that's better by and by —
Throws down the paper on the floor, and treads
A lively measure on it — kicks the shreds
And patches all about the room, and still
Performs his jig with unabated will.)

WIFE (*warbling sweetly, like an Elfland horn*):

Dear, do be careful of that second corn.

STANLEY.

Noting some great man’s composition vile:
A head of wisdom and a heart of guile,
A will to conquer and a soul to dare,
Joined to the manners of a dancing bear,
Fools unaccustomed to the wide survey
Of various Nature’s compensating sway,
Untaught to separate the wheat and chaff,
To praise the one and at the other laugh,
Yearn all in vain and impotently seek
Some flawless hero upon whom to wreak
The sycophantic worship of the weak.
Not so the wise, from superstition free,
Who find small pleasure in the bended knee;
Quick to discriminate ‘twixt good and bad,
And willing in the king to find the cad —
No reason seen why genius and conceit,
The power to dazzle and the will to cheat,
The love of daring and the love of gin,
Should not dwell, peaceful, in a single skin.
To such, great Stanley, you’re a hero still,
Despite your cradling in a tub for swill.
Your peasant manners can’t efface the mark
Of light you drew across the Land of Dark.

In you the extremes of character are wed,
To serve the quick and villify the dead.
Hero and clown! O, man of many sides,
The Muse of Truth adores you and derides,
And sheds, impartial, the revealing ray
Upon your head of gold and feet of clay.

ONE OF THE UNFAIR SEX.

She stood at the ticket-seller's
Serenely removing her glove,
While hundreds of strugglers and yellers,
And some that were good at a shove,
Were clustered behind her like bats in
a cave and unwilling to speak their love.

At night she still stood at that window
Endeavoring her money to reach;
The crowds right and left, how they sinned — O,
How dreadfully sinned in their speech!
Ten miles either way they extended
their lines, the historians teach.

She stands there to-day — legislation
Has failed to remove her. The trains
No longer pull up at that station;
And over the ghastly remains
Of the army that waited and died of
old age fall the snows and the rains.

THE LORD’S PRAYER ON A COIN.

Upon this quarter-eagle’s leveled face,
  The Lord’s Prayer, legibly inscribed, I trace.
  ”Our Father which” — the pronoun there is funny,
  And shows the scribe to have addressed the money —
  ”Which art in Heaven” — an error this, no doubt:
  The preposition should be stricken out.
  Needless to quote; I only have designed
  To praise the frankness of the pious mind
  Which thought it natural and right to join,
  With rare significancy, prayer and coin.

A LACKING FACTOR.

“You acted unwisely,” I cried, “as you see
By the outcome.” He calmly eyed me:
”When choosing the course of my action,” said he,
”I had not the outcome to guide me.”

THE ROYAL JESTER.

Once on a time, so ancient poets sing,
There reigned in Godknowswhere a certain king.
So great a monarch ne’er before was seen:
He was a hero, even to his queen,
In whose respect he held so high a place
That none was higher, — nay, not even the ace.
He was so just his Parliament declared
Those subjects happy whom his laws had spared;
So wise that none of the debating throng
Had ever lived to prove him in the wrong;
So good that Crime his anger never feared,
And Beauty boldly plucked him by the beard;
So brave that if his army got a beating
None dared to face him when he was retreating.
This monarch kept a Fool to make his mirth,
And loved him tenderly despite his worth.
Prompted by what caprice I cannot say,
He called the Fool before the throne one day
And to that jester seriously said:
”I’ll abdicate, and you shall reign instead,
While I, attired in motley, will make sport
To entertain your Majesty and Court.”

‘T was done and the Fool governed. He decreed
The time of harvest and the time of seed;
Ordered the rains and made the weather clear,
And had a famine every second year;
Altered the calendar to suit his freak,
Ordaining six whole holidays a week;
Religious creeds and sacred books prepared;
Made war when angry and made peace when scared.
New taxes he inspired; new laws he made;
Drowned those who broke them, who observed them, flayed,

In short, he ruled so well that all who'd not
Been starved, decapitated, hanged or shot
Made the whole country with his praises ring,
Declaring he was every inch a king;
And the High Priest averred 't was very odd
If one so competent were not a god.

Meantime, his master, now in motley clad,
Wore such a visage, woeful, wan and sad,
That some condoled with him as with a brother
Who, having lost a wife, had got another.
Others, mistaking his profession, often
Approached him to be measured for a coffin.
For years this highborn jester never broke
The silence — he was pondering a joke.
At last, one day, in cap-and-bells arrayed,
He strode into the Council and displayed
A long, bright smile, that glittered in the gloom
Like a gilt epithet within a tomb.
Posing his bauble like a leader's staff,
To give the signal when (and why) to laugh,
He brought it down with peremptory stroke
And simultaneously cracked his joke!

I can't repeat it, friends. I ne'er could school
Myself to quote from any other fool:
A jest, if it were worse than mine, would start
My tears; if better, it would break my heart.
So, if you please, I'll hold you but to state
That royal Jester's melancholy fate.

The insulted nation, so the story goes,
Rose as one man — the very dead arose,
Springing indignant from the riven tomb,
And babes unborn leapt swearing from the womb!
All to the Council Chamber clamoring went,

By rage distracted and on vengeance bent.
In that vast hall, in due disorder laid,
The tools of legislation were displayed,
And the wild populace, its wrath to sate,
Seized them and heaved them at the Jester’s pate.
Mountains of writing paper; pools and seas
Of ink, awaiting, to become decrees,
Royal approval — and the same in stacks
Lay ready for attachment, backed with wax;
Pens to make laws, erasers to amend them;
With mucilage convenient to extend them;
Scissors for limiting their application,
And acids to repeal all legislation —
These, flung as missiles till the air was dense,
Were most offensive weapons of offense,
And by their aid the Fool was nigh destroyed.
They ne’er had been so harmlessly employed.
Whelmed underneath a load of legal cap,
His mouth egurgitating ink on tap,
His eyelids mucilaginously sealed,
His fertile head by scissors made to yield
Abundant harvestage of ears, his pelt,
In every wrinkle and on every welt,
Quickset with pencil-points from feet to gills
And thickly studded with a pride of quills,
The royal Jester in the dreadful strife
Was made (in short) an editor for life!

An idle tale, and yet a moral lurks
In this as plainly as in greater works.
I shall not give it birth: one moral here
Would die of loneliness within a year.

A CAREER IN LETTERS.

When Liberverm resigned the chair
  Of This or That in college, where
  For two decades he'd gorged his brain
  With more than it could well contain,
  In order to relieve the stress
  He took to writing for the press.
  Then Pondronummus said, "I'll help
  This mine of talent to devel'p;"
  And straightway bought with coin and credit
  The *Thundergust* for him to edit.

The great man seized the pen and ink
  And wrote so hard he couldn't think;
  Ideas grew beneath his fist
  And flew like falcons from his wrist.
  His pen shot sparks all kinds of ways
  Till all the rivers were ablaze,
  And where the coruscations fell
  Men uttered words I dare not spell.

Eftsoons with corrugated brow,
  Wet towels bound about his pow,
  Locked legs and failing appetite,
  He thought so hard he couldn't write.
  His soaring fancies, chickenwise,
  Came home to roost and wouldn't rise.
  With dimmer light and milder heat
  His goose-quill staggered o'er the sheet,
  Then dragged, then stopped; the finish came —
  He couldn't even write his name.
  The *Thundergust* in three short weeks
  Had risen, roared, and split its cheeks.

Said Pondronummus, “How unjust!
The storm I raised has laid my dust!”

When, Moneybagger, you have aught
Invested in a vein of thought,
Be sure you’ve purchased not, instead,
That salted claim, a bookworm’s head.

THE FOLLOWING PAIR.

O very remarkable mortal,
What food is engaging your jaws
And staining with amber their portal?
”It’s ‘baccy I chaws.”

And why do you sway in your walking,
To right and left many degrees,
And hitch up your trousers when talking?
”I follers the seas.”

Great indolent shark in the rollers,
Is “‘baccy,” too, one of your faults? —
You, too, display maculate molars.
”I dines upon salts.”

Strange diet! — intestinal pain it
Is commonly given to nip.
And how can you ever obtain it?
”I follers the ship.”

POLITICAL ECONOMY.

“I beg you to note,” said a Man to a Goose,
As he plucked from her bosom the plumage all loose,
”That pillows and cushions of feathers and beds
As warm as maids’ hearts and as soft as their heads,
Increase of life’s comforts the general sum —
Which raises the standard of living.” “Come, come,”
The Goose said, impatiently, “tell me or cease,
How that is of any advantage to geese.”
”What, what!” said the man—”you are very obtuse!
Consumption no profit to those who produce?
No good to accrue to Supply from a grand
Progressive expansion, all round, of Demand?
Luxurious habits no benefit bring
To those who purvey the luxurious thing?
Consider, I pray you, my friend, how the growth
Of luxury promises—” “Promises,” quoth
The sufferer, “what? — to what course is it pledged
To pay me for being so often defledged?”
”Accustomed” — this notion the plucker expressed
As he ripped out a handful of down from her breast —
”To one kind of luxury, people soon yearn
For others and ever for others in turn;
And the man who to-night on your feathers will rest,
His mutton or bacon or beef to digest,
His hunger to-morrow will wish to assuage
By dining on goose with a dressing of sage.”

VANISHED AT COCK-CROW.

“I’ve found the secret of your charm,” I said,
Expounding with complacency my guess.
Alas! the charm, even as I named it, fled,
For all its secret was unconsciousness.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

I reckon that ye never knew,
That dandy slugger, Tom Carew,
He had a touch as light an’ free
As that of any honey-bee;
But where it lit there wasn’t much
To jestify another touch.
O, what a Sunday-school it was
To watch him puttin’ up his paws
An’ roominate upon their heft —
Particular his holy left!
Tom was my style — that’s all I say;
Some others may be equal gay.
What’s come of him? Dunno, I’m sure —
He’s dead — which make his fate obscure.
I only started in to clear
One vital p’int in his career,
Which is to say — afore he died
He soiled his erming mighty snide.
Ye see he took to politics
And learnt them statesmen-fellers’ tricks;
Pulled wires, wore stovepipe hats, used scent,
Just like he was the President;
Went to the Legislator; spoke
Right out agin the British yoke —
But that was right. He let his hair
Grow long to qualify for Mayor,
An’ once or twice he poked his snoot
In Congress like a low galoot!
It had to come — no gent can hope
To wrastle God agin the rope.
Tom went from bad to wuss. Being dead,
I s’pose it oughtn’t to be said,
For sech inikities as flow

From politics ain’t fit to know;
But, if you think it’s actin’ white
To tell it — Thomas throwed a fight!

INDUSTRIAL DISCONTENT.

As time rolled on the whole world came to be
  A desolation and a darksome curse;
And some one said: “The changes that you see
  In the fair frame of things, from bad to worse,
Are wrought by strikes. The sun withdrew his glimmer
Because the moon assisted with her shimmer.

“Then, when poor Luna, straining very hard,
  Doubled her light to serve a darkling world,
He called her ‘scab,’ and meanly would retard
  Her rising: and at last the villain hurled
A heavy beam which knocked her o’er the Lion
Into the nebula of great O’Ryan.

“The planets all had struck some time before,
  Demanding what they said were equal rights:
Some pointing out that others had far more
  That a fair dividend of satellites.
So all went out — though those the best provided,
If they had dared, would rather have abided.

“The stars struck too — I think it was because
  The comets had more liberty than they,
And were not bound by any hampering laws,
  While *they* were fixed; and there are those who say
The comets’ tresses nettled poor Altair,
An aged orb that hasn’t any hair.

“The earth’s the only one that isn’t in
  The movement — I suppose because she’s watched

With horror and disgust how her fair skin
  Her pranking parasites have fouled and blotched
With blood and grease in every labor riot,
When seeing any purse or throat to fly at.”

TEMPORA MUTANTUR.

“The world is dull,” I cried in my despair:
”Its myths and fables are no longer fair.

“Roll back thy centuries, O Father Time.
To Greece transport me in her golden prime.

“Give back the beautiful old Gods again —
The sportive Nymphs, the Dryad’s jocund train,

“Pan piping on his reeds, the Naiades,
The Sirens singing by the sleepy seas.

“Nay, show me but a Gorgon and I’ll dare
To lift mine eyes to her peculiar hair

“(The fatal horrors of her snaky pate,
That stiffen men into a stony state)

“And die — erecting, as my soul goes hence,
A statue of myself, without expense.”

Straight as I spoke I heard the voice of Fate:
”Look up, my lad, the Gorgon sisters wait.”

Raising my eyes, I saw Medusa stand,
Stheno, Euryale, on either hand.

I gazed unpetrified and unappalled —
The girls had aged and were entirely bald!

CONTENTMENT.

Sleep fell upon my senses and I dreamed
Long years had circled since my life had fled.
The world was different, and all things seemed
Remote and strange, like noises to the dead.
And one great Voice there was; and something said:
”Posterity is speaking — rightly deemed
Infallible:” and so I gave attention,
Hoping Posterity my name would mention.

“Illustrious Spirit,” said the Voice, “appear!
While we confirm eternally thy fame,
Before our dread tribunal answer, here,
Why do no statues celebrate thy name,
No monuments thy services proclaim?
Why did not thy contemporaries rear
To thee some schoolhouse or memorial college?
It looks almighty queer, you must acknowledge.”

Up spake I hotly: “That is where you err!”
But some one thundered in my ear: “You shan’t
Be interrupting these proceedings, sir;
The question was addressed to General Grant.”
Some other things were spoken which I can’t
Distinctly now recall, but I infer,
By certain flushings of my cheeks and forehead,
Posterity’s environment is torrid.

Then heard I (this was in a dream, remark)
Another Voice, clear, comfortable, strong,
As Grant’s great shade, replying from the dark,
Said in a tone that rang the earth along,
And thrilled the senses of the Judges’ throng:

”I’d rather you would question why, in park
And street, my monuments were not erected
Than why they were.” Then, waking, I reflected.

THE NEW ENOCH.

Enoch Arden was an able
Seaman; hear of his mishap —
Not in wild mendacious fable,
As ‘t was told by t’ other chap;

For I hold it is a youthful
Indiscretion to tell lies,
And the writer that is truthful
Has the reader that is wise.

Enoch Arden, able seaman,
On an isle was cast away,
And before he was a freeman
Time had touched him up with gray.

Long he searched the fair horizon,
Seated on a mountain top;
Vessel ne’er he set his eyes on
That would undertake to stop.

Seeing that his sight was growing
Dim and dimmer, day by day,
Enoch said he must be going.
So he rose and went away —

Went away and so continued
Till he lost his lonely isle:
Mr. Arden was so sinewed
He could row for many a mile.

Compass he had not, nor sextant,
    To direct him o’er the sea:
  Ere ‘t was known that he was extant,
    At his widow’s home was he.

When he saw the hills and hollows
    And the streets he could but know,
  He gave utterance as follows
    To the sentiments below:

“Blast my tarry toplights! (shiver,
    Too, my timbers!) but, I say,
  W’at a larruk to diskiver,
    I have lost me blessid way!

“W’at, alas, would be my bloomin’
    Fate if Philip now I see,
  Which I lammed? — or my old ‘oman,
    Which has frequent basted *me*?”

Scenes of childhood swam around him
    At the thought of such a lot:
  In a swoon his Annie found him
    And conveyed him to her cot.

‘T was the very house, the garden,
    Where their honeymoon was passed:
  ’T was the place where Mrs. Arden
    Would have mourned him to the last.

Ah, what grief she’d known without him!
    Now what tears of joy she shed!
  Enoch Arden looked about him:
    ”Shanghaied!” — that was all he said.

DISAVOWAL.

Two bodies are lying in Phoenix Park,
  Grim and bloody and stiff and stark,
  And a Land League man with averted eye
  Crosses himself as he hurries by.
  And he says to his conscience under his breath:
  ”I have had no hand in this deed of death!”

A Fenian, making a circuit wide
  And passing them by on the other side,
  Shudders and crosses himself and cries:
  ”Who says that I did it, he lies, he lies!”

Gingerly stepping across the gore,
  Pat Satan comes after the two before,
  Makes, in a solemnly comical way,
  The sign of the cross and is heard to say:
  ”O dear, what a terrible sight to see,
  For babes like them and a saint like me!”

1882.

AN AVERAGE.

I ne’er could be entirely fond
  Of any maiden who’s a blonde,
  And no brunette that e’er I saw
  Had charms my heart’s whole
    warmth to draw.

Yet sure no girl was ever made
  Just half of light and half of shade.
  And so, this happy mean to get,
  I love a blonde and a brunette.

WOMAN.

Study good women and ignore the rest,
  For he best knows the sex who knows the best.

INCURABLE.

From pride, joy, hate, greed, melancholy —
  From any kind of vice, or folly,
  Bias, propensity or passion
  That is in prevalence and fashion,
  Save one, the sufferer or lover
  May, by the grace of God, recover:
  Alone that spiritual tetter,
  The zeal to make creation better,
  Glows still immedicably warmer.
  Who knows of a reformed reformer?

THE PUN.

Hail, peerless Pun! thou last and best,
  Most rare and excellent bequest
  Of dying idiot to the wit
  He died of, rat-like, in a pit!

Thyself disguised, in many a way
  Thou let’st thy sudden splendor play,
  Adorning all where’er it turns,
  As the revealing bull’s-eye burns,
  Of the dim thief, and plays its trick
  Upon the lock he means to pick.

Yet sometimes, too, thou dost appear
  As boldly as a brigadier
  Tricked out with marks and signs, all o’er,
  Of rank, brigade, division, corps,
  To show by every means he can
  An officer is not a man;
  Or naked, with a lordly swagger,
  Proud as a cur without a wagger,
  Who says: “See simple worth prevail —
  All dog, sir — not a bit of tail!”

‘T is then men give thee loudest welcome,
  As if thou wert a soul from Hell come.

O obvious Pun! thou hast the grace
  Of skeleton clock without a case —
  With all its boweling displayed,
  And all its organs on parade.

Dear Pun, you’re common ground of bliss,
  Where *Punch* and I can meet and kiss;
  Than thee my wit can stoop no low’r —
  No higher his does ever soar.

A PARTISAN’S PROTEST.

O statesmen, what would you be at,
  With torches, flags and bands?
 You make me first throw up my hat,
  And then my hands.

TO NANINE.

Dear, if I never saw your face again;
If all the music of your voice were mute
As that of a forlorn and broken lute;
If only in my dreams I might attain
The benediction of your touch, how vain
Were Faith to justify the old pursuit
Of happiness, or Reason to confute
The pessimist philosophy of pain.
Yet Love not altogether is unwise,
For still the wind would murmur in the corn,
And still the sun would splendor all the mere;
And I — I could not, dearest, choose but hear
Your voice upon the breeze and see your eyes
Shine in the glory of the summer morn.

VICE VERSA.

Down in the state of Maine, the story goes,
  A woman, to secure a lapsing pension,
Married a soldier — though the good Lord knows
  That very common act scarce calls for mention.
What makes it worthy to be writ and read —
The man she married had been nine hours dead!

Now, marrying a corpse is not an act
  Familiar to our daily observation,
And so I crave her pardon if the fact
  Suggests this interesting speculation:
Should some mischance restore the man to life
Would she be then a widow, or a wife?

Let casuists contest the point; I'm not
  Disposed to grapple with so great a matter.
'T would tie my thinker in a double knot
  And drive me staring mad as any hatter —
Though I submit that hatters are, in fact,
Sane, and all other human beings cracked.

Small thought have I of Destiny or Chance;
  Luck seems to me the same thing as Intention;
In metaphysics I could ne'er advance,
  And think it of the Devil's own invention.
Enough of joy to know though when I wed
I *must* be married, yet I *may* be dead.

A BLACK-LIST.

“Resolved that we will post,” the tradesmen say,
”All names of debtors who do never pay.”
”Whose shall be first?” inquires the ready scribe —
”Who are the chiefs of the marauding tribe?”
Lo! high Parnassus, lifting from the plain,
Upon his hoary peak, a noble fane!
Within that temple all the names are scrolled
Of village bards upon a slab of gold;
To that bad eminence, my friend, aspire,
And copy thou the Roll of Fame, entire.
Yet not to total shame those names devote,
But add in mercy this explaining note:
”These cheat because the law makes theft a crime,
And they obey all laws but laws of rhyme.”

A BEQUEST TO MUSIC.

“Let music flourish!” So he said and died.
Hark! ere he’s gone the minstrelsy begins:
The symphonies ascend, a swelling tide,
Melodious thunders fill the welkin wide —
The grand old lawyers, chinning on their chins!

AUTHORITY.

“Authority, authority!” they shout
Whose minds, not large enough to hold a doubt,
Some chance opinion ever entertain,
By dogma billeted upon their brain.
”Ha!” they exclaim with choreatic glee,
”Here’s Dabster if you won’t give in to me —
Dabster, sir, Dabster, to whom all men look
With reverence!” The fellow wrote a book.
It matters not that many another wight
Has thought more deeply, could more wisely write
On t’ other side — that you yourself possess
Knowledge where Dabster did but faintly guess.
God help you if ambitious to persuade
The fools who take opinion ready-made
And “recognize authorities.” Be sure
No tittle of their folly they’ll abjure
For all that you can say. But write it down,
Publish and die and get a great renown —
Faith! how they’ll snap it up, misread, misquote,
Swear that they had a hand in all you wrote,
And ride your fame like monkeys on a goat!

THE PSORIAD.

The King of Scotland, years and years ago,
Convened his courtiers in a gallant row
And thus addressed them:

”Gentle sirs, from you
Abundant counsel I have had, and true:
What laws to make to serve the public weal;
What laws of Nature’s making to repeal;
What old religion is the only true one,
And what the greater merit of some new one;
What friends of yours my favor have forgot;
Which of your enemies against me plot.
In harvests ample to augment my treasures,
Behold the fruits of your sagacious measures!
The punctual planets, to their periods just,
Attest your wisdom and approve my trust.
Lo! the reward your shining virtues bring:
The grateful placemen bless their useful king!
But while you quaff the nectar of my favor
I mean somewhat to modify its flavor
By just infusing a peculiar dash
Of tonic bitter in the calabash.
And should you, too abstemious, disdain it,
Egad! I’ll hold your noses till you drain it!

“You know, you dogs, your master long has felt
A keen distemper in the royal pelt —
A testy, superficial irritation,
Brought home, I fancy, from some foreign nation.
For this a thousand simples you’ve prescribed —
Unguents external, draughts to be imbibed.

You’ve plundered Scotland of its plants, the seas
You’ve ravished, and despoiled the Hebrides,
To brew me remedies which, in probation,
Were sovereign only in their application.
In vain, and eke in pain, have I applied
Your flattering unctions to my soul and hide:
Physic and hope have been my daily food —
I’ve swallowed treacle by the holy rood!

“Your wisdom, which sufficed to guide the year
And tame the seasons in their mad career,
When set to higher purposes has failed me
And added anguish to the ills that ailed me.
Nor that alone, but each ambitious leech
His rivals’ skill has labored to impeach
By hints equivocal in secret speech.
For years, to conquer our respective broils,
We’ve plied each other with pacific oils.
In vain: your turbulence is unallayed,
My flame unquenched; your rioting unstayed;
My life so wretched from your strife to save it
That death were welcome did I dare to brave it.
With zeal inspired by your intemperate pranks,
My subjects muster in contending ranks.
Those fling their banners to the startled breeze
To champion some royal ointment; these
The standard of some royal purge display
And ‘neath that ensign wage a wasteful fray!
Brave tongues are thundering from sea to sea,
Torrents of sweat roll reeking o’er the lea!
My people perish in their martial fear,
And rival bagpipes cleave the royal ear!

“Now, caitiffs, tremble, for this very hour
Your injured sovereign shall assert his power!
Behold this lotion, carefully compound
Of all the poisons you for me have found —
Of biting washes such as tan the skin,

And drastic drinks to vex the parts within.
What aggravates an ailment will produce —
I mean to rub you with this dreadful juice!
Divided counsels you no more shall hatch —
At last you shall unanimously scratch.
Kneel, villains, kneel, and doff your shirts — God bless us!
They'll seem, when you resume them, robes of Nessus!"

The sovereign ceased, and, sealing what he spoke,
From Arthur's Seat confirming thunders broke.
The conscious culprits, to their fate resigned,
Sank to their knees, all piously inclined.
This act, from high Ben Lomond where she floats,
The thrifty goddess, Caledonia, notes.
Glibly as nimble sixpence, down she tilts
Headlong, and ravishes away their kilts,
Tears off each plaid and all their shirts discloses,
Removes each shirt and their broad backs exposes.
The king advanced — then cursing fled amain
Dashing the phial to the stony plain
(Where't straight became a fountain brimming o'er,
Whence Father Tweed derives his liquid store)
For lo! already on each back *sans* stitch
The red sign manual of the Rosy Witch!

[Footnote 1: A famous height overlooking Edinburgh.]

ONEIROMANCY.

I fell asleep and dreamed that I
  Was flung, like Vulcan, from the sky;
  Like him was lamed — another part:
  His leg was crippled and my heart.
  I woke in time to see my love
  Conceal a letter in her glove.

PEACE.

When lion and lamb have together lain down
Spectators cry out, all in chorus;
”The lamb doesn’t shrink nor the lion frown —
A miracle’s working before us!”

But ‘t is patent why Hot-head his wrath holds in,
And Faint-heart her terror and loathing;
For the one’s but an ass in a lion’s skin,
The other a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

THANKSGIVING.

The Superintendent of an Almshouse. A Pauper.

SUPERINTENDENT:

So *you're* unthankful — you'll not eat the bird?
  You sit about the place all day and gird.
  I understand you'll not attend the ball
  That's to be given to-night in Pauper Hall.

PAUPER:

Why, that is true, precisely as you’ve heard:
  I have no teeth and I will eat no bird.

SUPERINTENDENT:

Ah! see how good is Providence. Because
  Of teeth He has denuded both your jaws
  The fowl’s made tender; you can overcome it
  By suction; or at least — well, you can gum it,
  Attesting thus the dictum of the preachers
  That Providence is good to all His creatures —
  Turkeys excepted. Come, ungrateful friend,
  If our Thanksgiving dinner you’ll attend
  You shall say grace — ask God to bless at least
  The soft and liquid portions of the feast.

PAUPER.

Without those teeth my speech is rather thick —
He'll hardly understand Gum Arabic.
No, I'll not dine to-day. As to the ball,
'Tis known to you that I've no legs at all.
I had the gout — hereditary; so,
As it could not be cornered in my toe
They cut my legs off in the fond belief
That shortening me would make my anguish brief.
Lacking my legs I could not prosecute
With any good advantage a pursuit;
And so, because my father chose to court
Heaven's favor with his ortolans and Port
(Thanksgiving every day!) the Lord supplied
Saws for my legs, an almshouse for my pride
And, once a year, a bird for my inside.
No, I'll not dance — my light fantastic toe
Took to its heels some twenty years ago.
Some small repairs would be required for putting
My feelings on a saltatory footing.

(Sings)

O the legless man's an unhappy chap —
Tum-hi, tum-hi, tum-he o'haddy.
The favors o' fortune fall not in his lap —
Tum-hi, tum-heedle-do hum.
The plums of office avoid his plate
No matter how much he may stump the State —
Tum-hi, ho-heeee.
The grass grows never beneath his feet,
But he cannot hope to make both ends meet —
Tum-hi.
With a gleeless eye and a somber heart,

He plays the role of his mortal part:
Wholly himself he can never be.
O, a soleless corporation is he!
    Tum.

SUPERINTENDENT:

The chapel bell is calling, thankless friend,
Balls you may not, but church you *shall*, attend.
Some recognition cannot be denied
To the great mercy that has turned aside
The sword of death from us and let it fall
Upon the people's necks in Montreal;
That spared our city, steeple, roof and dome,
And drowned the Texans out of house and home;
Blessed all our continent with peace, to flood
The Balkan with a cataclysm of blood.
Compared with blessings of so high degree,
Your private woes look mighty small — to me.

L’AUDACE.

Daughter of God! Audacity divine —
Of clowns the terror and of brains the sign —
Not thou the inspirer of the rushing fool,
Not thine of idiots the vocal drool:
Thy bastard sister of the brow of brass,
Presumption, actuates the charging ass.
Sky-born Audacity! of thee who sings
Should strike with freer hand than mine the strings;
The notes should mount on pinions true and strong,
For thou, the subject shouldst sustain the song,
Till angels lean from Heaven, a breathless throng!
Alas! with reeling heads and wavering tails,
They (notes, not angels) drop and the hymn fails;
The minstrel’s tender fingers and his thumbs
Are torn to rags upon the lyre he strums.
Have done! the lofty thesis makes demand
For stronger voices and a harder hand:
Night-howling apes to make the notes aspire,
And Poet Riley’s fist to slug the rebel wire!

THE GOD'S VIEW-POINT.

Cheeta Raibama Chunder Sen,
The wisest and the best of men,
Betook him to the place where sat
With folded feet upon a mat
Of precious stones beneath a palm,
In sweet and everlasting calm,
That ancient and immortal gent,
The God of Rational Content.
As tranquil and unmoved as Fate,
The deity reposed in state,
With palm to palm and sole to sole,
And beaded breast and beetling jowl,
And belly spread upon his thighs,
And costly diamonds for eyes.
As Chunder Sen approached and knelt
To show the reverence he felt;
Then beat his head upon the sod
To prove his fealty to the god;
And then by gestures signified
The other sentiments inside;
The god's right eye (as Chunder Sen,
The wisest and the best of men,
Half-fancied) grew by just a thought
More narrow than it truly ought.
Yet still that prince of devotees,
Persistent upon bended knees
And elbows bored into the earth,
Declared the god's exceeding worth,
And begged his favor. Then at last,
Within that cavernous and vast
Thoracic space was heard a sound
Like that of water underground —
A gurgling note that found a vent

At mouth of that Immortal Gent
In such a chuckle as no ear
Had e’er been privileged to hear!

Cheeta Raibama Chunder Sen,
The wisest, greatest, best of men,
Heard with a natural surprise
That mighty midriff improvise.
And greater yet the marvel was
When from between those massive jaws
Fell words to make the views more plain
The god was pleased to entertain:
”Cheeta Raibama Chunder Sen,”
So ran the rede in speech of men —
”Foremost of mortals in assent
To creed of Rational Content,
Why come you here to impetrate
A blessing on your scurvy pate?
Can you not rationally be
Content without disturbing me?
Can you not take a hint — a wink —
Of what of all this rot I think?
Is laughter lost upon you quite,
To check you in your pious rite?
What! know you not we gods protest
That all religion is a jest?
You take me seriously? — you
About me make a great ado
(When I but wish to be alone)
With attitudes supine and prone,
With genuflexions and with prayers,
And putting on of solemn airs,
To draw my mind from the survey
Of Rational Content away!
Learn once for all, if learn you can,
This truth, significant to man:
A pious person is by odds
The one most hateful to the gods.”

Then stretching forth his great right hand,
Which shadowed all that sunny land,
That deity bestowed a touch
Which Chunder Sen not overmuch
Enjoyed — a touch divine that made
The sufferer hear stars! They played
And sang as on Creation’s morn
When spheric harmony was born.

Cheeta Raibama Chunder Sen,
The most astonished man of men,
Fell straight asleep, and when he woke
The deity nor moved nor spoke,
But sat beneath that ancient palm
In sweet and everlasting calm.

THE AESTHETES.

The lily cranks, the lily cranks,
  The loppy, loony lasses!
 They multiply in rising ranks
 To execute their solemn pranks,
  They moon along in masses.
 Blow, sweet lily, in the shade! O,
 Sunflower decorate the dado!

The maiden ass, the maiden ass,
  The tall and tailless jenny!
 In limp attire as green as grass,
 She stands, a monumental brass,
  The one of one too many.
 Blow, sweet lily, in the shade! O,
 Sunflower decorate the dado!

JULY FOURTH.

God said: “Let there be noise.” The dawning fire
  Of Independence gilded every spire.

WITH MINE OWN PETARD.

Time was the local poets sang their songs
Beneath their breath in terror of the thongs
I snapped about their shins. Though mild the stroke
Bards, like the conies, are “a feeble folk,”
Fearing all noises but the one they make
Themselves — at which all other mortals quake.
Now from their cracked and disobedient throats,
Like rats from sewers scampering, their notes
Pour forth to move, where’er the season serves,
If not our legs to dance, at least our nerves;
As once a ram’s-horn solo maddened all
The sober-minded stones in Jerich’s wall.
A year’s exemption from the critic’s curse
Mends the bard’s courage but impairs his verse.
Thus poolside frogs, when croaking in the night,
Are frayed to silence by a meteor’s flight,
Or by the sudden plashing of a stone
From some adjacent cottage garden thrown,
But straight renew the song with double din
Whene’er the light goes out or man goes in.
Shall I with arms unbraced (my casque unlatched,
My falchion pawned, my buckler, too, attached)
Resume the cuishes and the broad cuirass,
Accomplishing my body all in brass,
And arm in battle royal to oppose
A village poet singing through the nose,
Or strolling troubadour his lyre who strums
With clumsy hand whose fingers all are thumbs?
No, let them rhyme; I fought them once before
And stilled their songs — but, Satan! how they swore! —
Cuffed them upon the mouth whene’er their throats
They cleared for action with their sweetest notes;
Twisted their ears (they’d oft tormented mine)

And damned them roundly all along the line;
Clubbed the whole crew from the Parnassian slopes,
A wreck of broken heads and broken hopes!
What gained I so? I feathered every curse
Launched at the village bards with lilting verse.
The town approved and christened me (to show its
High admiration) Chief of Local Poets!

CONSTANCY.

Dull were the days and sober,
The mountains were brown and bare,
For the season was sad October
And a dirge was in the air.

The mated starlings flew over
To the isles of the southern sea.
She wept for her warrior lover —
Wept and exclaimed: “Ah, me!

“Long years have I mourned my darling
In his battle-bed at rest;
And it’s O, to be a starling,
With a mate to share my nest!”

The angels pitied her sorrow,
Restoring her warrior’s life;
And he came to her arms on the morrow
To claim her and take her to wife.

An aged lover — a portly,
Bald lover, a trifle too stiff,
With manners that would have been courtly,
And would have been graceful, if —

If the angels had only restored him
Without the additional years
That had passed since the enemy bored him
To death with their long, sharp spears.

As it was, he bored her, and she rambled
Away with her father’s young groom,
And the old lover smiled as he ambled
Contentedly back to the tomb.

SIRES AND SONS.

Wild wanton Luxury lays waste the land
  With difficulty tilled by Thrift’s hard hand!
  Then dies the State! — and, in its carcass found,
  The millionaires, all maggot-like, abound.
  Alas! was it for this that Warren died,
  And Arnold sold himself to t’ other side,
  Stark piled at Bennington his British dead,
  And Gates at Camden, Lee at Monmouth, fled? —
  For this that Perry did the foeman fleece,
  And Hull surrender to preserve the peace?
  Degenerate countrymen, renounce, I pray,
  The slothful ease, the luxury, the gay
  And gallant trappings of this idle life,
  And be more fit for one another’s wife.

A CHALLENGE.

A bull imprisoned in a stall
Broke boldly the confining wall,
And found himself, when out of bounds,
Within a washerwoman’s grounds.
Where, hanging on a line to dry,
A crimson skirt inflamed his eye.
With bellowings that woke the dead,
He bent his formidable head,
With pointed horns and gnarly forehead;
Then, planting firm his shoulders horrid,
Began, with rage made half insane,
To paw the arid earth amain,
Flinging the dust upon his flanks
In desolating clouds and banks,
The while his eyes’ uneasy white
Betrayed his doubt what foe the bright
Red tent concealed, perchance, from sight.
The garment, which, all undismayed,
Had never paled a single shade,
Now found a tongue — a dangling sock,
Left carelessly inside the smock:
”I must insist, my gracious liege,
That you’ll be pleased to raise the siege:
My colors I will never strike.
I know your sex — you’re all alike.
Some small experience I’ve had —
You’re not the first I’ve driven mad.”

TWO SHOWS.

The showman (blessing in a thousand shapes!)
Parades a “School of Educated Apes!”
Small education’s needed, I opine,
Or native wit, to make a monkey shine;
The brute exhibited has naught to do
But ape the larger apes who come to view —
The hoodlum with his horrible grimace,
Long upper lip and furtive, shuffling pace,
Significant reminders of the time
When hunters, not policemen, made him climb;
The lady loafer with her draggling “trail,”
That free translation of an ancient tail;
The sand-lot quadrumane in hairy suit,
Whose heels are thumbs perverted by the boot;
The painted actress throwing down the gage
To elder artists of the sylvan stage,
Proving that in the time of Noah’s flood
Two ape-skins held her whole profession’s blood;
The critic waiting, like a hungry pup,
To write the school — perhaps to eat it — up,
As chance or luck occasion may reveal
To earn a dollar or maraud a meal.
To view the school of apes these creatures go,
Unconscious that themselves are half the show.
These, if the simian his course but trim
To copy them as they have copied him,
Will call him “educated.” Of a verity
There’s much to learn by study of posterity.

A POET’S HOPE.

‘Twas a weary-looking mortal, and he wandered near the portal
Of the melancholy City of the Discontented Dead.
He was pale and worn exceeding and his manner was unheeding,
As if it could not matter what he did nor what he said.

“Sacred stranger” — I addressed him with a reverence befitting
The austere, unintermitting, dread solemnity he wore;
’Tis the custom, too, prevailing in that vicinage when hailing
One who possibly may be a person lately “gone before” —

“Sacred stranger, much I ponder on your evident dejection,
But my carefulest reflection leaves the riddle still unread.
How do you yourself explain your dismal tendency to wander
By the melancholy City of the Discontented Dead?”

Then that solemn person, pausing in the march that he was making,
Roused himself as if awaking, fixed his dull and stony eye
On my countenance and, slowly, like a priest devout and holy,
Chanted in a mournful monotone the following reply:

“O my brother, do not fear it; I’m no disembodied spirit —
I am Lampton, the Slang Poet, with a price upon my head.
I am watching by this portal for some late lamented mortal
To arise in his disquietude and leave his earthy bed.

“Then I hope to take possession and pull in the earth above me
And, renouncing my profession, ne’er be heard of any more.
For there’s not a soul to love me and no living thing respects me,
Which so painfully affects me that I fain would ‘go before.’”

Then I felt a deep compassion for the gentleman’s dejection,
For privation of affection would refrigerate a frog.
So I said: “If nothing human, and if neither man nor woman
Can appreciate the fashion of your merit — buy a dog.”

THE WOMAN AND THE DEVIL.

When Man and Woman had been made,
All but the disposition,
The Devil to the workshop strayed,
And somehow gained admission.

The Master rested from his work,
For this was on a Sunday,
The man was snoring like a Turk,
Content to wait till Monday.

“Too bad!” the Woman cried; “Oh, why,
Does slumber not benumb me?
A disposition! Oh, I die
To know if ‘twill become me!”

The Adversary said: “No doubt
’Twill be extremely fine, ma’am,
Though sure ‘tis long to be without —
I beg to lend you mine, ma’am.”

The Devil’s disposition when
She’d got, of course she wore it,
For she’d no disposition then,
Nor now has, to restore it.

TWO ROGUES.

Dim, grim, and silent as a ghost,
The sentry occupied his post,
To all the stirrings of the night
Alert of ear and sharp of sight.
A sudden something — sight or sound,
About, above, or underground,
He knew not what, nor where — ensued,
Thrilling the sleeping solitude.
The soldier cried: “Halt! Who goes there?”
The answer came: “Death — in the air.”
”Advance, Death — give the countersign,
Or perish if you cross that line!”
To change his tone Death thought it wise —
Reminded him they ‘d been allies
Against the Russ, the Frank, the Turk,
In many a bloody bit of work.
”In short,” said he, “in every weather
We’ve soldiered, you and I, together.”
The sentry would not let him pass.
”Go back,” he growled, “you tiresome ass —
Go back and rest till the next war,
Nor kill by methods all abhor:
Miasma, famine, filth and vice,
With plagues of locusts, plagues of lice,
Foul food, foul water, and foul gases,
Rank exhalations from morasses.
If you employ such low allies
This business you will vulgarize.
Renouncing then the field of fame
To wallow in a waste of shame,
I’ll prostitute my strength and lurk
About the country doing work —
These hands to labor I’ll devote,
Nor cut, by Heaven, another throat!”

BEECHER.

So, Beecher's dead. His was a great soul, too —
Great as a giant organ is, whose reeds
Hold in them all the souls of all the creeds
That man has ever taught and never knew.

When on this mighty instrument He laid
His hand Who fashioned it, our common moan
Was suppliant in its thundering. The tone
Grew more vivacious when the Devil played.

No more those luring harmonies we hear,
And lo! already men forget the sound.
They turn, retracing all the dubious ground
O'er which it led them, pigwise, by the ear.

NOT GUILTY.

“I saw your charms in another’s arms,”
Said a Grecian swain with his blood a-boil;
”And he kissed you fair as he held you there,
A willing bird in a serpent’s coil!”

The maid looked up from the cinctured cup
Wherein she was crushing the berries red,
Pain and surprise in her honest eyes —
”It was only one o’ those gods,” she said.

PRESENTIMENT.

With saintly grace and reverent tread,
She walked among the graves with me;
Her every foot-fall seemed to be
A benediction on the dead.

The guardian spirit of the place
She seemed, and I some ghost forlorn
Surprised in the untimely morn
She made with her resplendent face.

Moved by some waywardness of will,
Three paces from the path apart
She stepped and stood — my prescient heart
Was stricken with a passing chill.

The folk-lore of the years agone
Remembering, I smiled and thought:
”Who shudders suddenly at naught,
His grave is being trod upon.”

But now I know that it was more
Than idle fancy. O, my sweet,
I did not think such little feet
Could make a buried heart so sore!

A STUDY IN GRAY.

I step from the door with a shiver
(This fog is uncommonly cold)
And ask myself: What did I give her? —
The maiden a trifle gone-old,
With the head of gray hair that was gold.

Ah, well, I suppose ‘twas a dollar,
And doubtless the change is correct,
Though it’s odd that it seems so much smaller
Than what I’d a right to expect.
But you pay when you dine, I reflect.

So I walk up the street—’twas a saunter
A score of years back, when I strolled
From this door; and our talk was all banter
Those days when her hair was of gold,
And the sea-fog less searching and cold.

I button my coat (for I’m shaken,
And fevered a trifle, and flushed
With the wine that I ought to have taken,)
Time was, at this coat I’d have blushed,
Though truly, ‘tis cleverly brushed.

A score? Why, that isn’t so very
Much time to have lost from a life.
There’s reason enough to be merry:
I’ve not fallen down in the strife,
But marched with the drum and the fife.

If Hope, when she lured me and beckoned,
Had pushed at my shoulders instead,
And Fame, on whose favors I reckoned,
Had laureled the worthiest head,
I could garland the years that are dead.

Believe me, I’ve held my own, mostly
Through all of this wild masquerade;
But somehow the fog is more ghostly
To-night, and the skies are more grayed,
Like the locks of the restaurant maid.

If ever I’d fainted and faltered
I’d fancy this did but appear;
But the climate, I’m certain, has altered —
Grown colder and more austere
Than it was in that earlier year.

The lights, too, are strangely unsteady,
That lead from the street to the quay.
I think they’ll go out — and I’m ready
To follow. Out there in the sea
The fog-bell is calling to me.

A PARADOX.

“If life were not worth having,” said the preacher,
”’T would have in suicide one pleasant feature.”
”An error,” said the pessimist, “you’re making:
What’s not worth having cannot be worth taking.”

FOR MERIT.

To Parmentier Parisians raise
A statue fine and large:
He cooked potatoes fifty ways,
Nor ever led a charge.

“*Palmam qui meruit*” — the rest
You knew as well as I;
And best of all to him that best
Of sayings will apply.

Let meaner men the poet’s bays
Or warrior’s medal wear;
Who cooks potatoes fifty ways
Shall bear the palm — de terre.

A BIT OF SCIENCE.

What! photograph in colors? ‘Tis a dream
And he who dreams it is not overwise,
If colors are vibration they but seem,
And have no being. But if Tyndall lies,
Why, come, then — photograph my lady’s eyes.
Nay, friend, you can’t; the splendor of their blue,
As on my own beclouded orbs they rest,
To naught but vibratory motion’s due,
As heart, head, limbs and all I am attest.
How could her eyes, at rest themselves, be making
In me so uncontrollable a shaking?

THE TABLES TURNED.

Over the man the street car ran,
And the driver did never grin.
”O killer of men, pray tell me when
Your laughter means to begin.

“Ten years to a day I’ve observed you slay,
And I never have missed before
Your jubilant peals as your crunching wheels
Were spattered with human gore.

“Why is it, my boy, that you smother your joy,
And why do you make no sign
Of the merry mind that is dancing behind
A solemner face than mine?”

The driver replied: “I would laugh till I cried
If I had bisected you;
But I’d like to explain, if I can for the pain,
’T is myself that I’ve cut in two.”

TO A DEJECTED POET.

Thy gift, if that it be of God,
Thou hast no warrant to appraise,
Nor say: “Here part, O Muse, our ways,
The road too stony to be trod.”

Not thine to call the labor hard
And the reward inadequate.
Who haggles o’er his hire with Fate
Is better bargainer than bard.

What! count the effort labor lost
When thy good angel holds the reed?
It were a sorry thing indeed
To stay him till thy palm be crossed.

“The laborer is worthy” — nay,
The sacred ministry of song
Is rapture!—’t were a grievous wrong
To fix a wages-rate for play.

A FOOL.

Says Anderson, Theosophist:
”Among the many that exist
In modern halls,
Some lived in ancient Egypt’s clime
And in their childhood saw the prime
Of Karnak’s walls.”

Ah, Anderson, if that is true
’T is my conviction, sir, that you
Are one of those
That once resided by the Nile,
Peer to the sacred Crocodile,
Heir to his woes.

My judgment is, the holy Cat
Mews through your larynx (and your hat)
These many years.
Through you the godlike Onion brings
Its melancholy sense of things,
And moves to tears.

In you the Bull divine again
Bellows and paws the dusty plain,
To nature true.
I challenge not his ancient hate
But, lowering my knurly pate,
Lock horns with you.

And though Reincarnation prove
A creed too stubborn to remove,

And all your school
Of Theosophs I cannot scare —
All the more earnestly I swear
That you’re a fool.

You’ll say that this is mere abuse
Without, in fraying you, a use.
That’s plain to see
With only half an eye. Come, now,
Be fair, be fair, — consider how
It eases *me*!

THE HUMORIST.

“What is that, mother?”
”The funny man, child.
His hands are black, but his heart is mild.”

“May I touch him, mother?”
”’T were foolishly done:
He is slightly touched already, my son.”

“O, why does he wear such a ghastly grin?”
”That’s the outward sign of a joke within.”

“Will he crack it, mother?”
”Not so, my saint;
’T is meant for the *Saturday Livercomplaint.”*

“Does he suffer, mother?”
”God help him, yes! —
A thousand and fifty kinds of distress.”

“What makes him sweat so?”
”The demons that lurk
In the fear of having to go to work.”

“Why doesn’t he end, then, his life with a rope?”
”Abolition of Hell has deprived him of hope.”

MONTEFIORE.

I saw—’twas in a dream, the other night —
A man whose hair with age was thin and white:
One hundred years had bettered by his birth,
And still his step was firm, his eye was bright.

Before him and about him pressed a crowd.
Each head in reverence was bared and bowed,
And Jews and Gentiles in a hundred tongues
Extolled his deeds and spoke his fame aloud.

I joined the throng and, pushing forward, cried,
”Montefiore!” with the rest, and vied
In efforts to caress the hand that ne’er
To want and worth had charity denied.

So closely round him swarmed our shouting clan
He scarce could breathe, and taking from a pan
A gleaming coin he tossed it o’er our heads,
And in a moment was a lonely man!

A WARNING.

Cried Age to Youth: “Abate your speed! —
  The distance hither’s brief indeed.”
  But Youth pressed on without delay —
  The shout had reached but half the way.

DISCRETION.

SHE:

I’m told that men have sometimes got
Too confidential, and
Have said to one another what
They — well, you understand.
I hope I don’t offend you, sweet,
But are you sure that *you’re* discreet?

HE:

‘Tis true, sometimes my friends in wine
Their conquests *do* recall,
But none can truly say that mine
Are known to him at all.
I never, never talk you o’er —
In truth, I never get the floor.

AN EXILE.

‘Tis the census enumerator
   A-singing all forlorn:
 It’s ho! for the tall potater,
   And ho! for the clustered corn.
 The whiffle-tree bends in the breeze and the fine
 Large eggs are a-ripening on the vine.

“Some there must be to till the soil
   And the widow’s weeds keep down.
 I wasn’t cut out for rural toil
   But they *won’t* let me live in town!
 They ‘re not so many by two or three,
   As they think, but ah! they ‘re too many for me.”

Thus the census man, bowed down with care,
   Warbled his wood-note high.
 There was blood on his brow and blood in his hair,
   But he had no blood in his eye.

THE DIVISION SUPERINTENDENT.

Baffled he stands upon the track —
  The automatic switches clack.

Where’er he turns his solemn eyes
  The interlocking signals rise.

The trains, before his visage pale,
  Glide smoothly by, nor leave the rail.

No splinter-spitted victim he
  Hears uttering the note high C.

In sorrow deep he hangs his head,
  A-weary — would that he were dead.

Now suddenly his spirits rise —
  A great thought kindles in his eyes.

Hope, like a headlight’s vivid glare,
  Splendors the path of his despair.

His genius shines, the clouds roll back —
  ”I’ll place obstructions on the track!”

PSYCHOGRAPHS.

Says Gerald Massey: “When I write, a band
  Of souls of the departed guides my hand.”
  How strange that poems cumbering our shelves,
  Penned by immortal parts, have none themselves!

TO A PROFESSIONAL EULOGIST.

Newman, in you two parasites combine:
As tapeworm and as graveworm too you shine.
When on the virtues of the quick you’ve dwelt,
The pride of residence was all you felt
(What vain vulgarian the wish ne’er knew
To paint his lodging a flamboyant hue?)
And when the praises of the dead you’ve sung,
’Twas appetite, not truth, inspired your tongue;
As ill-bred men when warming to their wine
Boast of its merit though it be but brine.
Nor gratitude incites your song, nor should —
Even charity would shun you if she could.
You share, ‘tis true, the rich man’s daily dole,
But what you get you take by way of toll.
Vain to resist you — vermifuge alone
Has power to push you from your robber throne.
When to escape you he’s compelled to die
Hey! presto! — in the twinkling of an eye
You vanish as a tapeworm, reappear
As graveworm and resume your curst career.
As host no more, to satisfy your need
He serves as dinner your unaltered greed.
O thrifty sycophant of wealth and fame,
Son of servility and priest of shame,
While naught your mad ambition can abate
To lick the spittle of the rich and great;
While still like smoke your eulogies arise
To soot your heroes and inflame our eyes;
While still with holy oil, like that which ran
Down Aaron’s beard, you smear each famous man,
I cannot choose but think it very odd
It ne’er occurs to you to fawn on God.

FOR WOUNDS.

O bear me, gods, to some enchanted isle
  Where woman’s tears can antidote her smile.

ELECTION DAY.

Despots effete upon tottering thrones
  Unsteadily poised upon dead men’s bones,
  Walk up! walk up! the circus is free,
  And this wonderful spectacle you shall see:
  Millions of voters who mostly are fools —
  Demagogues’ dupes and candidates’ tools,
  Armies of uniformed mountebanks,
  And braying disciples of brainless cranks.
  Many a week they’ve bellowed like beeves,
  Bitterly blackguarding, lying like thieves,
  Libeling freely the quick and the dead
  And painting the New Jerusalem red.
  Tyrants monarchical — emperors, kings,
  Princes and nobles and all such things —
  Noblemen, gentlemen, step this way:
  There’s nothing, the Devil excepted, to pay,
  And the freaks and curios here to be seen
  Are very uncommonly grand and serene.

No more with vivacity they debate,
  Nor cheerfully crack the illogical pate;
  No longer, the dull understanding to aid,
  The stomach accepts the instructive blade,
  Nor the stubborn heart learns what is what
  From a revelation of rabbit-shot;
  And vilification’s flames — behold!
  Burn with a bickering faint and cold.

Magnificent spectacle! — every tongue
  Suddenly civil that yesterday rung
  (Like a clapper beating a brazen bell)

Each fair reputation’s eternal knell;
Hands no longer delivering blows,
And noses, for counting, arrayed in rows.

Walk up, gentlemen — nothing to pay —
The Devil goes back to Hell to-day.

THE MILITIAMAN.

“O warrior with the burnished arms —
With bullion cord and tassel —
Pray tell me of the lurid charms
Of service and the fierce alarms:
The storming of the castle,
The charge across the smoking field,
The rifles’ busy rattle —
What thoughts inspire the men who wield
The blade — their gallant souls how steeled
And fortified in battle.”

“Nay, man of peace, seek not to know
War’s baleful fascination —
The soldier’s hunger for the foe,
His dread of safety, joy to go
To court annihilation.
Though calling bugles blow not now,
Nor drums begin to beat yet,
One fear unmans me, I’ll allow,
And poisons all my pleasure: How
If I should get my feet wet!”

A LITERARY METHOD.

His poems Riley says that he indites
Upon an empty stomach. Heavenly Powers,
Feed him throat-full: for what the beggar writes
Upon his empty stomach empties ours!

A WELCOME.

Because you call yourself Knights Templar, and
  There's neither Knight nor Temple in the land, —
    Because you thus by vain pretense degrade
  To paltry purposes traditions grand, —

Because to cheat the ignorant you say
  The thing that's not, elated still to sway
    The crass credulity of gaping fools
  And women by fantastical display, —

Because no sacred fires did ever warm
  Your hearts, high knightly service to perform —
    A woman's breast or coffer of a man
  The only citadel you dare to storm, —

Because while railing still at lord and peer,
  At pomp and fuss-and-feathers while you jeer,
    Each member of your order tries to graft
  A peacock's tail upon his barren rear, —

Because that all these things are thus and so,
  I bid you welcome to our city. Lo!
    You're free to come, and free to stay, and free
  As soon as it shall please you, sirs — to go.

A SERENADE.

“Sas agapo sas agapo,”
He sang beneath her lattice.
”’Sas agapo’?” she murmured—”O,
I wonder, now, what *that* is!”

Was she less fair that she did bear
So light a load of knowledge?
Are loving looks got out of books,
Or kisses taught in college?

Of woman’s lore give me no more
Than how to love, — in many
A tongue men brawl: she speaks them all
Who says “I love,” in any.

THE WISE AND GOOD.

"O father, I saw at the church as I passed
  The populace gathered in numbers so vast
  That they couldn't get in; and their voices were low,
  And they looked as if suffering terrible woe."

"'Twas the funeral, child, of a gentleman dead
  For whom the great heart of humanity bled."

"What made it bleed, father, for every day
  Somebody passes forever away?
  Do the newspaper men print a column or more
  Of every person whose troubles are o'er?"

"O, no; they could never do that — and indeed,
  Though printers might print it, no reader would read.
  To the sepulcher all, soon or late, must be borne,
  But 'tis only the Wise and the Good that all mourn."

"That's right, father dear, but how can our eyes
  Distinguish in dead men the Good and the Wise?"

"That's easy enough to the stupidest mind:
  They're poor, and in dying leave nothing behind."

"Seest thou in mine eye, father, anything green?
  And takest thy son for a gaping marine?
  Go tell thy fine tale of the Wise and the Good
  Who are poor and lamented to babes in the wood."

And that horrible youth as I hastened away
  Was building a wink that affronted the day.

THE LOST COLONEL.

"'Tis a woeful yarn," said the sailor man bold
Who had sailed the northern-lakes —
"No woefuler one has ever been told
Exceptin' them called 'fakes.'"

"Go on, thou son of the wind and fog,
For I burn to know the worst!"
But his silent lip in a glass of grog
Was dreamily immersed.

Then he wiped it on his sleeve and said:
"It's never like that I drinks
But what of the gallant gent that's dead
I truly mournful thinks.

"He was a soldier chap — leastways
As 'Colonel' he was knew;
An' he hailed from some'rs where they raise
A grass that's heavenly blue.

"He sailed as a passenger aboard
The schooner 'Henery Jo.'
O wild the waves and galeses roared,
Like taggers in a show!

"But he sat at table that calm an' mild
As if he never had let
His sperit know that the waves was wild
An' everlastin' wet! —

“Jest set with a bottle afore his nose,
As was labeled ‘Total Eclipse’
(The bottle was) an’ he frequent rose
A glass o’ the same to his lips.

“An’ he says to me (for the steward slick
Of the ‘Henery Jo’ was I):
’This sailor life’s the very old Nick —
On the lakes it’s powerful dry!’

“I says: ‘Aye, aye, sir, it beats the Dutch.
I hopes you’ll outlast the trip.’
But if I’d been him — an’ I said as much —
I’d ‘a’ took a faster ship.

“His laughture, loud an’ long an’ free,
Rang out o’er the tempest’s roar.
’You’re an elegant reasoner,’ says he,
’But it’s powerful dry ashore!’”

“O mariner man, why pause and don
A look of so deep concern?
Have another glass — go on, go on,
For to know the worst I burn.”

“One day he was leanin’ over the rail,
When his footing some way slipped,
An’ (this is the woefulest part o’ my tale),
He was accidental unshipped!

“The empty boats was overboard hove,
As he swum in the ‘Henery’s wake’;
But ‘fore we had ‘bouted ship he had drove
From sight on the ragin’ lake!”

“And so the poor gentleman was drowned —

And now I’m apprised of the worst.”
”What! him? ‘Twas an hour afore he was found —
In the yawl — stone dead o’ thirst!”

FOR TAT.

O, heavenly powers! will wonders never cease? —
Hair upon dogs and feathers upon geese!
The boys in mischief and the pigs in mire!
The drinking water wet! the coal on fire!
In meadows, rivulets surpassing fair,
Forever running, yet forever there!
A tail appended to the gray baboon!
A person coming out of a saloon!
Last, and of all most marvelous to see,
A female Yahoo flinging filth at me!
If ‘twould but stick I’d bear upon my coat
May Little’s proof that she is fit to vote.

A DILEMMA.

Filled with a zeal to serve my fellow men,
For years I criticised their prose and verges:
Pointed out all their blunders of the pen,
Their shallowness of thought and feeling; then
Damned them up hill and down with hearty curses!

They said: “That’s all that he can do — just sneer,
And pull to pieces and be analytic.
Why doesn’t he himself, eschewing fear,
Publish a book or two, and so appear
As one who has the right to be a critic?

“Let him who knows it all forbear to tell
How little others know, but show his learning.”
The public added: “Who has written well
May censure freely” — quoting Pope. I fell
Into the trap and books began out-turning, —

Books by the score — fine prose and poems fair,
And not a book of them but was a terror,
They were so great and perfect; though I swear
I tried right hard to work in, here and there,
(My nature still forbade) a fault or error.

‘Tis true, some wretches, whom I’d scratched, no doubt,
Professed to find — but that’s a trifling matter.
Now, when the flood of noble books was out
I raised o’er all that land a joyous shout,
Till I was thought as mad as any hatter!

(Why hatters all are mad, I cannot say.
’T were wrong in their affliction to revile ‘em,
But truly, you’ll confess ‘tis very sad
We wear the ugly things they make. Begad,
They’d be less mischievous in an asylum!)

“Consistency, thou art a” — well, you’re *paste*!
When next I felt my demon in possession,
And made the field of authorship a waste,
All said of me: “What execrable taste,
To rail at others of his own profession!”

Good Lord! where do the critic’s rights begin
Who has of literature some clear-cut notion,
And hears a voice from Heaven say: “Pitch in”?
He finds himself — alas, poor son of sin —
Between the devil and the deep blue ocean!

METEMPSYCHOSIS.

Once with Christ he entered Salem,
Once in Moab bullied Balaam,
Once by Apuleius staged
He the pious much enraged.
And, again, his head, as beaver,
Topped the neck of Nick the Weaver.
Omar saw him (minus tether —
Free and wanton as the weather:
Knowing naught of bit or spur)
Stamping over Bahram-Gur.
Now, as Altgeld, see him joy
As Governor of Illinois!

THE SAINT AND THE MONK.

Saint Peter at the gate of Heaven displayed
  The tools and terrors of his awful trade;
  The key, the frown as pitiless as night,
  That slays intending trespassers at sight,
  And, at his side in easy reach, the curled
Interrogation points all ready to be hurled.

Straight up the shining cloudway (it so chanced
  No others were about) a soul advanced —
  A fat, orbicular and jolly soul
  With laughter-lines upon each rosy jowl —
  A monk so prepossessing that the saint
  Admired him, breathless, until weak and faint,
  Forgot his frown and all his questions too,
  Forgoing even the customary "Who?" —
  Threw wide the gate and, with a friendly grin,
Said, "'Tis a very humble home, but pray walk in."

The soul smiled pleasantly. "Excuse me, please —
  Who's in there?" By insensible degrees
  The impudence dispelled the saint's esteem,
  As growing snores annihilate a dream.
  The frown began to blacken on his brow,
  His hand to reach for "Whence?" and "Why?" and "How?"
  "O, no offense, I hope," the soul explained;
  "I'm rather — well, particular. I've strained
  A point in coming here at all; 'tis said
  That Susan Anthony (I hear she's dead
  At last) and all her followers are here.
As company, they'd be — confess it — rather queer."

The saint replied, his rising anger past:

”What can I do? — the law is hard-and-fast,
Albeit unwritten and on earth unknown —
An oral order issued from the Throne.
By but one sin has Woman e’er incurred
God’s wrath. To accuse Them Loud of that would be absurd.”

That friar sighed, but, calling up a smile,
Said, slowly turning on his heel the while:
”Farewell, my friend. Put up the chain and bar —
I’m going, so please you, where the pretty women are.”

1895.

THE OPPOSING SEX.

The Widows of Ashur
Are loud in their wailing:
”No longer the ‘masher’
Sees Widows of Ashur!”
So each is a lasher
Of Man’s smallest failing.
The Widows of Ashur
Are loud in their wailing.

The Cave of Adullam,
That home of reviling —
No wooing can gull ‘em
In Cave of Adullam.
No angel can lull ‘em
To cease their defiling
The Cave of Adullam,
That home of reviling.

At men they are cursing —
The Widows of Ashur;
Themselves, too, for nursing
The men they are cursing.
The praise they’re rehearsing
Of every slasher
At men. *They* are cursing
The Widows of Ashur.

A WHIPPER-IN.

[Commissioner of Pensions Dudley has established a Sunday-school and declares he will remove any clerk in his department who does not regularly attend. — *N.Y. World.]*

Dudley, great placeman, man of mark and note,
Worthy of honor from a feeble pen
Blunted in service of all true, good men,
You serve the Lord — in courses, *table d'hôte:*
Au, *naturel,* as well as *à la Nick* —
"Eat and be thankful, though it make you sick."

O, truly pious caterer, forbear
To push the Saviour and Him crucified
(Brochette you'd call it) into their inside
Who're all unused to such ambrosial fare.
The stomach of the soul makes quick revulsion
Of aught that it has taken on compulsion.

I search the Scriptures, but I do not find
That e'er the Spirit beats with angry wings
For entrance to the heart, but sits and sings
To charm away the scruples of the mind.
It says: "Receive me, please; I'll not compel" —
Though if you don't you will go straight to Hell!

Well, that's compulsion, you will say. 'T is true:
We cower timidly beneath the rod
Lifted in menace by an angry God,
But won't endure it from an ape like you.
Detested simian with thumb prehensile,
Switch *me* and I would brain you with my pencil!

Face you the Throne, nor dare to turn your back
On its transplendency to flog some wight
Who gropes and stumbles in the infernal night
Your ugly shadow lays along his track.
O, Thou who from the Temple scourged the sin,
Behold what rascals try to scourge it in!

JUDGMENT.

I drew aside the Future’s veil
And saw upon his bier
The poet Whitman. Loud the wail
And damp the falling tear.

“He’s dead — he is no more!” one cried,
With sobs of sorrow crammed;
”No more? He’s this much more,” replied
Another: “he is damned!”

1885.

THE FALL OF MISS LARKIN.

Hear me sing of Sally Larkin who, I’d have you understand,
Played accordions as well as any lady in the land;
And I’ve often heard it stated that her fingering was such
That Professor Schweinenhauer was enchanted with her touch;
And that beasts were so affected when her apparatus rang
That they dropped upon their haunches and deliriously sang.
This I know from testimony, though a critic, I opine,
Needs an ear that is dissimilar in some respects to mine.
She could sing, too, like a jaybird, and they say all eyes were wet
When Sally and the ranch-dog were performing a duet —
Which I take it is a song that has to be so loudly sung
As to overtax the strength of any single human lung.
That, at least, would seem to follow from the tale I have to tell,
Which (I’ve told you how she flourished) is how Sally Larkin fell.

One day there came to visit Sally’s dad as sleek and smart
A chap as ever wandered there from any foreign part.
Though his gentle birth and breeding he did not at all obtrude
It was somehow whispered round he was a simon-pure Dude.
Howsoe’er that may have been, it was conspicuous to see
That he *was* a real Gent of an uncommon high degree.
That Sally cast her tender and affectionate regards
On this exquisite creation was, of course, upon the cards;
But he didn’t seem to notice, and was variously blind
To her many charms of person and the merits of her mind,
And preferred, I grieve to say it, to play poker with her dad,
And acted in a manner that in general was bad.

One evening—’twas in summer — she was holding in her lap
Her accordion, and near her stood that melancholy chap,
Leaning up against a pillar with his lip in grog imbrued,

Thinking, maybe, of that ancient land in which he was a Dude.

Then Sally, who was melancholy too, began to hum
And elongate the accordion with a preluding thumb.
Then sighs of amorosity from Sally L. exhaled,
And her music apparatus sympathetically wailed.
”In the gloaming, O my darling!” rose that wild impassioned strain,
And her eyes were fixed on his with an intensity of pain,
Till the ranch-dog from his kennel at the postern gate came round,
And going into session strove to magnify the sound.
He lifted up his spirit till the gloaming rang and rang
With the song that to *his* darling he impetuously sang!
Then that musing youth, recalling all his soul from other scenes,
Where his fathers all were Dudes and his mothers all Dudines,
From his lips removed the beaker and politely, o’er the grog,
Said: “Miss Larkin, please be quiet: you will interrupt the dog.”

IN HIGH LIFE.

Sir Impycu Lackland, from over the sea,
Has led to the altar Miss Bloatie Bondee.
The wedding took place at the Church of St. Blare;
The fashion, the rank and the wealth were all there —
No person was absent of all whom one meets.
Lord Mammon himself bowed them into their seats,
While good Sir John Satan attended the door
And Sexton Beelzebub managed the floor,
Respectfully keeping each dog to its rug,
Preserving the peace between poodle and pug.
Twelve bridesmaids escorted the bride up the aisle
To blush in her blush and to smile in her smile;
Twelve groomsmen supported the eminent groom
To scowl in his scowl and to gloom in his gloom.
The rites were performed by the hand and the lip
Of his Grace the Diocesan, Billingham Pip,
Assisted by three able-bodied divines.
He prayed and they grunted, he read, they made signs.
Such fashion, such beauty, such dressing, such grace
Were ne’er before seen in that heavenly place!
That night, full of gin, and all blazing inside,
Sir Impycu blackened the eyes of his bride.

A BUBBLE.

Mrs. Mehitable Marcia Moore
Was a dame of superior mind,
With a gown which, modestly fitting before,
Was greatly puffed up behind.

The bustle she wore was ingeniously planned
With an inspiration bright:
It magnified seven diameters and
Was remarkably nice and light.

It was made of rubber and edged with lace
And riveted all with brass,
And the whole immense interior space
Inflated with hydrogen gas.

The ladies all said when she hove in view
Like the round and rising moon:
”She’s a stuck up thing!” which was partly true,
And men called her the Captive Balloon.

To Manhattan Beach for a bath one day
She went and she said: “O dear!
If I leave off *this* what will people say?
I shall look so uncommonly queer!”

So a costume she had accordingly made
To take it all nicely in,
And when she appeared in that suit arrayed,
She was greeted with many a grin.

Proudly and happily looking around,
She waded out into the wet,
But the water was very, very profound,
And her feet and her forehead met!

As her bubble drifted away from the shore,
On the glassy billows borne,
All cried: “Why, where is Mehitable Moore?
I saw her go in, I’ll be sworn!”

Then the bulb it swelled as the sun grew hot,
Till it burst with a sullen roar,
And the sea like oil closed over the spot —
Farewell, O Mehitable Moore!

A RENDEZVOUS.

Nightly I put up this humble petition:
”Forgive me, O Father of Glories,
My sins of commission, my sins of omission,
My sins of the Mission Dolores.”

FRANCINE.

Did I believe the angels soon would call
  You, my beloved, to the other shore,
  And I should never see you any more,
 I love you so I know that I should fall
 Into dejection utterly, and all
  Love’s pretty pageantry, wherein we bore
  Twin banners bravely in the tumult’s fore,
 Would seem as shadows idling on a wall.
 So daintily I love you that my love
  Endures no rumor of the winter’s breath,
   And only blossoms for it thinks the sky
 Forever gracious, and the stars above
  Forever friendly. Even the fear of death
   Were frost wherein its roses all would die.

AN EXAMPLE.

They were two deaf mutes, and they loved and they
Resolved to be groom and bride;
And they listened to nothing that any could say,
Nor ever a word replied.

From wedlock when warned by the married men,
Maintain an invincible mind:
Be deaf and dumb until wedded — and then
Be deaf and dumb and blind.

REVENGE.

A spitcat sate on a garden gate
And a snapdog fared beneath;
Careless and free was his mien, and he
Held a fiddle-string in his teeth.

She marked his march, she wrought an arch
Of her back and blew up her tail;
And her eyes were green as ever were seen,
And she uttered a woful wail.

The spitcat's plaint was as follows: "It ain't
That I am to music a foe;
For fiddle-strings bide in my own inside,
And I twang them soft and low.

"But that dog has trifled with art and rifled
A kitten of mine, ah me!
That catgut slim was marauded from him:
'Tis the string that men call E."

Then she sounded high, in the key of Y,
A note that cracked the tombs;
And the missiles through the firmament flew
From adjacent sleeping-rooms.

As her gruesome yell from the gate-post fell
She followed it down to earth;
And that snapdog wears a placard that bears
The inscription: "Blind from birth."

THE GENESIS OF EMBARRASSMENT.

When Adam first saw Eve he said:
”O lovely creature, share my bed.”
Before consenting, she her gaze
Fixed on the greensward to appraise,
As well as vision could avouch,
The value of the proffered couch.
And seeing that the grass was green
And neatly clipped with a machine —
Observing that the flow’rs were rare
Varieties, and some were fair,
The posts of precious woods, besprent
With fragrant balsams, diffluent,
And all things suited to her worth,
She raised her angel eyes from earth
To his and, blushing to confess,
Murmured: “I love you, Adam — yes.”
Since then her daughters, it is said,
Look always down when asked to wed.

IN CONTUMACIAM.

Och! Father McGlynn,
  Ye appear to be in
Fer a bit of a bout wid the Pope;
  An' there's divil a doubt
  But he's knockin' ye out
While ye're hangin' onto the rope.

An' soon ye'll lave home
  To thravel to Rome,
For its bound to Canossa ye are.
  Persistin' to shtay
  When ye're ordered away —
Bedad! that is goin' too far!

RE-EDIFIED.

Lord of the tempest, pray refrain
  From leveling this church again.
  Now in its doom, as so you’ve willed it,
  We acquiesce. But *you’ll* rebuild it.

A BULLETIN.

”Lothario is very low,”
  So all the doctors tell.
Nay, nay, not *so* — he will be, though,
  If ever he get well.

FROM THE MINUTES.

When, with the force of a ram that discharges its ponderous body
Straight at the rear elevation of the luckless culler of simples,
The foot of Herculean Kilgore — statesman of surname suggestive
Or carnage unspeakable! — lit like a missile prodigious
Upon the Congressional door with a monstrous and mighty momentum,
Causing that vain ineffective bar to political freedom
To fly from its hinges, effacing the nasal excrescence of Dingley,
That luckless one, decently veiling the ruin with ready bandanna,
Lamented the loss of his eminence, sadly with sobs as follows:
”Ah, why was I ever elected to the halls of legislation,
So soon to be shown the door with pitiless emphasis? Truly,
I’ve leaned on a broken Reed, and the same has gone back on me meanly.
Where now is my prominence, erstwhile in council conspicuous, patent?
Alas, I did never before understand what I now see clearly,
To wit, that Democracy tends to level all human distinctions!”
His fate so untoward and sad the Pine-tree statesman, bewailing,
Stood in the corridor there while Democrats freed from confinement
Came trooping forth from the chamber, dissembling all, as they passed him,
Hilarious sentiments painful indeed to observe, and remarking:
”O friend and colleague of the Speaker, what ails the unjoyous proboscis?”

WOMAN IN POLITICS.

What, madam, run for School Director? You?
And want my vote and influence? Well, well,
That beats me! Gad! where *are* we drifting to?
In all my life I never have heard tell
Of such sublime presumption, and I smell
A nigger in the fence! Excuse me, madam;
We statesmen sometimes speak like the old Adam.

But now you mention it — well, well, who knows?
We might, that’s certain, give the sex a show.
I have a cousin — teacher. I suppose
If I stand in and you ‘re elected — no?
You’ll make no bargains? That’s a pretty go!
But understand that school administration
Belongs to Politics, not Education.

We’ll pass the teacher deal; but it were wise
To understand each other at the start.
You know my business — books and school supplies;
You’d hardly, if elected, have the heart
Some small advantage to deny me — part
Of all my profits to be yours. What? Stealing?
Please don’t express yourself with so much feeling.

You pain me, truly. Now one question more.
Suppose a fair young man should ask a place
As teacher — would you (pardon) shut the door
Of the Department in his handsome face
Until — I know not how to put the case —
Would you extort a kiss to pay your favor?
Good Lord! you laugh? I thought the matter graver.

Well, well, we can’t do business, I suspect:
  A woman has no head for useful tricks.
 My profitable offers you reject
  And will not promise anything to fix
  The opposition. That’s not politics.
 Good morning. Stay — I’m chaffing you, conceitedly.
 Madam, I mean to vote for you — repeatedly.

TO AN ASPIRANT.

What! you a Senator — you, Mike de Young?
Still reeking of the gutter whence you sprung?
Sir, if all Senators were such as you,
Their hands so crimson and so slender, too, —
(Shaped to the pocket for commercial work,
For literary, fitted to the dirk) —
So black their hearts, so lily-white their livers,
The toga's touch would give a man the shivers.

A BALLAD OF PIKEVILLE.

Down in Southern Arizona where the Gila monster thrives,
And the “Mescalero,” gifted with a hundred thousand lives,
Every hour renounces one of them by drinking liquid flame —
The assassinating wassail that has given him his name;
Where the enterprising dealer in Caucasian hair is seen
To hold his harvest festival upon his village-green,
While the late lamented tenderfoot upon the plain is spread
With a sanguinary circle on the summit of his head;
Where the cactuses (or cacti) lift their lances in the sun,
And incautious jackass-rabbits come to sorrow as they run,
Lived a colony of settlers — old Missouri was the State
Where they formerly resided at a prehistoric date.

Now, the spot that had been chosen for this colonizing scheme
Was as waterless, believe me, as an Arizona stream.

The soil was naught but ashes, by the breezes driven free,
And an acre and a quarter were required to sprout a pea.
So agriculture languished, for the land would not produce,
And for lack of water, whisky was the beverage in use —
Costly whisky, hauled in wagons many a weary, weary day,
Mostly needed by the drivers to sustain them on their way.
Wicked whisky! King of Evils! Why, O, why did God create
Such a curse and thrust it on us in our inoffensive state?

Once a parson came among them, and a holy man was he;
With his ailing stomach whisky wouldn’t anywise agree;
So he knelt upon the *mesa* and he prayed with all his chin
That the Lord would send them water or incline their hearts to gin.

Scarcely was the prayer concluded ere an earthquake shook the land,
And with copious effusion springs burst out on every hand!
Merrily the waters gurgled, and the shock which gave them birth
Fitly was by some declared a temperance movement of the earth.
Astounded by the miracle, the people met that night
To celebrate it properly by some religious rite;
And ‘tis truthfully recorded that before the moon had sunk
Every man and every woman was devotionally drunk.
A half a standard gallon (says history) per head
Of the best Kentucky prime was at that ceremony shed.
O, the glory of that country! O, the happy, happy folk.
By the might of prayer delivered from Nature’s broken yoke!
Lo! the plains to the horizon all are yellowing with rye,
And the corn upon the hill-top lifts its banners to the sky!
Gone the wagons, gone the drivers, and the road is grown to grass,
Over which the incalescent Bourbon did aforetime pass.
Pikeville (that’s the name they’ve given, in their wild, romantic way,
To that irrigation district) now distills, statistics say,
Something like a hundred gallons, out of each recurrent crop,
To the head of population — and consumes it, every drop!

A BUILDER.

I saw the devil — he was working free:
  A customs-house he builded by the sea.
  ”Why do you this?” The devil raised his head;
  ”Churches and courts I’ve built enough,” he said.

AN AUGURY.

Upon my desk a single spray,
With starry blossoms fraught.
I write in many an idle way,
Thinking one serious thought.

“O flowers, a fine Greek name ye bear,
And with a fine Greek grace.”
Be still, O heart, that turns to share
The sunshine of a face.

“Have ye no messages — no brief,
Still sign: ‘Despair’, or ‘Hope’?”
A sudden stir of stem and leaf —
A breath of heliotrope!

LUSUS POLITICUS.

Come in, old gentleman. How do you do?
Delighted, I'm sure, that you've called.
I'm a sociable sort of a chap and you
Are a pleasant-appearing person, too,
With a head agreeably bald.
That's right — sit down in the scuttle of coal
And put up your feet in a chair.
It is better to have them there:
And I've always said that a hat of lead,
Such as I see you wear,
Was a better hat than a hat of glass.
And your boots of brass
Are a natural kind of boots, I swear.
"May you blow your nose on a paper of pins?"
Why, certainly, man, why not?
I rather expected you'd do it before,
When I saw you poking it in at the door.
It's dev'lish hot —
The weather, I mean. "You are twins"?
Why, that was evident at the start,
From the way that you paint your head
In stripes of purple and red,
With dots of yellow.
That proves you a fellow
With a love of legitimate art.
"You've bitten a snake and are feeling bad"?
That's very sad,
But Longfellow's words I beg to recall:
Your lot is the common lot of all.
"Horses are trees and the moon is a sneeze"?
That, I fancy, is just as you please.
Some think that way and others hold
The opposite view;

I never quite knew,
For the matter o’ that,
When everything’s been said —
May I offer this mat
If you *will* stand on your head?
I suppose I look to be upside down
From your present point of view.
It’s a giddy old world, from king to clown,
And a topsy-turvy, too.
But, worthy and now uninverted old man,
You’re built, at least, on a normal plan
If ever a truth I spoke.
Smoke?
Your air and conversation
Are a liberal education,
And your clothes, including the metal hat
And the brazen boots — what’s that?

”You never could stomach a Democrat
Since General Jackson ran?
You’re another sort, but you predict
That your party’ll get consummately licked?”
Good God! what a queer old man!

BEREAVEMENT.

A Countess (so they tell the tale)
  Who dwelt of old in Arno’s vale,
  Where ladies, even of high degree,
  Know more of love than of A.B.C,
  Came once with a prodigious bribe
  Unto the learned village scribe,
  That most discreet and honest man
  Who wrote for all the lover clan,
  Nor e’er a secret had betrayed —
  Save when inadequately paid.
  ”Write me,” she sobbed—”I pray thee do —
  A book about the Prince di Giu —
  A book of poetry in praise
  Of all his works and all his ways;
  The godlike grace of his address,
  His more than woman’s tenderness,
  His courage stern and lack of guile,
  The loves that wantoned in his smile.
  So great he was, so rich and kind,
  I’ll not within a fortnight find
  His equal as a lover. O,
  My God! I shall be drowned in woe!”

“What! Prince di Giu has died!” exclaimed
  The honest man for letters famed,
  The while he pocketed her gold;
  ”Of what’? — if I may be so bold.”
  Fresh storms of tears the lady shed:
  ”I stabbed him fifty times,” she said.

AN INSCRIPTION FOR A STATUE OF NAPOLEON, AT WEST POINT.

A famous conqueror, in battle brave,
  Who robbed the cradle to supply the grave.
  His reign laid quantities of human dust:
  He fell upon the just and the unjust.

A PICKBRAIN.

What! imitate me, friend? Suppose that you
  With agony and difficulty do
  What I do easily — what then? You’ve got
  A style I heartily wish *I* had not.
  If I from lack of sense and you from choice
  Grieve the judicious and the unwise rejoice,
  No equal censure our deserts will suit —
  We both are fools, but you’re an ape to boot!

CONVALESCENT.

”By good men’s prayers see Grant restored!”
  Shouts Talmage, pious creature!
Yes, God, by supplication bored
  From every droning preacher,
Exclaimed: “So be it, tiresome crew —
But I’ve a crow to pick with *you*.”

THE NAVAL CONSTRUCTOR.

He looked upon the ships as they
All idly lay at anchor,
Their sides with gorgeous workmen gay —
The riveter and planker —

Republicans and Democrats,
Statesmen and politicians.
He saw the swarm of prudent rats
Swimming for land positions.

He marked each “belted cruiser” fine,
Her poddy life-belts floating
In tether where the hungry brine
Impinged upon her coating.

He noted with a proud regard,
As any of his class would,
The poplar mast and poplar yard
Above the hull of bass-wood.

He saw the Eastlake frigate tall,
With quaintly carven gable,
Hip-roof and dormer-window — all
With ivy formidable.

In short, he saw our country’s hope
In best of all conditions —
Equipped, to the last spar and rope,
By working politicians.

He boarded then the noblest ship
  And from the harbor glided.
”Adieu, adieu!” fell from his lip.
  Verdict: “He suicided.”

1881.

DETECTED.

In Congress once great Mowther shone,
Debating weighty matters;
Now into an asylum thrown,
He vacuously chatters.

If in that legislative hall
His wisdom still he ‘d vented,
It never had been known at all
That Mowther was demented.

BIMETALISM.

Ben Bulger was a silver man,
Though not a mine had he:
He thought it were a noble plan
To make the coinage free.

“There hain’t for years been sech a time,”
Said Ben to his bull pup,
”For biz — the country’s broke and I’m
The hardest kind of up.

“The paper says that that’s because
The silver coins is sea’ce,
And that the chaps which makes the laws
Puts gold ones in their place.

“They says them nations always be
Most prosperatin’ where
The wolume of the currency
Ain’t so disgustin’ rare.”

His dog, which hadn’t breakfasted,
Dissented from his view,
And wished that he could swell, instead,
The volume of cold stew.

“Nobody’d put me up,” said Ben,
”With patriot galoots
Which benefits their feller men
By playin’ warious roots;

“But havin’ all the tools about,
I’m goin’ to commence
A-turnin’ silver dollars out
Wuth eighty-seven cents.

“The feller takin’ ‘em can’t whine:
(No more, likewise, can I):
They’re better than the genooine,
Which mostly satisfy.

“It’s only makin’ coinage free,
And mebby might augment
The wolume of the currency
A noomerous per cent.”

I don’t quite see his error nor
Malevolence prepense,
But fifteen years they gave him for
That technical offense.

THE RICH TESTATOR.

He lay on his bed and solemnly “signed,”
    Gasping — perhaps ‘twas a jest he meant:
  ”This of a sound and disposing mind
    Is the last ill-will and contestament.”

TWO METHODS.

To bucks and ewes by the Good Shepherd fed
The Priest delivers masses for the dead,
And even from estrays outside the fold
Death for the masses he would not withhold.
The Parson, loth alike to free or kill,
Forsakes the souls already on the grill,
And, God’s prerogative of mercy shamming,
Spares living sinners for a harder damning.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE STATE

Observe, dear Lord, what lively pranks
Are played by sentimental cranks!
First this one mounts his hinder hoofs
And brays the chimneys off the roofs;
Then that one, with exalted voice,
Expounds the thesis of his choice,
Our understandings to bombard,
Till all the window panes are starred!
A third augments the vocal shock
Till steeples to their bases rock,
Confessing, as they humbly nod,
They hear and mark the will of God.
A fourth in oral thunder vents
His awful penury of sense
Till dogs with sympathetic howls,
And lowing cows, and cackling fowls,
Hens, geese, and all domestic birds,
Attest the wisdom of his words.
Cranks thus their intellects deflate
Of theories about the State.
This one avers 'tis built on Truth,
And that on Temperance. This youth
Declares that Science bears the pile;
That graybeard, with a holy smile,
Says Faith is the supporting stone;
While women swear that Love alone
Could so unflinchingly endure
The heavy load. And some are sure
The solemn vow of Christian Wedlock
Is the indubitable bedrock.

Physicians once about the bed
Of one whose life was nearly sped

Blew up a disputatious breeze
About the cause of his disease:
This, that and t’ other thing they blamed.
”Tut, tut!” the dying man exclaimed,
”What made me ill I do not care;
You’ve not an ounce of it, I’ll swear.
And if you had the skill to make it
I’d see you hanged before I’d take it!”

AN IMPOSTER.

Must you, Carnegie, evermore explain
Your worth, and all the reasons give again
Why black and red are similarly white,
And you and God identically right?
Still must our ears without redress submit
To hear you play the solemn hypocrite
Walking in spirit some high moral level,
Raising at once his eye-balls and the devil?
Great King of Cant! if Nature had but made
Your mouth without a tongue I ne’er had prayed
To have an earless head. Since she did not,
Bear me, ye whirlwinds, to some favored spot —
Some mountain pinnacle that sleeps in air
So delicately, mercifully rare
That when the fellow climbs that giddy hill,
As, for my sins, I know at last he will,
To utter twaddle in that void inane
His soundless organ he will play in vain.

UNEXPOUNDED.

On Evidence, on Deeds, on Bills,
  On Copyhold, on Loans, on Wills,
    Lawyers great books indite;
  The creaking of their busy quills
    I’ve never heard on Right.

FRANCE.

Unhappy State! with horrors still to strive:
Thy Hugo dead, thy Boulanger alive;
A Prince who'd govern where he dares not dwell,
And who for power would his birthright sell —
Who, anxious o'er his enemies to reign,
Grabs at the scepter and conceals the chain;
While pugnant factions mutually strive
By cutting throats to keep the land alive.
Perverse in passion, as in pride perverse —
To all a mistress, to thyself a curse;
Sweetheart of Europe! every sun's embrace
Matures the charm and poison of thy grace.
Yet time to thee nor peace nor wisdom brings:
In blood of citizens and blood of kings
The stones of thy stability are set,
And the fair fabric trembles at a threat.

THE EASTERN QUESTION.

Looking across the line, the Grecian said:
  ”This border I will stain a Turkey red.”
  The Moslem smiled securely and replied:
  ”No Greek has ever for his country dyed.”
  While thus each patriot guarded his frontier,
  The Powers stole all the country in his rear.

A GUEST.

Death, are you well? I trust you have no cough
  That's painful or in any way annoying —
No kidney trouble that may carry you off,
  Or heart disease to keep you from enjoying
Your meals — and ours. 'T were very sad indeed
To have to quit the busy life you lead.

You've been quite active lately for so old
  A person, and not very strong-appearing.
I'm apprehensive, somehow, that my bold,
  Bad brother gave you trouble in the spearing.
And my two friends — I fear, sir, that you ran
Quite hard for them, especially the man.

I crave your pardon: 'twas no fault of mine;
  If you are overworked I'm sorry, very.
Come in, old man, and have a glass of wine.
  What shall it be — Marsala, Port or Sherry?
What! just a mug of blood? That's funny grog
To ask a friend for, eh? Well, take it, hog!

A FALSE PROPHECY.

Dom Pedro, Emperor of far Brazil
(Whence coffee comes and the three-cornered nut),
They say that you're imperially ill,
And threatened with paralysis. Tut-tut!
Though Emperors are mortal, nothing but
A nimble thunderbolt could catch and kill
A man predestined to depart this life
By the assassin's bullet, bomb or knife.

Sir, once there was a President who freed
Ten million slaves; and once there was a Czar
Who freed five times as many serfs. Sins breed
The means of punishment, and tyrants are
Hurled headlong out of the triumphal car
If faster than the law allows they speed.
Lincoln and Alexander struck a rut;
You freed slaves too. Paralysis — tut-tut!

1885.

TWO TYPES.

Courageous fool! — the peril's strength unknown.
Courageous man! — so conscious of your own.

SOME ANTE-MORTEM EPITAPHS. STEPHEN DORSEY.

Fly, heedless stranger, from this spot accurst,
  Where rests in Satan an offender first
  In point of greatness, as in point of time,
  Of new-school rascals who proclaim their crime.
  Skilled with a frank loquacity to blab
  The dark arcana of each mighty grab,
  And famed for lying from his early youth,
  He sinned secure behind a veil of truth.
  Some lock their lips upon their deeds; some write
  A damning record and conceal from sight;
  Some, with a lust of speaking, die to quell it.
  His way to keep a secret was to tell it.

STEPHEN J. FIELD.

Here sleeps one of the greatest students
Of jurisprudence.
Nature endowed him with the gift
Of the juristhrift.
All points of law alike he threw
The dice to settle.
Those honest cubes were loaded true
With railway metal.

GENERAL B.F. BUTLER.

Thy flesh to earth, thy soul to God,
  We gave, O gallant brother;
 And o’er thy grave the awkward squad
  Fired into one another!

Beneath this monument which rears its head.
 A giant note of admiration — dead,
 His life extinguished like a taper’s flame.
 John Ericsson is lying in his fame.
 Behold how massive is the lofty shaft;
 How fine the product of the sculptor’s craft;
 The gold how lavishly applied; the great
 Man’s statue how impressive and sedate!
 Think what the cost-was! It would ill become
 Our modesty to specify the sum;
 Suffice it that a fair per cent, we’re giving
 Of what we robbed him of when he was living.

Of Corporal Tanner the head and the trunk
 Are here in unconsecrate ground duly sunk.
 His legs in the South claim the patriot’s tear,
 But, stranger, you needn’t be blubbering here.

Jay Gould lies here. When he was newly dead
 He looked so natural that round his bed

The people stood, in silence all, to weep.
 They thought, poor souls! that he did only sleep.

Here Ingalls, sorrowing, has laid

The tools of his infernal trade —
His pen and tongue. So sharp and rude
They grew — so slack in gratitude,
His hand was wounded as he wrote,
And when he spoke he cut his throat.

Within this humble mausoleum
  Poor Guiteau's flesh you'll find.
His bones are kept in a museum,
  And Tillman has his mind.

Stranger, uncover; here you have in view
The monument of Chauncey M. Depew.
Eater and orator, the whole world round
For feats of tongue and tooth alike renowned.
Pauper in thought but prodigal in speech,
Nothing he knew excepting how to teach.
But in default of something to impart
He multiplied his words with all his heart:
When least he had to say, instructive most —
A clam in wisdom and in wit a ghost.

Dining his way to eminence, he rowed
With knife and fork up water-ways that flowed
From lakes of favor — pulled with all his force
And found each river sweeter than the source.
Like rats, obscure beneath a kitchen floor,
Gnawing and rising till obscure no more,
He ate his way to eminence, and Fame
Inscribes in gravy his immortal name.
A trencher-knight, he, mounted on his belly,
So spurred his charger that its sides were jelly.
Grown desperate at last, it reared and threw him,
And Indigestion, overtaking, slew him.

Here the remains of Schuyler Colfax lie;
  Born, all the world knows when, and Heaven knows why.
  In ‘71 he filled the public eye,
  In ‘72 he bade the world good-bye,
  In God’s good time, with a protesting sigh,
  He came to life just long enough to die.

Of Morgan here lies the unspirited clay,
  Who secrets of Masonry swore to betray.
  He joined the great Order and studied with zeal
  The awful arcana he meant to reveal.
  At last in chagrin by his own hand he fell —
  There was nothing to learn, there was nothing to tell.

A HYMN OF THE MANY.

God's people sorely were oppressed,
I heard their lamentations long; —
I hear their singing, clear and strong,
I see their banners in the West!

The captains shout the battle-cry,
The legions muster in their might;
They turn their faces to the light,
They lift their arms, they testify:

"We sank beneath the Master's thong,
Our chafing chains were ne'er undone; —
Now clash your lances in the sun
And bless your banners with a song!

"God bides his time with patient eyes
While tyrants build upon the land; —
He lifts his face, he lifts his hand,
And from the stones his temples rise.

"Now Freedom waves her joyous wing
Beyond the foemen's shields of gold.
March forward, singing, for, behold,
The right shall rule while God is king!"

ONE MORNING.

Because that I am weak, my love, and ill,
I cannot follow the impatient feet
Of my desire, but sit and watch the beat
Of the unpitying pendulum fulfill
The hour appointed for the air to thrill
And brighten at your coming. O my sweet,
The tale of moments is at last complete —
The tryst is broken on the gusty hill!
O lady, faithful-footed, loyal-eyed,
The long leagues silence me; yet doubt me not;
Think rather that the clock and sun have lied
And all too early, you have sought the spot.
For lo! despair has darkened all the light,
And till I see your face it still is night.

AN ERROR.

Good for he’s old? Ah, Youth, you do not dream
  How sweet the roses in the autumn seem!

AT THE NATIONAL ENCAMPMENT.

You ‘re grayer than one would have thought you:
The climate you have over there
In the East has apparently brought you
Disorders affecting the hair,
Which — pardon me — seems a thought spare.

You’ll not take offence at my giving
Expression to notions like these.
You might have been stronger if living
Out here in our sanative breeze.
It’s unhealthy here for disease.

No, I’m not as plump as a pullet.
But that’s the old wound, you see.
Remember my paunching a bullet? —
And how that it didn’t agree
With — well, honest hardtack for me.

Just pass me the wine — I’ve a helly
And horrible kind of drouth!
When a fellow has that in his belly
Which didn’t go in at his mouth
He’s hotter than all Down South!

Great Scott! what a nasty day *that* was —
When every galoot in our crack
Division who didn’t lie flat was
Dissuaded from further attack
By the bullet’s felicitous whack.

‘Twas there that our major slept under
Some cannon of ours on the crest,
Till they woke him by stilling their thunder,
And he cursed them for breaking his rest,
And died in the midst of his jest.

That night — it was late in November —
The dead seemed uncommonly chill
To the touch; and one chap I remember
Who took it exceedingly ill
When I dragged myself over his bill.

Well, comrades, I’m off now — good morning.
Your talk is as pleasant as pie,
But, pardon me, one word of warning:
Speak little of self, say I.
That’s my way. God bless you. Good-bye.

THE KING OF BORES.

Abundant bores afflict this world, and some
  Are bores of magnitude that-come and — no,
  They're always coming, but they never go —
 Like funeral pageants, as they drone and hum
 Their lurid nonsense like a muffled drum,
  Or bagpipe's dread unnecessary flow.
  But one superb tormentor I can show —
 Prince Fiddlefaddle, Duc de Feefawfum.
 He the johndonkey is who, when I pen
  Amorous verses in an idle mood
   To nobody, or of her, reads them through
 And, smirking, says he knows the lady; then
  Calls me sly dog. I wish he understood
   This tender sonnet's application too.

HISTORY.

What wrecked the Roman power? One says vice,
Another indolence, another dice.
Emascle says polygamy. “Not so,”
Says Impycu—”’twas luxury and show.”
The parson, lifting up a brow of brass,
Swears superstition gave the *coup de grâce*,
Great Allison, the statesman-chap affirms
’Twas lack of coins (croaks Medico: “‘T was worms”)
And John P. Jones the swift suggestion collars,
Averring the no coins were silver dollars.
Thus, through the ages, each presuming quack
Turns the poor corpse upon its rotten back,
Holds a new “autopsy” and finds that death
Resulted partly from the want of breath,
But chiefly from some visitation sad
That points his argument or serves his fad.
They’re all in error — never human mind
The cause of the disaster has divined.
What slew the Roman power? Well, provided
You’ll keep the secret, I will tell you. I did.

THE HERMIT.

To a hunter from the city,
Overtaken by the night,
Spake, in tones of tender pity
For himself, an aged wight:

“I have found the world a fountain
Of deceit and Life a sham.
I have taken to the mountain
And a Holy Hermit am.

“Sternly bent on Contemplation,
Far apart from human kind ——
In the hill my habitation,
In the Infinite my mind.

“Ten long years I’ve lived a dumb thing,
Growing bald and bent with dole.
Vainly seeking for a Something
To engage my gloomy soul.

“Gentle Pilgrim, while my roots you
Eat, and quaff my simple drink,
Please suggest whatever suits you
As a Theme for me to Think.”

Then the hunter answered gravely:
”From distraction free, and strife,
You could ponder very bravely
On the Vanity of Life.”

“O, thou wise and learned Teacher,
You have solved the Problem well —
You have saved a grateful creature
From the agonies of hell.

“Take another root, another
Cup of water: eat and drink.
Now I have a Subject, brother,
Tell me What, and How, to think.”

TO A CRITIC OF TENNYSON.

Affronting fool, subdue your transient light;
  When Wisdom’s dull dares Folly to be bright:
  If Genius stumble in the path to fame,
  ’Tis decency in dunces to go lame.

THE YEARLY LIE.

A merry Christmas? Prudent, as I live! —
  You wish me something that you need not give.

Merry or sad, what does it signify?
  To you ‘t is equal if I laugh, or die.

Your hollow greeting, like a parrot’s jest,
  Finds all its meaning in the ear addressed.

Why “merry” Christmas? Faith, I’d rather frown
  Than grin and caper like a tickled clown.

When fools are merry the judicious weep;
  The wise are happy only when asleep.

A present? Pray you give it to disarm
  A man more powerful to do you harm.

‘T was not your motive? Well, I cannot let
  You pay for favors that you’ll never get.

Perish the savage custom of the gift,
  Founded in terror and maintained in thrift!

What men of honor need to aid their weal
  They purchase, or, occasion serving, steal.

Go celebrate the day with turkeys, pies,
  Sermons and psalms, and, for the children, lies.

Let Santa Claus descend again the flue;
  If Baby doubt it, swear that it is true.

“A lie well stuck to is as good as truth,”
  And God’s too old to legislate for youth.

Hail Christmas! On my knees and fowl I fall:
  For greater grace and better gravy call.
  Vive l’Humbug! — that’s to say, God bless us all!

COOPERATION.

No more the swindler singly seeks his prey;
  To hunt in couples is the modern way —
  A rascal, from the public to purloin,
  An honest man to hide away the coin.

AN APOLOGUE.

A traveler observed one day
  A loaded fruit-tree by the way.
  And reining in his horse exclaimed:
  ”The man is greatly to be blamed
  Who, careless of good morals, leaves
  Temptation in the way of thieves.
  Now lest some villain pass this way
  And by this fruit be led astray
  To bag it, I will kindly pack
  It snugly in my saddle-sack.”
  He did so; then that Salt o’ the Earth
  Rode on, rejoicing in his worth.

DIAGNOSIS.

Cried Allen Forman: “Doctor, pray
Compose my spirits’ strife:
O what may be my chances, say,
Of living all my life?

“For lately I have dreamed of high
And hempen dissolution!
O doctor, doctor, how can I
Amend my constitution?”

The learned leech replied: “You’re young
And beautiful and strong —
Permit me to inspect your tongue:
H’m, ah, ahem!—’tis long.”

FALLEN.

O, hadst thou died when thou wert great,
When at thy feet a nation knelt
To sob the gratitude it felt
And thank the Saviour of the State,
Gods might have envied thee thy fate!

Then was the laurel round thy brow,
And friend and foe spoke praise of thee,
While all our hearts sang victory.
Alas! thou art too base to bow
To hide the shame that brands it now.

DIES IRAE.

A recent republication of the late Gen. John A. Dix’s disappointing translation of this famous medieval hymn, together with some researches into its history which I happened to be making at the time, induces me to undertake a translation myself. It may seem presumption in me to attempt that which so many eminent scholars of so many generations have attempted before me; but the conspicuous failure of others encourages me to hope that success, being still unachieved, is still achievable. The fault of previous translations, from Lord Macaulay’s to that of Gen. Dix, has been, I venture to think, a too strict literalness, whereby the delicate irony and subtle humor of the immortal poem — though doubtless these admirable qualities were well appreciated by the translators — have been utterly sacrificed in the result. In none of the English versions that I have examined is more than a trace of the mocking spirit of insincerity pervading the whole prayer, — the cool effrontery of the suppliant in enumerating his demerits, his serenely illogical demands of salvation in spite, or rather because, of them, his meek submission to the punishment of others, and the many similarly pleasing characteristics of this amusing work, being most imperfectly conveyed. By permitting myself a reasonable freedom of rendering — in many cases boldly supplying that “missing link” between the sublime and the ridiculous which the author, writing for the acute monkish apprehension of the 13th century, did not deem it necessary to insert — I have hoped at least partially to liberate the lurking devil of humor from his fetters, letting him caper, not, certainly, as he does in the Latin, but as he probably would have done had his creator written in English. In preserving the metre and double rhymes of the original, I have acted from the same reverent regard for the music with which, in the liturgy of the Church, the verses have become inseparably wedded that inspired Gen. Dix; seeking rather to surmount the obstacles to success by honest effort, than to avoid them by the adoption of an easier versification which would have deprived my version of all utility in religious service.

I must bespeak the reader’s charitable consideration in respect of the first stanza, the insuperable difficulties of which seem to have been purposely contrived in order to warn off trespassers at the very boundary of the alluring domain. I have got over the inhibition — somehow — but David and the Sibyl must try to forgive me if they find themselves represented merely by the names of those conspicuous personal qualities to which they probably owed, respectively, their powers of prophecy, as Samson’s strength lay in his hair.

DIES IRAE.

Dies irae! dies ilia!
  Solvet saeclum in favilla
  Teste David cum Sibylla.

Quantus tremor est futurus,
  Quando Judex est venturus.
  Cuncta stricte discussurus.

Tuba mirum spargens sonum
  Per sepulchra regionem,
  Coget omnes ante thronum.

Mors stupebit, et Natura,
  Quum resurget creatura
  Judicanti responsura.

Liber scriptus proferetur,
  In quo totum continetur,
  Unde mundus judicetur.

Judex ergo quum sedebit,
  Quicquid latet apparebit,
  Nil inultum remanebit.

Quid sum miser tunc dicturus,
  Quem patronem rogaturus,
  Quum vix justus sit securus?

Rex tremendae majestatis,
  Qui salvandos salvas gratis;
  Salva me, Fons pietatis

Recordare, Jesu pie
  Quod sum causa tuae viae;
  Ne me perdas illa die.

Quarens me sedisti lassus
  Redimisti crucem passus,
  Tantus labor non sit cassus.

Juste Judex ultionis,
  Donum fac remissionis
  Ante diem rationis.

Ingemisco tanquam reus,
  Culpa rubet vultus meus;
  Supplicanti parce, Deus.

Qui Mariam absolvisti
  Et latronem exaudisti,
  Mihi quoque spem dedisti.

Preces meae non sunt dignae,
  Sed tu bonus fac benigne
  Ne perenni cremer igne.

Inter oves locum praesta.
  Et ab haedis me sequestra,
  Statuens in parte dextra.

Confutatis maledictis,

  Flammis acribus addictis,
  Voca me cum benedictis.

Oro supplex et acclinis,
  Cor contritum quasi cinis;
  Gere curam mei finis.

Lacrymosa dies illa
  Qua resurgent et favilla,
  Judicandus homo reus
  Huic ergo parce, Deus!

THE DAY OF WRATH.

Day of Satan’s painful duty!
  Earth shall vanish, hot and sooty;
  So says Virtue, so says Beauty.

Ah! what terror shall be shaping
  When the Judge the truth’s undraping!
  Cats from every bag escaping!

Now the trumpet’s invocation
  Calls the dead to condemnation;
  All receive an invitation.

Death and Nature now are quaking,
  And the late lamented, waking,
  In their breezy shrouds are shaking.

Lo! the Ledger’s leaves are stirring,
  And the Clerk, to them referring,
  Makes it awkward for the erring.

When the Judge appears in session,
  We shall all attend confession,
  Loudly preaching non-suppression.

How shall I then make romances
  Mitigating circumstances?
  Even the just must take their chances.

King whose majesty amazes.
  Save thou him who sings thy praises;
  Fountain, quench my private blazes.

Pray remember, sacred Savior,
  Mine the playful hand that gave your
  Death-blow. Pardon such behavior.

Seeking me fatigue assailed thee,
  Calvary’s outlook naught availed thee:
  Now ‘t were cruel if I failed thee.

Righteous judge and learned brother,
  Pray thy prejudices smother
  Ere we meet to try each other.

Sighs of guilt my conscience gushes,
  And my face vermilion flushes;
  Spare me for my pretty blushes.

Thief and harlot, when repenting,
  Thou forgav’st — be complimenting
  Me with sign of like relenting.

If too bold is my petition
  I’ll receive with due submission
  My dismissal — from perdition.

When thy sheep thou hast selected
  From the goats, may I, respected,
  Stand amongst them undetected.

When offenders are indicted,
  And with trial-flames ignited,
  Elsewhere I’ll attend if cited.

Ashen-hearted, prone, and prayerful,
  When of death I see the air full,
  Lest I perish, too, be careful.

On that day of lamentation,
  When, to enjoy the conflagration.
  Men come forth, O, be not cruel.
  Spare me, Lord — make them thy fuel.

ONE MOOD’S EXPRESSION.

See, Lord, fanatics all arrayed
For revolution!
To foil their villainous crusade
Unsheathe again the sacred blade
Of persecution.

What though through long disuse ‘t is grown
A trifle rusty?
’Gainst modern heresy, whose bone
Is rotten, and the flesh fly-blown,
It still is trusty.

Of sterner stuff thine ancient foes,
Unapprehensive,
Sprang forth to meet thy biting blows;
Our zealots chiefly to the nose
Assume the offensive.

Then wield the blade their necks to hack,
Nor ever spare one.
Thy crowns of martyrdom unpack,
But see that every martyr lack
The head to wear one.

SOMETHING IN THE PAPERS.

“What’s in the paper?” Oh, it’s dev’lish dull:
There’s nothing happening at all — a lull
After the war-storm. Mr. Someone’s wife
Killed by her lover with, I think, a knife.
A fire on Blank Street and some babies — one,
Two, three or four, I don’t remember, done
To quite a delicate and lovely brown.
A husband shot by woman of the town —
The same old story. Shipwreck somewhere south.
The crew, all saved — or lost. Uncommon drouth
Makes hundreds homeless up the River Mud —
Though, come to think, I guess it was a flood.
’T is feared some bank will burst — or else it won’t
They always burst, I fancy — or they don’t;
Who cares a cent? — the banker pays his coin
And takes his chances: bullet in the groin —
But that’s another item — suicide —
Fool lost his money (serve him right) and died.
Heigh-ho! there’s noth — Jerusalem! what’s this:
Tom Jones has failed! My God, what an abyss
Of ruin! — owes me seven hundred clear!
Was ever such a damned disastrous year!

IN THE BINNACLE.

[The Church possesses the unerring compass whose needle points directly and persistently to the star of the eternal law of God. — *Religious Weekly*.]

The Church's compass, if you please,
  Has two or three (or more) degrees
    Of variation;
  And many a soul has gone to grief
  On this or that or t'other reef
  Through faith unreckoning or brief
    Miscalculation.
  Misguidance is of perils chief
    To navigation.

The obsequious thing makes, too, you'll mark,
  Obeisance through a little arc
    Of declination;
  For Satan, fearing witches, drew
  From Death's pale horse, one day, a shoe,
  And nailed it to his door to undo
    Their machination.
  Since then the needle dips to woo
    His habitation.

HUMILITY.

Great poets fire the world with fagots big
  That make a crackling racket,
 But I’m content with but a whispering twig
  To warm some single jacket.

ONE PRESIDENT.

“What are those, father?” “Statesmen, my child —
  Lacrymose, unparliamentary, wild.”

“What are they that way for, father?” “Last fall,
  ’Our candidate’s better,’ they said, ‘than all!’”

“What did they say he was, father?” “A man
  Built on a straight incorruptible plan —
  Believing that none for an office would do
  Unless he were honest and capable too.”

“Poor gentlemen — *so* disappointed!” “Yes, lad,
  That is the feeling that’s driving them mad;
  They’re weeping and wailing and gnashing because
  They find that he’s all that they said that he was.”

THE BRIDE.

“You know, my friends, with what a brave carouse
  I made a second marriage in my house —
    Divorced old barren Reason from my bed
  And took the Daughter of the Vine to spouse.”

So sang the Lord of Poets. In a gleam
  Of light that made her like an angel seem,
    The Daughter of the Vine said: “I myself
  Am Reason, and the Other was a Dream.”

STRAINED RELATIONS.

Says England to Germany: “Africa’s ours.”
Says Germany: “Ours, I opine.”
Says Africa: “Tell me, delectable Pow’rs,
What is it that ought to be mine?”

THE MAN BORN BLIND.

A man born blind received his sight
By a painful operation;
And these are things he saw in the light
Of an infant observation.

He saw a merchant, good and wise.
And greatly, too, respected,
Who looked, to those imperfect eyes,
Like a swindler undetected.

He saw a patriot address
A noisy public meeting.
And said: “Why, that’s a calf. I guess.
That for the teat is bleating.”

A doctor stood beside a bed
And shook his summit sadly.
”O see that foul assassin!” said
The man who saw so badly.

He saw a lawyer pleading for
A thief whom they’d been jailing,
And said: “That’s an accomplice, or
My sight again is failing.”

Upon the Bench a Justice sat,
With nothing to restrain him;
”’Tis strange,” said the observer, “that
They ventured to unchain him.”

With theologic works supplied,
He saw a solemn preacher;
”A burglar with his kit,” he cried,
”To rob a fellow creature.”

A bluff old farmer next he saw
Sell produce in a village,
And said: “What, what! is there no law
To punish men for pillage?”

A dame, tall, fair and stately, passed,
Who many charms united;
He thanked his stars his lot was cast
Where sepulchers were whited.

He saw a soldier stiff and stern,
”Full of strange oaths” and toddy;
But was unable to discern
A wound upon his body.

Ten square leagues of rolling ground
To one great man belonging,
Looked like one little grassy mound
With worms beneath it thronging.

A palace’s well-carven stones,
Where Dives dwelt contented,
Seemed built throughout of human bones
With human blood cemented.

He watched the yellow shining thread
A silk-worm was a-spinning;
”That creature’s coining gold.” he said,
”To pay some girl for sinning.”

His eyes were so untrained and dim
    All politics, religions,
  Arts, sciences, appeared to him
    But modes of plucking pigeons.

And so he drew his final breath,
    And thought he saw with sorrow
  Some persons weeping for his death
    Who'd be all smiles to-morrow.

A NIGHTMARE.

I dreamed that I was dead. The years went by:
  The world forgot that such a man as I
    Had ever lived and written: other names
  Were hailed with homage, in their turn to die.

Out of my grave a giant beech upgrew.
  Its roots transpierced my body, through and through,
    My substance fed its growth. From many lands
  Men came in troops that giant tree to view.

‘T was sacred to my memory and fame —
  My monument. But Allen Forman came,
    Filled with the fervor of a new untruth,
  And carved upon the trunk his odious name!

A WET SEASON.

Horas non numero nisi serenas.

The rain is fierce, it flogs the earth,
  And man’s in danger.
 O that my mother at my birth
  Had borne a stranger!
 The flooded ground is all around.
  The depth uncommon.
 How blest I’d be if only she
  Had borne a salmon.

If still denied the solar glow
  ’T were bliss ecstatic
 To be amphibious — but O,
  To be aquatic!
 We’re worms, men say, o’ the dust, and they
  That faith are firm of.
 O, then, be just: show me some dust
  To be a worm of.

The pines are chanting overhead
  A psalm uncheering.
 It’s O, to have been for ages dead
   And hard of hearing!
 Restore, ye Pow’rs, the last bright hours
   The dial reckoned;
 ’Twas in the time of Egypt’s prime —
   Rameses II.

THE CONFEDERATE FLAGS.

Tut-tut! give back the flags — how can you care
You veterans and heroes?
Why should you at a kind intention swear
Like twenty Neroes?

Suppose the act was not so overwise —
Suppose it was illegal —
Is ‘t well on such a question to arise
And pinch the Eagle?

Nay, let’s economize his breath to scold
And terrify the alien
Who tackles him, as Hercules of old
The bird Stymphalian.

Among the rebels when we made a breach
Was it to get their banners?
That was but incidental—’t was to teach
Them better manners.

They know the lesson well enough to-day;
Now, let us try to show them
That we ‘re not only stronger far than they.
(How we did mow them!)

But more magnanimous. You see, my lads,
’T was an uncommon riot;
The warlike tribes of Europe fight for “fads,”
We fought for quiet.

If we were victors, then we all must live
With the same flag above us;
'Twas all in vain unless we now forgive
And make them love us.

Let kings keep trophies to display above
Their doors like any savage;
The freeman's trophy is the foeman's love,
Despite war's ravage.

"Make treason odious?" My friends, you'll find
You can't, in right and reason,
While "Washington" and "treason" are combined —
"Hugo" and "treason."

All human governments must take the chance
And hazard of sedition.
O, wretch! to pledge your manhood in advance
To blind submission.

It may be wrong, it may be right, to rise
In warlike insurrection:
The loyalty that fools so dearly prize
May mean subjection.

Be loyal to your country, yes — but how
If tyrants hold dominion?
The South believed they did; can't you allow
For that opinion?

He who will never rise though rulers plods
His liberties despising
How is he manlier than the *sans culottes*

Who’s always rising?

Give back the foolish flags whose bearers fell
Too valiant to forsake them.
Is it presumptuous, this counsel? Well,
I helped to take them.

HAEC FABULA DOCET.

A rat who’d gorged a box of bane
And suffered an internal pain,
Came from his hole to die (the label
Required it if the rat were able)
And found outside his habitat
A limpid stream. Of bane and rat
’T was all unconscious; in the sun
It ran and prattled just for fun.
Keen to allay his inward throes,
The beast immersed his filthy nose
And drank — then, bloated by the stream,
And filled with superheated steam,
Exploded with a rascal smell,
Remarking, as his fragments fell
Astonished in the brook: “I’m thinking
This water’s damned unwholesome drinking!”

EXONERATION.

When men at candidacy don’t connive,
  From that suspicion if their friends would free ‘em,
 The teeth and nails with which they did not strive
  Should be exhibited in a museum.

AZRAEL.

The moon in the field of the keel-plowed main
Was watching the growing tide:
A luminous peasant was driving his wain,
And he offered my soul a ride.

But I nourished a sorrow uncommonly tall,
And I fixed him fast with mine eye.
”O, peasant,” I sang with a dying fall,
”Go leave me to sing and die.”

The water was weltering round my feet,
As prone on the beach they lay.
I chanted my death-song loud and sweet;
”Kioodle, ioodle, iay!”

Then I heard the swish of erecting ears
Which caught that enchanted strain.
The ocean was swollen with storms of tears
That fell from the shining swain.

“O, poet,” leapt he to the soaken sand,
”That ravishing song would make
The devil a saint.” He held out his hand
And solemnly added: “Shake.”

We shook. “I crave a victim, you see,”
He said—”you came hither to die.”
The Angel of Death, ‘t was he! ‘t was he!
And the victim he crove was I!

‘T was I, Fred Emerson Brooks, the bard;
    And he knocked me on the head.
  O Lord! I thought it exceedingly hard,
    For I didn’t want to be dead.

“You’ll sing no worser for that,” said he,
    And he drove with my soul away,
  O, death-song singers, be warned by me,
    Kioodle, ioodle, iay!

AGAIN.

Well, I’ve met her again — at the Mission.
She’d told me to see her no more;
It was not a command — a petition;
I’d granted it once before.

Yes, granted it, hoping she’d write me.
Repenting her virtuous freak —
Subdued myself daily and nightly
For the better part of a week.

And then (‘twas my duty to spare her
The shame of recalling me) I
Just sought her again to prepare her
For an everlasting good-bye.

O, that evening of bliss — shall I ever
Forget it? — with Shakespeare and Poe!
She said, when ‘twas ended: “You’re never
To see me again. And now go.”

As we parted with kisses ‘twas human
And natural for me to smile
As I thought, “She’s in love, and a woman:
She’ll send for me after a while.”

But she didn’t; and so — well, the Mission
Is fine, picturesque and gray;
It’s an excellent place for contrition —
And sometimes she passes that way.

That’s how it occurred that I met her,
And that’s ah there is to tell —
Except that I’d like to forget her
Calm way of remarking: “I’m well.”

It was hardly worth while, all this keying
My soul to such tensions and stirs
To learn that her food was agreeing
With that little stomach of hers.

HOMO PODUNKENSIS.

As the poor ass that from his paddock strays
  Might sound abroad his field-companions' praise,
  Recounting volubly their well-bred leer,
  Their port impressive and their wealth of ear,
  Mistaking for the world's assent the clang
  Of echoes mocking his accurst harangue;
  So the dull clown, untraveled though at large,
  Visits the city on the ocean's marge,
  Expands his eyes and marvels to remark
  Each coastwise schooner and each alien bark;
  Prates of "all nations," wonders as he stares
  That native merchants sell imported wares,
  Nor comprehends how in his very view
  A foreign vessel has a foreign crew;
  Yet, faithful to the hamlet of his birth,
  Swears it superior to aught on earth,
  Sighs for the temples locally renowned —
  The village school-house and the village pound —
  And chalks upon the palaces of Rome
  The peasant sentiments of "Home, Sweet Home!"

A SOCIAL CALL.

Well, well, old Father Christmas, is it you,
With your thick neck and thin pretense of virtue?
Less redness in the nose — nay, even some blue
Would not, I think, particularly hurt you.
When seen close to, not mounted in your car,
You look the drunkard and the pig you are.

No matter, sit you down, for I am not
In a gray study, as you sometimes find me.
Merry? O, no, nor wish to be, God wot,
But there’s another year of pain behind me.
That’s something to be thankful for: the more
There are behind, the fewer are before.

I know you, Father Christmas, for a scamp,
But Heaven endowed me at my soul’s creation
With an affinity to every tramp
That walks the world and steals its admiration.
For admiration is like linen left
Upon the line — got easiest by theft.

Good God! old man, just think of it! I’ve stood,
With brains and honesty, some five-and-twenty
Long years as champion of all that’s good,
And taken on the mazzard thwacks a-plenty.
Yet now whose praises do the people bawl?
Those of the fellows whom I live to maul!

Why, this is odd! — the more I try to talk

Of you the more my tongue grows egotistic
To prattle of myself! I'll try to balk
Its waywardness and be more altruistic.
So let us speak of others — how they sin,
And what a devil of a state they 're in!

That's all I have to say. Good-bye, old man.
Next year you possibly may find me scolding —
Or miss me altogether: Nature's plan
Includes, as I suppose, a final folding
Of these poor empty hands. Then drop a tear
To think they'll never box another ear.

FABLES IN RHYME

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THE SLEEPING LION

A Bull, the angel of the wild,
A Bull as gentle as a child,
A pleasant mannered Bull that lay
Upon a hill at break of day
And munched his cud, observed a gleam
Of crimson on the world’s extreme
Where the Dawn-Spirit had released
His flaring banner in the east.
The Bull, a flame in either eye
That frightened the offending sky,
Rose, pawed the earth until his skin
Was dun with dust from tail to chin,
And lowering his horrid brows,
Roared out: “How dare you thus arouse
The sleeping lion in my breast!”
Then, like a storm from out the west,
He blindly charged, and without check,
Went o’er a cliff and broke his neck!
A Tiger, calm, serene, sedate,
Administered on his estate,
And as he turned him into chyle
Remarked with a contented smile:
“That sleeping lion in his breast.
Was just an ass that needed rest.”

IN DOGLAND

A Man who fared along a road
That passed a yellow Dog’s abode
Incurred a paralyzing bite
From that incarnate appetite,
Creation’s joy and hope and crown —
The pride and terror of the town!
The Man in anger went before
The nearest Magistrate and swore
A warrant out for the Dog’s Master,
As author of the dire disaster.
Haled into court, that citizen
Employed attorneys, eight or ten,
Who as one man arose, and O,
The kind of things they said were so!
All honest souls, a crowd immense,
Were witnesses for the defense,
And when they came to testify
Of that bad plaintiff — my, O my!
Defendant rose and gravely swore
The Dog had never bit before.
“How could I know, till he transgressed,
The serpent lurking in his breast?”
And all the people cried: “That’s so!
How could he know? How could he know?”

That won — Defendant left the place
On shoulders of the populace.
The miserable Plaintiff slunk
Away and soon was dead or drunk,
Tradition says not which; I think
Death is inferior to drink.
But that’s irrelevant: what now
Concerns us is the bow and wow

Made by the snapdogs of that region
(Their name, tradition says, was Legion)
When, with a sound of trumpets blown,
The great decision was made known
From Sweetpotatoville to Pone.
They said, the dogs did, that the law
Was good — *pro bonos mores* (Latin
That dogs and lawyers mostly chat in).
They said, the while their bosoms burned
With ardor, that their souls discerned
“The dawn of a new era,” which
They promptly “hailed” at concert pitch!

As dogs had now the legal right
To trouble Man for one free bite
‘Twas voted that they would. They did:
That land, from Glorypool to Squid,
With snarl and yelp and snap of teeth
(Flashing like falchions from the sheath)
Was vocal till each cur beneath
The sun had fleshed his maiden fang
In some one of the human gang!
True, all the dogs whose heads were frosted
With age had long before exhausted
Their lawful privilege, and these
Died of chagrin among their fleas;
But there were pups enough at heel
Of every human leg to deal
Out floods of hydrophobia’s sap
And wash that country from the map.

A PAIR OF OPPOSITES

A Fabulist of wide repute,
Whose laugh was loud and wit was mute —
Whose grammar had the grace of guess,
And language an initial S —
Whose tireless efforts, long sustained,
Proved him far better brawned than brained,
Once met a Toad. “My son,” said he,
“‘Twould jar you to get onto me!
You’re swell, but I’m the dandy guy
That slings the gilt-edged lullaby.
Dost tumble? What I’m shouting, see,
Is, you’re the antithesis of Me.”
“That compliment,” the Toad replied,
“Is grateful to my foolish pride:
It seems to mean that though I hop
Right awkwardly I sometimes stop.”
The gods, whom long the Fabulist
Had plagued (the Toad had only hissed)
Emitted loud Olympian snorts
Of joy to hear the King of Warts
Administer a mental pang
To the Protagonist of Slang.
So Jove appointed him to be
Chief Jester by divine decree,
And ne’er another joke made he.

THE DEGENERATE

Two Horses that had always chewed
The bitter grain of servitude —
Between their meals had ever felt
The bit in mouth and lash on pelt —
Once, as they drew the creaking wain,
Saw a wild Zebra of the plain,
Unknown to halter, stall or cage.
Cried one: “Good Lord! this is an age
Of miracle!”
“Not so,” said t’other,
“That vision is a horse-and-brother.
Degraded as he is by sin,
He has an equine soul within,
Albeit Law, with stern reproof,
Has laid on him the heavy hoof.
Those stripes but show he’s ‘serving time’
In punishment of some great crime.”
The other thought an hour’s span,
Then said: “Perhaps he stole a man.”

THE VAIN CAT

Remarked a Tortoise to a Cat:
“Your speed’s a thing to marvel at!
I saw you as you flitted by,
And wished I were one-half so spry.”
The Cat said, humbly: “Why, indeed
I was not showing then my speed —
That was a poor performance.” Then
She said exultantly (as when
The condor feels his bosom thrill
Remembering Chimborazo’s hill,
And how he soared so high above,
It looked a valley, he a dove):
“‘Twould fire your very carapace
To see me with a dog in chase!”
Its snout in any kind of swill,
Pride, like a pig, will suck its fill.

A SOCIALIST

“You’re keeping me poor — I have only this egg.
All rich men are rascals!” said Impycu Dregg.
Couponicus Pigg said: “Your thanks, then, are due
To me for not making a rascal of you.”
But Impycu Dregg all the same flung his egg,
Which burst in the wig of Couponicus Pigg.

THE CO-DEFENDANTS

A Jackass by a Lion chased
Had made so admirable haste
That his pursuer, far behind,
Had, long before, his hope resigned
And gone to sleep; but still poor Jack
Pressed on, nor ventured to look back.
“Why, what’s the matter?” cried a Steer,
Obstructing him in his career.
“Out of the way and let us pass!”
Roared the still apprehensive Ass.
“‘Us’? Why, my friend,” the Steer replied,
“I see but you, and none beside.”
“I’m but the foremost,” answered Jack —
“The woods are full of us ‘way back.
Behold, he clawed me here and here;
See how he tore my precious ear!
Believe me, sir, your count’s at fault —
No one escapes that cat’s assault.”
To let them limp along, the Steer
Backed off in wonder and in fear.
The Ass evanished like a flame,
But not another donkey came.
Then said the Steer: “I’ve saved — well done! —
All jackasses beneath the sun,
Rolled into one, rolled into one.”

IN CONSEQUENCE OF APPLAUSE

“What makes you so round?”
Said an indolent Hound
To a Tiger that looked
As if he had booked
All the pilgrims of earth
For an inside berth.
Said the Tiger: “I strayed
To the edge of a glade
Where a man on a stump,
Sleek, handsome and plump,
His notions expounded
To those who surrounded
Him there with their ears
Erected like spears
For the words that he flung
From his flickering tongue.”
“Yes, yes, my good cat,
But what of all that?
That statesman, I swear,
Had enough and to spare
Of the breezes that blow
Out of heaven, but, O
‘Tis remarkably odd he
Could blow up your body
And make you so poddy.”
“By-and-by the man stopped,
And his forehead he mopped,
And his scalp — which was bald.
Then somebody called
For three cheers—”
“Hully Gee!
I’m beginning to see.”
“And a tiger. That’s me.”

SOME ANTE-MORTEM EPITAPHS

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A KING OF CRAFT

Here lies Sam Chamberlain; his fatal smile
Survives its wielder for a little while
In nightmares of the prudent few who fled
The Judas kisses that it heralded —
Those all are dreamless who stood still to view
The smile that stayed them for the stab that slew.
Against his God his warfare now is o’er:
His bloodless heart (no colder than before)
No longer with a mute ambition swells
To run a half-a-hundred little Hells.
With ever a polite, perfidious art —
A dove in manner and a snake in heart,
This titmouse Machiavelli ne’er again
Will feel the urge, the passion and the strain
To prove it true that one may smile and smile
And be a Chamberlain the blessed while.

Sharp at both ends, his secret soul
Was like a double-headed mole
Equipped with equal nose to prod
This way or that beneath the sod.
Conjecture fitted to confound
If seen a moment out of ground —
Its former, as its future, route
The matter of a vain dispute,
Save where a dunghill’s lure supplied
Its aid the riddle to decide.
When that occurred (his nearer nose
Pointing the way with happier throes)
He sought it as a bee the rose.
And as that robber daubs its thighs
With pollen till it cannot rise,
So he, with glutted mind, remained

Inert, and Christ arose and reigned.

We raise the stone, we carve the solemn word,
The sign of promise and the symbol grim;
His voice and vice are in the land unheard —
Yet all is doubtful that relates to him.
No more he twirls his smile to work us woe;
We saw him put a fathom under sod:
Flung down at last — but so was Aaron’s rod.
We *hope* he’s dead, but only this we know:
He does not smile. O glory be to God!

STEPHEN DORSEY

Flee, heedless stranger, from this spot accurst,
Where rests in Satan an offender first
In point of greatness, as in point of time,
Of new-school rascals who proclaim their crime.
Skilled with a frank loquacity to blab
The dark arcana of each mighty grab,
And famed for lying from his early youth,
He sinned secure behind a veil of truth.
Some lock their lips upon their deeds; some write
A damning record and conceal from sight;
Some, with a lust of speaking, die to quell it.
His way to keep a secret was to tell it.

MR. JUSTICE FIELD

Here sleeps one of the greatest students
    Of jurisprudence.
Nature endowed him with the gift
    Of juristhrift.
All points of law alike he threw
    The dice to settle.
Those honest cubes were loaded true
    With railway metal.

GENERAL B. F. BUTLER

Thy flesh to earth, thy soul to God,
  We gave, O gallant brother;
And o’er thy grave the awkward squad
  Fired into one another!

REPARATION

Beneath this monument which rears its head,
A giant note of admiration — dead,
His life extinguished like a taper’s flame,
John Ericsson is lying in his fame.
Behold how massive is the lofty shaft;
How fine the product of the sculptor’s craft;
The gold how lavishly applied; the great
Man’s statue how impressive and sedate!
Think what the cost was! It would ill become
Our modesty to specify the sum;
Suffice it that a fair per cent, we’re giving
Of what we robbed him of when he was living.

DISINCORPORATED

Of Corporal Tanner the head and the trunk
Are here in unconsecrate ground duly sunk.
His legs in the South claim the patriot’s tear,
But, stranger, you needn’t be blubbering here.

A KIT

Here Ingalls, sorrowing, has laid
The tools of his infernal trade —
His pen and tongue. So sharp they grew,
And such destruction from them flew,
His hand was wounded when he wrote,
And when he spoke he cut his throat.

DISJUNCTUS

Within this humble mausoleum
  Poor Guiteau’s flesh you’ll find.
His bones are kept in a museum,
  And Tillman has his mind.

A TRENCHER-KNIGHT

Stranger, uncover; here you have in view
The monument of Chauncey M. Depew,
Eater and orator, the whole world round
For feats of tongue and tooth alike renowned.
Dining his way to eminence, he rowed
With knife and fork up water-ways that flowed
From lakes of favor — pulled with all his force
And found each river sweeter than the source.

Like rats, obscure beneath a kitchen floor,
Gnawing and rising till obscure no more,
He ate his way to eminence, and Fame
Inscribes in gravy his immortal name.

A trencher-knight, he, mounte’d on his belly,
So spurred his charger that its sides were jelly.
Grown desperate at last, it reared and threw him,
And Indigestion, overtaking, slew him.

A VICE-PRESIDENT

Here the remains of Schuyler Colfax lie;
Born, all the world knows when, and God knows why.
In’71 he filled the public eye,
In ‘72 he bade the world good-bye;
In God’s good time, with a protesting sigh,
He came to life just long enough to die.

A WASTED LIFE

Of Morgan here lies the unspirited clay,
Who secrets of Masonry swore to betray.
He joined the great Order and studied with zeal
The awful arcana he meant to reveal.
At last in chagrin by his own hand he fell —
There was nothing to learn, there was nothing to tell.
The Masons are said to have killed him. Not so —
Even a secret so foul, they’re compelled to forego.

THE SCRAP HEAP

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POESY

Successive bards pursue Ambition’s fire
That shines, Oblivion, above thy mire.
The latest mounts his predecessor’s trunk,
And sinks his brother ere himself is sunk.
So die in gloriously Fame’s *elite,*
But dams of dunces keep the line complete.

HOSPITALITY

Why ask me, Gastrogogue, to dine,
(Unless to praise your rascal wine)
Yet never ask some luckless sinner
Who needs, as I do not, a dinner?

MAGNANIMITY

“To the will of the people we loyally bow!”
That’s the minority shibboleth now.
O — noble antagonists, answer me flat —
What would you do if you didn’t do that?

UNDERSTATED

“I’m sorry I married,” says Upton Sinclair:
  “The conjugal status is awful! —
The devil’s device, a delusion and snare.”
  Worse, far worse than that — it is lawful I

AN ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Philander Knox! — I know him by the sound;
His sleep, unlike his learning, is profound.
No dreams of duty mar his loud repose,
Nor strain the cobwebs tethering his nose,
Which, roaring ever like the solemn sea,
Proclaims to all the world that this is he.
In thought a tortoise but in act a hare,
Slow to decide and impotent to dare,
Yet no important crisis he ignores,
But sleeps upon it, and for action — snores.

FINANCIAL NEWS

Says Rockefeller: “Money is not tight,”
And, faith, I’m thinking that the man is right.
If it were not, at least in morals, loose
He hardly could command it for his use.

ASPIRATION

No man can truthfully say that he would not like to be President. — *William C. Whitney*.

Lo! the wild rabbit, happy in the pride
Of qualities to meaner beasts denied,
Surveys the ass with reverence and fear,
Adoring his superior length of ear,
And says: “No living creature, lean or fat,
But wishes in his heart to be like That!”

DEMOCRACY

Let slaves and subjects with extolling psalms
Before their sovereign execute salaams;
The freeman scorns one idol to adore —
Tom, Dick, and Harry and himself are four.

AN ENEMY TO LAW AND ORDER

A is defrauded of his land by B,
Who’s driven from the premises by C.
D buys the place with coin of plundered E.
“That A’s an Anarchist!” says F to G.

FORESIGHT

An “actors’ cemetery!” Sure
  The devil never tires
Of planning places to procure
  The sticks to feed his fires.

A FAIR DIVISION

Another Irish landlord gone to grass,
Slain by the bullets of the tenant class!
Pray, good agrarians, what wrong requires
Such foul redress? Between you and the squires
All Ireland’s parted with an even hand —
For you have all the ire, they all the land.

A LACKING FACTOR

“You acted unwisely,” I cried, “as you see
  By the outcome.” He calmly eyed me:
“When choosing the course of my action,” said he,
  “I had not the outcome to guide me.”

THE POLITICIAN

Let patriots manipulate
The tiller of the Ship of State;
Be mine the humble, useful toil
To work the tiller of the soil.

ELIHU ROOT

Stoop to a dirty trick or low misdeed?
  What, bend him from his moral skies to it?
No, no, not he! To serve his nature's need
  He may upon occasion rise to it.

AN ERROR

“I never have been able to determine
Just how it is that the judicial ermine
Is safely guarded from predacious vermin.”
“It is not so, my friend; though in a garret
‘Tis kept in camphor, and you often air it,
The vermin will get into it and wear it.”

VANISHED AT COCK-CROW

“I’ve found the secret of your charm,” I said,
  Expounding with complacency my guess.
Alas! the charm, even as I named it, fled,
  For all its secret was unconsciousness.

WOMAN

Study good women and ignore the rest,
For he best knows the sex who knows the best.

A PARTISAN’S PROTEST

O statesmen, what would you be at,
  With torches, flags and bands?
You make me first throw up my hat,
  And then my hands.

A BEQUEST TO MUSIC

“Let music flourish!” So he said and died.
  Hark! when he’s gone the minstrelsy begins:
The symphonies ascend, a swelling tide,
Melodious thunders fill the welkin wide —
  The grand old lawyers, chinning on their chins!

ONEIROMANCY

I fell asleep and dreamed that I
Was flung, like Vulcan, from the sky;
Like him, was lamed — another part:
His leg was crippled, and my heart.
I woke in time to see my love
Conceal a letter in her glove.

JULY FOURTH

God said: “Let there be noise.” The dawning fire
Of Independence gilded every spire.

A PARADOX

“If life were not worth living,” said the preacher,
“‘Twould have in suicide one pleasant feature.”
“An error,” said the pessimist, “you’re making:
What’s not worth having cannot be worth taking.”

REEDIFIED

Lord of the Tempest, pray refrain
From leveling this church again.
Now in its doom, since so you’ve willed it,
We acquiesce: but *you’ll* rebuild it.

A BULLETIN

"Lothario is very low,"
  So all the doctors tell.
Nay,,nay, not so, — he will be, though,
  If ever he get well.

AN INSCRIPTION

For a Statue of Napoleon

A conqueror as provident as brave,
He robbed the cradle to supply the grave.
His reign laid quantities of human dust:
He fell upon the just and the unjust.

AN ERRONEOUS ASSUMPTION

Good for he’s old? Ah, Youth, you do not dream
How sweet the roses in the autumn seem!

A CONSTRUCTOR

I saw the devil. He was working free —
A customs-house he builded by the sea.
“Why do you this?” The devil raised his head:
“Of churches I have built enough,” he said.

GOD COMPLIES

“By prayer see Megapomp restored,”
  Shouts Martext, pious creature.
Yes, God by supplication bored
  From every droning preacher,
Exclaimed: “So be it, tiresome crew;
But I’ve a crow to pick with you.”

IN ARTICULO MORTIS

The paper presented he solemnly signed,
  Gasping — perhaps ‘twas a jest he meant:
“This of a sound and disposing mind
  Is the last ill will and contestament.”

THE DISCOVERERS

My! how my fame rings out in ever zone —
A thousand critics shouting: “He’s unknown!”

UNEXPOUNDED

On Evidence, on Deeds, on Bills,
On Copyhold, on Loans, on Wills,
Lawyers great books indite.
The creaking of their busy quills
  I never heard on Right.

THE EASTERN QUESTION

Looking across the line, the Grecian said:
“This border I will stain a Turkey red.”
The Moslem smiled serenely and replied:
“No Greek has ever for his country dyed.”
While thus each patriot guarded his frontier
The Powers stole the country in his rear.

TWO TYPES

Courageous fool! — the peril’s strength unknown.
Courageous man! — so conscious of your own.

TO A CRITIC OF TENNYSON

Affronting fool, subdue your transient light;
When Wisdom's dull dares Folly to be bright?
If Genius stumble in the path to fame
'Tis decency in dunces to go lame.

COOPERATION

No more the swindler singly seeks his prey
To hunt in couples is the modern way —
A rascal from the public to purloin,
An honest man to hide away the coin.

HUMILITY

Great poets fire the world with fagots big
  That make a crackling racket,
But I’m content with but a whispering twig
  To warm some single jacket.

STRAINED RELATIONS

Says England to Germany: “Africa’s ours.”
  Says Germany: “Ours, I opine.”
Says Africa: “Tell me, delectable Powers,
  What is it that ought to be mine?”

EXONERATION

When men at candidacy don’t connive,
  From that suspicion if their friends would free ‘em
The teeth and nails with which they do not strive
  Should be exhibited in a museum.

AFTER PORTSMOUTH

Begirt with bombs that fall and flames that rise,
The Tsar, bewildered, stares. “Alas,” he cries,
“Life withholds joy and death denies release!
And Roosevelt would have me think this peace.”

A VOICE FROM PEKIN

"' Empress of China '! I nor rule nor reign:
I wear the purple but to hide the chain —
Free only to hold back the open door
For foreign devils drunk upon my floor."

A PIOUS RITE

On Maunday Thursday, as was good and meet,
The Emperor of Austria washed the feet
Of twelve poor men to show how humble he
For twenty minutes of the year could be.
O Thou, who trackest tenants of the throne
Through moral quagmires, make them wash their own.

JUSTICE

She jilted me. I madly cried:
  “The grave at least can hold her!”
Reflecting then that if she died
  ‘Twould stop her growing older,
I pitilessly sheathed the knife
And sternly sentenced her to life!

AT THE BEACH

List, England, to our words of scorn
For noblemen to title born!
Yet be thine eyes awhile depressed,
For one has turned his prow to-west,
And we, to catch his landing-line,
Are pickling all our shins in brine.

AN INFRACTION OF THE RULES

A duel in France, and the victor pursued
By the dogs of the law, by the multitude,
  By society’s fierce ill-will!
O what is the matter? The man was so rude,
  That he made an attempt to kill!

CONVERSELY

There’s grief in Belgrade, for no crown, it is said,
  Is found for King Peter in all of the town.
How sad that he’s lacking a crown for his head!
  How sweet were he lacking a head for his crown!

A WARNING

Cried Age to Youth: “Abate your speed!
The distance hither’s brief indeed.”
But Youth pressed on without delay —
The shout had reached but half the way.

PSYCHOGRAPHS

Says Gerald Massey: “When I write, a band
Of souls of the departed guides my hand.”
How strange that poems cumbering our shelves,
Penned by immortal parts, have none themselves!

FOR WOUNDS

O bear me, gods, to some enchanted isle
Where woman’s tears can antidote her smile.

A LITERARY METHOD

His “Hoosier poems” Riley says he writes
  Upon an empty stomach. Heavenly Powers,
Feed him throat-full; for what the wretch indites
  Upon his empty stomach empties ours!

BACK TO NATURE

Nathaniel, Julian, Hildegardy!
Sure the stock is far from hardy,
And the name once heard with awe
Now provokes the loud guffaw —
“Hawthorne” in the memory dear,
“Haw-haw-hawthorne” in the ear!

RUDOLPH BLOCK

What parallel, neighbor, be pleased to expound
‘Twixt Belgium’s king and you may be found?
Why this: if the cable dispatches are true
He lies on his deathbed. So would you.

BOYCOTT

“This thing’s a bomb,” said Gompers, lighting
The fuse; “‘twill blow them all *a* kiting!”
Well, now ‘tis shattered all to pieces,
And Gompers but a spot of grease is.

TO HER

O Sinner A, to me unknown
Be such a conscience as your own!
To ease it, you to Sinner B
Confess the sins of Sinner C.

CREATION

God dreamed — the suns sprang flaming into place,
And sailing worlds with many a venturous race!
He woke — His smile alone illumined space.

REBUKE

When Admonition’s hand essays
  Our greed to curse,
Its lifted finger oft displays
  Our missing purse.

PRAYER

Fear not in any tongue to call
Upon the Lord — He’s skilled in all.
But if He answereth my plea
He speaketh one unknown to me.

THE LONG FEAR

Noting the hangman’s frown and the law’s righteous rage,
Our murderers live in terror till they die of age.

AN INSPIRED PERFORMANCE

The Devil troubled a pool of mud,
  And Vierick from out the smother
Arose and to prove his royal blood
  Defamed his peasant mother.
Dear Devil, his poems — we’ll suffer all those,
But do not again provoke him to prose.

The Poems

Bierce's former residence in the Logan Circle neighbourhood of Washington, D.C.

LIST OF POEMS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

THE KEY NOTE
CAIN
AN OBITUARIAN
A COMMUTED SENTENCE
A LIFTED FINGER
TWO STATESMEN
MATTER FOR GRATITUDE
A MAN
Y’E FOE TO CATHAYE
SAMUEL SHORTRIDGE
SURPRISED
POSTERITY’S AWARD
AN ART CRITIC
THE SPIRIT OF A SPONGE
ORNITHANTHROPOS
TO E.S. SALOMON
DENNIS KEARNEY
FINIS ÆTERNITATIS
THE VETERAN
AN EXHIBIT
THE TRANSMIGRATIONS OF A SOUL
AN ACTOR
FAMINE’S REALM
THE MACKAIAD
A SONG IN PRAISE
A POET’S FATHER
A COWARD
TO MY LIARS
PHIL CRIMMINS
CODEX HONORIS
TO W.H.L.B.
EMANCIPATION
JOHNDONKEY
HELL
BY FALSE PRETENSES

LUCIFER OF THE TORCH
THE WHIRLIGIG OF TIME
A RAILROAD LACKEY
THE LEGATEE
DIED OF A ROSE
A LITERARY HANGMAN
AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR
A CONTROVERSIALIST
MENDAX
THE RETROSPECTIVE BIRD
THE OAKLAND DOG
THE UNFALLEN BRAVE
A CELEBRATED CASE
COUPLETS
A RETORT
A VISION OF RESURRECTION
MASTER OF THREE ARTS
THERSITES
A SOCIETY LEADER
EXPOSITOR VERITATIS
TO COLONEL DAN. BURNS
GEORGE A. KNIGHT
UNARMED
A POLITICAL VIOLET
THE SUBDUED EDITOR
A SCION OF NOBILITY
THE NIGHT OF ELECTION
THE CONVICTS’ BALL
A PRAYER
TO ONE DETESTED
THE BOSS’S CHOICE
A MERCIFUL GOVERNOR
AN INTERPRETATION
A SOARING TOAD
AN UNDRESS UNIFORM
THE PERVERTED VILLAGE
AFTER GOLDSMITH
MR. SHEETS
A JACK-AT-ALL-VIEWS

MY LORD POET
TO THE FOOL-KILLER
ONE AND ONE ARE TWO
MONTAGUE LEVERSON
THE WOFUL TALE OF MR. PETERS
TWIN UNWORTHIES
ANOTHER PLAN
A POLITICAL APOSTATE
TINKER DICK
BATS IN SUNSHINE
A WORD TO THE UNWISE
ON THE PLATFORM
A DAMPENED ARDOR
ADAIR WELCKER, POET
TO A WORD-WARRIOR
A CULINARY CANDIDATE
THE OLEOMARGARINE MAN
GENESIS
LLEWELLEN POWELL
THE SUNSET GUN.
THE VIDUATE DAME
FOUR OF A KIND
ROBERT F. MORROW
ALFRED CLARKE JR.
JUDGE RUTLEDGE
W.H.L. BARNES
RECONCILIATION
A VISION OF CLIMATE
A MASS MEETING
FOR PRESIDENT, LELAND STANFORD
FOR MAYOR
A CHEATING PREACHER
A CROCODILE
THE AMERICAN PARTY
UNCOLONELED
THE GATES AJAR
TIDINGS OF GOOD
ARBORICULTURE
A SILURIAN HOLIDAY

REJECTED
JUDEX JUDICATUS
ON THE WEDDING OF AN AËRONAUT
A HASTY INFERENCE
A VOLUPTUARY
AD CATTONUM
THE NATIONAL GUARDSMAN
THE BARKING WEASEL
A REAR ELEVATION
IN UPPER SAN FRANCISCO
NIMROD
CENSOR LITERARUM
BORROWED BRAINS
THE FYGHTYNGE SEVENTH
INDICTED
OVER THE BORDER
ONE JUDGE
TO AN INSOLENT ATTORNEY
ACCEPTED
A PROMISED FAST TRAIN
ONE OF THE SAINTS
A MILITARY INCIDENT
SUBSTANCE VERSUS SHADOW
THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC MORALS
CALIFORNIA
DE YOUNG — A PROPHECY
TO EITHER
DISAPPOINTMENT
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DOWN AMONG THE DEAD MEN
THE LAST MAN
ARBOR DAY
THE PIUTE
FAME
ONE OF THE REDEEMED
A CRITIC
A QUESTION OF ELIGIBILITY
FLEET STROTHER
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THE FOOT-HILL RESORT
AT ANCHOR
THE IN-COMING CLIMATE
A LONG-FELT WANT
TO THE HAPPY HUNTING GROUNDS
SLANDER
FITCH:
PICKERING:
JAMES L. FLOOD
FOUR CANDIDATES FOR SENATOR
A GROWLER
AD MOODIUM
AN EPITAPH
A SPADE
THE VAN NESSIAD
A FISH COMMISSIONER
TO A STRAY DOG
IN HIS HAND
A DEMAGOGUE
IGNIS FATUUS
FROM TOP TO BOTTOM
AN IDLER
THE DEAD KING
A PATTER SONG
A CALLER
THE SHAFTER SHAFTED
THE MUMMERY
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METEMPSYCHOSIS
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PEACEABLE EXPULSION
ASPIRANTS THREE
THE BIRTH OF THE RAIL
DRAMATIS PERSONÆ
A BAD NIGHT
ON STONE
A WREATH OF IMMORTELLES
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A WATER-PIRATE

C.P. BERRY
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AT THE CLOSE OF THE CANVASS.
NOVUM ORGANUM.
GEOTHEOS.
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A VISION OF DOOM.
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AN INVOCATION.
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A MORNING FANCY.
VISIONS OF SIN.
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BUSINESS.
A POSSIBILITY.
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THE HESITATING VETERAN.
A YEAR’S CASUALTIES.
INSPIRATION.
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AN ALIBI.
REBUKE.
J.F.B.
THE DYING STATESMAN.
THE DEATH OF GRANT.
THE FOUNTAIN REFILLED.
LAUS LUCIS.
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A REPLY TO A LETTER.
TO OSCAR WILDE.
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TO THE BARTHOLDI STATUE.
AN UNMERRY CHRISTMAS.
BY A DEFEATED LITIGANT.
AN EPITAPH.
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AN INSCRIPTION
FROM VIRGINIA TO PARIS.
A MUTE INGLORIOUS MILTON.
THE FREE TRADER’S LAMENT.
SUBTERRANEAN PHANTASIES.
IN MEMORIAM
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THE CYNIC’S BEQUEST
CORRECTED NEWS.
AN EXPLANATION.
JUSTICE.
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TO MY LAUNDRESS.
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AN ENEMY TO LAW AND ORDER.
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SUPERINTENDENT:
PAUPER.
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DIES IRAE.
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BOYCOTT
TO HER
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PRAYER
THE LONG FEAR
AN INSPIRED PERFORMANCE

LIST OF POEMS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Please note: to retain the original structure of the poetry collections, some poems appear more than once in the list.

A BAD NIGHT
A BALLAD OF PIKEVILLE.
A BEQUEST TO MUSIC
A BEQUEST TO MUSIC.
A BIT OF SCIENCE.
A BLACK-LIST.
A BORN LEADER OF MEN.
A BUBBLE.
A BUILDER.
A BULLETIN
A BULLETIN.
A CALLER
A CAREER IN LETTERS.
A CELEBRATED CASE
A CHALLENGE.
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A COMMUTED SENTENCE
A CONSTRUCTOR
A CONTROVERSIALIST
A COWARD
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A CROCODILE
A CULINARY CANDIDATE
A DAMPENED ARDOR
A DEMAGOGUE
A DEMAND.
A DILEMMA.
A FAIR DIVISION
A FAIR DIVISION.
A FALSE PROPHECY.
A FISH COMMISSIONER
A FOOL.
A GROWLER

A GUEST.
A HASTY INFERENCE
A HYMN OF THE MANY.
A JACK-AT-ALL-VIEWS
A KING OF CRAFT
A KIT
A LACKING FACTOR
A LACKING FACTOR.
A LIFTED FINGER
A LITERARY HANGMAN
A LITERARY METHOD
A LITERARY METHOD.
A LONG-FELT WANT
A MAN
A MASS MEETING
A MERCIFUL GOVERNOR
A MILITARY INCIDENT
A MORNING FANCY.
A MUTE INGLORIOUS MILTON.
A NIGHTMARE.
A PAIR OF OPPOSITES
A PARADOX
A PARADOX.
A PARTISAN’S PROTEST
A PARTISAN’S PROTEST.
A PATTER SONG
A PICKBRAIN.
A PIOUS RITE
A POET’S FATHER
A POET’S HOPE.
A POLITICAL APOSTATE
A POLITICAL VIOLET
A POSSIBILITY.
A PRAYER
A PROMISED FAST TRAIN
A QUESTION OF ELIGIBILITY
A RAILROAD LACKEY
A REAR ELEVATION
A RENDEZVOUS.

A REPLY TO A LETTER.
A RETORT
A SCION OF NOBILITY
A SERENADE.
A SILURIAN HOLIDAY
A SOARING TOAD
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A SOCIALIST
A SOCIETY LEADER
A SONG IN PRAISE
A SPADE
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A VISION OF CLIMATE
A VISION OF DOOM.
A VISION OF RESURRECTION
A VOICE FROM PEKIN
A VOLUPTUARY
A WARNING
A WARNING.
A WASTED LIFE
A WATER-PIRATE
A WELCOME.
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A WHIPPER-IN.
A WORD TO THE UNWISE
A WREATH OF IMMORTELLES
A YEAR’S CASUALTIES.
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AD MOODIUM
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AFTER PORTSMOUTH
AGAIN.
ALFRED CLARKE JR.
AN ACTOR
AN ALIBI.

AN ANARCHIST.
AN APOLOGUE.
AN ART CRITIC
AN ATTORNEY-GENERAL
AN AUGURY.
AN AVERAGE.
AN ENEMY TO LAW AND ORDER
AN ENEMY TO LAW AND ORDER.
AN EPITAPH
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AN ERROR.
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AN INVOCATION.
AN OBITUARIAN
AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE.
AN UNDRESS UNIFORM
AN UNMERRY CHRISTMAS.
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ANOTHER WAY.
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ARBORICULTURE
ARMA VIRUMQUE.
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ASPIRATION
ASPIRATION.

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AT THE BEACH
AT THE CLOSE OF THE CANVASS.
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COOPERATION.
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CREATION.
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DEMOCRACY.
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DIES IRAE.
DIES IRAE.
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DOWN AMONG THE DEAD MEN
DRAMATIS PERSONÆ
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EMANCIPATION
EXONERATION
EXONERATION.
EXPOSITOR VERITATIS
FALLEN.
FAME
FAME.
FAMINE’S REALM
FATE.
FINANCIAL NEWS
FINIS ÆTERNITATIS
FITCH:
FLEET STROTHER
FOR A CERTAIN CRITIC.
FOR MAYOR
FOR MERIT.
FOR PRESIDENT, LELAND STANFORD
FOR TAT.
FOR WOUNDS
FOR WOUNDS.
FORESIGHT
FORESIGHT.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE STATE
FOUR CANDIDATES FOR SENATOR
FOUR OF A KIND
FRANCE.
FRANCINE.
FROM THE MINUTES.
FROM TOP TO BOTTOM
FROM VIRGINIA TO PARIS.
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GENERAL B.F. BUTLER.
GENESIS
GENESIS.
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GEOTHEOS.
GOD COMPLIES
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HISTORY.
HOMO PODUNKENSIS.
HOSPITALITY
HOSPITALITY.
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HUMILITY.
IGNIS FATUUS
IN ARTICULO MORTIS
IN CONSEQUENCE OF APPLAUSE
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IN HIGH LIFE.
IN HIS HAND
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IN THE BINNACLE.
IN UPPER SAN FRANCISCO
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INDICTED
INDUSTRIAL DISCONTENT.
INSPIRATION.
J.F.B.

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JOHNDONKEY
JUDEX JUDICATUS
JUDGE RUTLEDGE
JUDGMENT.
JULY FOURTH
JULY FOURTH.
JUSTICE
JUSTICE.
L’AUDACE.
LAUS LUCIS.
LIBERTY.
LLEWELLEN POWELL
LORING PICKERING
LUCIFER OF THE TORCH
LUSUS POLITICUS.
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MAGNANIMITY.
MASTER OF THREE ARTS
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METEMPSYCHOSIS.
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MR. FINK’S DEBATING DONKEY.
MR. JUSTICE FIELD
MR. SHEETS
MY LORD POET
MY MONUMENT.
NANINE.
NIMROD
NOT GUILTY.
NOVUM ORGANUM.
OMNES VANITAS.
ON A PROPOSED CREMATORY.
ON STONE
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ON THE WEDDING OF AN AËRONAUT
ONE AND ONE ARE TWO
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ONE OF THE SAINTS
ONE OF THE UNFAIR SEX.
ONE PRESIDENT.
ONEIROMANCY
ONEIROMANCY.
ORNITHANTHROPOS
OVER THE BORDER
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PAUPER:
PEACE.
PEACEABLE EXPULSION
PHIL CRIMMINS
PHILOSOPHER BIMM.
PICKERING:
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POESY.
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PRAYER.
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PSYCHOGRAPHS
PSYCHOGRAPHS.
REBUKE
REBUKE.
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REEDIFIED.
REJECTED
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SAMUEL SHORTRIDGE
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SOMETHING IN THE PAPERS.
STEPHEN DORSEY
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STRAINED RELATIONS.
SUBSTANCE VERSUS SHADOW
SUBTERRANEAN PHANTASIES.
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THE BIRTH OF THE RAIL
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THE BOSS’S CHOICE
THE BRIDE.
THE BROTHERS.
THE CO-DEFENDANTS
THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC MORALS
THE CONFEDERATE FLAGS.
THE CONVICTS’ BALL
THE CYNIC’S BEQUEST

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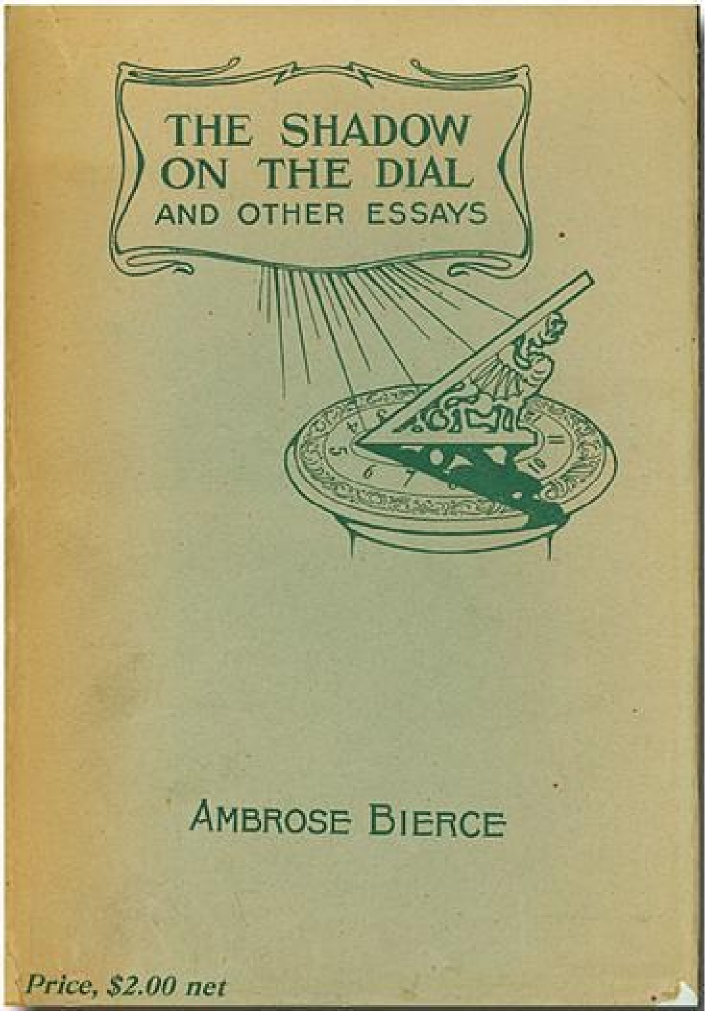
The Non-Fiction

Bierce’s final home, 1368 Euclid St., NW, Washington, DC

THE SHADOW ON THE DIAL, AND OTHER ESSAYS

The Shadow on the Dial and Other Essays appeared in 1909, published by A. M. Robertson of San Francisco. As with his stories and poems, Bierce's non-fiction has its strong advocates and virulent detractors. Of this collection, the contemporary reviewer in *The Nation* complained, "Mr. Bierce now forces the note, talks about matters he does not perfectly understand, says habitually more than he means, counts that sentence lost which contains no paradox, and contradicts himself without a blush." The same unsigned reviewer praised Bierce's stories but said that the essays demonstrate "the fatal effect of a lifetime of journalism on a fine talent." Hildegarde Hawthorne of the *New York Times*, however, wrote, "If Mr. Bierce does not contribute vastly to the knowledge of the world, he assuredly adds delightfully to its amusement."


THE SHADOW
ON THE DIAL
AND OTHER ESSAYS
AMBROSE BIERCE
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A NOTE BY THE AUTHOR

IT WAS expected that this book would be included in my “Collected Works” now in course of publication, but unforeseen delay in the date of publication has made this impossible. The selection of its contents was not made by me, but the choice has my approval and the publication my authority.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

Washington, D. C. March 14. 1909.

PREFACE

THE note of prophecy! It sounds sharp and clear in many a vibrant line, in many a sonorous sentence of the essays herein collected for the first time. Written for various Californian journals and periodicals and extending over a period of more than a quarter of a century, these opinions and reflections express the refined judgment of one who has seen, not as through a glass darkly, the trend of events. And having seen the portentous effigy that we are making of the Liberty our fathers created, he has written of it in English that is the despair of those who, thinking less clearly, escape not the pitfalls of diffuseness and obscurity. For Mr. Bierce, as did Flaubert, holds that the right word is necessary for the conveyance of the right thought and his sense of word values rarely betrays him into error. But with an odd — I might almost say perverse — indifference to his own reputation, he has allowed these writings to lie fallow in the old files of papers, while others, possessing the knack of publicity, years later tilled the soil with some degree of success. President Hadley, of Yale University, before the Candlelight Club of Denver, January 8, 1900, advanced, as novel and original, ostracism as an effective punishment of social highwaymen. This address attracted widespread attention, and though Professor Hadley's remedy has not been generally adopted it is regarded as his own. Mr. Bierce wrote in "The Examiner," January 20, 1895, as follows: "We are plundered because we have no particular aversion to plunderers."

The 'predatory rich' (to use Mr. Stead's felicitous term) put their hands into our pockets because they know that, virtually, none of us will refuse to take their hands in our own afterwards, in friendly salutation. If notorious rascality entailed social outlawry the only rascals would be those properly — and proudly — belonging to the 'criminal class.'

Again, Edwin Markham has attracted to himself no little attention by advocating the application of the Golden Rule in temporal affairs as a cure for evils arising from industrial discontent In this he, too, has been anticipated. Mr. Bierce, writing in "The Examiner," March 25, 1894, said: "When a people would avert want and strife, or having them, would restore plenty and peace, this noble commandment offers the only means — all other plans for safety and relief are as vain as dreams, and as empty as the crooning of fools. And, behold, here it is: 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.'"

Rev. Charles M. Sheldon created a nine days' wonder, or rather a seven, by conducting for a week a newspaper as he conceived Christ would have done. Some years previously, June 28, 1896, to be exact, the author of these essays wrote: "That is my ultimate and determining test of right—'What, under the circumstances, would Christ have done?' — the Christ of the New Testament, not the Christ of the commentators, theologians, priests and parsons."

I am sure that Mr. Bierce does not begrudge any of these gentlemen the acclaim they have received by enunciating his ideas, and I mention the instances here merely to forestall the filing of any other claim to priority.

The essays cover a wide range of subjects, embracing among other things government, dreams, writers of dialect, and dogs, and always the author's point of view is fresh, original and non-Philistine. Whether one cares to agree with him or not, one will find vast entertainment in his wit that illuminates with lightning flashes all he touches. Other qualities I forbear allusion to, having already encroached too much upon the time of the reader.

S. O. HOWES.

THE SHADOW ON THE DIAL

I.

THERE is a deal of confusion and uncertainty in the use of the words “Socialist,” “Anarchist,” and “Nihilist.” Even the ‘1st himself commonly knows with as little accuracy what he is as the rest of us know why he is. The Socialist believes that most human affairs should be regulated and managed by the State — the Government — that is to say, the majority. Our own system has many Socialistic features and the trend of republican government is all that way. The Anarchist is the kind of lunatic who believes that all crime is the effect of laws forbidding it — as the pig that breaks into the kitchen garden is created by the dog that chews its ear! The Anarchist favors abolition of all law and frequently belongs to an organization that secures his allegiance by solemn oaths and dreadful penalties. “Nihilism” is a name given by Turgenieff to the general body of Russian discontent which finds expression in antagonizing authority and killing authorities. Constructive politics would seem, as yet, to be a cut above the Nihilist’s intelligence; he is essentially a destructionary. He is so diligently engaged in unweeding the soil that he has not given a thought to what he will grow there. Nihilism may be described as a policy of assassination tempered by reflections upon Siberia. American sympathy with it is the offspring of an unholy union between the tongue of a liar and the ear of a dupe.

Upon examination it will be seen that political dissent, when it takes any form more coherent than the mere brute dissatisfaction of a mind that does not know what it wants to want, finds expression in one of but two ways — in Socialism or in Anarchism. Whatever methods one may think will best substitute for a system gradually evolved from our needs and our natures a system existing only in the minds of dreamers, one is bound to choose between these two dreams. Yet such is the intellectual delinquency of many who most strenuously denounce the system that we have that we not infrequently find the same man advocating in one breath, Socialism, in the next, Anarchism. Indeed, few of these sons of darkness know that even as coherent dreams the two are incompatible. With Anarchy triumphant the Socialist would be a thousand years further from realization of his hope than he is today. Set up Socialism on a Monday and on Tuesday the country would be *en fête*, gaily hunting down Anarchists. There would be little difficulty in trailing them, for they have not so much sense as a deer, which, running down the wind, sends its tell-tale fragrance on before.

Socialism and Anarchism are the two extremes of political thought; they are parts of the same dung, in the sense that the terminal points of a road are parts of the same road. Between them, about midway, lies the system that we have the happiness to endure. It is a “blend” of Socialism and Anarchism in about equal parts: all that is not one is the other. Everything serving the common interest, or looking to the welfare of the whole people, is socialistic in the strictest sense of the word as understood by the Socialist Whatever tends to private advantage or advances an individual or class interest at the expense of a public one, is anarchistic. Cooperation is Socialism; competition is Anarchism. Competition carried to its logical conclusion (which only cooperation prevents or can prevent) would leave no law in force no property possible no life secure.

Of course the words “cooperation” and “competition” are not here used in a merely industrial and commercial sense; they are intended to cover the whole field of human activity. Two voices singing a duet — that is cooperation — Socialism. Two voices singing each a different tune and trying to drown each other — that is competition — Anarchism: each is a law unto itself — that is to say, it is lawless. Everything that ought to be done the Socialist hopes to do by associated endeavor, as an army wins battles; Anarchism is socialistic in its means only: by cooperation it tries to render cooperation impossible — combines to kill combination. Its method says to its purpose: “Thou fool!”

II.

Everything foretells the doom of authority. The killing of kings is no new industry; it is as ancient as the race. Always and everywhere persons in high place have been the assassin’s prey. We have ourselves lost three Presidents by murder, and will doubtless lose many another before the book of American history is closed. If anything is new in this activity of the regicide it is found in the choice of victims. The contemporary “avenger” slays, not the merely great, but the good and the inoffensive — an American President who had struck the chains from millions of slaves; a Russian Czar who against the will and work of his own powerful nobles had freed their serfs; a French President from whom the French people had received nothing but good; a powerless Austrian Empress, whose weight of sorrows touched the world to tears; a blameless Italian King beloved of his people; such is a part of the recent record of the regicide whose every entry is a tale of infamy unrelieved by one circumstance of justice, decency or good intention.

And the great Brazilian liberator died in exile.

This recent uniformity of malevolence in the choice of victims is not without significance. It points unmistakably to two facts: first, that the selections are made, not by the assassins themselves, but by some central control inaccessible to individual preference and unaffected by the fortunes of its instruments; second, that there is a constant purpose to manifest an antagonism, not to any individual ruler, but to rulers; not to any system of government, but to Government. It is a war, not upon those in authority, but upon Authority. The issue is defined, the alignment made, the battle set: Chaos against Order, Anarchy against Law.

M. Vaillant, the French gentleman who lacked a “good opinion of the law,” but was singularly rich in the faith that by means of gunpowder and flying nails humanity could be brought into a nearer relation with reason, righteousness and the will of God, is said to have been nearly devoid of a nose. Of this affliction M. Vaillant made but slight account, as was natural, seeing that but for a brief season did he need even so much of nose as remained to him. Yet before its effacement by premature disruption of his own petard it must have had a certain value to him — he would not wantonly have renounced it; and had he foreseen its extinction by the bomb the iron views of that controversial device would probably have been denied expression. Albeit (so say the scientists) doomed to eventual elimination from the scheme of being, and to the Anarchist even now something of an accusing conscience, the nose is indubitably an excellent thing in man.

This brings us to consideration of the human nose as a measure of human happiness — not the size of it, but its numbers; its frequent or infrequent occurrence upon the human face. We have grown so accustomed to the presence of this feature that we take it as a matter of course; its absence is one of the most notable phenomena of our observation—”an occasion long to be remembered,” as the society reporter hath it Yet “abundant testimony showeth” that but two or three centuries ago noseless men and women were so common all over Europe as to provoke but little comment when seen and (in their disagreeable way) heard They abounded in all the various walks of life: there were honored burgomasters without noses, wealthy merchants, great scholars, artists, teachers. Amongst the humbler classes nasal destitution was almost as frequent as pecuniary — in the humblest of all the most common of all. Writing in the thirteenth century, Salsius mentions the retainers and servants of certain Suabian noblemen as having hardly a whole ear among them — for until a comparatively recent period man’s tenure of his ears was even more precarious than that of his nose. In 1436, when a Bavarian woman, Agnes Bemaurian, wife of Duke Albert the Pious, was dropped off the bridge at Prague, she persisted in rising to the surface and trying to escape; so the executioner gave himself the trouble to put a long pole into her hair and hold her under. A contemporary account of the matter hints that her disorderly behavior at so solemn a moment was due to the pain caused by removal of her nose; but as her execution was by order of her own father it seems more probable that “the extreme penalty of the law” was not imposed. Without a doubt, though, possession of a nose was an uncommon (and rather barren) distinction in those days among “persons designated to assist the executioner,” as the condemned were civilly called. Nor, as already said, was it any too common among persons not as yet consecrated to that service: “Few,” says Salsius, “have two noses, and many have none.”

Man’s firmer grasp upon his nose in this our day and generation is not altogether due to invention of the handkerchief. The genesis and development of his right to his own nose have been accompanied with a corresponding advance in the possessory rights all along the line of his belongings — his ears, his fingers and toes, his skin, his bones, his wife and her young, his clothes and his labor — everything that is (and that once was not) his. In Europe and America today these things can not be taken away from even the humblest and poorest without somebody wanting to “know the reason why.” In every decade the nation that is most powerful upon the seas incurs voluntarily a vast expense of blood and treasure in suppressing a slave trade which in no way is injurious to her interests, nor to the interests of any but the slaves.

So “Freedom broadens slowly down,” and today even the lowliest incapable of all Nature’s aborted has a nose that he dares to call his own and bite off at his own sweet will. Unfortunately, with an unthinkable fatuity we permit him to be told that but for the very agencies that have put him in possession he could successfully assert a God-given and world-old right to the noses of others. At present the honest fellow is mainly engaged in refreshing himself upon his own nose, consuming that comestible with avidity and precision; but the Vaillants, Ravechols, Mosts and Willeys are pointing his appetite to other snouts than his, and inspiring him with rhinophagic ambition. Meantime the rest of us are using those imperiled organs to snore with.

‘Tis a fine, resonant and melodious snore, but it is not going to last: there is to be a rude awakening. We shall one day get our eyes open to the fact that scoundrels like Vaillant are neither few nor distant. We shall learn that our blind dependence upon the magic of words is a fatuous error; that the fortuitous arrangement of consonants and vowels which we worship as Liberty is of slight efficacy in disarming the lunatic brandishing a bomb. Liberty, indeed! The murderous wretch loves it a deal better than we, and wants more of it. Liberty!

one almost sickens of the word, so quick and glib it is on every lip — so destitute of meaning.

There is no such thing as abstract liberty; it is not even thinkable. If you ask me, “Do you favor liberty?” I reply, “Liberty for whom to do what? Just now I distinctly favor the liberty of the law to cut off the noses of anarchists caught red-handed or red-tongued. If they go in for mutilation let them feel what it is like. If they are not satisfied with the way that things have been going on since the wife of Duke Albert the Pious was held under water with a pole, and since the servitors of the Suabian nobleman cherished their vestigial ears, it is to be presumed that they favor reversion to that happy state. There is grave objection, but if we must we will. Let us begin (with moderation) by reverting *them*.”

I favor mutilation for anarchists convicted of killing or inciting to kill — mutilation followed by death. For those who merely deny the right and expediency of law, plain mutilation — which might advantageously take the form of removal of the tongue.

Why not? Where is the injustice? Surely he who denies men’s right to make laws will not invoke the laws that they have wickedly made! That were to say that they must not protect themselves, yet are bound to protect him. What! if I beat him will he call the useless and mischievous constabulary? If I draw out his tongue shall he (in the sign-language) demand it back, and failing of restitution (for surely I should cut it clean away) shall he have the law on me — the naughty law, instrument of the oppressor? Why? that “goes neare to be fonny!”

Two human beings can not live together in peace without laws — laws innumerable. Everything that either, in consideration of the other’s wish or welfare, abstains from is inhibited by law, tacit or expressed. If there were in all the world none but they — if neither had come with any sense of obligation toward the other, both clean from creation, with nothing but brains to direct their conduct — every hour would evolve an understanding, that is to say, a law; every act would suggest one. They would have to agree not to kill nor harm each other. They must arrange their work and all their activities to secure the best advantage. These arrangements, agreements, understandings — what are they but laws? To live without law is to live alone. Every family is a miniature State with a complicate system of laws, a supreme authority and subordinate authorities down to the latest babe. And as he who is loudest in demanding liberty for himself is sternest in denying it to others, you may confidently go to the Maison Vaillant, or the Mosthaus, for a flawless example of the iron hand.

Laws of the State are as faulty and as faultily administered as those of the Family. Most of them have to be speedily and repeatedly “amended,” many repealed, and of those permitted to stand, the greater number fall into disuse and are forgotten. Those who have to be entrusted with the duty of administering them have all the limitations of intelligence and defects of character by which the rest of us also are distinguished from the angels. In the wise governor, the just judge, the honest sheriff or the patient constable we have as rare a phenomenon as the faultless father. The good God has not given us a special kind of men upon whom to devolve the duty of seeing to the observance of the understandings that we call laws. Like all else that men do, this work is badly done. The best that we can hope for through all the failures, the injustice, the disheartening damage to individual rights and interests, is a fairly good general result, enabling us to walk abroad among our fellows unafraid, to meet even the tribesmen from another valley without too imminent peril of braining and evisceration. Of that small security the Anarchist would deprive us. But without that nothing is of value and we shall be willing to renounce all. Let us begin by depriving ourselves of the Anarchist.

Our system of civilization being the natural outgrowth of our wretched moral and intellectual natures, is open to criticism and subject to revision. Our laws, being of human origin, are faulty and their application is disappointing. Dissent, dissatisfaction, deprecation, proposals for a better system fortified with better laws more intelligently administered — these are permissible and should be welcome. The Socialist (when he is not carried away by zeal to pool issues with the Anarchist) has that in him which it does us good to hear. He may be wrong b all else, yet right in showing us wherein we ourselves are wrong. Anyhow, his mission is amendment, and so long as his paths are peace he has the right to walk therein, exhorting as he goes. The French Communist who does not preach Petroleum and It rectified is to be regarded with more than amusement, more than compassion. There is room for him and his fad; there are hospitable ears for his boast that Jesus Christ would have been a Communist if there had been Communes. They really did not “know everything down in Judee.” But for the Anarchist, whose aim is not amendment, but destruction — not welfare to the race, but mischief to a part of it — not happiness for the future, but revenge for the past — for that animal there should be no close season, for that savage, no reservation. Society has not the right to grant life to one who denies the right to live. The protagonist of reversion to the regime of lacking noses should lack a nose.

It is difficult to say if the bomb-thrower, actual or potential, is greater as scoundrel or fool. Suppose his aim is to compel concession by terror. Can not the brute observe at each of his exploits a tightening of “the reins of power?” Through the necessity of guarding against him the mildest governments are becoming despotic, the most despotic more despotic. Does he suppose that “the rulers of the earth” are silly enough to make concessions that will not insure their safety? Can *he* give them security?

III.

Of all the wild asses that roam the plain, the wildest wild ass that roams the plain is indubitably the one that lifts his voice and heel against that socialism known as “public ownership of public utilities,” on the ground of “principle.” There may be honest, and in some degree intelligent, opposition on the ground of expediency. Many persons whom it is a pleasure to respect believe that a Government railway, for example, would be less efficiently managed than the same railway in private hands, and that political dangers lurk in the proposal so enormously to increase the number of Federal employes as Government ownership of railways would entail. They think, in other words, that the policy is inexpedient. It is a duty to reason with them, which, as a rule, one can do without being insulted. But the chap who greets the proposal with a howl of derision as “Socialism!” is not a respectable opponent. Eyes he has, but he sees not; ears — oh! very abundant ears — but he hears not the still, small voice of history nor the still smaller voice of common sense.

Obviously to those who, having eyes, do see, public ownership of anything is a step in the direction of Socialism, for perfect Socialism means public ownership of everything. But “principle” has nothing to do with it The principle of public ownership is already accepted and established. It has no visible opponents except in the camp of the Anarchists, and fewer of them are visible there than soap and water would reveal. Antagonists of the *principle* of Socialism lost their fight when the first human government held the dedicatory exercises of a Cave of Legislation. Since then the only question about the matter has been how far the *extension* of Socialism is expedient Some would draw the limiting line at one place, some at another; but only a fool thinks there can be government without it, or good government without a great deal of it (The fact that we have always had a great deal of it yet never had good government affirms nothing that it is worth while to consider.) The word-worn example of our Postal Department is only one of a thousand instances of pure Socialism. If it did not exist how bitter an opposition a proposal to establish it would evoke from Adversaries of the Red Rag! The Government builds and operates bridges with general assent; but as the late General Walker pointed out, it might under some circumstances be more economical, or better otherwise, to build and operate a ferry boat, which is a floating bridge. But that would be opposed as rank

Socialism.

The truth is that the men and women of principle are a pretty dangerous class, generally speaking — and they are generally speaking. It is they that hamper us in every war. It is they who, preventing concentration and regulation of unabolishable evils, promote their distribution and liberty. Moral principles are pretty good things — for the young and those not well grounded in goodness. If one have an impediment in his thought, or is otherwise unequal to emergencies as they arise, it is safest to be provided beforehand with something to refer to in order that a right decision may be made without taking thought. But "spirits of a purer fire" prefer to decide each question as it comes up, and to act upon the merits of the case, unbound and unpledged. With a quick intelligence, a capable conscience and a habit of doing right automatically one has little need to burden one's mind and memory with a set of solemn principles formulated by owlish philosophers who do not happen to know that what is right is merely what, in the long run and with regard to the greater number of cases, is expedient Principle is not always an infallible guide. For illustration, it is not always expedient — that is, for the good of all concerned — to tell the truth, to be entirely just or merciful, to pay a debt. I can conceive a case in which it would be right to assassinate one's neighbor. Suppose him to be a desperate scoundrel of a chemist who has devised a means of setting the atmosphere afire. The man who should go through life on an inflexible line of principle would border his path with a havoc of human happiness.

What one may think perfect one may not always think desirable. By "perfect" one may mean merely complete, and the word was so used in my reference to Socialism. I am not myself an advocate of "perfect Socialism," but as to Government ownership of railways, there is doubtless a good deal to be said on both sides. One argument in its favor appears decisive; under a system subject to popular control the law of gravitation would be shorn of its preeminence as a means of removing personal property from the baggage car, and so far as it is applicable to that work might even be repealed.

IV.

When M. Casimir-Perier resigned the French Presidency there were those who regarded the act as weak, cowardly, undutiful and otherwise censurable. It seems to me the act, not of a feeble man, but of a strong one — not that of a coward, but that of a gentleman. Indeed, I hardly know where to look in history for an act more entirely gratifying to my sense of "the fitness of things" than this dignified notification to mankind that in consenting to serve one’s country one does not relinquish the right to decent treatment — to immunity from factious opposition and abuse — to at least as much civil consideration as is due from the Church to the Devil.

M. Casimir-Perier did not seek the Presidency of the French Republic; it was thrust upon him against his protestations by an apparently almost unanimous mandate of the French people in an emergency which it was thought that he was the best man to meet. That he met it with modesty and courage was testified without dissent. That he afterward did anything to forfeit the confidence and respect that he then inspired is not true, and nobody believes it true. Yet in his letter of resignation he said, and said truly:

“For the last six months a campaign of slander and insult has been going on against the army, magistrates. Parliament and hierarchical Chief of State, and this license to disseminate social hatred continues to be called ‘the liberty of thought.’”

And with a dignity to which it seems strange that any one could be insensible, he added:

“The respect and ambition which I entertain for my country will not allow me to acknowledge that the servants of the country, and he who represents it in the presence of foreign nations, may be insulted every day.”

These are noble words. Have we any warrant for demanding or expecting that men of clean life and character will devote themselves to the good of ingrates who pay, and ingrates who permit them to pay, in flung mud? It is hardly credible that among even those persons most infatuated by contemplation of their own merit as pointed out by their thrifty sycophants “the liberty of thought” has been carried to that extreme. The right of the State to demand the sacrifice of the citizen’s life is a doctrine as old as the patriotism that concedes it, but the right to require him to forego his good name — that is something new under the sun. From nothing but the dunghill of modern democracy could so noxious a plant have sprung.

“Perhaps in laying down my functions,” said M. Casimir-Perier, “I shall have marked out a path of duty to those who are solicitous for the dignity, power and good name of France in the world.”

We may be permitted to hope that the lesson is wider than France and more lasting than the French Republic. It is time that not only France but all other countries with “popular institutions” should learn that if they wish to command the services of men of honor they must accord them honorable treatment; the rule now is for the party to which they belong to give them a half-hearted support while suffering all other parties to slander and insult them. The action of the President of the French Republic in these disgusting circumstances is exceptional and unusual only in respect of his courage in expressly resenting his wrong. Everywhere the unreasonable complaint is heard that good men will not “go into politics;” everywhere the ignorant and malignant masses and their no less malignant and hardly less ignorant leaders and spokesmen, having sown the wind of reasonless obstruction and partisan vilification, are reaping the whirlwind of misrule. So far as concerns the public service, gentlemen are mostly on a strike against introduction of the mud-machine. This high-minded political workman, Casimir-Perier, never showed to so noble advantage as in gathering up his tools and walking out.

It may be, and a million times has been, urged that abstention from activity in public affairs by men of brains and character leaves the business of government in the hands of the incapable and the vicious. In whose hands, pray, in a republic does it logically belong? What does the theory of “representative government” affirm? What is the lesson of every netherward extension of the suffrage? What do we mean by permitting it to “broaden slowly down” to lower and lower intelligences and moralities? — what but that stupidity and vice, equally with virtue and wisdom, are entitled to a voice in political affairs, a finger in the public pie?

A person that is fit to vote is fit to be voted for. He who is competent for the high and difficult function of choosing an officer of the State is competent to serve the State as an officer. To deny him the right is illogical and unjust. Participation in Government can not be at the same time a privilege and a duty, and he who claims it as a privilege must not speak of another’s renunciation (whereby himself is more highly privileged) as “shirking.” With every retirement from politics increased power passes to those who remain. Shall they protest? Shall they, also, who have retired? Who else is to protest? The complaint of “incivism” would be more rational if there were some one by whom it could reasonably be made.

My advice to slandered officials has ever been: “Resign.” The public officials of this favored country, Heaven be thanked, are infrequently slandered: they are, as a rule, so bad that calumniation is a compliment. Our best men, with here and there an exception, have been driven out of public life, or made afraid to enter it. Even our spasmodic efforts at reform fail ludicrously for lack of leaders unaffiliated with “the thing to be reformed.” Unless attracted by the salary, why should a gentleman “aspire” to the Presidency of the United States? During his canvass (and he is expected to “run,” not merely to “stand”) he will have from his own party a support that should make him blush, and from all the others an opposition that will stick at nothing to accomplish his satisfactory defamation.

After his election his partition and allotment of the loaves and fishes will estrange an important and thenceforth implacable faction of his following without appeasing the animosity of any one else; and during his entire service his sky will be dark with a flight of dead cats. At the finish of his term the utmost that he can expect in the way of reward not expressible in terms of the national currency is that not much more than one-half of his countrymen will believe him a scoundrel to the end of their days.

V.

The kind of government that we have seems to me one of the worst kinds extant A government that does not protect life is a flat failure, no matter what else it may do. Life being almost universally regarded as the most precious possession, its security is the first and highest essential — not the life of him who takes life, but the life which is exposed defenceless to his hateful hand. In no country in the world, civilized or savage, is life so insecure as in this. In no country in the world is murder held in so light reprobation. In no battle of modern times have so many lives been taken as are lost annually in the United States through public indifference to the crime of homicide — through disregard of law, through bad government. If American self-government, with its ten thousand homicides a year, is good government, there is no such thing as bad. Self-government! What monstrous nonsense! Who governs himself needs no government, has no governor, is not governed. If government has any meaning it means the restraint of the many by the few — the subordination of numbers to brains. It means the determined denial to the masses of the right to cut their own throats. It means the grasp and control of all the social forces and material enginery — a vigilant censorship of the press, a firm hand upon the church, keen supervision of public meetings and public amusements, command of the railroads, telegraph and all means of communication. It means, in short, the ability to make use of all the beneficent influences of enlightenment for the good of the people, and to array all the powers of civilization against civilization’s natural enemies — the people. Government like this has a thousand defects, but it has one merit: it is government.

Despotism? Yes. It is the despotisms of the world that have been the conservators of civilization. It is the despot who, most powerful for mischief, is alone powerful for good. It is conceded that government is necessary — even by the “fierce democracies” that madly renounce it. But in so far as government is not despotic it is not government. In Europe for the last one hundred years, the tendency of all government has been liberalization. The history of European politics during that period is a history of renunciation by the rulers and assumption by the ruled. Sovereign after sovereign has surrendered prerogative after prerogative; the nobility privilege after privilege. Mark the result: society honeycombed with treason; property menaced with partition; assassination studied as a science and practiced as an art; everywhere powerful secret organizations sworn to demolish the social fabric that the slow centuries have but just erected and unmindful that themselves will perish in the wreck. No heart in Europe can beat tranquilly under clean linen. Such is the gratitude, such is the wisdom, such the virtue of “The Masses.” In 1863 Alexander II of Russia freed 25,000,000 serfs. In 1879 they had killed him and all joined the conspirators.

That ancient and various device, “a republican form of government,” appears to be too good for all the peoples of the earth excepting one. It is partly successful in Switzerland; in France and America, where the majority is composed of persons having dark understandings and criminal instincts, it has broken down. In our case, as in every case, the momentum of successful revolution carried us too far. We rebelled against tyranny and having overthrown it, overthrew also the governmental form in which it had happened to be manifest. In their anger and their triumph our good old gran’thers acted somewhat in the spirit of the Irishman who cudgeled the dead snake until nothing was left of it, in order to make it “sinsible of its desthroction.” They meant it all, too, the honest souls! For a long time after the setting up of the republic the republic meant active hatred to kings, nobles, aristocracies. It was held, and rightly held, that a nobleman could not breathe in America — that he left his title and his privileges on the ship that brought him over. Do we observe anything of that in this generation? On the landing of a foreign king, prince or nobleman — even a miserable “knight” — do we not execute sycophantic genuflexions? Are not our newspapers full of flamboyant descriptions and qualming adulation? Nay, does not our President himself — successor to Washington and Jefferson! — greet and entertain the “nation’s guest”? Is not every American young woman crazy to mate with a male of title? Does all this represent no retrogression? — is it not the backward movement of the shadow on the dial? Doubtless the republican idea has struck strong roots into the soil of the two Americas, but he who rightly considers the tendencies of events, the causes that bring them about and the consequences that flow from them, will not be hot to affirm the perpetuity of republican institutions in the Western Hemisphere. Between their inception and their present stage of development there is scarcely the beat of a pendulum; and already, by corruption and lawlessness, the people of both continents, with all their diversities of race and character, have shown themselves about equally unfit. To become a nation of scoundrels all that any people needs is opportunity, and what we are pleased to call by the impossible name of “self-government” supplies it.

The capital defect of republican government is inability to repress internal forces tending to disintegration. It does not take long for a “self-governed” people to learn that it is not really governed — that an agreement enforcible by nobody but the parties to it is not binding. We are learning this very rapidly: we set aside our laws whenever we please. The sovereign power — the tribunal of ultimate jurisdiction — is a mob. If the mob is large enough (it need not be very large), even if composed of vicious tramps, it may do as it will. It may destroy property and life. It may without proof of guilt inflict upon individuals torments unthinkable by fire and flaying, mutilations that are nameless. It may call men, women and children from their beds and beat them to death with cudgels. In the light of day it may assail the very strongholds of law in the heart of a populous city, and assassinate prisoners of whose guilt it knows nothing. And these things — observe, O victims of kings — are habitually done. One would as well be at the mercy of one’s sovereign as of one’s neighbor.

For generations we have been charming ourselves with the magic of words. When menaced by some exceptionally monstrous form of the tyranny of numbers we have closed our eyes and murmured, “Liberty.” When armed Anarchists threaten to quench the fires of civilization in a sea of blood we prate of the protective power of “free speech.” If,

“Girt about by friends or foes,
A man may speak the thing he will,”

we fondly fancy that the thing he will speak is harmless — that immunity disarms his tongue of its poison, his thought of its infection. With a fatuity that would be incredible without the testimony of observation, we hold that an Anarchist free to go about making proselytes, free to purchase arms, free to drill and parade and encourage his dupes with a demonstration of their numbers and power, is less mischievous than an Anarchist with a shut mouth, a weaponless hand and under surveillance of the police. The Anarchist himself is persuaded of the superiority of our plan of dealing with him; he likes it and comes over in quantity, inpesting the political atmosphere with the “sweltered venom” engendered by centuries of oppression — comes over here, where he is not oppressed, and sets up as oppressor. His preferred field of malefaction is the country that is most nearly anarchical. He comes here, partly to better himself under our milder institutions, partly to secure immunity while conspiring to destroy them. There is thunder in Europe, but if the storm ever break it is in America that the lightning will fall, for here is a great vortex into which the decivilizing agencies are pouring without obstruction. Here gather the eagles to the feast, for the quarry is defenceless. Here is no power in government, no government. Here an enemy of order is thought to be least dangerous when suffered to preach and arm in peace. And here is nothing between him and his task of supervision — no pampered soldiery to repress his rising, no iron authority to lay him by the heels. The militia is fraternal, the magistracy elective. Europe may hold out a little longer. The Great Powers may make what stage-play they will, but they are not maintaining their incalculable armaments for aggression upon one another, for protection from one another, nor for fun. These vast forces are purely constabular — creatures and creators of discontent — phenomena of decivilization. Eventually they will fraternize with Disorder or become themselves Praetorian Guards more dangerous than the perils that have called them into existence.

It is easy to forecast the first stages of the End's approach: Rioting. Disaffection of constabulary and troops. Subversion of the Government A policy of decapitation. Upthrust of the serviceable Anarchist. His prompt effacement by his victorious ally and natural enemy, the Socialist. Free minting and printing of money — to every citizen a shoulder-load of the latter, to the printers a ton each. Divided counsels. Pandemonium. The man on horseback. Gusts of grape. ——— ?

Formerly the bearer of evil tidings was only slain; he is now ignored. The gods kept their secrets by telling them to Cassandra, whom no one would believe. I do not expect to be heeded. The crust of a volcano is electric the fumes are narcotic; the combined sensation is delightful no end. I have looked at the dial of civilization; I tell you the shadow is going back. That is of small importance to men of leisure, with wine-dipped wreaths upon their heads. They do not care to know.

CIVILIZATION

I.

THE question “Does civilization civilize?” is a fine example of *petitio principii*. and decides itself in the affirmative; for civilization must needs do that from the doing of which it has its name. But it is not necessary to suppose that he who propounds is either unconscious of his lapse in logic or desirous of digging a pitfall for the feet of those who discuss; I take it he simply wishes to put the matter in an impressive way, and relies upon a certain degree of intelligence in the interpretation.

Concerning uncivilized peoples we know but little except what we are told by travelers — who, speaking generally, can know very little but the fact of uncivilization as shown in externals and irrelevances, and are moreover, greatly given to lying. From the savages we hear very little. Judging them in all things by our own standards, in default of a knowledge of theirs, we necessarily condemn, disparage and belittle. One thing that civilization certainly has not done is to make us intelligent enough to understand that the opposite of a virtue is not necessarily a vice. Because we do not like the taste of one another it does not follow that the cannibal is a person of depraved appetite. Because, as a rule, we have but one wife and several mistresses each it is not certain that polygamy is everywhere — nor, for that matter, anywhere — either wrong or inexpedient. Our habit of wearing clothes does not prove that conscience of the body, the sense of shame, is charged with a divine mandate; for like the conscience of the spirit it is the creature of what it seems to create: it comes to the habit of wearing clothes. And for those who hold that the purpose of civilization is morality it may be said that peoples which are the most nearly naked are, in our sense, the most nearly moral. Because the brutality of the civilized slave owners and dealers created a conquering sentiment against slavery it is not intelligent to assume that slavery is a maleficent thing amongst Oriental peoples (for example) where the slave is not oppressed.

Some of these same Orientals whom we are pleased to term half-civilized have no regard for truth. “Takest thou me for a Christian dog,” said one of them, “that I should be the slave of my word?” So far as I can perceive the “Christian dog” is no more the slave of his word than the True Believer, and I think the savage — allowing for the fact that his inveracity has dominion over fewer things — as great a liar as either of them. For my part, I do not know what, in all circumstances, is right or wrong; but I know, if right, it is at least stupid to judge an uncivilized people by the standards of morality and intelligence set up by civilized ones. An infinitesimal proportion of civilized men do not, and there is much to be said for civilization if they are the product of it.

Life in civilized countries is so complex that men there have more ways to be good than savages have, and more to be bad; more to be happy, and more to be miserable. And in each way to be good or bad, their generally superior knowledge — their knowledge of more things — enables them to commit greater excesses than the savage could widi the same opportunity. The civilized philanthropist wreaks upon his fellow creatures a ranker philanthropy, the civilized scoundrel a sturdier rascality. And — splendid triumph of enlightenment! — the two characters are, in civilisation, commonly combined in one person.

I know of no savage custom or habit of thought which has not its mate in civilized countries. For every mischievous or absurd practice of the natural man I can name you a dozen of the unnatural which are essentially the same. And nearly every custom of our barbarian ancestors in historic times survives in some form today. We make ourselves look formidable in battle — for that matter, we fight. Our women paint their faces. We feel it obligatory to dress more or less alike, inventing the most ingenious reasons for it and actually despising and persecuting those who do not care to conform. Within the memory of living persons bearded men were stoned in the streets; and a clergyman in New York who wore his beard as Christ wore his, was put into jail and variously persecuted till he died. We bury our dead instead of burning them, yet every cemetery is set thick with urns. As there are no ashes for the urns we do not trouble ourselves to make them hollow, and we say their use is “emblematic.” When, following the bent of our ancestral instincts, we go on, age after age, in the performance of some senseless act which once had a use and meaning we excuse ourselves by calling it symbolism. Our “symbols” are merely survivals. We have theology and patriotism. We have all the savage’s superstition. We propitiate and ingratiate by means of gifts. We shake hands. All these and hundreds of others of our practices are distinctly, in their nature and by their origin, savage.

Civilization does not, I think, make the race any better. It makes men know more: and if knowledge makes them happy it is useful and desirable. The one purpose of every sane human being is to be happy. No one can have any other motive than that. There is no such thing as unselfishness. We perform the most “generous” and “self-sacrificing” acts because we should be unhappy if we did not. We move on lines of least reluctance. Whatever tends to increase the beggarly sum of human happiness is worth having; nothing else has any value.

The cant of civilization fatigues. Civilization is a fine and beautiful structure. It is as picturesque as a Gothic cathedral. But it is built upon the bones and cemented with the blood of those whose part in all its pomp is that and nothing more. It cannot be reared in the generous tropics, for there the people will not contribute their blood and bones. The proposition that the average American workingman or European peasant is "better off" than the South Sea Islander, lolling under a palm and drunk with over-eating, will not bear a moment's examination.

It is we scholars and gentlemen that are better off.

It is admitted that the South Sea Islander in a state of nature is overmuch addicted to the practice of eating human flesh; but concerning that I submit: first, that he likes it; second, that those who supply it are mostly dead. It is upon his enemies that he feeds, and these he would kill anyhow, as we do ours. In civilized, enlightened and Christian countries, where cannibalism has not yet established itself, wars are as frequent and destructive as among the maneaters. The untitled savage knows at least why he goes killing, whereas the private soldier is commonly in black ignorance of the apparent cause of quarrel — of the actual cause, always. Their shares in the fruits of victory are about equal: the Chief takes all the dead, the General all the glory. Moreover it costs more human life to supply a Christian gentleman with food than it does a cannibal — with food alone: "board;" if you could figure out the number of lives that his lodging, clothing, amusements and accomplishment cost the sum would startle. Happily *he* does not pay it. Considering human lives as having value, cannibalism is undoubtedly the more economical system.

II.

Transplanted institutions grow but slowly; and civilization can not be put into a ship and carried across an ocean. The history of this country is a sequence of illustrations of these truths. It was settled by civilized men and women from civilized countries, yet after two and a half centuries with unbroken communication with the mother systems, it is still imperfectly civilized. In learning and letters, in art and the science of government, America is but a faint and stammering echo of England.

For nearly all that is good in our American civilization we are indebted to England; the errors and mischiefs are of our own creation. We have originated little, because there is little to originate, but we have unconsciously reproduced many of the discredited and abandoned systems of former ages and other countries — receiving them at second hand, but making them ours by the sheer strength and immobility of the national belief in their newness. Newness! Why, it is not possible to make an experiment in government, in art, in literature, in sociology, or in morals, that has not been made over, and over, and over again. Fools talk of clear and simple remedies for this and that evil afflicting the commonwealth. If a proposed remedy is obvious and easily intelligible, it is condemned in the naming, for it is morally certain to have been tried a thousand times in the history of the world, and had it been effective men ere now would have forgotten, from mere disuse, how to produce the evil it cured.

There are clear and simple remedies for nothing. In medicine there has been discovered but a single specific; in politics not one. The interests, moral and natural, of a community in our highly differentiated civilization are so complex, intricate, delicate and interdependent, that you can not touch one without affecting all. It is a familiar truth that no law was ever passed that did not have unforeseen results; but of these results, by far the greater number are never recognized as of its creation. The best that can be said of any “measure” is, that the sum of its perceptible benefits seems so to exceed the sum of its perceptible evils as to constitute a balance of advantage. Yet the magnificent innocence of the statesman or philosopher to whose understanding “the whole matter lies in a nutshell” — who thinks he can formulate a practical political or social policy within the four corners of an epigram — who fears nothing because he knows nothing — is constantly to the fore with a simple specific for ills whose causes are complex, constant and inscrutable. To the understanding of this creature a difficulty well ignored is half overcome; so he buttons up his eyes and assails the problems of life with the divine confidence of a blind pig traversing a labyrinth.

The glories of England are our glories. She can achieve nothing that our fathers did not help to make possible to her. The learning, the power, the refinement of a great nation, are not the growth of a century, but of many centuries; each generation builds upon the work of the preceding. For untold ages our ancestors wrought to rear that “revered pile,” the civilization of England. And shall we now try to belittle the mighty structure because other though kindred hands are laying the top courses while we have elected to found a new tower in another land? The American eulogist of civilization who is not proud of his heritage in England’s glory is unworthy to enjoy his lesser heritage in the lesser glory of his own country.

The English are undoubtedly our intellectual superiors; and as the virtues are solely the product of education — a rogue being only a dunce considered from another point of view — they are our moral superiors likewise. Why should they not be? It is a land not of log and pine-board schoolhouses grudgingly erected and containing schools supported by such niggardly tax levies as a sparse and hard-handed population will consent to pay, but of ancient institutions splendidly endowed by the State and by centuries of private benefaction. As a means of dispensing formulated ignorance our boasted public school system is not without merit; it spreads it out sufficiently thin to give everyone enough to make him a more competent fool than he would have been without it; but to compare it with that which is not the creature of legislation acting with malice aforethought, but the unnoted outgrowth of ages, is to be ridiculous. It is like comparing the laid-out town of a western prairie, its right-angled streets, prim cottages, "built on the installment plan," and its wooden a-b-c shops, with the grand old town of Oxford, topped with the clustered domes and towers of its twenty-odd great colleges; the very names of many of whose founders have perished from human record as have all the chronicles of the times in which they lived.

It is not alone that we have had to "subdue the wilderness;" our educational conditions are otherwise adverse. Our political system is unfavorable. Our fortunes, accumulated in one generation, are dispersed in the next. If it takes three generations to make a gentleman one will not make a thinker. Instruction is acquired, but capacity for instruction is transmitted. The brain that is to contain a trained intellect is not the result of a haphazard marriage between a clown and a wench, nor does it get its tractable tissues from a hard-headed farmer and a soft-headed milliner. If you confess the importance of race and pedigree in a race horse and a bird dog how dare you deny it in a man?

I do not claim that the political and social system that creates an aristocracy of leisure, and consequently of intellect, is the best possible kind of human organization; I perceive its disadvantages clearly enough. But I do not hold that a system under which all important public trusts, political and professional, civil and military, ecclesiastical and secular, are held by educated men — that is, men of trained faculties and disciplined judgment — is not an altogether faulty system.

It is only in our own country that an exacting literary taste is believed to disqualify a man for purveying to the literary needs of a taste less exacting — a proposition obviously absurd, for an exacting taste is nothing but the intelligent discrimination of a judgment instructed by comparison and observation. There is, in fact, no pursuit or occupation, from that of a man who blows up a balloon to that of the man who bores out the stove pipes, in which he that has talent and education is not a better worker than he that has either, and he than he that has neither. It is a universal human weakness to disparage the knowledge that we do not ourselves possess, but it is only my own beloved country that can justly boast herself the last refuge and asylum of the impotents and incapables who deny the advantage of all knowledge whatsoever. It was an American Senator (Logan) who declared that he had devoted a couple of weeks to the study of finance, and found the accepted authorities all wrong. It was another American Senator (Morton) who, confronted with certain ugly facts in the history of another country, proposed "to brush away all facts, and argue the question on considerations of plain common sense."

Republican institutions have this disadvantage: by incessant changes in the *personnel* of government — to say nothing of the manner of men that ignorant constituencies elect; and all constituencies are ignorant — we attain to no fixed principles and standards. There is no such thing here as a science of politics, because it is not to any one's interest to make politics the study of his life. Nothing is settled; no truth finds general acceptance. What we do one year we undo the next, and do over again the year following. Our energy is wasted in, and our prosperity suffers from, experiments endlessly repeated.

One of the disadvantages of our social system, which is the child of our political, is the tyranny of public opinion, forbidding the utterance of wholesome but unpalatable truth. In a republic we are so accustomed to the rule of majorities that it seldom occurs to us to examine their title to dominion; and as the ideas of might and right are, by our innate sense of justice, linked together, we come to consider public opinion infallible and almost sacred. Now, majorities rule, not because they are right, but because they are able to rule. In event of collision they would conquer, so it is expedient for minorities to submit beforehand to save trouble. In fact, majorities, embracing, as they do the most ignorant, seldom think rightly; public opinion, being the opinion of mediocrity, is commonly a mistake and a mischief. But it is to nobody's interest — it is against the interest of most — to dispute with it. Public writer and public speaker alike find their account in confirming "the plain people" in their brainless errors and brutish prejudices — in glutting their omnivorous vanity and inflaming their implacable racial and national hatreds.

I have long held the opinion that patriotism is one of the most abominable vices affecting the human understanding. Every patriot in this world believes his country better than any other country. Now, they cannot all be the best; indeed, only one can be the best, and it follows that the patriots of all the others have suffered themselves to be misled by a mere sentiment into blind unreason. In its active manifestation — it is fond of shooting — patriotism would be well enough if it were simply defensive; but it is also aggressive, and the same feeling that prompts us to strike for our altars and our fires impels us likewise to go over the border to quench the fires and overturn the altars of our neighbors. It is all very pretty and spirited, what the poets tell us about Thermopylae, but there was as much patriotism at one end of that pass as there was at the other. Patriotism deliberately and with folly aforethought subordinates the interests of a whole to the interests of a part. Worse still, the fraction so favored is determined by an accident of birth or residence. Patriotism is like a dog which, having entered at random one of a row of kennels, suffers more in combats with the dogs in the other kennels than it would have done by sleeping in the open air. The hoodlum who cuts the tail from a Chinamen’s nowl, and would cut the nowl from the body if he dared, is simply a patriot with a logical mind, having the courage of his opinions. Patriotism is fierce as a fever, pitiless as the grave, blind as a stone and irrational as a headless hen.

There are two ways of clarifying liquids — ebullition and precipitation; one forces the impurities to the surface as scum, the other sends them to the bottom as dregs. The former is the more offensive, and that seems to be our way; but neither is useful if the impurities are merely separated but not removed. We are told with tiresome iteration that our social and political systems are clarifying; but when is the skimmer to appear? If the purpose of free institutions is good government where is the good government? — when may it be expected to begin? — how is it to come about? Systems of government have no sanctity; they are practical means to a simple end — the public welfare; worthy of no respect if they fail of its accomplishment. The tree is known by its fruit. Ours, is bearing crab-apples.

If the body politic is constitutionally diseased, as I verily believe; if the disorder inheres in the system; there is no remedy. The fever must burn itself out, and then Nature will do the rest. One does not prescribe what time alone can administer. We have put our criminal class in power; do we suppose they will efface themselves? Will they restore to *us* the power of governing *them*? They must have their way and go their length. The natural and immemorial sequence is: tyranny, insurrection, combat. In combat everything that wears a sword has a chance — even the right. History does not forbid us to hope. But it forbids us to rely upon numbers; they will be against us. If history teaches anything worth learning it teaches that the majority of mankind is neither good nor wise. Where government is founded upon the public conscience and the public intelligence the stability of States is a dream. Nor have we any warrant for the Tennysonian faith that

> “Freedom broadens slowly down
> From precedent to precedent.”

In that moment of time that is covered by historical records we have abundant evidence that each generation has believed itself wiser and better than any of its predecessors; that each people has believed itself to have the secret of national perpetuity. In support of this universal delusion there is nothing to be said; the desolate places of the earth cry out against it. Vestiges of obliterated civilizations cover the earth; no savage but has camped upon the sites of proud and populous cities; no desert but has heard the statesman's boast of national stability. Our nation, our laws, our history — all shall go down to everlasting oblivion with the others, and by the same road. But I submit that we are traveling it with needless haste.

But it is all right and righteous. It can be spared — this Jonah's gourd civilization of ours. We have hardly the rudiments of a true civilization; compared with the splendors of which we catch dim glimpses in the fading past, ours are as an illumination of tallow candles. We know no more than the ancients; we only know other things, but nothing in which is an assurance of perpetuity, and little that is truly wisdom. Our vaunted *elixir vito* is the art of printing with moveable types. What good will those do when posterity, struck by the inevitable intellectual blight, shall have ceased to read what is printed? Our libraries will become its stables, our books its fuel.

Ours is a civilization that might be heard from afar in space as a scolding and a riot; a civilization in which the race has so differentiated as to have no longer a community of interest and feeling; which shows as a ripe result of the principles underlying it a reasonless and rascally feud between rich and poor; in which one is offered a choice (if one have the means to take it) between American plutocracy and European militocracy, with an imminent chance of renouncing either for a stultocratic republic with a headsman in the presidential chair and every laundress in exile.

I have not a "solution" to the "labor problem." I have only a story. Many and many years ago lived a man who was so good and wise that none in all the world was so good and wise as he. He was one of those few whose goodness and wisdom are such that after some time has passed their fellowmen begin to think them gods and treasure their words as divine law; and by millions they are worshiped through centuries of time. Amongst the utterances of this man was one command — not a new nor perfect one — which has seemed to his adorers so preeminently wise that they have given it a name by which it is known over half the world. One of the sovereign virtues of this famous law is its simplicity, which is such that all hearing must understand; and obedience is so easy that any nation refusing is unfit to exist except in the turbulence and adversity that will surely come to it. When a people would avert want and strife, or having them, would restore plenty and peace, this noble commandment offers the only means — all other plans for safety or relief are as vain as dreams, and as empty as the crooning of fools. And behold, here it is: “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

What! you unappeasable rich, coining the sweat and blood of your workmen into drachmas, understanding the law of supply and demand as mandatory and justifying your cruel greed by the senseless dictum that “business is business;” you lazy workman, railing at the capitalist by whose desertion, when you have frightened away his capital, you starve — rioting and shedding blood and torturing and poisoning by way of answer to exaction and by way of exaction; you foul anarchists, applauding with indelicate palms when one of your coward kind hurls a bomb amongst powerless and helpless women and children; you imbecile politicians with a plague of remedial legislation for the irremediable; you writers and thinkers unread in history, with as many “solutions to the labor problem” as there are dunces among you who can not coherently define it — do you really think yourself wiser than Jesus of Nazareth? Do you seriously suppose yourselves competent to amend his plan for dealing with all the evils besetting states and souls? Have you the effrontery to believe that those who spurn his Golden Rule you can bind to obedience of an act entitled an act to amend an act? Bah! you fatigue the spirit. Go get ye to your scoundrel lockouts, your villain strikes, your blacklisting, your boycotting, your speech-ing, marching and maundering; but if ye do not to others as ye would that they do to you it shall occur, and that right soon, that ye be drowned in your own blood and your pickpocket civilization quenched as a star that falls into the sea.

THE GAME OF POLITICS

I.

IF ONE were to declare himself a Democrat or a Republican and the claim should be contested he would find it a difficult one to prove. The missing link in his chain of evidence would be the major premise in the syllogism necessary to the establishment of his political status — a definition of “Democrat” or “Republican.” Most of the statesmen in public and private life who are poll-parroting these words, do so with entire unconsciousness of their meaning, or rather without knowledge that they have lost whatever of meaning they once had. The words are mere “survivals,” marking dead issues and covering allegiances of the loosest and most shallow character. On any question of importance each party is divided against itself and dares not formulate a preference. There is no question before the country upon which one may not think and vote as he likes without affecting his standing in the political communion of saints of which he professes himself a member. “Party lines” are as terribly confused as the parallels of latitude and longitude after a twisting earthquake, or those aimless lines representing the competing railroad on a map published by a company operating “the only direct route.” It is not probable that this state of things can last; if there is to be “government by party” — and we should be sad to think that so inestimable a boon were soon to return to Him who gave it — men must begin to let their angry passions rise and take rides. “Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey,” where the people are too wise to dispute and too good to fight. Let us have the good old political currency of bloody noses and cracked crowns; let the yawp of the demagogue be heard in the land; let ears be pestered with the spargent cheers of the masses. Give us a whoop-up that shall rouse us like a rattling peal of thunder. Will nobody be our Moses — there should be two Moseses — to lead us through this detestable wilderness of political stagnation?

II.

Nowhere “on God’s green earth” — it is fitting, that this paper contain a bit of bosh — nowhere is so much insufferable stuff talked in a given period of time as in an American political convention. It is there that all those objectionable elements of the national character which evoke the laughter of Europe and are the despair of our friends find freest expression, unhampered by fear of any censorship more exacting than that of “the opposing party” — which takes no account of intellectual delinquencies, but only of moral. The “organs” of the “opposing party” will not take the trouble to point out — even to observe — that the “debasing sentiments” and “criminal views” uttered in speech and platform are expressed in sickening syntax and offensive rhetoric. Doubtless an American politician, statesman, what you will, could go into a political convention and signify his views with simple, unpretentious common sense, but doubtless he never does.

Every community is cursed with a number of “orators” — men regarded as “eloquent”—”silver tongued” men — fellows who to the common American knack at brandishing the tongue add an exceptional felicity of platitude, a captivating mastery of dog’s-eared sentiment, a copious and obedient vocabulary of eulogium, an iron insensibility to the ridiculous and an infinite affinity to fools. These afflicting Chrysostoms are always lying in wait for an “occasion” It matters not what it is: a “reception” to some great man from abroad, a popular ceremony like the laying of a corner-stone, the opening of a fair, the dedication of a public building, an anniversary banquet of an ancient and honorable order (they all belong to ancient and honorable orders) or a club dinner — they all belong to clubs and pay dues. But it is in the political convention that they come out particularly strong. By some imperious tradition having the force of written law it is decreed that in these absurd bodies of our fellow citizens no word of sense shall be uttered from the platform; whatever is uttered in set speeches shall be addressed to the meanest capacity present As a chain can be no stronger than its weakest link, so nothing said by the speakers at a political convention must be above the intellectual reach of the most pernicious idiot having a seat and a vote. I don’t know why it is so. It seems to be thought that if he is not suitably entertained he will not attend, as a delegate, the next convention.

Here are the opening sentences of the speech in which a man was once nominated for Governor:

“Two years ago the Republican party in State and Nation marched to imperial triumph. On every hilltop and mountain peak our beacons blazed and we awakened the echoes of every valley with songs of our rejoicings.”

And so forth. Now, if I were asked to recast those sentences so that they should conform to the simple truth and be inoffensive to good taste I should say something like this:

“Two years ago the Republican party won a general election.”

If there is any thing in this inflated rigmarole that is not adequately expressed in my amended statement, what is it? As to eloquence it will hardly be argued that nonsense, falsehood and metaphors which were old when Rome was young are essential to that. The first man (in early Greece) who spoke of awakening an echo did a felicitous thing. Was it felicitous in the second? Is it felicitous now? As to that military metaphor — the “marching” and so forth — its inventor was as great an ass as any one of the incalculable multitude of his plagiarists. On this matter hear the late Richard Grant White:

“Is it not time that we had done with the nauseous talk about campaigns, and standard-bearers, and glorious victories (imperial triumphs) and all the bloated army-bumming bombast which is so rife for the six months preceding an election? To read almost any one of our political papers during a canvass is enough to make one sick and sorry.... An election has no manner of likeness to a campaign, or a battle. It is not even a contest in which the stronger or more dexterous party is the winner; it is a mere counting, in which the bare fact that one party is the more numerous puts it in power if it will only come up and be counted; to insure which a certain time is spent by each party in reviling and belittling the candidates of its opponents and lauding its own; and this is the canvass, at the likening of which to a campaign every honest soldier might reasonably take offense.”

But, after all, White was only “one o’ them dam litery fellers,” and I dare say the original proponent of the military metaphor, away off there in “the dark backward and abysm of time,” knew a lot more about practical politics than White ever did. And it is practical politics to be an ass.

In withdrawing his own name from before a convention, a California politician once made a purely military speech of which a single sample passage is all that I shall allow myself the happiness to quote:

“I come before you today as a Republican of the Republican banner county of this great State of ours. From snowy Shasta on the north to sunny Diego on the south; from the west, where the waves of the Pacific look upon our shores, to where the barriers of the great Sierras stand clad in eternal snow, there is no more loyal county to the Republican party in this State than the county from which I hail. [Applause, naturally.] Its loyalty to the party has been tested on many fields of battle [Anglice, in many elections] and it has never wavered in the contest Wherever the fate of battle was trembling in the balance [Homer, and since Homer, Tom, Dick and Harry] Alameda county stepped into the breach and rescued the Republican party from defeat.”

Translated into English this military mouthing would read somewhat like this:

“I live in Alameda county, where the Republicans have uniformly outvoted the Democrats."

The orators at the Democratic convention a week earlier were no better and no different. Their rhetorical stock-in-trade was the same old shop-worn figures of speech in which their predecessors have dealt for ages, and in which their successors will traffic to the end of — well, to the end of that imitative quality in the national character, which, by its superior intensity, serves to distinguish us from the apes that perish.

III.

"What we most need, to secure honest elections," says a well-meaning reformer, "is the Clifford or the Myers voting machine." Why, truly, here is a hopeful spirit — a rare and radiant intelligence suffused with the conviction that men can be made honest by machinery — that human character is a matter of gearing, ratchets and dials! One would give something to know how it feels to be like that. A mind so constituted must be as happy in its hope as a hen incubating a nest-ful of porcelain door-knobs. It lives in rapturous contemplation of a world of its own creation — a world where public morality and political good order are to be had by purchase at the machine-shop. In that delectable world religion is superfluous; the true high priest is the mechanical engineer; the minor clergy are the village blacksmiths. It is rather a pity that so fine and fair a sphere should prosper only in the attenuated ether of an idiot's understanding.

Voting-machines are doubtless well enough; they save labor and enable the statesmen of the street to know the result within a few minutes of the closing of the polls — whereby many are spared to their country who would otherwise incur fatal disorders by exposure to the night air while assisting in awaiting the returns. But a voting-machine that human ingenuity can not pervert, human ingenuity can not invent.

That is true, too, of laws. Your statesman of a mental stature somewhat overtopping that of the machine-person puts his faith in law. Providence has designed to permit him to be persuaded of the efficacy of statutes — good, stringent, carefully drawn statutes definitively repealing all the laws of nature in conflict with any of their provisions. So the poor devil (I am writing of Mr. Legion) turns for relief from law to law, ever on the stool of repentance, yet ever unfouling the anchor of hope. By no power cm earth can his indurated understanding be penetrated by the truth that his woful state is due, not to any laws of his own, nor to any lack of them, but to his rascally refusal to obey the Golden Rule. How long is it since we were all clamoring for the Australian ballot law, which was to make a new Heaven and a new earth? We have the Australian ballot law and the same old earth smelling to the same old Heaven. Writhe upon the triangle as we may, groan out what new laws we will, the pitiless thong will fall upon our bleeding backs as long as we deserve it. If our sins, which are scarlet, are to be washed as white as wool it must be in the tears of a genuine contrition: our crocodile deliverances will profit us nothing. We must stop chasing dollars, stop lying, stop cheating, stop ignoring art, literature and all the refining agencies and instrumentalities of civilization. We must subdue our detestable habit of shaking hands with prosperous rascals and fawning upon the merely rich. It is not permitted to our employers to plead in justification of low wages the law of supply and demand that is giving them high profits. It is not permitted to discontented employees to break the bones of contented ones and destroy the foundations of social order. It is infamous to look upon public office with the lust of possession; it is disgraceful to solicit political preferment, to strive and compete for “honors” that are sullied and tarnished by the touch of the reaching hand. Until we amend our personal characters we shall amend our laws in vain. Though Paul plant and Apollos water, the field of reform will grow nothing but the figless thistle and the grapeless thorn. The State is an aggregation of individuals. Its public character is the expression of their personal ones. By no political prestidigitation can it be made better and wiser than the sum of their goodness and wisdom. To expect that men who do not honorably and intelligently conduct their private affairs will honorably and intelligently conduct the affairs of the community is to be a fool. We are told that out of nothing God made the Heavens and the earth; but out of nothing God never did and man never can, make a public sense of honor and a public conscience. Miracles are now performed but one day of the year — the twenty-ninth of February; and on leap year God is forbidden to perform them.

IV.

Ye who hold that the power of eloquence is a thing of the past and the orator an anachronism; who believe that the trend of political events and the results of parliamentary action are determined by committees in cold consultation and the machinations of programmes in holes and corners, consider the ascension of Bryan and be wise. A week before the convention of 1896 William J. Bryan had never heard of himself; upon his natural obscurity was superposed the opacity of a Congressional service that effaced him from the memory of even his faithful dog, and made him immune to dunning. Today he is pinnacled upon the summit of the tallest political distinction, gasping in the thin atmosphere of his unfamiliar environment and fitly astonished at the mischance. To the dizzy elevation of his candidacy he was hoisted out of the shadow by his own tongue, the longest and liveliest in Christendom. Had he held it — which he could not have done with both hands — there had been no Bryan. His creation was the unstudied act of his own larynx; it said, “Let there be Bryan,” and there was Bryan. Even in these degenerate days there is a hope for the orators when one can make himself a Presidential peril by merely waving the red flag in the cave of the winds and tormenting the circumjacence with a brandish of abundant hands.

To be quite honest, I do not entirely believe that Orator Bryan’s tongue had anything to do with it. I have long been convinced that personal persuasion is a matter of animal magnetism — what in its more obvious manifestation we now call hypnotism. At the back of the words and the postures, and independent of them, is that secret, mysterious power, addressing, not the ear, not the eye, nor, through them, the understanding, but through its matching quality in the auditor, captivating the will and enslaving it That is how persuasion is effected; the spoken words merely supply a pretext for surrender. They enable us to yield without loss of our self-esteem, in the delusion that we are conceding to reason what is really extorted by charm. The words are necessary, too, to point out what the orator wishes us to think, if we are not already apprised of it. When the nature of his power is better understood and frankly recognized, he can spare himself the toil of talking. The parliamentary debate of the future will probably be conducted in silence, and with only such gestures as go by the name of “passes.” The chairman will state the question before the House and the side, affirmative or negative, to be taken by the honorable member entitled to the floor. That gentleman will rise, train his compelling orbs upon the miscreants in opposition, execute a few passes and exhaust his alloted time in looking at them. He will then yield to an honorable member of dissenting views. The preponderance in magnetic power and hypnotic skill will be manifest in the voting. The advantages of the method are as plain as the nose on an elephant’s face. The “arena” will no longer “ring” with anybody’s “rousing speech,” to the irritating abridgment of the inalienable right to pursuit of sleep. Honorable members will lack provocation to hurl allegations and cuspidors. Pitchforking statesmen and tosspot reformers will be unable to play at pitch-and-toss with reputations not submitted for the performance. In short, the congenial asperities of debate will be so mitigated that the honorable member from Hades will retire permanently from the hauls of legislation.

V.

“Public opinion,” says Buckle, “being the voice of the average man, is the voice of mediocrity.” Is it therefore so very wise and infallible a guide as to be accepted without other credentials than its name and fame? Ought we to follow its light and leading with no better assurance of the character of its authority than a count of noses of those following it already, and with no inquiry as to whether it has not on many former occasions let them and their several sets of predecessors into bogs of error and over precipices to “eternal mock?” Surely “the average man,” as every one knows him, is not very wise, not very learned, not very good; how is it that his views, of so intricate and difficult matters as those of which public opinion makes pronouncement through him are entitled to such respect? It seems to me that the average man, as I know him, is very much a fool, and something of a rogue as well. He has only a smattering of education, knows virtually nothing of political history, nor history of any kind, is incapable of logical, that is to say clear, thinking, is subject to the suasion of base and silly prejudices, and selfish beyond expression. That such a person’s opinions should be so obviously better than my own that I should accept them instead, and assist in enacting them into laws, appears to me most improbable. I may “bow to the will of the people” as gracefully as a defeated candidate, and for the same reason, namely, that I can not help myself; but to admit that I was wrong in my belief and flatter the power that subdues me — no, that I will not do. And if nobody would do so the average man would not be so very cock-sure of his infallibility and might sometimes consent to be counseled by his betters.

In any matter of which the public has imperfect knowledge, public opinion is as likely to be erroneous as is the opinion of an individual equally uninformed. To hold otherwise is to hold that wisdom can be got by combining many ignorances. A man who knows nothing of algebra can not be assisted in the solution of an algebraic problem by calling in a neighbor who knows no more than himself, and the solution approved by the unanimous vote of ten million such men would count for nothing against that of a competent mathematician. To be entirely consistent, gentlemen enamored of public opinion should insist that the text books of our common schools should be the creation of a mass meeting, and all disagreements arising in the course of the work settled by a majority vote. That is how all difficulties incident to the popular translation of the Hebrew Scriptures were composed. It should be admitted, however that most of those voting knew a little Hebrew, though not much. A problem in mathematics is a very simple thing compared with many of those upon which the people are called to pronounce by resolution and ballot — for example, a question of finance.

"The voice of the people is the voice of God" — the saying is so respectably old that it comes to us in the Latin. He is a strange, an unearthly politician who has not a score of times publicly and solemnly signified his faith in it But does anyone really believe it? Let us see. In the period between 1859 and 1885, the Democratic party was defeated six times in succession. The voice of the people pronounced it in error and unfit to govern. Yet after each overthrow it came back into the field gravely reaffirming its faith in the principles that God had condemned. Then God twice reversed Himself, and the Republicans "never turned a hair," but set about beating Him with as firm a confidence of success (justified by the event) as they had known in the years of their prosperity. Doubtless in every instance of a political party's defeat there are defections, but doubtless not all are due to the voice that spoke out of the great white light that fell about Saul of Tarsus. By the way, it is worth observing that that clever gentleman was under no illusion regarding the origin of the voice that wrought his celebrated "flop"; he did not confound it with the *vox populi* The people of his time and place had no objection to the persecution that he was conducting, and could persecute a trifle themselves upon occasion.

Majorities rule, when they do rule, not because they ought, but because they can. We vote in order to learn without fighting which party is the stronger; it is less disagreeable to learn it that way than the other way. Sometimes the party that is numerically the weaker is by possession of the Government actually the stronger, and could maintain itself in power by an appeal to arms, but the habit of submitting when outvoted is hard to break. Moreover, we all recognize in a subconscious way, the reasonableness of the habit as a practical method of getting on; and there is always the confident hope of success in the next canvass. That one's cause will succeed because it ought to succeed is perhaps the most general and invincible folly affecting the human judgment Observation can not shake it, nor experience destroy. Though you bray a partisan in the mortar of adversity till he numbers the strokes of the pestle by the hairs of his head, yet will not this fool notion depart from him. He is always going to win the next time, however frequently and disastrously he has lost before. And he can always give you the most cogent reasons for the faith that is in him. His chief reliance is on the "fatal mistakes" made since the last election by the other party. There never was a year in which the party in power and the party out of power did not make bad mistakes — mistakes which, unlike eggs and fish, seem always worst when freshest. If idiotic errors of policy were always fatal, no party would ever win an election and there would be a hope of better government under the benign sway of the domestic cow.

VI.

Each political party accuses the "opposing candidate" of refusing to answer certain questions which somebody has chosen to ask him. I think myself it is discreditable for a candidate to answer any questions at all, to make speeches, declare his policy, or to do anything whatever to get himself elected. If a political party choose to nominate a man so obscure that his character and his views on all public questions are not known or inferable he ought to have the dignity to refuse to expound them. As to the strife for office being a pursuit worthy of a noble ambition, I do not think so; nor shall I believe that many do think so until the term "office seeker" carries a less opprobrious meaning and the dictum that "the office should seek the man, not the man the office," has a narrower currency among all manner of persons. That by acts and words generally felt to be discreditable a man may evoke great popular enthusiasm is not at all surprising. The late Mr. Barnum was not the first nor the last to observe that the people love to be humbugged. They love an impostor and a scamp, and the best service that you can do for a candidate for high political preferment is to prove him a little better than a thief, but not quite so good as a thug.

VII.

The view is often taken that a representative is the same thing as a delegate; that he is to have, and can honestly entertain, no opinion that is at variance with the whims and the caprices of his constituents. This is the very *reductio ad absurdum* of representative government. That it is the dominant theory of the future there can be little doubt, for it is of a piece with the progress downward which is the invariable and unbroken tendency of republican institutions. It fits in well with manhood suffrage, rotation in office, unrestricted patronage, assessment of subordinates, an elective judiciary and the rest of it. This theory of representative institutions is the last and lowest stage in our pleasant performance of "shooting Niagara." When it shall have universal recognition and assent we shall have been fairly engulfed in the whirlpool, and the buzzard of anarchy may hopefully whet his beak for the national carcass. My view of the matter — which has the further merit of being the view held by those who founded this Government — is that a man holding office from and for the people is in conscience and honor bound to do what seems to his judgment best for the general welfare, respectfully regardless of any and all other considerations. This is especially true of legislators, to whom such specific "instructions" as constituents sometimes send are an impertinence and an insult. Pushed to its logical conclusion, the "delegate" idea would remove all necessity of electing men of brains and judgment; one man properly connected with his constituents by telegraph would make as good a legislator as another. Indeed, as a matter of economy, one representative should act for many constituencies, receiving his instructions how to vote from mass meetings in each. This, besides being logical, would have the added advantage of widening and hardening the power of the local "bosses," who, by properly managing the showing of hands could have the same beneficent influence in national affairs that they now enjoy in municipal. The plan would be a pretty good one if there were not so many other ways for the Nation to go to the Devil that it appears needless.

VIII.

With a wiser wisdom than was given to them, our forefathers in making the Constitution would not have provided that each House of Congress "shall be the judge of the elections, returns and qualifications of its own members." They would have foreseen that a ruling majority of Congress could not safely be trusted to exercise this power justly in the public interest, but would abuse it in the interest of party. A man's right to sit in a legislative body should be determined, not by that body, which has neither the impartiality, the knowledge of evidence nor the time to determine it rightly, but by the courts of law. That is how it is done in England, where Parliament voluntarily surrendered the right to say by whom the constituencies shall be represented, and there is no disposition to resume it. As the vices hunt in packs, so, too, virtues are gregarious; if our Congress had the righteousness to decide contested elections justly it would have also the self-denial not to wish to decide them at all.

IX

The purpose of the legislative custom of "eulogizing" dead members of Congress is not apparent unless it is to add a terror to death and make honorable and self-respecting members rather bear the ills they have than escape through the gates of death to others that they know a good deal about. If a member of that kind, who has had the bad luck to “go before,” could be consulted he would indubitably say that he was sorry to be dead; and that is not a natural frame of mind in one who is exempt from the necessity of himself “delivering a eulogy.”

It may be urged that the Congressional “eulogy” expresses in a general way the eulogist’s notion of what he would like to have somebody say of himself when he is by death elected to the Lower House. If so, then Heaven help him to a better taste. Meanwhile it is a patriotic duty to prevent him from indulging at the public expense the taste that he has. There have been a few men in Congress who could speak of the character and services of a departed member with truth and even eloquence. One such was Senator Vest. Of many others, the most charitable thing that one can conscientiously say is that one would a little rather hear a “eulogy” by them than on them. Considering that there are many kinds of brains and only one kind of no brains, their diversity of gifts is remarkable, but one characteristic they have in common: they are all poets. Their efforts in the way of eulogium illustrate and illuminate Pascal’s obscure saying that poetry is a particular sadness. If not sad themselves, they are at least the cause of sadness in others, for no sooner do they take to their legs to remind us that life is fleeting, and to make us glad that it is, than they burst into bloom as poets all! Some one has said that in the contemplation of death there is something that belittles. Perhaps that explains the transformation. Anyhow the Congressional eulogist takes to verse as naturally as a moth to a candle, and with about the same result to his reputation for sense.

The poetry is commonly not his own; what it violates every law of sense, fitness, metre, rhyme and taste it is. But nine times in ten it is some dog’s-eared, shop-worn quotation from one of the “standard” bards, usually Shakspere. There are familiar passages from that poet which have been so often heard in “the halls of legislation” that they have acquired an infamy which unfits them for publication in a decent family newspaper; and Shakspere himself, reposing in Elysium on his bed of asphodel and moly, omits them when reading his complete works to the shades of Kit Marlowe and Ben Jonson, for their sins.

This whole business ought to be “cut out” It is not only a waste of time and a sore trial to the patience of the country; it is absolutely immoral. It is not true that a member of Congress who, while living was a most ordinary mortal, becomes by the accident of death a hero, a saint, “an example to American youth.” Nobody believes these abominable “eulogies,” and nobody should be permitted to utter them in the time and place designated for another purpose. A “tribute” that is exacted by custom and has not the fire and light of spontaneity is without sincerity or sense. A simple resolution of regret and respect is all that the occasion requires and would not inhibit any further utterance that friends and admirers of the deceased might be moved to make elsewhere. If any bereaved gentlemen, feeling his heart getting into his head, wishes to tickle his ear with his tongue by way of standardizing his emotion let him hire a hall and do so. But he should not make the Capitol a “Place of Wailing” and the Congressional Record a book of bathos.

SOME FEATURES OF THE LAW

I.

THERE is a difference between religion and the amazing circumstructure which, under the name of theology, the priesthoods have builded round about it, which for centuries they made the world believe was the true temple, and which, after incalculable mischiefs wrought, immeasurable blood spilled in its extension and consolidation, is only now beginning to crumble at the touch of reason. There is the same difference between the laws and the law — the naked statutes (bad enough, God knows) and the incomputable additions made to them by lawyers. This immense body of superingenious writings it is that we all are responsible to in person and property. It is unquestionable authority for setting aside any statute that any legislative body ever passed or can pass. In it are dictates of recognized validity for turning topsy-turvy every principle of justice and reversing every decree of reason. There is no fallacy so monstrous, no deduction so hideously unrelated to common sense, as not to receive, somewhere in the myriad pages of this awful compilation, a support that any judge in the land would be proud to recognize with a decision if ably persuaded. I do not say that the lawyers are altogether responsible for the existence of this mass of disastrous rubbish, nor for its domination of the laws. They only create and thrust it down our throats; we are guilty of contributory negligence in not biting the spoon.

As long as there exists the right of appeal there is a chance of acquittal. Otherwise the right of appeal would be a sham and an insult more intolerable, even, than that of the man convicted of murder to say why he should not receive the sentence which nothing he may say will avert. So long as acquittal may ensue guilt is not established. Why, than are men sentenced before they are proved guilty? Why are they punished in the middle of proceedings against them? A lawyer can reply to these questions in a thousand ingenious ways; there is but one answer. It is because we are a barbarous race, submitting to laws made by lawyers for lawyers. Let the “legal fraternity” reflect that a lawyer is one whose profession it is to circumvent the law; that it is a part of his business to mislead and befog the court of which he is an officer; that it is considered right and reasonable for him to live by a division of the spoils of crime and misdemeanor; that the utmost atonement he ever makes for acquitting a man whom he knows to be guilty is to convict a man whom he knows to be innocent.

I have looked into this thing a bit and it is my judgment that all the methods of our courts, and the traditions of bench and bar exist and are perpetuated, altered and improved, for the one purpose of enabling the lawyers as a class to exact the greatest amount of money from the rest of mankind. The laws are mostly made by lawyers, and so made as to encourage and compel litigation. By lawyers they are interpreted and by lawyers enforced for their own profit and advantage. The whole intricate and interminable machinery of precedent, rulings, decisions, objections, writs of error, motions for new trials, appeals, reversals, affirmations and the rest of it, is a transparent and iniquitous systems of "cinching." What remedy would I propose? None. There is none to propose. The lawyers have "got us" and they mean to keep us. But if thoughtless children of the frontier sometimes rise to tar and feather the legal pelt may God's grace go with them and amen. I do not believe there is a lawyer in Heaven, but by a bath of tar and a coating of hen's-down they can be made to resemble angels more nearly than by any other process.

The matchless villainy of making men suffer for crimes of which they may eventually be acquitted is consistent with our entire system of laws — a system so complicated and contradictory that a judge simply does as he pleases, subject only to the custom of giving for his action reasons that at his option may or may not be derived from the statute. He may sternly affirm that he sits there to interpret the law as he finds it, not to make it accord with his personal notions of right and justice. Or he may declare that it could never have been the Legislature's intention to do wrong, and so, shielded by the useful phrase *contra bonos mores*, pronounce that illegal which he chooses to consider inexpedient. Or he may be guided by either of any two inconsistent precedents, as best suits his purpose. Or he may throw aside both statute and precedent, disregard good morals, and justify the judgment that he wishes to deliver by what other lawyers have written in books, and still others, without anybody's authority, have chosen to accept as a part of the law. I have in mind judges whom I have observed to do all these things in a single term of court, and could mention one who has done them all in a single decision, and that not a very long one. The amazing feature of the matter is that all these methods are lawful — made so, not by legislative enactment, but by the judges. Language can not be used with sufficient lucidity and positiveness to land them.

The legal purpose of a preliminary examination is not the discovery of a criminal; it is the ascertaining of the probable guilt or innocence of the person already charged. To permit that person's counsel to insult and madden the various assisting witnesses in the hope of making them seem to incriminate themselves instead of him by statements that may afterward be used to confuse a jury — that is perversion of law to defeat justice. The outrageous character of the practice is seen to better advantage what contrasted with the tender consideration enjoyed by the person actually accused and presumably guilty — the presumption of his innocence being as futile a fiction as that a sheep's tail is a leg when called so. Actually, the prisoner in a criminal trial is the only person supposed to have a knowledge of the facts who is not compelled to testify! And this amazing exemption is given him by way of immunity from the snares and pitfalls with which the paths of all witnesses are wantonly beset! To a visiting Lunarian it would seem strange indeed that in a Terrestrial court of justice it is not deemed desirable for an accused person to incriminate himself, and that it *is* deemed desirable for a subpoena to be more dreaded than a warrant.

When a child, a wife, a servant, a student — any one under personal authority or bound by obligation of honor — is accused or suspected an explanation is demanded, and refusal to testify is held, and rightly held, a confession of guilt To question the accused — rigorously and sharply to examine him on all matters relating to the offense, and even trap him if he seem to be lying — that is Nature's method of criminal procedure; why in our public trials do we forego its advantages? It may annoy; a person arrested for crime must expect annoyance. It can not make an innocent man incriminate himself, not even a witness, but it can make a rogue do so, and therein lies its value. Any pressure short of physical torture or the threat of it, that can be put upon a rogue to make him assist in his own undoing is just and therefore expedient.

This ancient and efficient safeguard to rascality, the right of a witness to refuse to testify when his testimony would tend to convict him of crime, has been strengthened by a decision of the United States Supreme Court. That will probably add another century or two to its mischievous existence, and possibly prove the first act in such an extension of it that eventually a witness can not be compelled to testify at all. In fact it is difficult to see how he can be compelled to now if he has the hardihood to exercise his constitutional right without shame and with an intelligent consciousness of its limitless application.

The case in which the Supreme Court made the decision was one in which a witness refused to say whether he had received from a defendant railway company a rate on grain shipments lower than the rate open to all shippers. The trial was in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, and Judge Gresham chucked the scoundrel into jail. He naturally applied to the Supreme Court for relief, and that high tribunal gave joy to every known or secret malefactor in the country by deciding — according to law, no doubt — that witnesses in a criminal case can not be compelled to testify to anything that "*might tend* to criminate them *in any way*, or subject them to *possible* prosecution.” The italics are my own and seem to me to indicate, about as clearly as extended comment could, the absolutely boundless nature of the immunity that the decision confirms or confers. It is to be hoped that some public-spirited gentleman called to the stand in some celebrated case may point the country’s attention to the state of the law by refusing to tell his name, age or occupation, or answer any question whatever. And it would be a fitting *finale* to the farce if he would threaten the too curious attorney with an action for damages for compelling a disclosure of character.

Most lawyers have made so profound a study of human nature as to think that if they have shown a man to be of loose life with regard to women they have shown him to be one that would tell needless lies to a jury — a conviction unsupported by the familiar facts of life and character. Different men have different vices, and addiction to one kind of “upsetting sin” does not imply addiction to an unrelated kind. Doubtless a rake is a liar in so far as is needful to concealment, but it does not follow that he will commit perjury to save a horsethief from the penitentiary or send a good man to the gallows. As to lying, generally, he is not conspicuously worse than the mere lover, male or female; for lovers have been liars from the beginning of time. They deceive when it is necessary and when it is not. Schopenhauer says that it is because of a sense of guilt — they contemplate the commission of a crime and, like other criminals, cover their tracks. I am not prepared to say if that is the true explanation, but to the fact to be explained I am ready to testify with lifted arms. Yet no cross-examining attorney tries to break the credibility of a witness by showing that he is in love.

An habitual liar, if disinterested, makes about as good a witness as anybody. There is really no such thing as “the lust of lying:” falsehoods are told for advantage — commonly a shadowy and illusory advantage, but one distinctly enough had in mind. Discerning no opportunity to promote his interest, tickle his vanity or feed a grudge, the habitual liar will tell the truth. If lawyers would study human nature with half the assiduity that they give to resolution of hairs into their longitudinal elements they would be better fitted for service of the devil than they have now the usefulness to be.

I have always asserted the right and expediency of cross-examining attorneys in court with a view to testing their credibility. An attorney’s relation to the trial is closer and more important than that of a witness. He has more to say and more opportunities to deceive the jury, not only by naked lying, but by both *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi*. Why is it not important to ascertain his credibility; and if an inquiry into his private life and public reputation will assist, as himself avers, why should he not be put upon the grill and compelled to sweat out the desired incrimination? I should think it might give good results, for example, to compel him to answer a few questions touching, not his private life, but his professional. Somewhat like this:

“Did you ever defend a client, knowing him to be guilty?”

“What was your motive in doing so?”

“But in addition to your love of fair play had you not also the hope and assurance of a fee?”

“In defending your guilty client did you declare your belief in his innocence?”

“Yes, I understand, but necessary as it may have been (in that it helped to defeat justice and earn your fee) was not your declaration a lie?”

“Do you believe it right to lie for the purpose of circumventing justice? — yes or no?”

“Do you believe it right to lie for personal gain — yes or no?”

“Then why did you do both?”

“A man who lies to beat the laws and fill his purse is — what?”

“In defending a murderer did you ever misrepresent the character, acts, motives and intentions of the man that he murdered — never mind the purpose and effect of such misrepresentation — yes or no?”

“That is what we call slander of the dead, is it not?”

“What is the most accurate name you can think of for one who slanders the dead to defeat justice and promote his own fortune?”

“Yes, I know — such practices are allowed by the ‘ethics’ of your profession, but can you point to any evidence that they are allowed by Jesus Christ?”

“If in former trials you have obstructed justice by slander of the dead, by falsely affirming the innocence of the guilty, by cheating in argument, by deceiving the court whom you are sworn to serve and assist, and have done all this for personal gain, do you expect, and is it reasonable for you to expect, the jury in this case to believe you?”

“One moment more, please. Did you ever accept an annual, or other fee conditioned on your not taking any action against a corporation?”

“While in receipt of such refrainer — I beg you pardon, retainer — did you ever prosecute a blackmailer?”

It will be seen that in testing the credibility of a lawyer it is needless to go into his private life and his character as a man and a citizen: his professional practices are an ample field in which to search for offenses against man and God. Indeed, it is sufficient simply to ask him: “What is your view of ‘the ethics of your profession’ as a suitable standard of conduct for a pirate of the Spanish Main?”

The moral sense of the laymen is dimly conscious of something wrong in the ethics of the noble profession; the lawyers affirming, rightly enough, a public necessity for them and their mercenary services, permit their thrift to construe it vaguely as personal justification. But nobody has blown away from the matter its brumous encompassment and let in the light upon it It is very simple.

Is it honorable for a lawyer to try to clear a man that he knows deserves conviction? That is not the entire question by much. Is it honorable to pretend to believe what you do not believe? Is it honorable to lie? I submit that these questions are not answered affirmatively by showing the disadvantage to the public and to civilization of a lawyer refusing to serve a known offender. The popular interest, like any other good cause, can be and commonly is, served by foul means. Justice itself may be promoted by acts essentially unjust. In serving a sordid ambition a powerful scoundrel may by acts in themselves wicked augment the prosperity of a whole nation. I have not the right to deceive and lie in order to advantage my fellowmen, any more than I have the right to steal or murder to advantage them, nor have my fellowmen the power to grant me that indulgence.

The question of a lawyer's right to clear a known criminal (with the several questions involved) is not answered affirmatively by showing that the law forbids him to decline a case for reasons personal to himself — not even if we admit the statute's moral authority. Preservation of conscience and character is a civic duty, as well as a personal; one's fellowmen have a distinct interest in it. That, I admit, is an argument rather in the manner of an attorney; clearly enough the intent of this statute is to compel an attorney to cheat and lie for any rascal that wants him to. In that sense it may be regarded as a law softening the rigor of all laws; it does not mitigate punishments, but mitigates the chance of incurring them. The infamy of it lies in forbidding an attorney to be a gentleman. Like all laws it falls something short of its intent: many attorneys, even some who defend that law, are as honorable as is consistent with the practice of deceit to serve crime.

It will not do to say that an attorney in defending a client is not compelled to cheat and lie. What kind of defense could be made by any one who did not profess belief in the innocence of his client? — did not affirm it in the most serious and impressive way? — did not lie? How would it profit the defense to be conducted by one who would not meet the prosecution's grave asseverations of belief in the prisoner's guilt by equally grave assurances of faith in his innocence? And in point of fact, when was counsel for the defense ever known to forego the advantage of that solemn falsehood? If I am asked what would become of accused persons if they had to prove their innocence to the lawyers before making a defense in court, I reply that I do not know; and in my turn I ask: What would become of Humpty Dumpty if all the king's horses and all the king’s men were an isosceles triangle?

It all amounts to this, that lawyers want clients and are not particular about the kind of clients that they get All this is very ugly work, and a public interest that can not be served without it would better be unserved.

I grant, in short, ‘tis better all around
That ambidextrous consciences abound
In courts of law to do the dirty work
That self-respecting scavengers would shirk.
What then? Who serves however clean a plan
By doing dirty work, he is a dirty man.

But in point of fact I do not “grant” any such thing. It is not for the public interest that a rogue have the same freedom of defense as an honest man; it should be a good deal harder for him. His troubles should begin, not when he seeks acquital, but when he seeks counsel. It would be better for the community if he could not obtain the services of a reputable attorney, or any attorney at all. A defense that can not be made without his attorney’s actual knowledge of his guilt should be impossible to him. Nor should he be permitted to remain off the witness stand lest he incriminate himself. It ought to be the aim of the court to let him incriminate himself — to make him do so if his testimony will. In our courts that natural method would serve the ends of justice greatly better than the one that we have. Testimony of the guilty would assist in conviction; that of the innocent would not.

As to the general question of a judge’s right to inflict arbitrary punishment for words that he may be pleased to hold disrespectful to himself or another judge, I do not myself believe that any such right exists; the practice seems to be merely a survival — a heritage from the dark days of irresponsible power, when the scope of judicial authority had no other bounds than fear of the royal gout or indigestion. If in these modern days the same right is to exist it may be necessary to revive the old checks upon it by restoring the throne. In freeing us from the monarchial chain, the coalition of European Powers commonly known in American history as “the valor of our forefathers” stripped us starker than they knew.

Suppose an attorney should find his client’s interests imperiled by a prejudiced or corrupt judge — what is he to do? If he may not make representations to that effect, supporting them with evidence, where evidence is possible and by inference where it is not, what means of protection shall he venture to adopt? If it be urged in objection that judges are never prejudiced nor corrupt I confess that I shall have no answer: the proposition will deprive me of breath.

If contempt is not a crime it should not be punished; if a crime it should be punished as other crimes are punished — by indictment or information, trial by jury if a jury is demanded, with all the safeguards that secure an accused person against judicial blunders and judicial bias. The necessity for these safeguards is even greater in cases of contempt than in others — particularly if the prosecuting witness is to sit in judgment on his own grievance. That should, of course, not be permitted: the trial should take place before another judge.

Why should twelve able-bodied jurymen, with their oaths to guide them and the law to back, submit to the dictation of one small judge armed with nothing better than an insolent assumption of authority? A judge has not the moral right to order a jury to acquit, the utmost that he can rightly do is to point out what state of the law or facts may seem to him unfavorable to conviction. If the jurors, holding a different view, persist in conviction the accused will have grounds, doubtless, for a new trial. But under no circumstances is a judge justified in requiring a responsible human being to disregard the solemn obligation of an oath.

The public ear is dowered with rather more than just enough of clotted nonsense about "attacks upon the dignity of the Bench," "bringing the judiciary into disrepute" and the rueful rest of it. I crave leave to remind the solicitudinarians sounding these loud alarums on their several larynges that by persons of understanding men are respected, not for what they do, but for what they are, and that one public functionary will stand as high in their esteem as another if as high in character. The dignity of a wise and righteous judge needs not the artificial safeguarding which is a heritage of the old days when if dissent found a tongue the public executioner cut it out. The Bench will be sufficiently respected when it is no longer a place where dullards dream and rogues rob — when its *personnel* is no longer chosen in the back-rooms of tipple-shops, forced upon yawning conventions and confirmed by the votes of men who neither know what the candidates are nor what they should be. With the gang that we have and under our system must continue to have, respect is out of the question and ought to be. They are entitled to just as much of its forms and observances as are needful to maintenance of order in their courts and fortification of their lawful power — no more. As to their silence under criticism, that is as they please. No body but themselves is holding their tongues.

II.

A law under which the unsuccessful respondent in a divorce proceeding may be forbidden to marry again during the life of the successful complainant, the latter being subject to no such disability, is infamous infinitely. If the disability is intended as a punishment it is exceptional among legal punishments in that it is inflicted without conviction, trial or arraignment, the divorce proceedings being quite another and different matter. It is exceptional in that the period of its continuance, and therefore the degree of its severity, are indeterminate; they are dependent on no limiting statute, and on neither the will of the power inflicting nor the conduct of the person suffering.

To sentence a person to a punishment that is to be mild or severe according to chance or — which is even worse — circumstance, which but one person, and that person not officially connected with administration of justice, can but partly control, is a monstrous perversion of the main principles that are supposed to underlie the laws.

In “the case at bar” it can be nothing to the woman — possibly herself remarried — whether the man remarries or not; that is, can affect only her feelings, and only such of them as are least creditable to her. Yet her self-interest is enlisted against him to do him incessant disservice. By merely caring for her health she increases the sharpness of his punishment — for punishment it is if he feels it such; every hour that she wrests from death is added to his “term.” The expediency of preventing a man from marrying, without having the power to prevent him from making his marriage desirable in the interest of the public and vital to that of some woman, is not discussable here. If a man is ever justified in poisoning a woman who is no longer his wife it is when, by way of making him miserable, the State has given him, or he supposes it to have given him, a direct and distinct interest in her death.

III.

With a view, possibly, to promoting respect for law by making the statutes so conform to public sentiment that none will fall into disesteem and disuse, it has been advocated that there be a formal recognition of sex in the penal code, by making a difference in the punishment of men and of women for the same crimes and misdemeanors. The argument is that if women were “provided” with milder punishment juries would sometimes convict them, whereas they now commonly get off altogether.

The plan is not so new as might be thought. Many of the nations of antiquity of whose laws we have knowledge, and nearly all the European nations until within a comparatively recent time, punished women differently from men for the same offenses. And as recently as the period of the Early Puritan in New England women were punished for some offenses which men might commit without fear if not without reproach. The ducking-stool, for example, was an appliance for softening the female temper only. In England women used to be burned at the stake for crimes for which men were hanged, roasting being regarded as the milder punishment. In point of fact, it was not punishment at all, the victim being carefully strangled before the fire touched her. Burning was simply a method of disposing of the body so expeditiously as to give no occasion and opportunity for the unseemly social rites commonly performed about the scaffold of the erring male by the jocular populace. As lately as 1763 a woman named Margaret Biddingfield was burned in Suffolk as an accomplice in the crime of "petty treason." She had assisted in the murder of her husband, the actual killing being done by a man; and he was hanged, as no doubt he richly deserved. For "coining," too (which was "treason"), men were hanged and women burned. This distinction between the sexes was maintained until the year of grace 1790, after which female offenders ceased to have "a stake in the country," and like Hood's martial hero, "enlisted in the line."

In still earlier days, before the advantages of fire were understood, our good grandmothers who sinned were admonished by water — they were drowned; but in the reign of Henry III a woman was hanged — without strangulation, apparently, for after a whole day of it she was cut down and pardoned. Sorceresses and unfaithful wives were smothered in mud, as also were unfaithful wives among the ancient Burgundians. The punishment of unfaithful husbands is not of record; we only know that there were no austerely virtuous editors to direct the finger of public scorn their way.

Among the Anglo-Saxons, women who had the bad luck to be detected in theft were drowned, while men meeting with the same mischance died a dry death by hanging. By the early Danish laws female thieves were buried alive, whether or not from motives of humanity is not now known. This seems to have been the fashion in France also, for in 1331 a woman named Duplas was scourged and buried alive at Abbeville, and in 1460 Perotte Mauger, a receiver of stolen goods, was inhumed by order of the Provost of Paris in front of the public gibbet. In Germany in the good old days certain kinds of female criminals were "impaled," a punishment too grotesquely horrible for description, but likely enough considered by the simple German of the period conspicuously merciful.

It is, in short, only recently that the civilized nations have placed the sexes on an equality in the matter of the death penalty for crime, and the new system is not yet by any means universal. That it is a better system than the old, or would be if enforced, is a natural presumption from human progress, out of which it is evolved. But coincidently with its evolution has evolved also a sentiment adverse to punishment of women at all. But this sentiment appears to be of independent growth and in no way a reaction against that which caused the change. To mitigate the severity of the death penalty for women to some pleasant form of euthanasia, such as drowning in rose-water, or in their case to abolish the death penalty altogether and make their capital punishment consist in a brief interment in a jail with a softened name, would probably do no good, for whatever form it might take, it would be, so far as woman is concerned, the "extreme penalty" and crowning disgrace, and jurors would be as reluctant to inflict it as they now are to inflict hanging.

IV.

Testators should not, from the snug security of the grave, utter a perpetual threat of disinheritance or any other uncomfortable fate to deter an American citizen, even one of his own legatees, from applying to the courts of his country for redress of any wrong from which he might consider himself as suffering. The courts of law ought to be open to any one conceiving himself a victim of injustice, and it should be unlawful to abridge the right of complaint by making its exercise more hazardous than it naturally is. Doubtless the contesting of wills is a nuisance, generally speaking, the contestant conspicuously devoid of moral worth and the verdict singularly unrighteous; but as long as some testators really *are* daft, or subject to interested suasion, or wantonly sinful, they should be denied the power to stifle dissent by fining the luckless dissenter. The dead have too much to say in this world at the best, and it is monstrous and intolerable tyranny for them to stand at the door of the Temple of Justice to drive away the suitors that themselves have made.

Obedience to the commands of the dead should be conditional upon their good behavior, and it is not good behavior to set up a censure of actions at law among the living. If our courts are not competent to say what actions are proper to be brought and what are unfit to be entertained let us improve them until they are competent, or abolish them altogether and resort to the mild and humane arbitrament of the dice. But while courts have the civility to exist they should refuse to surrender any part of their duties and responsibilities to such exceedingly private persons as those under six feet of earth, or sealed up in habitations of hewn stone. Persons no longer affectible by human events should be denied a voice in determining the character and trend of them. Respect for the wishes of the dead is a tender and beautiful sentiment, certainly. Unfortunately, it can not be ascertained that they have any wishes. What commonly go by that name are wishes once entertained by living persons who are now dead, and who in dying renounced them, along with everything else. Like those who entertained them, the wishes are no longer in existence. “The wishes of the dead,” therefore, are not wishes, and are not of the dead. Why they should have anything more than a sentimental influence upon those still in the flesh, and be a factor to be reckoned with in the practical affairs of the super-graminous world, is a question to which the merely human understanding can find no answer, and it must be referred to the lawyers. When “from the tombs a doleful sound” is vented, and “thine ear” is invited to “attend the cry,” an intelligent forethought will suggest that you inquire if it is anything about property. If so pass on — that is no sacred spot.

V.

Much of the testimony in French courts, civil and martial, appears to consist of personal impressions and opinions of the witnesses. All very improper and mischievous, no doubt, if — if what? Why, obviously, if the judges are unfit to sit in judgment By designating them to sit the designating power assumes their fitness — assumes that they know enough to take such things for what they are worth, to make the necessary allowances; if needful, to disregard a witness’s opinion altogether. I do not know if they are fit. I do not know that they do make the needful allowances. It is by no means clear to me that any judge or juror, French, American or Patagonian, is competent to ascertain the truth when lying witnesses are trying to conceal it under the direction of skilled and conscientiousless attorneys licensed to deceive. But his competence is a basic assumption of the law vesting him with the duty of deciding. Having chosen him for that duty the French law very logically lets him alone to decide for himself what is evidence and what is not. It does not trust him a little but altogether. It puts him under conditions familiar to him — makes him accessible to just such influences and suasions as he is accustomed to when making conscious and unconscious decisions in his personal affairs.

There may be a distinct gain to justice in permitting a witness to say whatever he wants to say. If he is telling the truth he will not contradict himself; if he is lying the more rope he is given the more surely he will entangle himself. To the service of that end defendants and prisoners should, I think, be compelled to testify and denied the advantage of declining to answer, for silence is the refuge of guilt In endeavoring by austere means to make an accused person incriminate himself the French judge logically applies the same principle that a parent uses with a suspected child. When the Grandfather of His Country arraigned the wee George Washington for arboricide the accused was not carefully instructed that he need not answer if a truthful answer would tend to convict him. If he had refused to answer he would indubitably have been lambasted until he did answer, as right richly he would have deserved to be.

The custom of permitting a witness to wander at will over the entire field of knowledge, hearsay, surmise and opinion has several distinct advantages over our practice. In giving hearsay evidence, for example, he may suggest a new and important witness of whom the counsel for the other side would not otherwise have heard, and who can then be brought into court. On some unguarded and apparently irrelevant statement he may open an entirely new line of inquiry, or throw upon the case a flood of light. Everyone knows what revelations are sometimes evoked by apparently the most insignificant remarks. Why should justice be denied a chance to profit that way?

There is a still greater advantage in the French "method." By giving a witness free rein in expression of his personal opinions and feelings we should be able to calculate his frame of mind, his good or ill will to the prosecution or defense and, therefore, to a certain extent his credibility. In our courts he is able by a little solemn perjury to conceal all this, even from himself, and pose as an impartial witness, when in truth, with regard to the accused, he is full of rancor or reeking with compassion.

In theory our system is perfect. The accused is prosecuted by a public officer, who having no interest in his conviction, will serve the State without mischievous zeal and perform his disagreeable task with fairness and consideration. He is permitted to entrust his defense to another officer, whose duty it is to make a rigidly truthful and candid presentation of his case in order to assist the court to a just decision. The jurors, if there are jurors, are neither friendly nor hostile, are open-minded, intelligent and conscientious. As to the witnesses, are they not sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth (in so far as they are permitted) and nothing but the truth? What could be finer and better than all this? — what could more certainly assure justice? How close the resemblance is between this ideal picture and what actually occurs all know, or should know. The judge is commonly an ignoramus incapable of logical thought and with little sense of the dread and awful nature of his responsibility. The prosecuting attorney thinks it due to his reputation to "make a record" and tries to convict by hook or crook, even when he is himself persuaded of the defendant's innocence. Counsel for the defense is equally unscrupulous for acquittal, and both, having industriously coached their witnesses, contend against each other in deceiving the court by every artifice of which they are masters. Witnesses on both sides perjure themselves freely and with almost perfect immunity if detected. At the close of it all the poor weary jurors, hopelessly bewildered and dumbly resentful of their duping, render a random or compromise verdict, or one which best expresses their secret animosity to the lawyer they like least or their faith in the newspapers which they have diligently and disobediently read every night Commenting upon Rabelais' old judge who, when impeached for an outrageous decision, pleaded his defective eye-sight which made him miscount the spots on the dice, the most distinguished lawyer of my acquaintance seriously assured me that if all the cases with which he had been connected had been decided with the dice substantial justice would have been done more frequently than it was done. If that is true, or nearly true, and I believe it, the American's right to sneer at the Frenchman's "judicial methods" is still an open question.

It is urged that the corrupt practices in our courts of law be uncovered to public view, whenever that is possible, by dial impeccable censor, the press. Exposure of rascality is very good — better, apparently for rascals than for anybody else, for it usually suggests something rascally which they had overlooked, and so familiarizes the public with crime that crime no longer begets loathing. If the newspapers of the country are really concerned about corrupter practices than their own and willing to bring our courts up to the English standard there is something better than exposure — which fatigues. Let the newspapers set about creating a public opinion favorable to non-elective judges, well paid, powerful to command respect and holding office for life or good behavior. That is the only way to get good men and great lawyers on the Bench. As matters are, we stand and cry for what the English have and rail at the way they get it. Our boss-made, press-ridden and mob-fearing paupers and ignoramuses of the Bench give us as good a quality of justice as we merit A better quality awaits us whenever the will to have it is attended by the sense to take it.

ARBITRATION

THE universal cry for arbitration is either dishonest or unwise. For every evil there are quack remedies galore — especially for every evil that is irremediable. Of this order of remedies is arbitration, for of this order of evils is the inadequate wage of manual labor. Since the beginning of authentic history everything has been tried in the hope of divorcing poverty and labor, but nothing has parted them. It is not conceivable that anything ever will; success of arbitration, antecedently improbable, is demonstrably impossible. Most of the work of the world is hard, disagreeable work, requiring little intelligence. Most of the people of the world are unintelligent — unfit to do any other work. If it were not done by them it would not be done, and it is the basic work. Withdraw them from it and the whole superstructure would topple and fall. Yet there is too little of the work, and there are so many incapable of doing anything else that adequate return is out of the question. For the laboring *class* there is no hope of an existence that is comfortable in comparison with that of the other class; the hope of an individual laborer lies in the possibility of fitting himself for higher employment — employment of the head; not manual but cerebral labor. While selfishness remains the main ingredient of human nature (and a survey of the centuries accessible to examination shows but a slow and intermittent decrease) the cerebral workers, being the wiser and no better, will manage to take the greater profit. In justice it must be said of them that they extend a warm and sincere invitation to their ranks, and take “apprentices;” every chance of education that the other class enjoys is proof of that.

All this is perhaps a trifle abstruse; let us, then, look at arbitration more nearly; in our time it is, in form at least something new. It began as “international arbitration,” which already, in settling a few disputes of no great importance, has shown itself a dangerous remedy. In the necessary negotiation to determine exactly what points to submit to whom, and how, and where, and when to submit them, and how to carry out the arbitrator’s decision, scores of questions are raised, upon each of which it is as easy to disagree and fight as upon the original issue. International arbitration may be defined as the substitution of many burning questions for a smouldering one; for disputes that have reached a really acute stage are not submitted. The animosities that it has kindled have been hotter than those it has quenched.

Industrial arbitration is no better; it is manifestly worse, and any law enforcing it and enforcing compliance with its decisions, is absurd and mischievous. “Compulsory arbitration” is not arbitration, the essence whereof is voluntary submission of differences and voluntary submission to judgment. If either reference or obedience is enforced the arbitrators are simply a court with no powers to do anything but apply the law. Proponents of the fad would do well to consider this: If a party to a labor dispute is *compelled* to invoke and obey a decision of arbitrators that decision must follow strictly the line of law; the smallest invasion of any constitutional, statutory or common-law right will enable him to upset the whole judgment No legislative body can establish a tribunal empowered to make and enforce illegal or extra legal decisions; for making and enforcing legal ones the tribunals that we already have are sufficient This talk of “compulsory arbitration” is the maddest nonsense that the industrial situation has yet evolved. Doubtless it is sent upon us for our sins; but had we not already a plague of inveracity?

Arbitration of labor disputes means compromise with the unions. It can, in this country, mean nothing else, for the law would not survive a half-dozen failures to concede some part of their demands, however reasonless. By repeated strikes they would eventually get all their original demand and as much more as on second thought they might choose to ask for. Each concession would be, as it is now, followed by a new demand, and the first arbitrators might as well allow them all that they demand and all that they mean to demand hereafter.

Would not employers be equally unscrupulous. They would not. They could not afford the disturbance, the stoppage of the business, the risk of unfair decisions in a country where it is “popular” to favor and encourage, not the just, but the poor. The labor leaders have nothing to lose, not even their jobs, for their work is labor leading. Their dupes, by the way, would be dupes no longer, for with enforced arbitration the game of “follow my leader” would pay until there should be nothing to follow him to but empty treasuries of dead industries in an extinct civilization. If there must be enforced arbitration it should at least not apply to that sum of all impudent rascalities, the “sympathetic strike.”

As to the men who have set up the monstrous claim asserted by the “sympathetic strike,” I shall refer to the affair of 1904. If it was creditable in them to feel so much concern about a few hundred aliens in Illinois, how about the grievances of the whole body of their countrymen in California? When their employers, who they confess were good to them, were plundering the Californians, they did not strike, sympathetically nor otherwise. Year after year the railway companies picked the pockets of the Californians; corrupted their courts and legislatures; laid its Briarean hands in exaction upon every industry and interest; filled the land with lies and false reasoning; threw honest men into prisons and locked the gates of them against thieves and assassins; by open defiance of the tax collector denied to children of the poor the advantages of education — did all this and more, and these honest working men stood loyally by it, sharing in wages its dishonest gains, receivers, in one sense, of stolen goods. The groans of their neighbors were nothing to them; even the wrongs of themselves, their wives and their children did not stir them to revolt. On every breeze that blew, this great chorus of cries and curses was borne past their ears unheeded. Why did they not strike then? Where then were their fiery altruists and storm-petrels of industrial disorder? No! — the ingenious gods who have invented the Debses and Gomperses, and humorously branded them with names that would make a cat laugh, have never put it into their cold selfish hearts to order out their misguided followers to redress a public wrong, but only to inflict one — to avenge a personal humiliation, gratify an appetite for notoriety, slake a thirst for the intoxicating cup of power, or punish the crime of prosperity.

It is a practical, an illogical, a turbulent time, yes; it always is. The age of Jesus Christ was a practical age, yet Jesus Christ was sweetly impractical. In an illogical period Socrates reasoned clearly, and logically died for it. Nero’s time was a time of turbulence, yet Seneca’s mind was not disturbed, nor his conscience perverted. Compare their fame with the everlasting infamy that time has fixed upon the names of the Jack Cades, the Robespierres, the Tomaso Nielos — guides and gods of the “fierce democracies” which rise with a sickening periodicity to defile the page of history with a quickly fading mark of blood and fire, their own awful example their sole contribution to the good of mankind. To be a child of your time, imbued with its spirit and endowed with its aims — that is to petition Posterity for a niche in the Temple of Shame.

No strike of any prominence ever takes place in this country without the concomitants of violence and destruction of property, and usually murder. These cheerful incidents one who does not personally suffer them can endure with considerable fortitude, but the sniveling, hypocritical condemnation of them by the press that has instigated them and the strikers who have planned and executed them, and who invariably ascribe them to those whom they most injure; the solemn offers of the leaders to assist in protecting the imperiled property and avenging the dead, while openly employing counsel for every incendiary and assassin arrested in spite of them — these are pretty hard to bear. A strike means (for it includes as its main method) violence, lawlessness, destruction of the property of others than the strikers, riot and if necessary bloodshed. Even when the strikers themselves have no hand in these crimes they are morally liable for the foreknown consequences of their act. Nay, they are morally liable for *all the* consequences — all the inconveniences and losses to the community, all the sufferings of the poor entailed by interruptions of trade, all the privations of other workingmen whom a selfish attention to their own supposed advantage throws out of the closed industries. They are liable in morals and should be made so in law — only that strikes are needless. It is not worth while to create a multitude of complex criminal responsibilities for acts which can easily be prevented by a single and simple one. How?

First, I should like to point out that we are hearing a deal too much about a man's inalienable right to work or play, at his own sovereign will. In so far as that means — and it is always used to mean — his right to quit any kind of work at any moment, without notice and regardless of consequences to others, it is false; there is no such moral right, and the law should have at least a speaking acquaintance with morality. What is mischievous should be illegal. The various interests of civilization are so complex, delicate, intertangled and interdependent that no man, and no set of men, should have power to throw the entire scheme into confusion and disorder for pro-motion of a trumpery principle or a class advantage. In dealing with corporations we recognize that. If for any selfish purpose the trade union of railway managers had done what their sacred brakemen and divine firemen did — had decreed that "no wheel should turn," until Mr. Pullman's men should return to work — they would have found themselves all in jail the second day. *Their* right to quit work was not conceded: they lacked that authenticating credential of moral and legal irresponsibility, an indurated palm. In a small lockout affecting a mill or two the offender finds a half-hearted support in *the* law if he is willing to pay enough deputy sheriffs; but even then he is mounted by the hobnailed populace, at its back the daily newspapers, clamoring and spitting like cats. But let the manager of a great railway discharge all its men without warning and "kill" its own engines! Then see what you will see. To commit a wrong so gigantic with impunity a man must wear overalls.

How prevent anybody from committing it? How break up this *régime* of strikes and boycotts and lockouts, more disastrous to others than to those at whom the blows are aimed — than to those, even, who deliver them. How make all those concerned in the management and operation of great industries, about which have grown up tangles of related and dependent interests, conduct them with some regard to the welfare of others? Before committing ourselves to the dubious and irretraceable course of "Government ownership," or to the infectious expedient of a "pension system," is there anything of promise yet untried? — anything of superior simplicity and easier application? I think so. Make a breach of labor contract by either parly to it a criminal offense punishable by imprisonment "Fine or imprisonment" will not do — the employee, unable to pay the fine, would commonly go to jail, the employer seldom. That would not be fair.

The purpose of such a law is apparent: Labor contracts would then be drawn for a certain time, securing both employer and employee and (which is more important) helpless persons in related and dependent industries — the whole public, in fact — against sudden and disastrous action by either "capital" or "labor" for accomplishment of a purely selfish or frankly impudent end. A strike or lockout compelled to announce itself thirty days in advance would be innocuous to the public, whilst securing to the party of initiation all the advantages that anybody professes to want — all but the advantage of ruining others and of successfully defying the laws.

Under the present *régime* labor contracts are useless; either party can violate them with impunity. They offer redress only through a civil suit for damages, and the employee commonly has nothing with which to conduct an action or satisfy a judgment. The consequence is seen in the incessant and increasing industrial disturbances, with their ever-attendant crimes against property, life and liberty — disturbances which by driving capital to investments in which it needs employ no labor, do more than all the other causes so glibly enumerated by every newspaper and politician, though by no two alike, to bring about the "hard times" — which in their turn cause further and worse disturbances.

INDUSTRIAL DISCONTENT

I.

THE time seems to have come when the two antagonistic elements of American society should, and could afford to, throw off their disguise and frankly declare their principles and purposes. But what, it may be asked, are the two antagonistic elements? Dividing lines parting the population into two camps more or less hostile may be drawn variously; for example, one may be run between the law-abiding and the criminal class. But the elements to which reference is here made are those immemorable and implacable foes which the slang of modern economics roughly and loosely distinguishes as “Capital” and “Labor.” A more accurate classification — as accurate a one as it is possible to make — would designate them as those who do muscular labor and those who do not. The distinction between rich and poor does not serve: to the laborer the rich man who works with his hands is not objectionable; the poor man who does not, is. Consciously or unconsciously, and alike by those whose necessities compel them to perform it and those whose better fortune enables them to avoid it, manual labor is considered the most insufferable of human pursuits. It is a pill that the Tolstois, the “communities” and the “Knights” of Labor can not sugarcoat. We may prate of the dignity of labor; emblazon its praise upon banners; set apart a day on which to stop work and celebrate it; shout our teeth loose in its glorification — and, God help our fool souls to better sense, we think we mean it all!

If labor is so good and great a thing let all be thankful, for all can have as much of it as may be desired. The eight-hour law is not mandatory to the laborer, nor does possession of leisure entail idleness. It is permitted to the clerk, the shopman, the street peddler — to all who live by the light employment of keeping the wolf from the door without eating him — to abandon their ignoble callings, seize the shovel, the axe and the sledge-hammer and lay about them right sturdily, to the ample gratification of their desire. And those who are engaged in more profitable vocations will find that with a part of their incomes they can purchase from their employers the right to work as hard as they like in even the dullest times.

Manual labor has nothing of dignity, nothing of beauty. It is a hard, imperious and dispiriting necessity. He who is condemned to it feels that it sets upon his brow the brand of intellectual inferiority. And that brand of servitude never ceases to burn. In no country and at no time has the laborer had a kindly feeling for the rest of us, for everywhere and always has he heard in our patronising platitudes the note of contempt. In his repression, in the denying him the opportunity to avenge his real and imaginary wrongs, government finds its main usefulness, activity and justification. Jefferson’s dictum that governments are instituted among men in order to secure them in “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” is luminous nonsense. Governments are not instituted; they grow. They are evolved out of the necessity of protecting from the handworker the life and property of the brain worker and the idler. The first is the most dangerous because the most numerous and the least content. Take from the science and the art of government, and from its methods, whatever has had its origin in the consciousness of his ill-will and the fear of his power and what have you left? A pure republic — that is to say, no government.

I should like it understood that, if not absolutely devoid of preferences and prejudices, I at least believe myself to be; that except as to result I think no more of one form of government than of another; and that with reference to results all forms seem to me bad, but bad in different degrees. If asked my opinion as to the results of our own, I should point to Homestead, to Wardner, to Buffalo, to Coal Creek, to the interminable tale of unpunished murders by individuals and by mobs, to legislatures and courts unspeakably corrupt and executives of criminal cowardice, to the prevalence and immunity of plundering trusts and corporations and the monstrous multiplication of millionaires. I should invite attention to the pension roll, to the similar and incredible extravagance of Republican and Democratic “Houses” — a plague o’ them both! If addressing Democrats only, I should mention the protective tariff; if Republicans, the hill-tribe clamor for free coinage of silver. I should call to mind the existence of prosperous activity of a thousand lying secret societies having for their sole object mitigation of republican simplicity by means of pageantry and costumes grotesquely resembling those of kings and courtiers, and titles of address and courtesy exalted enough to draw laughter from an ox.

In contemplation of these and a hundred other “results,” no less shameful in themselves than significant of the deeper shame beneath and prophetic of the blacker shame to come, I should say: “Behold the outcome of hardly more than a century of government by the people! Behold the superstructure whose foundations our forefathers laid upon the unstable overgrowth of popular caprice surfacing the unplummeted abysm of human depravity! Behold the reality behind our dream of the efficacy of forms, the saving grace of principles, the magic of words! We have believed in the wisdom of majorities and are fooled;

trusted to the good honor of numbers, and are betrayed. Our touching faith in the liberty of the rascal, our strange conviction that anarchy making proselytes and bombs is less dangerous than anarchy with a shut mouth and a watched hand — lo, this is the beginning of the aid of the dream!"

Our Government has broken down at every point, and the two irreconcilable elements whose suspensions of hostilities are mistaken for peace are about to try their hands at each other's tempting display of throats. There is no longer so much as a pretense of amity; apparently there will not much longer be a pretense of regard for mercy and morals. Already "industrial discontent" has attained to the magnitude of war. It is important, then, that there be an understanding of principles and purposes. As the combatants will not define their positions truthfully by words, let us see if it can be inferred from the actions which are said to speak more plainly. If one of the really able men who now "direct the destinies" of the labor organizations in this country, could be enticed into the Palace of Truth and "examined" by a skilful catechist he would indubitably say something like this:

"Our ultimate purpose is abolition of the distinction between employer and employee, which is but a modification of that between master and slave.

"We propose that the laborer shall be chief owner of all the property and profits of the enterprise in which he is engaged, and have through his union a controlling voice in all its affairs.

"We propose to overthrow the system under which a man can grow richer by working with his head than with his hands, and prevent the man who works with neither from having anything at all.

"In the attainment of these ends any means is to be judged, as to its fitness for our use, with sole regard to its efficacy. We shall punish the innocent for the sins of the guilty. We shall destroy property and life under such circumstances and to such an extent as may seem to us expedient. Falsehood, treachery, arson, assassination, all these we look upon as legitimate if effective.

"The rules of 'civilized warfare' we shall not observe, but shall put prisoners to death or torture them, as we please.

"We do not recognize a non-union man's right to labor, nor to live. The right to strike includes the right to strike *him*."

Doubtless all that (and "the half is not told") sounds to the unobservant like a harsh exaggeration, an imaginative travesty of the principles of labor organizations. It is not a travesty; it has no element of exaggeration. Not in the last twenty-five years has a great strike or lockout occurred in this country without supplying facts, notorious and undisputed, upon which some of these confessions of faith are founded. The war is practically a servile insurrection, and servile insurrections are today what they ever were: the most cruel and ferocious of all manifestations of human hate. Emancipation is rough work; when he who would be free, himself strikes the blow, he can not consider too curiously with what he strikes it nor upon whom it falls. It will profit you to understand, my fine gentleman with the soft hands, the character of that which is confronting you. You are not threatened with a bombardment of roses.

Let us look into the other camp, where General Hardhead is so engrossed with his own greatness and power as not clearly to hear the shots on his picket line. Suppose we hypnotize him and make him open his "shut soul" to our searching. He will say something like this:

"In the first place, I claim the right to own and enclose for my own use or disuse as much of the earth's surface as I am desirous and able to procure. I and my kind have made laws confirming us in the occupancy of the entire habitable and arable area as fast as we can get it. To the objection that this must eventually here, as it has actually done elsewhere, deprive the rest of you places upon which legally to be born, and exclude you after surreptitious birth as trespassers from all chance to procure directly the fruits of the earth, I reply that you can be born at sea and eat fish.

"I claim the right to induce you, by offer of employment, to colonize yourselves and families about my factories, and then arbitrarily, by withdrawing the employment, break up in a day the homes that you have been years in acquiring where it is no longer possible for you to procure work.

"In determining your rate of wages when I employ you, I claim the right to make your necessities a factor in the problem, thus making your misfortunes cumulative. By the law of supply and demand (God bless its expounder!) the less you have and the less chance to get more, the more I have the right to take from you in labor and the less I am bound to give you in wages.

"I claim the right to ignore the officers of the peace and maintain a private army to subdue you when you rise.

"I claim the right to make you suffer, by creating for my advantage an artificial scarcity of the necessaries of life.

"I claim the right to employ the large powers of the government in advancing my private welfare.

"As to falsehood, treachery and the other military virtues with which you threaten me, I shall go, in them, as far as you; but from arson and assassination I recoil with horror. You see you have very little to burn, and you are not more than half alive anyhow."

That, I submit, is a pretty fair definition of the position of the wealthy man who works with his head. It seems worth while to put it on record while he is extant to challenge or verify; for the probability is that unless he mend his ways he will not much longer be wealthy, work, nor have a head.

II.

In discussion of the misdoings at Homestead and Coeur d’ Alene it is amusing to observe all the champions of law and order gravely prating of “principles” and declaring with all the solemnity of owls that these sacred things have been violated. On that ground they have the argument all their own way. Indubitably there is hardly a fundamental principle of law and morals that the rioting laborers have not footballed out of the field of consideration. Indubitably, too, in doing so they have forfeited as they must have expected to forfeit, all the “moral support” for which they did not care a tinker’s imprecation. If there were any question of their culpability this solemn insistence upon it would lack something of the humor with which it is now invested and which saves the observer from death by dejection.

It is not only in discussions of the “labor situation” that we hear this eternal babble of “principles.” It is never out of ear, and in politics is especially clamant. Every success in an election is yawped of as “a triumph of Republican (or Democratic) principles.” But neither in politics nor in the quarrels of laborers and their employers have principles a place as “factors in the problem.” Their use is to supply to both combatants a vocabulary of accusation and appeal. All the fierce talk of an antagonist’s violation of those eternal principles upon which organized society is founded — and the rest of it — what is it but the cry of the dog with the chewed ear? The dog that is chewing foregoes the advantage of song.

Human contests engaging any number of contestants are not struggles of principles but struggles of interests; and this is no less true of those decided by the ballot than of those in which the franker bullet gives judgment. Nor, but from considerations of prudence and expediency, will either party hesitate to transgress the limits of the law and outrage the sense of right. At Homestead and Wardner the laborers committed robbery, pillage and murder, as striking workmen invariably do when they dare, and as cowardly newspapers and scoundrel politicians encourage them in doing. But what would you have? They conceive it to be to their interest to do these things. If capitalists conceive it to be to theirs they too would do them. They do not do them for their interest lies in the supremacy of the law — under which they can suffer loss but do not suffer hunger.

“But they do murder,” say the labor unions; “they bring in gangs of armed mercenaries who shoot down honest workmen striving for their rights.” This is the baldest nonsense, as they know very well who utter it. The Pinkerton men are mere mercenaries and have no right place in our system, but there have been no instances of their attacking men not engaged in some unlawful prank. In the fight at Homestead the workmen were actually intrenched on premises belonging to the other side, where they had not the ghost of a legal right to be. American working men are not fools; they know well enough when they are rogues. But confession is not among the military virtues, and the question. Is roguery expedient? is not so simple that it can be determined by asking the first preacher you meet.

It would be very nice and fine all round if idle workmen would not riot nor idle employers meet force with force, but invoke the impossible Sheriff. When the Dragon has been chained in the Bottomless Pit and we are living under the rule of the saints, things will be so ordered, but in these rascal times “revolutions are not made with rosewater,” and this is a revolution. What is being revolutionized is the relation between our old friends. Capital and Labor. The relation has already been altered many times, doubtless; once, we know, within the period covered by history, at least in the countries that we call civilized. The relation was formerly a severely simple one — the capitalist owned the laborer. Of the difficulty and the cost of abolishing that system it is needless to speak at length. Through centuries of time and with an appalling sacrifice of life the effort has gone on, a continuous war characterized by monstrous infractions of law and morals, by incalculable cruelty and crime. Our own generation has witnessed the culminating triumphs of this revolution, and of its three mightiest leaders the assassination of two, the death in exile of the third. And now, while still the clank of the falling chains is echoing through the world, and still a mighty multitude of the world’s workers is in bondage under the old system, the others, for whose liberation was all this “expense of spirit in a waste of shame,” are sharply challenging the advantage of the new. The new is, in troth, breaking down at every point The relation of employer and employee is giving but little better satisfaction than that of master and slave. The difference between the two is, indeed, not nearly so broad as we persuade ourselves to think it. In many of the industries there is practically no difference at all, and the tendency is more and more to effacement of the difference where it exists.

Labor unions, strikes and rioting are no new remedies for this insidious disorder; they were common in ancient Rome and still more ancient Egypt. In the twenty-ninth year of Rameses III a deputation of workmen employed in the Theban necropolis met the superintendent and the priests with a statement of their grievances. “Behold,” said the spokesman, “we are brought to the verge of famine. We have neither food, nor oil, nor clothing; we have no fish; we have no vegetables. Already we have sent up a petition to our sovereign lord the Pharaoh, praying that he will give us these things and we are going to appeal to the Governor that we may have the wherewithal to live.” The response to this complaint was one day’s rations of corn. This appears to have been enough only while it lasted, for a few weeks later the workmen were in open revolt. Thrice they broke out of their quarter, rioting like mad and defying the police. Whether they were finally shot full of arrows by the Pinkerton men of the period the record does not state.

“Organized discontent” in the laboring population is no new thing under the sun, but in this century and country it has a new opportunity and Omniscience alone can forecast the outcome. Of one thing we may be very sure, and the sooner the “capitalist” can persuade himself to discern it the sooner will his eyes guard his neck: the relations between those who are able to live without physical toil and those who are not are a long way from final adjustment, but are about to undergo a profound and essential alteration. That this is to come by peaceful evolution is a hope which has nothing in history to sustain it. There are to be bloody noses and cracked crowns, and the good people who suffer themselves to be shocked by such things in others will have a chance to try them for themselves. The working man is not troubling himself greatly about a just allotment of these blessings; so that the greater part go to those who do not work with their hands he will not consider too curiously any person’s claim to exemption. It would perhaps better harmonize with his sense of the fitness of things (as it would, no doubt, with that of the angels) if the advantages of the transitional period fell mostly to the share of such star-spangled impostors as Andrew Carnegie; but almost any distribution that is sufficiently objectionable as a whole to the other side will be acceptable to the distributor. In the mean time it is to be wished that the moralize, and homilizers who prate of “principles” may have a little damnation dealt out to them on account. The head that is unable to entertain a philosophical view of the situation would be notably advantaged by removal.

III.

It is the immigration of “the oppressed of all nations” that has made this country one of the worst on the face of the earth. The change from good to bad took place within a generation — so quickly that few of us have had the nimbleness of apprehension to “get it through our heads.” We go on screaming our eagle in the self-same note of triumph that we were taught at our fathers’ knees before the eagle became a buzzard. America is still “an asylum for the oppressed;” and still, as always and everywhere, the oppressed are unworthy of asylum, avenging upon those who give them sanctuary the wrongs from which they fled. The saddest thing about oppression is that it makes its victims unfit for anything but to be oppressed — makes them dangerous alike to their tyrants, their saviors and themselves. In the end they turn out to be fairly energetic oppressors. The gentleman in the cesspool invites compassion, certainly, but we may be very well assured, before undertaking his relief without a pole, that his conception of a prosperous life is merely to have his nose above the surface with another gentleman underfoot.

All languages are spoken in Hell, but chiefly those of Southeastern Europe. I do not say that a man fresh from the fields or the factories of Europe — even of Southeastern Europe — may not be a good man; I say only that, as a matter of fact, he commonly is not. In nine instances in ten he is a brute whom it would be God’s mercy to drown on his arrival, for he is constitutionally unhappy.

Let us not deny him his grievance: he works — when he works — for men no better than himself. He is required, in many instances, to take a part of his pay in “truck” at prices of breathless altitude; and the pay itself is inadequate — hardly more than double what he could get in his own country. Against all this his howl is justified; but his rioting and assassination are not — not even when directed against the property and persons of his employers. When directed against the persons of other laborers, who choose to exercise the fundamental human right to work for whom and for what pay they please — when he denies this right, and with it the right of organized society to exist, the necessity of shooting him is not only apparent; it is conspicuous and imperative. That he and his horrible kind, of whatever nationality, are usually forgiven this just debt of nature, and suffered to execute, like rivers, their annual spring rise, constitutes the most valid of the many indictments that decent Americans by birth or adoption find against the feeble form of government under which their country groans, A nation that will not enforce its laws has no claim to the respect and allegiance of its people.

This “citizen soldiery” business is a ghastly failure. The National Guard is not worth the price of its uniforms. It is intended to be a Greater Constabulary: its purpose is to suppress disorders with which the civil authorities are too feeble to cope. How often does it do so? Nine times in ten it fraternizes with, or is cowed or beaten by the savage mobs which it is called upon to kill. In a country with a competent militia and competent men to use it there would be crime enough and some to spare, but no rioting. Rioting in a Republic is without a shadow of excuse. If we have bad laws, or if our good laws are not enforced; if corporations and capital are “tyrannous and strong;” if white men murder one another and black men outrage white women, all this is our own fault — the fault of those, among others, who seek redress or revenge by rioting and lynching. The people have always as good government, as good industrial conditions, as effective protection of person, property and liberty, as they deserve. They can have what ever they have the honesty to desire and the sense to set about getting in the right way. If as citizens of a Republic we lack the virtue and intelligence rightly to use the supreme power of the ballot so that it

> “Executes a freeman’s will
> As lightning does the will of God”

we are unfit to be citizens of a Republic, undeserving of peace, prosperity and liberty, and have no right to rise against conditions due to our own moral and intellectual delinquency. There is a simple way, Messieurs the Masses to correct public evils: put wise and good men into power. If you can not do that for you are not yourselves wise, or will not for you are not yourselves good, you deserve to be oppressed when you submit and shot when you rise.

To shoot a rioter or lyncher is a high kind of mercy. Suppose that twenty-five years ago (the longer ago the better) two or three criminal mobs in succession had been exterminated in that way, “as the law provides.” Suppose that several scores of lives had been so taken, including even those of “innocent spectators” — though that kind of angel does not abound in the vicinity of mobs. Suppose that no demagogue judges had permitted officers in command of the “firing lines” to be persecuted in the courts. Suppose that these events had writ themselves large and red in the public memory. How many lives would this have saved? Just as many as since have been taken and lost by rioters, plus those that for a long time to come will be taken, and minus those that were taken at that time. Make your own computation from your own data; I insist only that a rioter shot in time saves nine.

You know — you, the People — that all this is true. You know that in a Republic lawlessness is villainy entailing greater evils than it cures — that it cures none. You know that even the “money power” is powerful only through your own dishonesty and cowardice. You know that nobody can bribe or intimidate a voter who will not take a bribe or suffer himself to be intimidated — that there can be no “money power” in a nation of honorable and courageous men. You know that “bosses” and “machines” can not control you if you will not suffer then to divide you into “parties” by playing upon your credulity and senseless passions. You know all this, and know it all the time. Yet not a man has the courage to stand forth and say to your faces what you know in your hearts. Well, Messieurs the Masses, I don’t consider you dangerous — not very. I have not observed that you want to tear anybody to pieces for confessing your sins, even if at the same time he confesses his own. From a considerable experience in that sort of thing I judge that you rather like it, and that he whom, secretly, you most despise is he who echoes back to you what he is pleased to think you think and flatters you for gain. Anyhow, for some reason, I never hear you speak well of newspaper men and politicians, though in the shadow of your disesteem they get an occasional gleam of consolation by speaking fairly well of one another.

CRIME AND ITS CORRECTIVES

I.

SOCIOLOGISTS have been debating the theory that the impulse to commit crime is a disease, and the ayes appear to have it — not the impulse but the decision. It is gratifying and profitable to have the point settled: we now know “where we are at,” and can take our course accordingly. It has for a number of years been known to all but a few back-number physicians — survivals from an exhausted *régime* — that all disease is caused by bacilli, which worm themselves into the organs that secrete health and enjoin them from the performance of that rite. The medical conservatives mentioned attempt to whittle away the value and significances of this theory by affirming its inadequacy to account for such disorders as broken heads, sunstroke, superfluous toes, home-sickness, burns and strangulation on the gallows; but against the testimony of so eminent bacteriologists as Drs. Koch and Pasteur their carping is as that of the idle angler. The bacillus is not to be denied; he has brought his blankets and is here to stay until evicted, and eviction can not be wrought by talking. Doubtless we may confidently expect his eventual suppression by a fresher and more ingenious disturber of the physiological peace, but the bacillus is now chief among ten thousand evils and it is futile to attempt to read him out of the party.

It follows that in order to deal intelligently with the criminal impulse in our afflicted fellow-citizens we must discover the bacillus of crime. To that end I think that the bodies of hanged assassins and such persons of low degree as have been gathered to their fathers by the cares of public office or consumed by the rust of inactivity in prison should be handed over to the microscopists for examination. The bore, too, offers a fine field for research, and might justly enough be examined alive. Whether there is one general — or as the ancient and honorable orders prefer to say, “grand” — bacillus, producing a general (or grand) criminal impulse covering a multitude of sins, or an infinite number of well defined and several bacilli, each inciting to a particular crime, is a question to the determination of which the most distinguished microscopist might be proud to devote the powers of his eye. If the latter is the case it will somewhat complicate the treatment, for clearly the patient afflicted with chronic robbery will require medicines different from those that might be efficacious in a gentleman suffering from constitutional theft or the desire to represent his

District in the Assembly. But it is permitted to us to hope that all crimes, like all arts, are essentially one; that murder, arson and conservatism are but different symptoms of the same physical disorder, back of which is a microbe vincible to a single medicament, albeit the same awaits discovery.

In the fascinating theory of the unity of crime we may not unreasonably hope to find another evidence of the brotherhood of man, another spiritual bond tending to draw the various classes of society more closely together.

From time to time it is said that a “wave” of some kind of crime is sweeping the country. It is all nonsense about “waves” of crime. Occasionally occurs some crime notable for its unusual features, or for the renown of those concerned. It arrests public attention, which for a time is directed to that particular kind of crane, and the newspapers, with business-like instinct, give, for a season, unusual prominence to the record of similar offenses. Then, self-deceived, they talk about a “wave,” or “epidemic” of it. So far is this from the truth that one of the most noticeable characteristics of crime is the steady and unbroken monotony of its occurrence in certain forms. There is nothing so dull and unvarying as this tedious uniformity of repetition. The march of crime is never retarded, never accelerated. The criminals appear to be thoroughly well satisfied with their annual average, as shown by the periodical reports of their secretary, the statistician.

A marked illustration occurs to me. Many years ago in London a well-known and respectable gentleman was brutally garroted. It was during the “silly season” — between sessions of Parliament, when the newspapers are likely to be dull. They at once began to report cases of garroting. There appeared to be an “epidemic of garroting.” The public mind was terribly excited, and when Parliament met it hastened to pass the infamous “flogging act” — a distinct reversion to the senseless and discredited methods of physical torture, so alluring to the half instructed mind of the average journalist of today. Yet the statistics published by the Home Secretary under whose administration the act was passed show that neither at the time of the alarm was there any material increase of garroting, nor in the period of public tranquillity succeeding was there any appreciable diminution.

II.

By advocating painless removal of incurable idiots and lunatics, incorrigible criminals and irreclaimable drunkards from this vale of tears Dr. W. Duncan McKim provoked many a respectable but otherwise blameless person to throw a catfit of great complexity and power. Yet Dr. McKim seemed only to anticipate the trend of public opinion and forecast its crystallization into law. It is rapidly becoming a question of not what we ought to do with these unfortunates, but what we shall be compelled to do. Study of the statistics of the matter shows that in all civilized countries mental and moral diseases are increasing, proportionately to population, at a rate which in the course of a few generations will make it impossible for the healthy to care for the afflicted. To do so will require the entire revenue which it is possible to raise by taxation — will absorb all the profits of all the industries and professions and make deeper and deeper inroads upon the capital from which they are derived. When it comes to that there can be but one result. High and humanizing sentiments are angel visitants, whom we entertain with pride and pleasure, but when *fine* entertainment becomes too costly to be borne we "speed the parting guest" forthwith. And it may happen that in inviting to his vacant place a less exciting successor — that in replacing Sentiment with Reason — we shall, in this instance, learn to our joy that we do but entertain another angel. For nothing is so heavenly as Reason; nothing is so sweet and compassionate as her voice —

"Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute,"

Is it cruel, is it heartless, is it barbarous to use something of the same care in breeding men and women as in breeding horses and dogs? Here is a determining question: Knowing yourself doomed to hopeless idiocy, lunacy, crime or drunkenness, would you, or would you not, welcome a painless death? Let us assume that you would. Upon what ground, then, would you deny to another a boon that you would desire for yourself?

III.

The good American is, as a rule, pretty hard upon roguery, but he atones for his austerity by an amiable toleration of rogues. His only requirement is that he must personally know the rogues. We all "denounce" thieves loudly enough, if we have not the honor of their acquaintance. If we have, why, that is different — unless they have the actual odor of the prison about them. We may know them guilty, but we meet them, shake hands with them, drink with them, and if they happen to be wealthy or otherwise great invite them to our houses, and deem it an honor to frequent theirs. We do not "approve their methods" — let that be understood; and thereby they are sufficiently punished. The notion that a knave cares a pin what is thought of his ways by one who is civil and friendly to himself appears to have been invented by a humorist. On the vaudeville stage of

Mars it would probably have made his fortune. If warrants of arrest were out for every man in this country who is conscious of having repeatedly shaken hands with persons whom he knew to be knaves there would be no guiltless person to serve them.

I know men standing high in journalism who today will “expose” and bitterly “denounce” a certain rascality and tomorrow will be hobnobbing with the rascals whom they have named. I know legislators of renown who habitually in “the halls of legislation” raise their voices against the dishonest schemes of some “trust magnate,” and are habitually seen in familiar conversation with him. Indubitably these be hypocrites all. Between the head and the heart of such a man is a wall of adamant, and neither organ knows what the other is doing.

If social recognition were denied to rogues they would be fewer by many. Some would only the more diligently cover their tracks along the devious paths of unrighteousness, but others would do so much violence to their consciences as to renounce the disadvantages of rascality for those of an honest life. An unworthy person dreads nothing so much as the withholding of an honest hand, the slow inevitable stroke of an ignoring eye.

For one having knowledge of Mr. John D. Rockefeller’s social life and connections it would be easy to name a dozen men and women who by a conspiracy of conscription could profoundly affect the plans and profits of the Standard Oil Company. I have been asked: “If John D. Rockefeller were introduced to you by a friend, would you refuse to take his hand?” I certainly should — and if ever thereafter I took the hand of that hardy “friend” it would be after his repentance and promise to reform his ways. We have Rockefellers and Morgans because we have “respectable” persons who are not ashamed to take them by the hand, to be seen with them, to say that they know them. In such it is treachery to censure them; to cry out when robbed by them is to turn State’s evidence.

One may smile upon a rascal (most of us do so many times a day) if one does not know him to be a rascal, and has not said he is; but knowing him to be, or having said he is, to smile upon him is to be a hypocrite — just a plain hypocrite or a sycophantic hypocrite, according to the station in life of the rascal smiled upon. There are more plain hypocrites than sycophantic ones, for there are more rascals of no consequence than rich and distinguished ones, though they get fewer smiles each. The American people will be plundered as long as the American character is what it is; as long as it is tolerant of successful knavery; as long as American ingenuity draws an imaginary distinction between a man’s public character and his private — his commercial and his personal In brief, the American people will be plundered as long as they deserve to be plundered. No human law can stop it, none ought to stop it, for that would abrogate a higher and more salutary law: “As ye sow ye shall reap.”

In a sermon by the Rev. Dr. Parkhurst is the following: “The story of all our Lord’s dealings with sinners leaves upon the mind the invariable impression, if only the story be read sympathetically and earnestly, that He always felt kindly towards the transgressor, but could have no tenderness of regard toward the transgression. There is no safe and successful dealing with sin of any kind save as that distinction is appreciated and made a continual factor in our feelings and efforts.”

With all due respect for Dr. Parkhurst, that is nonsense. If he will read his New Testament more understandingly he will observe that Christ’s kindly feeling to transgressors was not to be counted on by sinners of every kind, and it was not always in evidence; for example, when he flogged the money-changers out of the temple. Nor is Dr. Parkhurst himself any too amiably disposed toward the children of darkness. It is not by mild words and gentle means that he has hurled the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree. Such revolutions as he set afoot are not made with spiritual rose-water; there must be the contagion of a noble indignation fueled with harder wood than abstractions. The people can not be collected and incited to take sides by the spectacle of a man fighting something that does not fight back. It is men that Dr. Parkhurst is trouncing — not their crimes — not Crime. He may fancy himself “dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,” but in reality he does not hate hate but hates the hateful, and scorns, not scorn, but the scornworthy.

It is singular with what tenacity that amusing though mischievous superstition keeps its hold upon the human mind — that grave *bona fide* personification of abstractions and the funny delusion that it is possible to hate or love them. Sin is not a thing; there is no existing object corresponding to any of the mere counter-words that are properly named abstract nouns. One can no more hate sin or love virtue than one can hate a vacuum (which Nature — itself imaginary — was once by the scientists of the period solemnly held to do) or love one of the three dimensions. We may think that while loving a sinner we hate the sin, but that is not so; if anything is hated it is other sinners of the same kind, who are not quite so close to us.

“But,” says Citizen Goodheart, who thinks with difficulty, “shall I throw over my friend when he is in trouble?” Yes, when you are convinced that he deserves to be in trouble; throw him all the harder and the further because he is your friend. In addition to his particular offense against society he has disgraced *you*. If there are to be lenity and charity let them go to the criminal who has foreborne to involve you in his shame. It were a pretty state of affairs if an undetected scamp, fearing exposure, could make you a co-defendant by so easy a precaution as securing your acquaintance and regard. Don’t throw the first stone, of course, but when convinced that your friend is a proper target, heave away with a right hearty good-will, and let the stone be of serviceable dimensions, scabrous, textured flintwise and delivered with a good aim.

The French have a saying to the effect that to know all is to pardon all; and doubtless with an omniscient insight into the causes of character we should find the field of moral responsibility pretty thickly strewn with extenuating circumstances very suitable indeed for consideration by a god who has had a hand in besetting “with pitfall and with gin” the road we are to wander in. But I submit that universal forgiveness would hardly do as a working principle. Even those who are most apt and facile with the incident of the woman taken in adultery commonly cherish a secret respect for the doctrine of eternal damnation; and some of them are known to pin their faith to the penal code of their state. Moreover there is some reason to believe that the sinning woman, being “taken,” was penitent — they usually are when found out.

I care nothing about principles — they are lumber and rubbish. What concerns our happiness and welfare, as affectible by our fellowmen, is conduct “Principles, not men,” is a rogue’s cry; rascality’s counsel to stupidity, the noise of the duper duping on his dupe. He shouts it most loudly and with the keenest sense of its advantage who most desires inattention to his own conduct, or to that forecast of it, his character. As to sin, that has an abundance of expounders and is already universally known to be wicked. What more can be said against it, and why go on repeating that? The thing is a trifle wordworn, whereas the sinner cometh up as a flower every day, fresh, ingenious and inviting. Sin is not at all dangerous to society; it is the sinner that does all the mischief. Sin has no arms to thrust into the public treasury and the private; no hands with which to cut a throat; no tongue to wreck a reputation withal. I would no more attack it than I would attack an isosceles triangle, a vacuum, or Hume’s “phantasm floating in a void.” My chosen enemy must be something that has a skin for my switch, a head for my cudgel — something that can smart and ache and, if so minded, fight back. I have no quarrel with abstractions; so far as I know they are all good citizens.

THE DEATH PENALTY

I.

“DOWN with the gallows!” is a cry not unfamiliar in America. There is always a movement afoot to make odious the just principle of “a life for a life” — to represent it as “a relic of barbarism,” “a usurpation of the divine authority,” and the rotten rest of it The law making murder punishable by death is as purely a measure of self-defense as is the display of a pistol to one diligently endeavoring to kill without provocation. Even the most brainless opponent of “capital punishment” would do that if he knew enough. It is in precisely the same sense an admonition, a warning to abstain from crime. Society says by that law: “If you kill one of us you die,” just as by display of the pistol the individual whose life is attacked says: “Desist or be shot.” To be effective the warning in either case must be more than an idle threat. Even the most unearthly reasoner among the gallows-downing unfortunates would hardly expect to frighten away an assassin who knew the pistol to be unloaded. Of course these queer illogicians can not be made to understand that their position commits them to absolute non-resistance to any kind of aggression, and that is fortunate for the rest of us, for if as Christians they frankly and consistently took that ground we should be under the miserable necessity of respecting them.

We have good reason to hold that the horrible prevalence of murder in this country is due to the fact that we do not execute our laws — that the death penalty is threatened but not inflicted — that the pistol is not loaded. In civilized countries, where there is enough respect for the laws to administer them, there is enough to obey them. While man still has as much of the ancestral brute as his skin can hold widiout cracking we shall have thieves and demagogues and anarchists and assassins and persons with a private system of lexicography who define hanging as murder and murder as mischance, and many another disagreeable creation, but in all this welter of crime and stupidity are areas where human life is comparatively secure against the human hand. It is at least a significant coincidence that in these the death penalty for murder is fairly well enforced by judges who do not derive any part of their authority from those for whose restraint and punishment they hold it. Against the life of one guiltless person the lives of ten thousand murderers count for nothing; their hanging is a public good, without reference to the crimes that disclose their deserts. If we could discover them by other signs than their bloody deeds they should be hanged anyhow. Unfortunately we must have a death as evidence. The scientists who will tell us how to recognize the potential assassin, and persuade us to kill him, will be the greatest benefactor of his century.

What would these enemies of the gibbet have? — these lineal descendants of the drunken mobs that pelted the hangmen at Tyburn Tree; this progeny of criminals, which has so defiled with the mud of its animosity the noble office of public executioner that even "in this enlightened age" he shirks his high duty, entrusting it to a hidden or unnamed subordinate? If murder is unjust of what importance is it whether it's punishment by death be just or not? — nobody needs to incur it.

Men are not drafted for the death penalty; they volunteer. "Then it is not deterrent," mutters the gentleman whose rude forefather pelted the hangman. Well, as to that, the law which is to accomplish more than a part of its purpose must be awaited with great patience. Every murder proves that hanging is not altogether deterrent; every hanging that it is somewhat deterrent — it deters the person hanged. A man's first murder is his crime, his second is ours.

The voice of Theosophy has been heard in favor of downing the gallows. As usual the voice is a trifle vague and it babbles. Clear speech is the outcome of clear thought, and that is something to which Theosophists are not addicted. Considering their infirmity in that way, it would be hardly fair to take them as seriously as they take themselves, but when any considerable number of apparently earnest citizens unite in a petition to the Governor of their State, to commute the death sentence of a convicted assassin without alleging a doubt of his guilt the phenomenon challenges a certain attention to what they do allege. What these amiable persons hold, it seems, is what was held by Alphonse Karr: the expediency of abolishing the death penalty; but apparently they do not hold, with him, that the assassins should begin. They want the State to begin, believing that the magnanimous example will effect a change of heart in those about to murder. This, I take it, is the meaning of their assertion that "death penalties have not the deterring influence which imprisonment for life carries." In this they obviously err: death deters at least the person who suffers it — he commits no more murder; whereas the assassin who is imprisoned for life and immune from further punishment may with impunity kill his keeper or whomsoever he may be able to get at. Even as matters now are, the most incessant vigilance is required to prevent convicts in prison from murdering their attendants and one another. How would it be if the "life-termer" were assured against any additional inconvenience for braining a guard occasionally, or strangling a chaplain now and then? A penitentiary may be described as a place of punishment and reward;

and under the system proposed the difference in desirableness between a sentence and an appointment would be virtually effaced. To overcome this objection a life sentence would have to mean solitary confinement, and that means insanity. Is that what these Theosophical gentlemen propose to substitute for death?

These petitioners call the death penalty “a relic of barbarism,” which is neither conclusive nor true. What is required is not loose assertion and dogs-eared phrases, but evidence of futility, or, in lack of that, cogent reasoning. It is true that the most barbarous nations inflict the death penalty most frequently and for the greatest number of offenses, but that is because barbarians are more criminal in instinct and less easily controlled by gentle methods than civilized peoples. That is why we call them barbarous. It is not so very long since our English ancestors punished more than forty kinds of crime with death. The fact that the hangman, the boiler-in-oil and the breaker-on-the-wheel had their hands full does not show that the laws were futile; it shows that the dear old boys from whom we are proud to derive ourselves were a bad lot — of which we have abundant corroborative evidence in their brutal pastimes and in their manners and customs generally. To have restrained that crowd by the rose-water methods of modern penology — that is unthinkable.

The death penalty, say the memorialists, “creates blood-thirstiness in the unthinking masses and defeats its own ends. It is a cause of murder, not a check.” These gentlemen are themselves of “the unthinking masses” — they do not know how to think. Let them try to trace and lucidly expound the chain of motives lying between the knowledge that a murderer has been hanged and the wish to commit a murder. How, precisely, does the one beget the other? By what unearthly process of reasoning does a man turning away from the gallows persuade himself that it is expedient to incur the danger of hanging? Let us have pointed out to us the several steps in that remarkable mental progress. Obviously, the thing is absurd; one might as reasonably say that contemplation of a pitted face will make a man go and catch smallpox, or the spectacle of an amputated limb on the scrap-heap of a hospital tempt him to cut off his arm.

“An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,” says the Theosophist, “is not justice. It is revenge and unworthy of a Christian civilization.” It is exact justice: nobody can think of anything more accurately just than such punishments would be, whatever the motive in awarding them. Unfortunately such a system is not practicable, but he who denies its absolute justice must deny also the justice of a bushel of corn for a bushel of corn, a dollar for a dollar, service for service. We can not undertake by such clumsy means as laws and courts to do to the criminal exactly what he has done to his victim, but to demand a life for a life is simple, practicable, expedient and (therefore) right.

Here are two of these gentlemen's dicta, between which they inserted the one just considered, though properly they should go together in frank inconsistency:

"6. It [the death penalty] punishes the innocent a thousand times more than the guilty. Death is merciful to the tortures which the living relatives must undergo. And they have committed no crime."

"8. Death penalties have not the deterring influence which imprisonment for life carries. Mere death is not dreaded. See the number of suicides. Hopeless captivity is much more severe."

Merely noting that the "living relatives" whose sorrows so sympathetically affect these soft-hearted and soft-headed persons are those of the murderer, not those of his victim, let us consider what they really say, not what they think they say: "Death is no very great punishment, for the criminal doesn't mind it much, but hopeless captivity is a very great punishment indeed Therefore, let us spare the assassin's family the tortures they will suffer if we inflict the lighter penalty. Let us make it easier for them by inflicting the severer one."

There is sense for you! — sense of the sound old fruity Theosophical sort — the kind of sense that has lifted "The Beautiful Cult" out of the dark domain of reason into the serene altitudes of inexpressible Thrill!

As to "hopeless captivity," though, there is no such thing. In legislation, today can not bind tomorrow. By an act of the Legislature — even by a constitutional prohibition, we may do away with the pardoning power; but laws can be repealed, constitutions amended.

The public has a short memory, signatures to petitions in the line of mercy are had for the asking, and tender-hearted Governors are familiar afflictions. We have life sentences already, and sometimes they are served to the end — if the end comes soon enough! but the average length of "life imprisonment" is, I am told, a little more than seven years. Hope springs eternal in the human beast, and matters simply can not be so arranged that in entering the penitentiary he will "leave hope behind." Hopeless captivity is a dream.

I quote again:

"9. Life imprisonment is the natural and humane check upon one who has proven his unfitness for freedom by taking life deliberately."

What! it is no longer "much more severe" than the "relic of barbarism?" In the course of a half dozen lines of petition it has become "humane". Truly these are lightning changes of character! It would be pleasing to know just what these worthy Theosophers have the happiness to think that they think.

"It is the only punishment that receives the consent of conscience."

That is to say, their conscience and that of the convicted assassin.

“Taking the life of a murderer does not restore the life he took therefore, it is a most illogical punishment. Two wrongs do not make a right.”

Here’s richness! Hanging an assassin is illogical because it does not restore the life of his victim; incarceration does; therefore, incarceration is logical — *quod erat demonstrandum*.

Two wrongs certainly do not make a right, but the veritable thing in dispute is whether taking the life of a life-taker is a wrong. So naked and unashamed an example of *petitio principii* would disgrace a debater in a pinafore. And these wonder-mongers have the incredible effrontery to babble of “logic”! Why, if one of them were to meet a syllogism in a lonely road he would run away in a hundred and fifty directions as hard as ever he could hook it. One is almost ashamed to dispute with such intellectual cloudings.

Whatever an individual may rightly do to protect himself society may rightly do to protect him, for he is a part of itself. If he may rightly take life in defending himself society may rightly take life in defending him. If society may rightly take life in defending him it may rightly threaten to take it. Having rightly and mercifully threatened to take it, it not only rightly may take it, but expediently must.

The law of a life for a life does not altogether prevent murder. No law can altogether prevent any form of crime, nor is it desirable that it should. Doubtless God could so have created us that our sense of right and justice could have existed without contemplation of injustice and wrong, as doubtless he could so have created us that we could have felt compassion without a knowledge of suffering, but doubtless he did not. Constituted as we are, we can know good only by contrast with evil. Our sense of sin is what our virtues feed upon; in the thin air of universal morality the altar-fires of honor and the beacons of conscience could not be kept alight A community without crime would be a community without warm and elevated sentiments — without the sense of justice, without generosity, without courage, without magnanimity — a community of small, smug souls, uninteresting to God and uncoveted by the Devil. We can have too much of crime, no doubt; what the wholesome proportion is none can say. Just now we are running a good deal to murder, but he who can gravely attribute that phenomenon, or any part of it, to infliction of the death penalty, instead of virtual immunity from any penalty at all, is justly entitled to the innocent satisfaction that comes of being a simpleton.

The New Woman is against the death penalty, naturally, for she is hot and hardy in the conviction that whatever is is wrong. She has visited this world in order to straighten things about a bit, and is in distress lest the number of things be insufficient to her need. The matter is important variously; not least so in its relation to the new heaven and the new earth that are to be the outcome of woman suffrage. There can be no doubt that the vast majority of women have sentimental objections to the death penalty that quite outweigh such practical considerations in its favor as they can be persuaded to comprehend. Aided by the minority of men afflicted by the same mental malady, they will indubitably effect its abolition in the first lustrum of their political activity. The New Woman will scarcely feel the seat of power warm beneath her before giving to the assassin's "unhand me villain!" the authority of law. So we shall make again the old experiment, discredited by a thousand failures, of preventing crime by tenderness to caught criminals. And the criminal uncaught will treat us to a quality of toughness notably augmented by the Christian spirit of the régime.

II.

As to painless executions, the simple and practical way to make them both just and popular is the adoption by murderers of a system of painless assassinations. Until this is done there seems to be no hope that the people will renounce the wholesome discomfort of the style of executions endeared to them by memories and associations of the tenderest character. There is also, I fancy, a shaping notion in the public mind that the penologists and their allies have gone about as far as they can safely be permitted to go in the direction of a softer suasion of the criminal nature toward good behavior. The modern prison has become a rather more comfortable habitation than the dangerous classes are accustomed to at home. Modern prison life has in their eyes something of the charm and glamor of an ideal existence, like that in the Happy Valley from which Rasselas had the folly to escape. Whatever advantages to the public may be secured by abating the rigors of imprisonment and inconveniences incident to execution, there is this objection, it makes them less deterrent. Let the penologers and philanthrope, have their way and even hanging might be made so pleasant and withal so interesting a social distinction that it would deter nobody but the person hanged. Adopt the euthanasian method of electricity, asphyxia by smothering in rose-leaves, or slow poisoning with rich food, and the death penalty may come to be regarded as the object of a noble ambition to the *bon vivant*, and the rising young suicide may go and murder somebody else instead of himself in order to receive a happier dispatch than his own 'prentice hand can assure him.

But the advocates of agreeable pains and penalties tell us that in the darker ages, when cruel and degrading punishment was the rule, and was freely inflicted for every light infraction of the law, crime was more common than it is now; and in this they appear to be right. But they one and all overlook a fact equally obvious and vastly significant: that the intellectual, moral and social condition of the masses was very low. Crime was more common because ignorance was more common, poverty was more common, sins of authority, and therefore hatred of authority, were more common. The world of even a century ago was a quite different world from the world of today, and a vastly more uncomfortable one. The popular adage to the contrary notwithstanding, human nature was not by a long cut the same then that it is now. In the very ancient time of that early English king, George III, when women were burned at the stake in public for various offenses and men were hanged for “coining” and children for theft, and in the still remoter period, (circa 1530) when poisoners were boiled in several waters, divers sorts of criminals were disemboweled and some are thought to have undergone *the pêne forte et dure* of cold-pressing (an infliction which the pen of Hugo has since made popular — in literature) — in these wicked old days it is possible that crime flourished, not because of the law’s severity, but in spite of it. It is possible that our respected and respectable ancestors understood the situation as it then was a trifle better than we can understand it on the hither side of this gulf of years, and that they were not the reasonless barbarians that we think them to have been. And if they were, what must have been the unreason and barbarity of the criminal element with which they had to deal?

I am far from thinking that severity of punishment can have the same restraining effect as probability of some punishment being inflicted; but if mildness of penalty is to be superadded to difficulty of conviction, and both are to be mounted upon laxity in detection, the “pile” will be “complete” with a vengeance. There is a peculiar fitness, perhaps, in the fact that all these ideas for comfortable punishment should be urged at a time when there appears to be a tolerably general disposition to inflict no punishment at all. There are, however, still a few old-fashioned persons who hold it obvious that one who is ambitious to break the laws of his country will not with as light a heart and as airy an indifference incur the peril of a harsh penalty as he will the chance of one more nearly resembling that which he would select for himself.

III.

After lying for more than a century dead I was revived, given a new body, and restored to society. This was in the year 2015. The first thing of interest that I observed was an enormous building, covering a square mile of ground. It was surrounded on all sides by a high, strong wall of hewn stone upon which armed sentinels paced to and fro. In one face of the wall was a single gate of massive iron, strongly guarded. While admiring the cyclopean architecture of the "reverend pile" I was accosted by a man in uniform, evidently The Warden, with a cheerful salutation.

"Colonel," I said, pressing his hand, "it gives me pleasure to find some one that I can believe. Pray tell me what is this building."

"That," said the colonel, "is the new State penitentiary. It is one of twelve, all alike."

"You surprise me," I replied. "Surely the criminal element must have increased enormously."

"Yes, indeed," he assented; "under the Reform *régime*, which began in your day, it became so powerful, bold and fierce that arrests were no longer possible and the prisons then in existence were soon overcrowded. The State was compelled to erect others of greater capacity."

"But, Colonel," I protested, "if the criminals were too bold and powerful to be taken into custody, of what use are the prisons! And how are they crowded?"

He fixed upon me a look that I could not fail to interpret as expressing a doubt of my sanity. "What?" he said, "is it possible that the modern Penology is unknown to you? Do you suppose we practise the antiquated and ineffective method of shutting up the rascals? Sir, the growth of the criminal element has, as I said, compelled the erection of more and larger prisons. We have enough to hold comfortably all the honest men and women of the State. Within these protecting walls they carry on all the necessary vocations of life excepting commerce. That is necessarily in the hands of the rogues as before."

"Venerated representative of Reform," I exclaimed, wringing his hand with effusion, "you are Knowledge, you are History, you are the Higher Education! We must talk further. Come, let us enter this benign edifice; you shall show me your dominion and instruct me in the rules. You shall propose me as an inmate."

I walked rapidly to the gate. When challenged by the sentinel, I turned to summon my instructor. He was nowhere visible: desolate and forbidding, as about the broken statue of Ozymandias,

> "The lone and level sands stretched far away."

RELIGION

I.

This is my ultimate and determining test of right—”What, in the circumstances, would Christ have done?” — the Christ of the New Testament, not the Christ of the commentators, theologians, priests and parsons. The test is perhaps not infallible, but it is exceedingly simple and gives as good practical results as any. I am not a Christian, but so far as I know, the best and truest and sweetest character in literature, is next to Buddha, Jesus Christ. He taught nothing new in goodness, for all goodness was ages old before he came; but with an almost infallible intuition he applied to life and conduct the entire law of righteousness. He was a lightning moral calculator: to his luminous intelligence the statement of the problem carried the solution — he could not hesitate, he seldom erred. That upon his deeds and words was founded a religion which in a debased form persists and even spreads to this day is mere attestation of his marvelous gift: adoration is a primitive mode of recognition.

It seems a pity that this wonderful man had not a longer life under more complex conditions — conditions more nearly identical with those of the modern world and the future. One would like to be able to see, through the eyes of his biographers, his genius applied to more and more difficult questions. Yet one can hardly go wrong in inference of his thought and act. In many of the complexities and entanglements of modern affairs it is no easy matter to find an answer off-hand to the question,”What is it right to do?” But put it in another way: “What would Christ have done?” and lo! there is light. I Doubt spreads her bat-like wings and is away; the sun of truth springs into the sky, splendoring the path of right and marking that of error with a deeper shade.

II.

Gentlemen of the secular press dealt with the Rev. Mr. Sheldon not altogether fairly. To some very relevant considerations they gave no weight. It was not fair, for example, to say, as the distinguished editor of the “North American Review” did, that in professing to conduct a daily newspaper for a week as he conceived that Christ would have conducted it, Mr. Sheldon acted the part of “a notoriety seeking mountebank.” It seldom is fair to go into the question of motive, for that is something upon which one has the least light, even when the motive is one’s own. The motives that we think dominale us seem simple and obvious; they are in most instances exceedingly complex and obscure. Complacently surveying the wreck and ruin that he has wrought, even that great anarch, the “well meaning person,” can not have entire assurance that he meant as well as the disastrous results appear to him to show.

The trouble with Mr. Harvey of the “Review” was inability to put himself in another’s place if that happened to be at any considerable distance from his own place. He made no allowance for the difference in the point of view — for the difference, that is, between his mind and the mind of Mr. Sheldon. If Mr. Harvey had undertaken to conduct that Kansas newspaper as Christ would have done he would indeed have been “a notoriety seeking mountebank,” or some similarly unenviable thing, for only a selfish purpose could persuade him to an obviously resultless work. But Mr. Sheldon was different — his was the religious mind — a mind having faith in an “overruling” Providence who can, and frequently does, interfere with the orderly relation of cause and effect, accomplishing an end by means otherwise inadequate to its production. Believing himself a faithful servant of that Power, and asking daily for its interposition for promotion of a highly moral purpose, why should he not have expected his favor to the enterprise? To expect that was, in Mr. Sheldon, natural, reasonable, wise; his folly lay in believing in conditions making it expectable. A person convinced that the law of gravitation is suspended is no fool for walking into a bog. Mr. Harvey may understand, but Mr. Sheldon can not understand, that Jesus Christ would not edit a newspaper at all.

The religious mind, it should be understood, is not logical. It may acquire, as Whateley’s did, a certain familiarity with the syllogism as an abstraction, but of the syllogism’s practical application, its real relation to the phenomena of thought, the religious mind can know nothing. That is merely to say that the mind congenitally gifted with the power of logic and accessible to its light and leading does not take to religion, which is a matter, not of reason, but of feeling — not of the head, but of the heart. Religions are conclusions for which the facts of nature supply no major premises. They are accepted or rejected according to the original mental make-up of the person to whom they appeal for recognition. Believers and unbelievers are like two boys quarreling across a wall. Each got to his place by means of a ladder. They may fight if they will, but neither can kick away the other’s support.

Believing the things that he did believe, Mr. Sheldon was entirely right in thinking that the main purpose of a newspaper should be the salvation of souls.

If his religious belief is true that should be the main purpose, not only of a newspaper, but of everything that has a purpose, or can be given one. If we have immortal souls and the consequences of our deeds in the body reach over into another life in another world, determining there our eternal state of happiness or pain, that is the most momentous fact conceivable. It is the only momentous fact; all others are chaff and rags. A man who, believing it to be a fact, does not make it the one purpose of his life to save his soul and the souls of others that are willing to be saved is a fool and a rogue. If he think that any part of this only needful work can be done by turning a newspaper into a gruelpot he ought to do so or (preferably) perish in the attempt.

The talk of degrading the sacred name, and all that, is mostly nonsense. If one may not test his conduct in this life by reference to the highest standard that his religion affords it is not easy to see how religion is to be made anything but a mere body of doctrine. I do not think the Christian religion will ever be seriously discredited by an attempt to determine, even with too dim a light, what under given circumstances, the man miscalled its “founder” would do. What else is his great example good for? But it is not always enough to ask oneself, “How would Christ do this?” One should first consider whether Christ would do it. It is conceivable that certain of his thrifty contemporaries may have asked him how he would change money in the Temple.

If Mr. Sheldon’s critics were unfair his defenders were, as a rule, not much better. They meant to be fair, but they had to be foolish. For example, there is the Rev. Dr. Parkhurst, whose defence was published with Mr. Harvey’s attack. I shall give a single illustration of how this more celebrated than cerebrated “divine” is pleased to think that he thinks. He is replying to some one’s application to this matter of Christ’s injunction, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth.” This command, he gravely says, “is not against money, nor against the making of money, but against the loving it for its own sake and the dedicating of it to self-aggrandizing uses.” I call this a foolish utterance, because it violates the good old rule of not telling an obvious falsehood. In no word nor syllable does Christ’s injunction give the least color of truth to the reverend gentleman’s “interpretation;” that is the reverend gentleman’s very own, and doubtless he feels an honest pride in it. It is the product of a controversial need — a characteristic attempt to crawl out of a hole in an enclosure which he was not invited to enter. The words need no “interpretation;” are capable of none; are as clear and unambiguous a proposition as language can frame. Moreover, they are consistent with all that we think we know of their author’s life and character, for he not only lived in poverty and taught poverty as a blessing, but commanded it as a duty and a means of salvation. The probable effect of universal obedience among those who adore him as a god is not at present an urgent question. I think even so faithful a disciple as the Rev. Dr. Parkhurst has still a place to lay his head, a little of the wherewithal to be clothed, and a good deal of the power of interpretation to excuse it.

III.

There are other hypocrites than those of the pulpit Dr. Gatling, the ingenious scoundrel who invented the gun that bears his name with commendable fortitude, says he has given much thought to the task of bringing the forces of war to such perfection that war will be no more. Commonly the man who talks of war becoming so destructive as to be impossible is only a harmless lunatic, but this fellow utters his cant to conceal his cupidity. If he thought there was any danger of the nations beating their swords into plowshares we should see him "take the stump" against agriculture forthwith. The same is true of all military inventors. They are lions' parasites; themselves, of cold blood they fatten upon hot. The sheep-tick's paler fare is not at all to their taste.

I sometimes wish I were a preacher: preachers do so blindly ignore their shining opportunities. I am indifferently versed in theology — whereof, so help me Heaven, I do not believe one word — but know something of religion. I know, for example, that Jesus Christ was no soldier; that war has two essential features which did not command His approval: aggression and defence. No man can either attack or defend and remain Christian; and if no man, no nation. I could quote texts by the hour proving that Christ taught not only absolute abstention from violence but absolute non-resistance. Now what do we see? Nearly all the so-called Christian nations of the world sweating and groaning under their burdens of debt contracted in violation of these injunctions which they believe divine — contracted in perfecting their means of offense and defense. "We must have the best," they cry; and if armor plates for ships were better when alloyed with silver, and guns if banded with gold, such armor plates would be put upon the ships, such guns would be freely made. No sooner does one nation adopt some rascal's costly device for taking life or protecting it from the taker (and these soulless inventors will as readily sell the product of their malign ingenuity to one nation as to another) than all the rest either possess themselves of it or adopt something superior and more expensive; and so all pay the penalty for the sins of each. A hundred million dollars is a moderate estimate of what it has cost the world to abstain from strangling the infant Gatling in his cradle.

You may say, if you will, that primitive Christianity — the Christianity of Christ — is not adapted to these rough-and-tumble times; that it is not a practical scheme of conduct. As you please; I have not undertaken to say what it is not, but what it partly is. I am no Christian, though I think that Christ probably knew what was good for man about as well as Dr. Gatling or the United States Ordnance Office. It is not for me to defend Christianity; Christ did not. Nevertheless, I can not forbear the wish that I were a preacher, in order sincerely to affirm that the awful burdens borne by modern nations are obvious judgments of Heaven for disobedience to the Prince of Peace. What a striking theme to kindle fires upon the heights of imagination — to fill the secret sources of eloquence — to stir the very stones in the temple of truth! What a noble subject for the pious gentlemen who serve (with rank, pay and allowances) as chaplains in the Army and the Navy, or the civilian divines who offer prayer at the launching of an ironclad!

IV.

A matter of missionaries commonly is to the fore as a cause of quarrel among nations which have the hardihood to prefer their own religions to ours. Missionaries constitute, in truth, a perpetual menace to the national peace. I dare say the most of them are conscientious men and women of a certain order of intellect. They believe, and from the way that they interpret their sacred book have some reason to believe, that in meddling uninvited with the spiritual affairs of others they perform a work acceptable to God — their God. They think they discern a moral difference between “approaching” a man of another religion about the state of his soul and approaching him on the condition of his linen or the character of his wife. I think there is no difference. I have observed that the person who volunteers an interest in my spiritual welfare is the same person from whom I must expect an impudent concern about my temporal affairs. The missionary is one who goes about throwing open the shutters of other men’s bosoms in order to project upon the blank walls a shadow of himself.

No ruler nor government of sense would willingly permit foreigners to sap the foundation of the national religion. No ruler nor government ever does permit it except under the stress of compulsion. It is through the people’s religion that a wise government governs wisely — even in our own country we make only a transparent pretense of officially ignoring Christianity, and a pretense only because we have so many kinds of Christians, all jealous and inharmonious. Each sect would make this a Theocracy if it could, and would that make short work of any missionary from abroad. Happily all religions but ours have the sloth and timidity of error; Christianity alone, drawing vigor from eternal truth, is courageous enough and energetic enough to make itself a nuisance to people of every other faith. The Jew not only does not bid for converts, but discourages them by imposition of hard conditions, and the Moslem True Believer's simple, forthright method of reducing error is to cut off the head holding it. I don't say that this is right; I say only that, being practical and comprehensible, it commands a certain respect from the impartial observer not conversant with scriptural justification of the other practice.

It is only where the missionaries have made themselves hated that there is any molestation of Europeans engaged in the affairs of this world. Chinese antipathy to Caucasians in China is neither a racial animosity nor a religious; it is an instinctive dislike of persons who will not mind their own business. China has been infested with missionaries from the earliest centuries of our era, and they have rarely been molested when they have taken the trouble to behave themselves. In the time of the Emperor Justinian the fact that the Christian religion was openly preached throughout China enabled that sovereign to wrest from the Chinese the jealously-guarded secret of silk-making. He sent two monks to Pekin, who alternately preached seriousness and studied sericulture, and who brought away silkworms' eggs concealed in sticks.

In religious matters the Chinese are more tolerant than we. They let the religions of others alone, but naturally and rightly demand that others shall let theirs alone. In China, as in other Oriental countries where the color line is not drawn and where slavery itself is a light affliction, the mental attitude of the zealot who finds gratification in "spreading the light" of which he deems himself custodian, is not understood. Like most things not understood, it is felt to be bad, and is indubitably offensive.

V.

At a church club meeting a paper was read by a minister entitled, "Why the Masses Do not Attend the Churches." This good and pious man was not ashamed to account for it by the fact that there is no Sunday law, and "the masses" can find recreation elsewhere, even in the drinking saloons. It is frank of him to admit that he and his professional brethren have not brains enough to make religious services more attractive than shaking dice for cigars or playing cards for drink; but if it is a fact he must not expect the local government to assist in spreading the gospel by rounding-up the people and corralling them in the churches. The truth is, and this gentleman suspects it, that “the masses” stay out of hearing of his pulpit because he talks nonsense of the most fatiguing kind; they would rather do any one of a thousand other things than go to hear it. These parsons are like a scolding wife who grieves because her husband will not pass his evenings with her. The more she grieves, the more she scolds and the more diligently he keeps away from her. I don’t think Jack Satan is conspicuously wise, but he is in the main a good entertainer, with a right pretty knack at making people come again; but the really reprehensible part of his performance is not the part that attracts them. The parsons might study his methods with great advantage to religion and morality.

It may be urged that religious services have not entertainment for their object. But the people, when not engaged in business or labor, have it for *their* object. If the clergy do not choose to adapt their ministrations to the characters of those to whom they wish to minister, that is their own affair; but let them accept the consequences. “The masses” move along the line of least reluctance. They do not really enjoy Sunday at all; they try to get through the day in the manner that is least wearisome to the spirit. Possibly their taste is not what it ought to be. If this minister were a physician of bodies instead of souls, and patients who had not called him in should refuse to take the medicine which he thought his best and they his nastiest, he should either offer them another, a little less disagreeable if a little less efficacious, or let them alone. In no case is he justified in asking the civil authority to hold their noses while he plies the spoon.

“The masses” have not asked for churches and services; they really do not care for anything of the kind — whether they ought is another matter. If the clergy choose to supply them, that is well and worthy. But they should understand their relation to the impenitent worldling, which is precisely that of a physician without a mandate from the patient, who may not be convinced that there is very much the matter with him. The physician may have a diploma and a State certificate authorizing him to practise, but if the patient do not deem himself bound to be practised upon has the physician a right to make him miserable until he will submit? Clearly, he has not. If he can not persuade him to come to the dispensary and take medicine there is an end to the matter, and he may justly conclude that he is misfitted to his vocation.

I am sure that the ministers and that singularly small contingent of earnest and, on the whole, pretty good persons who cluster about them do not perceive how alien they are in their convictions, tastes, sympathies and general mental habitudes to the great majority of their fellow men and women. Their voices, like “the gushing wave” which, to the ears of the lotus-eaters,

“Far, far away did seem to mourn and rave,” come to us as from beyond a great gulf — mere ghosts of sound, almost destitute of signification. We know that they would have us do something, but what it is we do not clearly apprehend. We feel that they are concerned for us, but why we are imperfectly able to conceive. In an intelligible tongue they tell us of unthinkable things. Here and there in the discourse we catch a word, a phrase, a sentence — something which, from ancestors whose mother-speech it was, we have inherited the capacity to understand; but the homily as a whole is devoid of meaning. Solemn and sonorous enough it all is, and not unmusical, but it lacks its natural accompaniment of shawm and sackbut and the wind-swept harp in the willows by the waters of Babylon. It is, in fact, something of a survival — the memory of a dream.

VI.

The first week of January is set apart as a week of prayer. It is a custom of more than a half century's age, and it seems that "gracious answers have been received in proportion to the earnestness and unanimity of the petitions." That is to say, in this world's speech, the more Christians that have prayed and the more they have meant it, the better the result is known to have been. I don't believe all that. I don't believe that when God is asked to do something that he had not intended to do he counts noses before making up his mind whether to do it or not God probably knows the character of his work, and knowing that he has made this a world of knaves and dunces he must know that the more of them that ask for something, and the more loudly they ask, the stronger is the presumption that they ought not to have it. And I think God is perhaps less concerned about his popularity than some good folk seem to suppose.

Doubtless there are errors in the record of results — some things set down as "answers" to prayer which came about through the orderly operation of natural laws and would have occurred anyhow. I am told that similar errors have been made, or are believed to have been made, in the past. In 1730, for example, a good Bishop at Auvergne prayed for an eclipse of the sun as a warning to unbelievers. The eclipse ensued and the pious prelate made the most of it; but when it was shown that the astronomers of the period had foretold it he was a sufferer from irreverent gibes. A monk of Treves prayed that an enemy of the church, then in Paris, might lose his head, and it fell off; but it transpired that, unknown (or known) to the monk, the man was under sentence of decapitation when the prayer was made. This is related by Ausolus, who piously explains, however, that but for the prayer the sentence might perhaps have been commuted to service in the galleys. I have myself known a minister to pray for rain, and the rain came. Perhaps you can conceive his discomfiture when I showed him that the weather bureau had previously predicted a fair day.

I do not object to a week of prayer. But why only a week? If prayer is “answered” Christians ought to pray all the time. That prayer is “answered” the Scripture affirms as positively and unequivocally as anything can be affirmed in words: “All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, that ye shall receive.” Why, then, when all the clergy of this country prayed, publicly for the recovery of President McKinley, did the man die? Why is it that although two pious Chaplains ask almost daily that goodness and wisdom may descend upon Congress, Congress remains wicked and unwise? Why is it that although in all the churches and half the dwellings of the land God is continually asked for good government, good government remains what it always and everywhere has been, a dream? From Earth to Heaven in unceasing ascension flows a stream of prayer for every blessing that man desires, yet man remains unblest, the victim of his own folly and passions, the sport of fire, flood, tempest and earthquake, afflicted with famine and disease, war, poverty and crime, his world an incredible welter of evil, his life’ a labor and his hope a lie. Is it possible that all this praying is futilized and invalidated by the lack of faith? — that the “asking” is not credentialed by the “believing?” When the anointed minister of Heaven spreads his palms and uprolls his eyes to beseech a general blessing or some special advantage is he the celebrant of a hollow, meaningless rite, or the dupe of a false promise? One does not know, but if one is not a fool one does know that his every resultless petition proves him by the inexorable laws of logic to be the one or the other.

VII.

Modern Christianity is beautiful exceedingly, and he who admires not is eyed batly and minded as the mole. “Sell all thou hast,” said Christ and “give to the poor.” All — no less — in order “to be saved.” The poor were Christ’s peculiar care. Ever for them and their privations, and not greatly for their spiritual darkness, fell from his lips the compassionate word, the mandate divine for their relief and cherishing. Of foreign missions, of home missions, of mission schools, of church buildings, of work among pagans *in partibus infidelium*, of work among sailors, of communion table, of delegates to councils — of any of these things he knew no more than the moon man. They were inventions of others, as is the entire florid and flamboyant fabric of ecclesiasticism that has been reared, stone by stone and century after century, upon his simple life and works and words. “Founder,” indeed! He founded nothing, instituted nothing; Paul did all that Christ simply went about doing, and being, good — admonishing the rich, whom he regarded as criminals, comforting the luckless and uttering wisdom with that Oriental indirection wherein our stupid ingenuity finds imaginary warrant for all desiderated pranks and fads.

IMMORTALITY

THE desire for life everlasting has commonly been affirmed to be universal — at least that is the view taken by those unacquainted with Oriental faiths and with Oriental character. Those of us whose knowledge is a trifle wider are not prepared to say that the desire is universal or even general.

If the devout Buddhist, for example, wishes to “live alway,” he has not succeeded in very clearly formulating the desire. The sort of thing that he is pleased to hope for is not what we should call life, and not what many of us would care for.

When a man says that everybody has “a horror of annihilation,” we may be very sure that he has not many opportunities for observation, or that he has not availed himself of all that he has. Most persons go to sleep rather gladly, yet sleep is virtual annihilation while it lasts; and if it should last forever the sleeper would be no worse off after a million years of it than after an hour of it There are minds sufficiently logical to think of it that way, and to them annihilation is not a disagreeable thing to contemplate and expect.

In this matter of immortality, people’s beliefs appear to go along with their wishes. The chap who is content with annihilation thinks he will get it; those that want immortality are pretty sure they are immortal, and that is a very comfortable allotment of faiths. The few of us that are left unprovided for are those who don’t bother themselves much about the matter, one way or another.

The question of human immortality is the most momentous that the mind is capable of conceiving. If it is a fact that the dead live, all other facts are in comparison trivial and without interest. The prospect of obtaining certain knowledge with regard to this stupendous matter is not encouraging. In all countries but those in barbarism the powers of the profoundest and most penetrating intelligences have been ceaselessly addressed to the task of glimpsing a life beyond this life; yet today no one can truly say that he knows. It is still as much a matter of faith as ever it was.

Our modern Christian nations hold a passionate hope and belief in another world, yet the most popular writer and speaker of his time, the man whose lectures drew the largest audiences, the work of whose pen brought him the highest rewards, was he who most strenuously strove to destroy the ground of that hope and unsettle the foundations of that belief.

The famous and popular Frenchman, Professor of Spectacular Astronomy, Camille Flammarion, affirms immortality because he has talked with departed souls who said that it was true. Yes, Monsieur, but surely you know the rule about hearsay evidence. We Anglo-Saxons are very particular about that. Your testimony is of that character.

"I don't repudiate the presumptive arguments of school men. I merely supplement them with something positive. For instance, if you assumed the existence of God this argument of the scholastics is a good one. God has implanted in all men the desire of perfect happiness. This desire can not be satisfied in our lives here. If there were not another life wherein to satisfy it then God would be a deceiver. *Voila tout*."

There is more: the desire of perfect happiness does not imply immortality, even if there is a God, for:

(1) God may not have implanted it, but merely suffers it to exist, as He suffers sin to exist, the desire of wealth, the desire to live longer than we do in this world. It is not held that God implanted all the desires of the human heart. Then why hold that He implanted that of perfect happiness?

(2) Even if He did — even if a divinely implanted desire entail its own gratification — even if it can not be gratified in this life — that does not imply immortality. It implies *only* another life long enough for its gratification just once. An eternity of gratification is not a logical inference from it.

(3) Perhaps God *is* "a deceiver" who knows that He is not? Assumption of the existence of a God is one thing; assumption of the existence of a God who is honorable and candid according to our finite conception of honor and candor is another.

(4) There may be an honorable and candid God. He may have implanted in us the desire of perfect happiness. It may be — it is — impossible to gratify that desire in this life. Still, another life is not implied, for God may not have intended us to draw the inference that He is going to gratify it. If omniscient and omnipotent, God must be held to have intended, whatever occurs, but no such God is assumed in M. Flammarion's illustration, and it may be that God's knowledge and power are limited, or that one of them is limited.

M. Flammarion is a learned, if somewhat "yellow" astronomer.

He has a tremendous imagination, which naturally is more at home in the marvelous and catastrophic than in the orderly regions of familiar phenomena. To him the heavens are an immense pyrotechnicon and he is the master of the show and sets off the fireworks. But he knows nothing of logic, which is the science of straight thinking, and his views of things have therefore no value; they are nebulous.

Nothing is clearer than that our pre-existence is a dream, having absolutely no basis in anything that we know or can hope to know. Of after-existence there is said to be evidence, or rather testimony, in assurances of those who are in present enjoyment of it — if it is enjoyable. Whether this testimony has actually been given — and it is the only testimony worth a moment's consideration — is a disputed point Many persons while living this life have professed to have received it. But nobody professes, or ever has professed, to have received a communication of any kind from one in actual experience of the fore-life. "The souls as yet ungarmented," if such there are, are dumb to question. The Land beyond the Grave has been, if not observed, yet often and variously described: if not explored and surveyed, yet carefully charted. From among so many accounts of it that we have, he must be fastidious indeed who can not be suited. But of the Fatherland that spreads before the cradle — the great Heretofore, wherein we all dwelt if we are to dwell in the Hereafter, we have no account. Nobody professes knowledge of that. No testimony reaches our ears of flesh concerning its topographical or other features; no one has been so enterprising as to wrest from its actual inhabitants any particulars of their character and appearance, to refresh our memory withal. And among educated experts and professional proponents of worlds to be there is a general denial of its existence.

I am of their way of thinking about that. The fact that we have no recollection of a former life is entirely conclusive of the matter. To have lived an unrecollected life is impossible and unthinkable, for there would be nothing to connect the new life with the old — no thread of continuity — nothing that persisted from the one life to the other. The later birth is that of another person, an altogether different being, unrelated to the first — a new John Smith succeeding to the late Tom Jones.

Let us not be misled here by a false analogy. Today I may get a thwack on the mazzard which will give me an intervening season of unconsciousness between yesterday and tomorrow. Thereafter I may live to a green old age with no recollection of anything that I knew, or did, or was before the accident; yet I shall be the same person, for between the old life and the new there will be a *nexus*, a thread of continuity, something spanning the gulf from the one state to the other, and the same in both — namely, my body with its habits, capacities and powers. That is I; that identifies me as my former self — authenticates and credentials me as the person that incurred the cranial mischance, dislodging memory.

But when death occurs *all* is dislodged if memory is; for between two merely mental or spiritual existences memory is the only *nexus* conceivable; consciousness of identity is the only identity. To live again without memory of having lived before is to live another. Re-existence without recollection is absurd; there is nothing to re-exist.

OPPORTUNITY

THIS is not a country of equal fortunes; outside a Socialist’s dream no such country exists or can exist. But as nearly as possible this is a country of equal opportunities for those who begin life with nothing but nature’s endowments — and of such is the kingdom of success.

In nine instances in ten successful Americans — that is Americans who have succeeded in any worthy ambition or legitimate field of endeavor — have started with nothing but the skin they stood in. It almost may be said, indeed, that to begin with nothing is a main condition of success — in America.

To a young man there is no such hopeless impediment as wealth or the expectation of wealth. Here a man and there a man will be born so abundantly endowed by nature as to overcome the handicap of artificial “advantages,” but that is not the rule; usually the chap “born with a gold spoon in his mouth” puts in his time sucking that spoon, and without other employment. Counting possession of the spoon success, why should he bestir himself to achieve what he already has?

The real curled darling of opportunity has nothing in his mouth but his teeth and his appetite — he knows, or is likely to know, what it is to feel his belly sticking to his back. If he have brains a-plenty he will get on, for he must be up and doing — the penalty of indiligence is famine. If he have not, he may up and do to the uttermost satisfaction of his mind and heart, but the end of that man is failure, with possibly Socialism, that last resort of conscious incompetence. It fatigues, this talk of the narrowing opportunities of today, the “closed avenues to success,” and the rest of it. Doubtless it serves its purpose of making mischief for the tyrant trusts and the wicked rich generally, but in a six months’ bound volume of it there is not enough of truth to float a religion.

Men of brains never had a better chance than now to accomplish all that it is desirable that they should accomplish; and men of no brains never did have much of a chance, nor under any possible conditions can have in this country, nor in any other. They are nature’s failures, God’s botchwork. Let us be sorry for them, treating them justly and generously; but the Socialism that would level us all down to their plane of achievement and reward is a proposal of which they are themselves the only proponents.

Opportunity, indeed! Who is holding me from composing a great opera that would make me rich and famous?

What oppressive laws forbade me to work my passage up the Yukon as deckhand on a steamboat and discover the gold along Bonanza creek?

What is there in our industrial system that conceals from me the secret of making diamonds from charcoal?

Why was it not I who, entering a lawyer’s office as a suitable person to sweep it out, left it as an appointed Justice of the Supreme Court?

The number of actual and possible sources of profit and methods of distinction is infinite. Not all the trusts in the world combined in one trust of trusts could appreciably reduce it — could condemn to permanent failure one man with the talent and the will to succeed. They can abolish that doubtful benefactor of the “small dealer,” who lives by charging too much, and that very thickly disguised blessing the “drummer,” whom they have to add to the price of everything they sell; but for every opportunity they close they open a new one and leave untouched a thousand actual and a million possible ones. As to their dishonest practices, these are conspicuous and striking, because “lumped,” but no worse than the silent, steady aggregate of cheating; by which their constituent firms and individuals, formerly consumed the consumer without his special wonder.

CHARITY

THE promoter of organized charity protests against “the wasteful and mischievous method of undirected relief.” He means, naturally, relief that is not directed by somebody else than the person giving it — undirected by him and his kind — professional almoners — philanthropists who deem it more blessed to allot than to bestow. Indubitably much is wasted and some mischief done by indiscriminate giving — and individual givers are addicted to that faulty practice. But there is something to be said for “undirected relief” quite the same. It blesses not only him who receives (when he is worthy; and when he is not upon his own head be it), but him who gives. To those uncalculating persons who, despite the protests of the organized charitable, concede a certain moral value to the spontaneous impulses of the heart and read in the word “relief” a double meaning, the office of the mere distributor is imperfectly sacred. He is even without scriptural authority, and lives in the perpetual challenge of a moral *quo warranto*. Nevertheless he is not without his uses. He is a tapper of tills that do not open automatically. He is almoner to the uncompassionate, who but for him would give no alms. He negotiates unnatural but not censurable relations between selfishness and ingratitude. The good that he does is purely material. He makes two leaves of fat to grow where but one grew before, lessens the sum of gastric pangs and dorsal chills. All this is something, certainly, but it generates no warm and elevated sentiments and does nothing in mitigation of the poor’s animosity to the rich. Organized charity is a sapid and savorless thing; its place among moral agencies is no higher than that of root beer.

Christ did not say “Sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the church to give to the poor.” He did not mention the Associated Charities of the period. I do not find the words “The Little Sisters of the Poor ye have always with you,” nor “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these Dorcas societies ye have done it unto me.” Nowhere do I find myself commanded to enable others to comfort the afflicted and visit the sick and those in prison. Nowhere is recorded God’s blessing upon him who makes himself a part of a charity machine — no, not even if he be the guiding lever of the whole mechanism.

Organized charity is a delusion and a snare. It enables Munniglut to think himself a good man for paying annual dues and buying transferable meal tickets. Munniglut is not thereby, a good man. On the Last Great Day, when he cowers in the Ineffable Presence and is asked for an accounting it will not help him to say, “Hearing that A was in want I gave money for his need to B.” Nor will it help B to say, “When A was in distress I asked C to relieve him, and myself allotted the relief according to a resolution of D, E and F.”

There are blessings and benefactions that one would willingly forego — among them the poor. Quack remedies for poverty amuse; a real specific would kindle a noble enthusiasm. Yet the world would lose much by it; human nature would suffer a change for the worse. Happily and unhappily poverty is not abolishable: “The poor ye have always with you” is a sentence that can never become unintelligible. Effect of a thousand causes, poverty is invincible, eternal. And since we must have it let us thank God for it and avail ourselves of all its advantages to mind and character. He who is not good to the deserving poor — who knows not those of his immediate environment, who goes not among them making inquiry of their personal needs, who does not wish with all his heart and both his hands to relieve them — is a fool.

EMANCIPATED WOMAN

WHAT I should like to know is, how “the enlargement of woman’s sphere” by entrance into the various activities of commercial, professional and industrial life benefits the sex. It may please Helen Gougar and satisfy her sense of logical accuracy to say, as she does: “We women must work in order to fill the places left vacant by liquor-drinking men.” But who filled these places before? Did they remain vacant, or were there then disappointed applicants, as now? If my memory serves, there has been no time in the period that it covers when the supply of workers — abstemious male workers — was not in excess of the demand. That it has always been so is sufficiently attested by the universally inadequate wage rate.

Employers seldom fail, and never for long, to get all the workmen they need. The field, then, into which women have put their sickles was already overcrowded with reapers. Whatever employment women have obtained has been got by displacing men — who would otherwise be supporting women. Where is the general advantage? We may shout “high tariff,” “combination of capital,” “demonetization of silver,” and what not, but if searching for the cause of augmented poverty and crime, “industrial discontent,” and the tramp evil, instead of dogmatically expounding it, we should take some account of this enormous, sudden addition to the number of workers seeking work. If any one thinks that within the brief period of a generation the visible supply of labor can be enormously augmented without profoundly affecting the stability of things and disastrously touching the interests of wage-workers, let no rude voice dispel his dream of such maleficent agencies as his slumbrous understanding may joy to affirm. And let our Widows of Ashur unlung themselves in advocacy of quack remedies for evils for which they themselves are cause; it remains true that when the contention of two lions for one bone is exacerbated by the accession of a lioness the squabble is not composable by stirring up some bears in the cage adjacent.

Indubitably a woman is under no obligation to sacrifice herself to the good of her sex by refusing needed employment in the hope that it may fall to a man gifted with dependent women. Nevertheless our congratulations are more intelligent when bestowed upon her individual head than when sifted into the hair of all Eve’s daughters. This is a world of complexities, in which the lines of interest are so intertangled as frequently to transgress that of sex; and one ambitious to help but half the race may profitably know that every effort to that end provokes a counterbalancing mischief. The “enlargement of woman’s opportunities” has benefited individual women. It has not benefited the sex as a whole, and has distinctly damaged the race. The mind that can not discern a score of great and irreparable general evils distinctly traceable to “emancipation of woman” is as impregnable to the light as a toad in a rock.

A marked demerit of the new order of things — the régime of female commercial service — is that its main advantage accrues, not to the race, not to the sex, not to the class, not to the individual woman, but to the person of least need and worth — the male employer. (Female employers in any considerable number there will not be, but those that we have could give the male ones profitable instruction in grinding the faces of their employees.) This constant increase of the army of labor — always and everywhere too large for the work in sight — by accession of a new contingent of natural oppressibles makes the very teeth of old Munniglut thrill with a poignant delight. It brings in that situation known as two laborers seeking one job — and one of them a person whose bones he can easily grind to make his bread. And Munniglut is a miller of skill and experience, dusted all over with the evidence of his useful craft. When Heaven has assisted the Daughters of Hope to open to women a new “avenue of opportunities” the first to enter and walk therein, like God in the Garden of Eden, is the good Mr. Munniglut, contentedly smoothing the folds out of the superior slope of his paunch, exuding the peculiar aroma of his oleagmous personality, and larding the new roadway with the overflow of a righteousness secreted by some spiritual gland stimulated to action by relish of his own identity. And ever thereafter the subtle suggestion of a fat Philistinism lingers along the path of progress like an assertion of a possessory right.

It is God’s own crystal truth that in dealing with women unfortunate enough to be compelled to earn their own living and fortunate enough to have wrested from Fate an opportunity to do so, men of business and affairs treat them with about the same delicate consideration that they show to dogs and horses of the inferior breeds. It does not commonly occur to the wealthy “professional man,” or “prominent merchant,” to be ashamed to add to his yearly thousands a part of the salary justly due to his female bookkeeper or typewriter, who sits before him all day with an empty belly in order to have an habilimented back. He has a vague, hazy notion that the law of supply and demand is mandatory, and that in submitting himself to it by paying her a half of what he would have to pay a man of inferior efficiency he is supplying the world with a noble example of obedience. I must take the liberty to remind him that the law of supply and demand is not imperative; it is not a statute, but a phenomenon. He may reply:

"It is imperative; the penalty for disobedience is failure. If I pay more in salaries and wages than I need to, my competitor will not; and with that advantage he will drive me from the field." If his margin of profit is so small that he must eke it out by coining the sweat of his workmen into nickels, I've nothing to say to him. Let him adopt in peace the motto, "I cheat to eat" I do not know why he should eat, but Nature, who has provided sustenance for the worming sparrow, the sparrowing owl, and the owling eagle, approves the needy man of prey, and makes a place for him at table.

Human nature is pretty well balanced; for every lacking virtue there is a rough substitute that will serve at a pinch — as cunning is the wisdom of the unwise, and ferocity the courage of the coward. Nobody is altogether bad; the scoundrel who has grown rich by underpaying the workmen in his factory will sometimes endow an asylum for indigent seamen. To oppress one's own workmen, and provide for the workmen of a neighbor — to skin those in charge of one's own interests, while cottoning and oiling the residuary product of another's skinnery — that is not very good benevolence, nor very good sense, but it serves in place of both. The man who eats *pâté de fois gras* in the sweat of his girl cashier's face, or wears purple and fine linen in order that his typewriter may have an eocene gown and a pliocene hat, seems a tolerably satisfactory specimen of the genus thief; but let us not forget that in his own home — a fairly good one — he may enjoy and merit that highest and most honorable title in the hierarchy of woman's favor, "a good provider." One having a just claim to that glittering distinction should enjoy a sacred immunity from the coarse and troublesome question, "From whose backs and bellies do you provide?"

So much for the material results to the sex. What are the moral results? One does not like to speak of them, particularly to those who do not and can not know — to good women in whose innocent minds female immorality is inseparable from flashy gowning and the painted face; to foolish, book-taught men who honestly believe in some protective sanctity that hedges womanhood. If men of the world with years enough to have lived out of the old *régime* into the new would testify in this matter there would ensue a great rattling of dry bones in bodices of reform ladies. Nay, if the young man about town, knowing nothing of how things were in the "dark backward and abysm of time," but something of the moral difference between even so free-running a creature as the society girl and the average working girl of the factory, the shop and the office, would speak out (under assurance of immunity from prosecution) his testimony would be a surprise to the cartilaginous virgins, blowsy matrons, acrid relicts and hairy males of Emancipation. It would pain, too, some very worthy but unobservant persons not in sympathy with "the cause."

Certain significant facts are within the purview of all but the very young and the comfortably blind. To the woman of today the man of today is imperfectly polite. In place of reverence he gives her “deference;” to the language of compliment has succeeded the language of raillery. Men have almost forgotten how to bow. Doubtless the advanced female prefers the new manner, as may some of her less forward sisters, thinking it more sincere. It is not; our giddy grandfather talked high-flown nonsense because his heart had tangled his tongue. He treated his woman more civilly than we ours because he loved her better. He never had seen her on the “rostrum” and in the lobby, never had seen her in advocacy of herself, never had read her confessions of his sins, never had felt the stress of her competition, nor himself assisted by daily personal contact in rubbing the bloom off her. He did not know that her virtues were due to her secluded life, but thought, dear old boy, that they were a gift of God.

THE OPPOSING SEX

EMANCIPATION of woman is not of American invention. The “movement,” like most others that are truly momentous, originated in Europe, and has broken through and broken down more formidable barriers of law, custom and tradition there than here. It is not true that the English married woman is “virtually a bondwoman” to her husband; that “she can hardly go and come without his consent, and usually he does not consent;” that “all she has is his.” If there is such a thing as “the bitterness of the English married woman to the law,” underlying it there is such a thing as ignorance of what the law is. The “subjection of woman,” as it exists today in England, is customary and traditionary — a social, not a legal, subjection. Nowhere has law so sharply challenged that male dominion whose seat is in the harder muscles, the larger brain and the coarser heart And the law, it may be worth while to point out, was not of woman born; nor was it handed down out of Heaven engraved on tables of stone. Learned English judges have decided that virtually the term “marital rights” has no longer a legal signification. As one writer puts it, “The law has relaxed the husband’s control over his wife’s person and fortune, bit by bit, until legally it has left him nothing but the power to prevent her, if he is so disposed, and arrives in time, from jumping out of the window.” He will find it greatly to his interest to arrive in time when he conveniently can, and to be so disposed, for the husband is still liable for the wife’s torts; and if she makes the leap he may have to pay for the telescoping of a subjacent hat or two.

In England it is the Tyrant Man himself who is chafing in his chain. Not only is a husband still liable for the wrongs committed by the wife whom he has no longer the power to restrain from committing them, but in many ways — in one very important way — his obligation to her remains intact after she has had the self-sacrifice to surrender all obligation to him. Moreover, if his wife has a separate estate he has to endure the pain of seeing it hedged about from her creditors (themselves not altogether happy in the contemplation) with restrictions which do not hamper the right of recourse against his own. Doubtless all this is not without a softening effect upon his character, smoothing down his dispositional asperities and endowing him day by day with fresh accretions of humility. And that is good for him. I do not say that female autonomy is not among the most efficacious agencies for man’s reclamation from the sin of pride; I only say that it is not indigenous to this country, the sweet, sweet home of the assassiness, the happy hunting ground of the whiplady, the paradise of the vitrioleuse.

If the protagonists of woman suffrage are frank they are shallow; if wise, uncandid. Continually they affirm their conviction that political power in the hands of women will give us better government. To proof of that proposition they address all the powers that they have and marshal such facts as can be compelled to serve under their flag. They either think or profess to think that if they can show that women's votes will purify politics they will have proved their case. That is not true; whether they know it or not, the strongest objection to woman suffrage would remain untouched. Pure politics is desirable, certainly, but it is not the chief concern of the best and most intelligent citizens. Good government is "devoutly to be wished," but more than good government we need good women. If all our public affairs were to be ordered with the goodness and wisdom of angels, and this state of perfection were obtained by sacrifice of any of those qualities which make the best of our women, if not what they should be, nor what the mindless male thinks them, at least what they are, we should have purchased the advantage too dearly. The effect of woman suffrage upon the country is of secondary importance: the question for profitable consideration is, How will it affect the character of woman? He who does not see in the goodness and charm of such women as are good and charming something incalculably more precious than any degree of political purity or national prosperity may be a patriot: doubtless he is; but also he has the distinction to be a pig.

I should like to ask the gallant gentlemen who vote for removal of woman's political disability if they have observed in the minds and manners of the women in the forefront of the movement nothing "ominous and drear." Are not these women different — I don't say worse, just different — from the best types of women of peace who are not exhibits and audibles? If they are different, is the difference of such a nature as to encourage a hope that activity in public affairs will work an improvement in women generally? Is "the glare of publicity" good for her growth in grace and winsomeness? Would a sane and sensible husband or lover willingly forego in wife or sweetheart all that the colonels of her sex appear to lack, or find in her all that they appear to have and to value?

A few more questions — addressed more particularly to veteran observers than to those to whom the world is new and strange. Have you observed any alteration in the manner of men toward women? If so, is it in the direction of greater rudeness or of more ceremonious respect? And again, if so, has not the change, in point of time, been coincident with the genesis and development of woman's "emancipation" and her triumphal entry into the field of "affairs"? Are you really desirous that the change go further? Or do you think that when women are armed with the ballot they will compel a return of the old *régime* of deference and delicate consideration — extorting by their power the tribute once voluntarily paid to their weakness? Is there any known way by which women can at once be our political equals and our social superiors, our competitors in the sharp and bitter struggle for glory, gain or bread, and the objects of our unselfish and undiminished devotion? The present predicts the future; of the foreshadow of the coming event all sensitive female hearts feel the chill. For whatever advantages, real or illusory, some women enjoy under this *régime* of partial "emancipation" all women pay. Of the coin in which payment is made the shouldering shouters of the sex have not a groat and can bear the situation with impunity. They have either passed the age of masculine attention or were born without the means to its accroachment. Dwelling in the open bog, they can afford to defy eviction.

While men did nearly all the writing and public speaking of the world, setting so the fashion in thought, women, naturally extolled with true sexual extravagance, came to be considered, even by themselves, as a very superior order of beings, with something in them of divinity which was denied to man. Not only were they represented as better, generally, than men, as indeed anybody could see that they were, but their goodness was supposed to be a kind of spiritual endowment and more or less independent of environmental influences.

We are changing all that. Women are beginning to do much of the writing and public speaking, and not only are they going to extol us (to the fattening of our conceit) but they are bound to disclose, even to the unthinking, certain defects of character in themselves which their silence had veiled. Their competition, too, in several kinds of affairs will slowly but certainly provoke resentment, and moreover expose them to temptations which will distinctly lower the morality of their sex. All these changes, and many more having a similar effect and significance, are occurring with amazing rapidity, and the stated results are already visible to even the blindest observation. In accurate depiction of the new order of things conjecture fails, but so much we know: the woman-superstition has already received its death wound and must soon expire.

Everywhere, and in no reverential spirit, men are questioning the dear old idolatry; not "sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer," but dispassionately applying to its basic doctrine the methods of scientific criticism. He who within even the last twenty years has not marked in society, in letters, in art, in everything, a distinct change in man's attitude toward women — a change which, were one a woman, one would not wish to see — may reasonably conclude that much, otherwise observable, is hidden by his nose. In the various movements — none of them consciously iconoclastic — engaged in overthrowing this oddest of modern superstitions there is something to deprecate, and even deplore, but the superstition can be spared. It never had much in it that was either creditable or profitable, and all through its rituals ran a note of insincerity which was partly Nature's protest against the rites, but partly, too, hypocrisy. There is no danger that good men will ever cease to respect and love good women, and if bad men ever cease to adore them for their sex when not beating them for their virtues the gain in consistency will partly offset the loss in religious ecstasy.

Let the patriot abandon his fear, his betters their hope, that only the low class woman will vote — the unlettered wench of the slums, the raddled hag of the dives, the war-painted *protégée* of the police. Into the vortex of politics goes every floating thing that is free to move. The summons to the polls will be imperative and incessant. Duty will thunder it from every platform, conscience whisper it into every ear, pride, interest, the lust of victory — all the motives that impel men to partisan activity will act with equal power upon women as upon men; and to all the other forces flowing irresistibly toward the polls will be added the suasion of men themselves. The price of votes will not decline because of the increased supply, although it will in most instances be offered in currencies too subtle to be counted. As now, the honest and respectable elector will habitually take bribes in the invisible coin of the realm of Sentiment — a mintage peculiarly valued by woman. For one reason or another all women will vote, even those who now view the "right" widi aversion. The observer who has marked the strength and activity of the forces pent in the dark drink of politics and given off in the act of bibation will not expect inaction to the victim of the "habit," be he male or she female. In the partisan, conviction is compulsion — opinions bear fruit in conduct. The partisan thinks in deeds, and woman is by nature a partisan — a blessing for which the Lord has never made her male relatives and friends sufficiently thankful. Not a mere man of them would have the effrontery to ask her toleration if she were not Depend upon it, the full strength of the female vote will eventually be cast at every election. And it would be well indeed for civilization and the interests of the race if woman suffrage meant no more than going to the polling-place and polling — which clearly is all that it has been thought out to mean by the headless horsemen spurring their new hobbies bravely at the tail of the procession. That would be a very simple matter; the opposition based upon the impropriety of the female rubbing shoulders at the polls with such scurvy blackguards as ourselves may with advantage be retired from service. Nor is it particularly important what men and measures the women will vote for. By one means or another Tyrant Man will have his way; the Opposing Sex can merely obstruct him in his way of having it. And should that obstruction ever be too pronounced, the party line and the sex line coinciding, woman suffrage will then and henceforth be no more.

In the politics of this bad world majorities are of several kinds. One of the most "overwhelming" is made up of these simple elements: (1) a numerical minority; (2) a military superiority. If not a single election were ever in any degree affected by it, the introduction of woman suffrage into our scheme of manners and morals would nevertheless be the most momentous and mischievous event of modern history. Compared with the action of this destructive solvent, that of all other disintegrating agencies concerned in our decivilization is as the languorous indiligence of rosewater to the mordant fury of nitric acid.

Lively Woman is indeed, as Carlyle would put it, "hellbent" on purification of politics by adding herself as an ingredient. It is unlikely that the injection of her personality into the contention (and politics is essentially a contention) will allay any animosities, sweeten any tempers, elevate any motives. The strifes of women are distinctly meaner than those of men — which are out of all reason mean; their methods of overcoming opponents distinctly more unscrupulous. That their participation in politics will notably alter the conditions of the game is not to be denied; that, unfortunately, is obvious; but that it will make the player less malignant and the playing more honorable is a proposition in support of which one can utter a deal of gorgeous nonsense, with a less insupportable sense of its unfitness, than in the service of any other delusion.

The frosty truth is that except in the home the influence of women is not elevating, but debasing. When they stoop to uplift men who need uplifting, they are themselves pulled down, and that is all that is accomplished. Wherever they come into familiar contact with men who are not their relatives they impart nothing, they receive all; they do not affect us with their notions of morality; we infect them with ours.

In the last forty years, in this country, they have entered a hundred avenues of activity from which they were previously debarred by an unwritten law. They are found in the offices, the shops, the factories. Like Charles Lamb's fugitive pigs, they have run up all manner of streets. Does any one think that in that time there has been an advance in professional, commercial and industrial morality? Are lawyers more scrupulous, tradesmen more honest? When one has been served by a "saleslady" does one leave the shop with a feebler sense of injury than was formerly inspired by a transaction at the counter — a duller consciousness of being oneself the commodity that has changed hands? Have actresses elevated the stage to a moral altitude congenial to the colder virtues? In studios of the artists is the "sound of revelry by night" invariably a deep, masculine bass? In literature are the immoral books — the books "dealing" with questionable "questions" — always, or even commonly, written by men?

There is one direction in which "emancipation of woman" and enlargement of her "sphere" have wrought a reform: they have elevated the *personnel* of the little dinner party in the "private room." Formerly, as any veteran man-about-town can testify, if he will, the female contingent of the party was composed of persons altogether unspeakable. That element now remains upon its reservation; among the superior advantages enjoyed by the man-about-town of today is that of the companionship, at his dinner *in camera*, of ladies having an honorable vocation. In the corridors of the "French restaurant" the swish of Pseudonyma's skirt is no longer heard; she has been superseded by the Princess Tap-tap (with Truckle & Cinch), by my lady Snip-snip (from the "emporium" of Boltwhack & Co.), by Miss Chink-chink, who sits at the receipt of customs in that severely un-French restaurant, the Maison Hash. That the man-about-town has been morally elevated by this Emancipation of Girl from the seclusion of home to that of the "private room" is too obvious for denial. Nothing so uplifts Tyrant Man as the table talk of good young women who earn their own living.

I do not wish to be altogether ironical about this rather serious matter — not so much so as to forfeit anything of lucidity. Let me state, then, in all earnestness and sobriety and simplicity of speech, what is known to every worldly-wise male dweller in the cities, to every scamp and scapegrace of the clubs, to every reformed sentimentalist and every observer with a straight eye — namely, that in all the various classes of young women in our cities who support, or partly support, themselves in vocations which bring them into personal contact with men, female chastity is a vanishing tradition. In the lives of the "main and general" of these, all those *considerate* which have their origin in personal purity, and cluster about it, and are its signs and safeguards, have almost ceased to cut a figure. It is needless to remind me that there are exceptions — I know that. With some of them I have personal acquaintance, or think I have, and for them a respect withheld from any woman of the rostrum who points to their misfortune and calls it emancipation — to their need and calls it a spirit of independence. It is not from these good girls that you will hear the flippant boast of an unfettered life, with "freedom to develop;" nor is it they who will be foremost and furious in denial and resentment of my statements regarding the morals of their class. They do not know the whole truth, thank Heaven, but they know enough for a deprecation too deep to find relief in a cheap affirmation of woman's purity, which is, and always has been, the creature of seclusion.

The fitness of women for political activity is not in present question; I am considering the fitness of political activity for women. For women as men say they are, wish them to be, and try to think them, it is unfit altogether — as unfit as anything else that "mixes them up" with us, compelling a communication and association that are not social. If we wish to have women who are different from ourselves in knowledge, character, accomplishments, manners; as different mentally as physically — and in these and in all odier expressible differences reside all the charms that they have for us — we must keep them, or they must keep themselves, in an environment unlike our own. One would think that obvious to the meanest capacity, and might even hope that it would be understood by the Daughters of Thunder. Possibly the Advanced One, hospitably accepting her karma, is not concerned to be charming to "the likes o' we'" — would prefer the companionship of her blue gingham umbrella, her corkscrew curls, her epicene audiences and her name in the newspapers. Perhaps she is content with the comfort of her raucous voice. Therein she is unwise, for self-interest is the first law. When we no longer find woman charming we may find a way to make them more useful — more truly useful, even, than the speech-ladies would have them make themselves by competition. Really, there is nothing in the world between them and slavery but their power of interesting us; and that has its origin in the very differences which the Colonels are striving to abolish. God has made no law of miracles and none of His laws are going to be suspended in deference to woman's desire to achieve familiarity without contempt. If she wants to please she must retain some scrap of novelty; if she desires our respect she must not be always in evidence, disclosing the baser side of her character, as in competition with us she must do (as we do to one another) or lamentably fail. Mrs. Edmund Gosse, like "Ouida," Mrs. Atherton, and all other women of brains, declares that the taking of unfair advantages — the lack of magnanimity — is a leading characteristic of her sex. Mrs. Gosse adds, with reference to men's passive acquiescence in this monstrous folly of "emancipation," that possibly our quiet may be the calm before the storm; and she utters this warning, which, also, more strongly, "Ouida" has uttered: "How would it be with us if the men should suddenly rise *en masse* and throw the whole surging lot of us into convents and harems?"

It is not likely that men will "rise *en masse*" to undo the mischief wrought by noisy protagonists of Woman Suffrage working like beavers to rear their airy fad upon the sandy foundation of masculine tolerance and inattention. No rising will be needed. All that is required for the wreck of their hopes is for a wave of reason to slide a little farther up the sands of time, "loll out its large tongue, lick the whole labor flat" The work has prospered so far only because nobody but its promoters has taken it seriously. It has not engaged attention from those having the knowledge and the insight to discern beneath its cap-and-bells and the motley that is its only wear a serious menace to all that civilized men hold precious in woman. It is of the nature of men — themselves cheerful polygamists, with no penitent intentions — to set a high value upon chastity in woman. (We need not inquire why they do so; those to whom the reasons are not clear can profitably remain in the valley of the shadow of ignorance.) Valuing it, they purpose having it, or some considerable numerical presumption of it. As they perceive that in a general way women are virtuous in proportion to the remoteness of their lives and interests from the lives and interests of men — their seclusion from the influences of which men's own vices are a main part — an easy and peaceful means will doubtless be found for the repression of the shouters.

In the orchestration of mind woman's instruments might have kept silence without injury to the volume and quality of the music; efface the impress of her touch upon the world and, by those who come after, the blank must be diligently sought. Go to the top of any large city and look about and below. It is not much that you will see, but it represents an amazing advance from the conditions of primitive man. No where in the wide survey will you see the work of woman. It is all the work of men's hands, and before it was wrought into form and substance, existed as conscious creations in men's brains. Concealed within the visible forms of buildings and ships — themselves miracles of thought — lie such wonder-worlds of invention and discovery as no human life is long enough to explore, no human understanding capacious enough to hold in knowledge. If, like Asmodeus, we could rive the roofs and see woman's part of this prodigious exhibition — the things that she has actually created with her brain — what kind of display would it be? It is probable that all the intellectual energy expended by women from first to last would not have sufficed, if directed into the one channel, for the genesis and evolution of the modern bicycle.

I once heard a lady who had playfully competed with men in a jumping match gravely attribute her defeat to the trammeling of her skirt. Similarly, women are pleased to explain their penury of mental achievement by repressive education and custom, and therein they are not altogether in heresy. But even in regions where they have ever had the freedom of the quarries they have not builded themselves monuments. Nobody, for example, is holding them from greatness in poetry, which needs no special education, and music, in which they have always been specially educated; yet where is the great poem by a woman? where the great musical composition? In the grammar of literature what is the feminine of Homer, of Shakspere, of Goethe, of Hugo? What female names are the equivalents of the names of Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin, Wagner? Women are not musicians — they “sing and play.” In short, if woman had no better claim to respect and affection than her brain; no sweeter charms than those of her reason; no means of suasion but her power upon men’s convictions, she would long ago have been “improved off the face of the earth.” As she is, men accord her such homage as is compatible with contempt, such immunities as are consistent with exaction; but whereas she is not altogether filled with light and is moreover, imperfectly reverent, it is but right that in obedience to Scriptural injunction she keep silence in our churches while we are worshipping Ourselves.

She will not have it so, the good, good girl; as moral as the best of us, she will be as intellectual as the rest of us. She will have out her little taper and set the rivers of thought all ablaze, legging it over the land from stream to stream till all are fired. She will widen her sphere, forsooth, herself no wider than before. It is not enough that we have edified her a pedestal and perform impossible rites in celebration of her altitude and distinction. It does not suffice that with never a smile we assure her that she is the superior sex — a whopper by the repetition whereof certain callow youth among us have incurred the divine vengeance of belief. It does not satisfy her that she is indubitably gifted with pulchritude and an unquestionable genius for its embellishing; that Nature has endowed her with a prodigious knack at accroachment, whereby the male of her species is lured to a suitable doom. No; she has taken unto herself in these evil days that “intelligent discontent” which giveth its beloved fits. To her flock of graces and virtues she must add our one poor ewe lamb of brains. Well, I tell her that intellect is a monster which devours beauty; that the woman of exceptional mind is exceptionally masculine in face, figure, action; that in transplanting brains to an unfamiliar soil God leaves much of the original earth about the roots. And so with a reluctant farewell to Lovely Woman, I humbly withdraw from her presence and hasten to overtake the receding periphery of her “sphere.”

One moment more. Mesdames: I crave leave to estop your disfavor — which were affliction and calamity — by “defining my position” in the words of one of yourselves, who has said of me (though with reprehensible exaggeration, believe me) that I hate woman and love women — have an acute animosity to your sex and adoring each individual member of it. What matters my opinion of your understandings so long as I am in bondage to your charms? Moreover, there is one service of incomparable utility and dignity for which I esteem you eminently fit — to be mothers of men.

THE AMERICAN SYCOPHANT

AN AMERICAN newspaper holds this opinion: “If republican government had done nothing else than give independence to American character and preserve it from the servility inseparable from the allegiance to kings, it would have accomplished a great work.”

I do not doubt that the writer of that sentence believes that republican government has actually wrought the change in human nature which challenges his admiration. He is very sure that his countrymen are not sycophants; that before rank and power and wealth they stand covered, maintaining “the godlike attitude of freedom and a man” and exulting in it. It is not true; it is an immeasurable distance from the truth. We are as abject toadies as any people on earth — more so than any European people of similar civilization. When a foreign emperor, king, prince or nobleman comes among us the rites of servility that we execute in his honor are baser than any that he ever saw in his own land. When a foreign nobleman’s prow puts into shore the American shin is pickled in brine to welcome him; and if he come not in adequate quantity those of us who can afford the expense go swarming over sea to struggle for front places in his attention. In this blind and brutal scramble for social recognition in Europe the traveling American toady and impostor has many chances of success: he is commonly unknown even to ministers and consuls of his own country, and these complaisant gentlemen, rather than incur the risk of erring on the wrong side, take him at his own valuation and push him in where his obscurity being again in his favor, he is treated with kindly toleration, and sometimes a genuine hospitality, to which he has no shadow of right nor title, and which, if he were a gentleman, he would not accept if it were voluntarily proffered. It should be said in mitigation that all this delirious abasement in no degree tempers his rancor against the system of which the foreign notable is the flower and fruit. He keeps his servility sweet by preserving it in the salt of vilification. In the character of a blatant blackguard the American snob is so happily disguised that he does not know himself.

An American newspaper once printed a portrait of her whom the irreverent Briton had a reprehensible habit of designating colloquially as “The Old Lady,” But the editor in question did not so designate her — his simple American manhood and republican spirit would not admit that she was a lady. So he contented himself with labeling the portrait “Her Most Gracious Majesty, Queen

Victoria” This incident raises an important question.

Important Question Raised by This Incident: Is it better to be a subject and a man, or a citizen and a flunkey — to own the sway of a “gory tyrant” and retain one’s self-respect, or dwell, a “sovereign elector,” in the land of liberty and disgrace it?

However it may be customary for English newspapers to designate the English sovereign, they are at least not addicted to sycophancy in designating the rulers of other countries than their own. They would not say “His Abracadabral Humpti-dumptiness Emperor William,” nor “His Pestilency the Speaker of the American House of Representatives.” They would not think of calling even the most ornately self-bemedaled American sovereign elector “His Badgesty.” Of a foreign nobleman they do not say “His Lordship;” they will not admit that he is a lord; nor when speaking of their own noblemen do they spell “lord” with a capital L, as we do. In brief, when mentioning foreign dignitaries, of whatever rank in their own countries, the English press is simply and serviceably descriptive: the king is a king, the queen a queen, the jack a jack. We use “another kind of common sense.” At the very foundation of our political system lies the denial of hereditary and artificial rank. Our fathers created this government as a protest against all that, and all that it implies. They virtually declared that kings and noblemen could not breathe here, and no American loyal to the principles of the Revolution which made him one will ever say in his own country “Your Majesty” or “Your Lordship” — the words would choke him and they ought.

There are a few of us who keep the faith, who do not bow the knee to Baal, who hold fast to what is high and good in the doctrine of political equality; in whose hearts the altar-fires of rational liberty are kept aglow, beaconing the darkness of that illimitable inane where their countrymen, inaccessible to the light, wander witless in the bogs of political unreason, alternately adoring and damning the man-made gods of their own stature. Of that bright band fueling the bale-fires of political consistency I can not profess myself a member in good standing. In view of this general recreancy and treason to the principles that our fathers established by the sword — having in constant observation this almost universal hospitality to the solemn nonsense of hereditary rank and unearned distinction, my faith in practical realization of republican ideals is small, and I falter in the work of their maintenance in the interest of a people for whom they are too good. Seeing that we are immune to none of the evils besetting monarchies, excepting those for which we secretly yearn; that inequality of fortune and unjust allotment of honors are as conspicuous among us as elsewhere; that the tyranny of individuals is as intolerable, and that of the public more so; that the law’s majesty is a dream and its failure a fact — hearing everywhere the footfalls of disorder and the watchwords of anarchy, I despair of the republic and catch in every breeze that blows “a cry prophetic of its fall.”

I have seen a vast crowd of Americans change color like a field of waving grain, as it uncovered to do such base homage to a petty foreign princess as in her own country she had never received. I have seen full-grown, self-respecting American citizens tremble and go speechless when spoken to by the Emperor of Brazil. I have seen a half-dozen American gentlemen in evening clothes trying to outdo one another in the profundity of their bows in the presence of the nigger King of Hawaii. I have not seen a Chinese “Earl” borne in a chair by four Americans officially detailed for the disgraceful service, but it was done, and did not evoke a hiss of disapproval. And I did not — thank Heaven! — observe the mob of American “simple republicans” that dogged the heels of a disreputable little Frenchman who is a count by courtesy only, and those of an English duke quietly attending to his business of making a living by being a married man. The republican New World is no less impested with servility than the monarchial Old. One form of government may be better than another for this purpose or for that; all are alike in the futility of their influence upon human character. None can affect man’s instinctive abasement in the contemplation of power and rank.

Not only are we no less sycophantic than the people of monarchial countries; we are more so. We grovel before their exalted personages, and perform in addition a special prostration at the clay feet of our own idols — which *they* do not revere. The typical “subject,” hat-in-hand to his sovereign and his nobleman, is a less shameful figure than the “citizen” executing his genuflexion before the public of which he is himself a part. No European court journal, no European courtier, was ever more abject in subservience to the sovereign than are the American newspaper and the American politician in flattery of the people. Between the courtier and the demagogue I see nothing to choose. They are moved by the same sentiment and fired by the same hope. Their method is flattery, and their purpose profit. Their adulation is not a testimony to character, but a tribute to power, or the shadow of power. If this country were governed by its criminal idiots we should have the same attestations of their goodness and wisdom, the same competition for their favor, the same solemn doctrine that their voice is the voice of God. Our children would be brought up to believe that an Idiotocracy is the only natural and rational form of government And for my part I’m not at all sure that it would not be a pretty good political system, as political systems go. I have always, however, cherished a secret faith in Smithocracy, which seems to combine the advantages of both the monarchial and the republican idea. If all the offices were held for life by Smiths — the senior John being President — we should have a settled and orderly succession to allay all fears of anarchy and a sufficiently wide eligibility to feed the fires of patriotic ambition. All could not be Smiths, but many could marry into the family.

The Harrison "progress" left its heritage of shame, whereof each abaser would gladly have washed the hands of him in his neighbor's basin. All this was in due order of Nature, and was to have been expected. It was a phenomenon of the same character as, in the loves of the low, the squabbling consequent upon satiety and shame. We could not slink out of sight; we could deny our sycophancy, albeit we might give it another name; but we could somewhat medicine our damaged self-esteem by dealing damnation 'round on one another. The blush of shame turned easily to the glow of indignation, and many a hot hatred was kindled at the rosy flame of self-contempt. Persons conscious of having dishonored themselves are doubly sensitive to any indignity put upon them by others. The vices and follies of human nature are interdependent; they do not move alone, nor are they singly aroused to activity. In my judgment, this entire incident of the President's "tour" was infinitely discreditable to President and people. I do not go into the question of his motive in making it. Be that what it may, the manner of it seems to me an outrage upon all the principles and sentiments underlying republican institutions. In all but the name it was a "royal progress" — the same costly ostentation, the same civic and military pomp, the same solemn and senseless adulation, the same abasement of spirit of the Many before the One. And according to republican traditions, ten thousand times a year affirmed, in every way in which affirmation is possible, we fondly persuade ourselves, as a true faith in the hearts of our hearts, that the One is the inferior of the Many! And it is no mere political catch-phrase: he *is* their servant; he *is* their creature; all that in him to which they grovel (dignifying and justifying their instinctive and inherited servility by names as false as anything in ceremonial imposture) they themselves have made, as truly as the heathen has made the wooden god before which he performs his unmanly rite. It is precisely this thing — the superiority of the people to their servants — that constitutes, and was by our fathers understood to constitute, the essential, fundamental difference between the monarchial system which they uprooted and the democratic one which they planted in its stead. Deluded men! how little they guessed the length and strength and vitality of the roots left in the soil of the centuries when their noxious harvestage of mischievous institutions had been cast as rubbish to the void!

I am no contestant for forms of government — no believer in either the practical value or the permanence of any that has yet been devised. That all men are created equal, in the best and highest sense of the phrase, I hold; not as I observe it held by others, but as a living faith. That an officeholder is a servant of the people; that I am his political superior, owing him no deference, and entitled to such deference from him as may be serviceable to keep him in mind of his subordination — these are propositions which command my assent, which I *feel* to be true and which determine the character of my personal relations with those whom they concern. That I should give my hand, or bend my neck, or uncover my head to any man in homage to or recognition of his office, great or small, is to me simply inconceivable. These tricks of servility with the softened names are the vestiges of an involuntary allegiance to power extraneous to the performer. They represent in our American life obedience and propitiation in their most primitive and odious forms. The man who speaks of them as manifestations of a proper respect for "the President's great office" is either a rogue, a dupe or a journalist They come to us out of a fascinating but terrible past as survivals of servitude. They speak a various language of oppression, and the superstition of man-worship; they cany forward the traditions of the sceptre and the lash. Through the plaudits of the people may be heard always the faint, far cry of the beaten slave.

Respect? Respect the good. Respect the wise. Respect the dead. Let the President look to it that he belongs to one of these classes. His going about the country in gorgeous state and barbaric splendor as the guest of a thieving corporation, but at our expense — shining and dining and swining — unsouling himself of clotted nonsense in pickled platitudes calculated for the meridian of Coon Hollow, Indiana, but ingeniously adapted to each water tank on the line of his absurd "progress," does not prove it, and the presumption of his "great office" is against him.

Can you not see, poor misguided "fellow citizens," how you permit your political taskmasters to forge leg-chains of your follies and load you down with them? Will nothing teach you that all this fuss-and-feathers, all this ceremony, all this official gorgeousness and brass-banding, this "manifestation of a proper respect for the nation's head" has no decent place in American life and American politics? Will no experience open your stupid eyes to the fact that these shows are but absurd imitations of royalty, to hold you silly while you are plundered by the managers of the performance? — that while you toss your greasy caps in air and sustain them by the ascending current of your senseless hurrahs the programmers are going through your blessed pockets and exploiting your holy dollars? No; you feel secure; "power is of the People," and you can effect a change of robbers every four years. Inestimable privilege — to pull off the glutted leech and attach the lean one! And you can not even choose among the lean leeches, but must accept those designated by the programmers and showmen who have the reptiles on tap! But then you are not “subjects;” you are “citizens” — there is much in that Your tyrant is not a “King;” he is a “President.” He does not occupy a “throne,” but a “chair.” He does not succeed to it by inheritance; he is pitchforked into it by the boss. Altogether, you are distinctly better off than the Russian mujik who wears his shirt outside his trousers and has never shaken hands with the Czar in all his life.

I hold that kings and noblemen can not breathe in America. When they set foot upon our soil their kingship and their nobility fall away from them like the chains of a slave in England. Whatever a man may be in his own country, here he is but a man. My countrymen may do as they please, lickspittling the high and mighty of other nations even to the filling of their spiritual bellies, but I make a stand for simple American manhood. I will meet no man on this soil who expects from me a greater deference than I could properly accord to the President of my own country. My allegiance to republican institutions is slack through lack of faith in them as a practical system of governing men as men are. All the same, I will call no man “Your Majesty,” nor “Your Lordship.” For me to meet in my own country a king or a nobleman would require as much preliminary negotiation as an official interview between the Mufti of Moosh and the Ahkoond of Swat. The form of salutation and the style and tide of address would have to be settled definitively and with precision. With some of my most esteemed and patriotic friends the matter is more simple; their generosity in concession fills me with admiration and their forbearance in exaction challenges my astonishment as one of the seven wonders of American hospitality. In fancy I see the ceremony of their “presentation” and as examples of simple republican dignity I commend their posture to the youth of this fair New World, inviting particular attention to the grand, bold curves of character shown in the outlines of the Human Ham.

A DISSERTATION ON DOGS

OF ALL anachronisms and survivals, the love of the dog; is the most reasonless. Because, some thousands of years ago, when we wore other skins than our own and sat enthroned upon our haunches, tearing tangles of tendons from raw bones with our teeth, the dog ministered purveyorwise to our savage needs, we go on cherishing him to this day, when his only function is to lie sun-soaken on a door mat and insult us as we pass in and out, enamored of his fat superfluity. One dog in a thousand earns his bread — and takes beefsteak; the other nine hundred and ninety-nine we maintain, by cheating the poor, in the style suitable to their state.

The trouble with the modern dog is that he is the same old dog. Not an inch has the rascal advanced along the line of evolution. We have ceased to squat upon our naked haunches and gnaw raw bones, but this companion of the childhood of the race, this vestigial remnant of *juventus mundi* this dismal anachronism, this veteran inharmony of the scheme of things, the dog, has abated no jot nor tittle of his unthinkable objection-ableness since the morning stars sang together and he had sat up all night to deflate a lung at the performance. Possibly he may some time be improved otherwise than by effacement, but at present he is still in that early stage of reform that is not incompatible with a mouthful of reformer.

The dog is a detestable quadruped. He knows more ways to be unmentionable than can be suppressed in seven languages.

The word “dog” is a term of contempt the world over. Poets have sung and prosaists have prosed of the virtues of individual dogs, but nobody has had the hardihood to eulogize the species. No man loves the Dog; he loves his own dog or dogs, and there he stops; the force of perverted affection can no further go. He loves his own dog partly because that thrifty creature, ever cadging when not maurauding, tickles his vanity by fawning upon him as the visible source of steaks and bones; and partly because the graceless beast insults everybody else, harming as many as he dares. The dog is an encampment of fleas, and a reservoir of sinful smells. He is prone to bad manners as the sparks fly upward. He has no discrimination; his loyalty is given to the person that feeds him, be the same a blackguard or a murderer’s mother. He fights for his master without regard to the justice of the quarrel — wherein he is no better than a patriot or a paid soldier. There are men who are proud of a dog’s love — and dogs love that kind of men. There are men who, having the privilege of loving women, insult them by loving dogs; and there are women who forgive and respect their canine rivals. Women, I am told, are true cynolaters; they adore not only dogs, but Dog — not only their own horrible little beasts, but those of others. But women will love anything; they love men who love dogs. I sometimes wonder how it is that of all our women among whom the dog fad is prevalent none have incurred the husband fad, or the child fad. Possibly there are exceptions, but it seems to be a rule that the female heart which has a dog in it is without other lodgers. There is not, I suppose, a very wild and importunate demand for accommodation. For my part, I do not know which is the less desirable, the tenant or the tenement There are dogs that submit to be kissed by women base enough to kiss them; but they have a secret, coarse revenge. For the dog is a joker, withal, gifted with as much humor as is consistent with biting.

Miss Louise Imogen Guiney has replied to Mrs. Meynell's proposal to abolish the dog — a proposal which Miss Guiney has the originality to call "original." Divested of its "literature," Miss Guiney's plea for the defendant consists, essentially, of the following assertions: (1) Dogs are whatever their masters are. (2) They bite only those who fear them. (3) Really vicious dogs are not found nearer than Constantinople. (4) Only wronged dogs go mad, and hydrophobia is retaliation. (5) In actions for damages for dog-bites judicial prejudice is against the dog. (6) "Dogs are continually saving children from death." (7) Association with dogs begets piety, tenderness, mercy, loyalty, and so forth; in brief, the dog is an elevating influence: "to walk modestly at a dog's heels is a certificate of merit!" As to that last, if Miss Guiney had ever observed the dog himself walking modestly at the heels of another dog she would perhaps have wished that it was not the custom of her sex to seal the certificate of merit with a kiss.

In all this absurd woman's statements, thus fairly epitomized, there is not one that is true — not one of which the essential falsity is not evident, obvious, conspicuous to even the most delinquent observation. Yet with the smartness and smirk of a graduating seminary girl refuting Epicurus she marshals them against the awful truth that every year in Europe and the United States alone more than five thousand human beings the of hydrophobia — a fact which her controversial conscience does not permit her to mention. The names on this needless death-roll are mostly those of children, the sins of whose parents in cherishing their own hereditary love of dogs is visited upon their children because they have not the intelligence and agility to get out of the way. Or perhaps they lack that tranquil courage upon which Miss Guiney relies to avert the canine tooth from her own inedible shank.

Finally this amusing illogician, this type and example of the female controversialist, has the hardihood to hope that there may be fathers who can see their children the the horrible death of hydrophobia without wishing “to exile man’s best ideal of fidelity from the hearthstones of civilization.” If we must have an “ideal of fidelity” why not find it, not in the dog that kills the child, but in the father that kills the dog. The profit of maintaining a standard and pattern of the virtues (at considerable expense in the case of this insatiable canine consumer) may be great, but are we so hard pushed that we must go to the animals for it? In life and letters are there no men and women whose names kindle enthusiasm and emulation? Is fidelity, is devotion, is self-sacrifice unknown among ourselves? As a model of the higher virtues why will not one’s mother serve at a pinch? And what is the matter with Miss Guiney herself? She is faithful, at least to dogs, whatever she may be to the hundreds of American children inevitably foredoomed to a death of unthinkable agony.

There is perhaps a hope that when the sun’s returning flame shall gild the hither end of the thirtieth century this savage and filthy brute, the dog, will have ceased to “banquet on through a whole year” of human fat and lean; that he will have been gathered to his variously unworthy fathers to give an account of the deeds done in body of man. In the meantime, those of us who have not the enlightened understanding to be enamored of him may endure with such fortitude as we can command his feats of tooth among the shins and throats of those who have; we ourselves are so few that there is a strong numerical presumption of personal immunity.

It is well to have a clear understanding of such inconveniences as may be expected to ensue from dog-bites. That inconveniences and even discomforts do sometimes flow from, or at least follow, the mischance of being bitten by dogs, even the sturdiest champion of “man’s best friend” will admit when not heated fay controversy. True, he is disposed to sympathy for those incurring the inconveniences and discomforts, but against apparent incompassion may be offset his indubitable sympathy with the dog. No one is altogether heartless.

Amongst the several disadvantages of a close personal connection with the canine tooth, the disorder known as hydrophobia has long held an undisputed primacy. The existence of dus ailment is attested by so many witnesses, many of whom, belonging to the profession of medicine, speak with a certain authority, that even the breeders and lovers of snap-dogs are compelled reluctantly to concede it, though as a rule they stoutly deny that it is imparted by the dog. In their view, hydrophobia is a theory, not a condition. The patient imagines himself to have it, and acting upon that unsupported assumption or hypothesis, suffers and dies in the attempt to square his conduct with his opinions.

It seems there is firmer ground for their view of the matter than the rest of us have been willing to admit There is such a thing, doubtless, as hydrophobia proper, but also there is such another thing as pseudo-hydrophobia, or hydrophobia improper.

Pseudo-hydrophobia, the physicians explain, is caused by fear of hydrophobia. The patient, having been chewed by a healthy and harmless dog, broods upon his imaginary peril, solicitously watches his imaginary symptoms, and, finally, persuading himself of their reality, puts them on exhibition, as he understands them. He runs about (when permitted) on his hands and knees, growls, barks, howls, and in default of a tail wags the part of him where it would be if he had one. In a few days he is gone before, a victim to his lack of confidence in man's best friend.

The number of cases of pseudo-hydrophobia, relatively, to those of true hydrophobia, is not definitely known, the medical records having been imperfectly made, and never collated; champions of the snap-dog, as intimated, believe it is many to nothing. That being so (they argue), the animal is entirely exonerated, and leaves the discussion without a stain upon his reputation.

But that is feeble reasoning. Even if we grant their premises we can not embrace their conclusion. In the first place, it hurts to be bitten by a dog, as the dog himself audibly confesses when bitten by another dog. Furthermore, pseudo-hydrophobia is quite as fatal as if it were a legitimate product of the bite, not a result of the terror which that mischance inspires.

Human nature being what it is, and well known to the dog to be what it is, we have a right to expect that the creature will take our weaknesses into consideration — that he will respect our addiction to reasonless panic, even as we respect his when, as we commonly do, we refrain from attaching tinware to his tail. A dog that runs himself to death to evade a kitchen utensil which could not possibly harm him, and which if he did not flee would not pursue, is the author of his own undoing in precisely the same sense as is the victim of pseudo-hydrophobia. He is slain by a theory, not a condition. Yet the wicked boy that set him going is not blameless, and no one would be so zealous and strenuous in his prosecution as the cynolater, the adorer of dogs, the person who holds them guileless of pseudo-hydrophobia.

Mr. Nicholas Smith, while United States Consul at Liege, wrote, or caused to be written, an official report, wickedly, willfully and maliciously designed to abridge the privileges, augment the ills and impair the honorable status of the domestic dog. In the very beginning of this report Mr. Smith manifests his animus by stigmatizing the domestic dog as an "hereditary loafer;" and having hurled the allegation, affirms "the dawn of a [Belgian] new era" wherein the pampered menial will loaf no more. There is to be no more sun-soaking on door mats having a southern exposure, no more usurpation of the warmest segment of the family circle, no more successful personal solicitation of cheer at the domestic board. The dog's place in the social scale is no longer to be determined by consideration of sentiment, but will be the result of cold commercial calculation, and so fixed as best to serve the ends of industrial expediency. All this in Belgium, where the dog is already in active service as a beast of burden and draught; doubtless the transition to that humble condition from his present and immemorial social elevation in less advanced countries will be slow and characterized by bitter factional strife. America, especially, though ever accessible to the infection of new and profitable ideas, will be angularly slow to accept so radical a subversion of a social superstructure that almost may be said to rest upon the domestic dog as a basic verity.

The dogs are our only true "leisure class" (for even the tramps are sometimes compelled to engage in such simple industries as are possible within the "precincts" of the county jail) and we are justly proud of them. They toil not, neither spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not a dog. Instead of making them hewers of wood and drawers of water, it would be more consonant with the Anglomaniacal and general Old World spirit, now so dominant in the councils of the nation, to make them "hereditary legislators." And Mr. Smith must permit me to add, with a special significance, that history records an instance of even a horse making a fairly good Consul.

Mr. Smith avers with obvious and impudent satisfaction that in Liege twice as many draught dogs as horses are seen in the streets, attached to vehicles. He regards "a gaily painted cart" drawn by "a well fed dog" and driven by a well fed (and gaily painted) woman as a "pleasing vision." I do not; I should prefer to see the dog sitting at the receipt of steaks and chops and the lady devoting herself to the amelioration of the condition of the universe, and the manufacture of poetry and stories that are not true. A more pleasing vision, too, one endeared to eye and heart by immemorial use and wont, is that of stranger and dog indulging in the pleasures of the chase — stranger a little ahead — while the woman in the case manifests a characteristically compassionate solicitude lest the gentleman's trousers do not match Fido's mustache. It is, indeed, impossible to regard with any degree of approval the degradation to commercial utility of two so noble animals as Dog and Woman; and if Man had joined them together by driving-reins I should hope that God would put them asunder, even if the reins were held by Dog. There would no doubt be a distinct gain as well as a certain artistic fitness in unyoking the strong-minded female of our species from the Chariot of Progress and yoking her to the apple-cart or fish-wagon, and — but that is another story; the imminence of the draughtwoman is not foreshadowed in the report of our Consul at Liege.

Mr. Smith’s estimate of the number of dogs in this country at 7,000,000 is a “conservative” one, it must be confessed, and can hardly have been based on observations by moonlight in a suburban village; his estimate of the effective strength of the average dog at 500 pounds is probably about right, as will be attested by any intelligent boy who in campaigns against orchards has experienced detention by the Cerberi of the places. Taking his own figures Mr. Smith calculates that we have in this country 3,500,000,000 pounds of “idle dog power.” But this statement is more ingenious than ingenuous; it gives, as doubtless it was intended to give, the impression that we have only idle dogs, whereas of all mundane forces the domestic dog is most easily stirred to action. His expense of energy in pursuit of the harmless, necessary flea, for example, is prodigious; and he is not infrequently seen in chase of his own tail, with an activity scarcely inferior. If there is anything worth while in accepted theories of the conversion and conservation of force these gigantic energies are by no means wasted; they appear as heat, light and electricity, modifying climate, reducing gas bills and assisting in propulsion of street cars. Even in baying the moon and insulting visitors and bypassers the dog releases a certain amount of vibratory force which through various mutations of its wave-length, may do its part in cooking a steak or gratifying the olfactory nerve by throwing fresh perfume on the violet. Evidently the commercial advantages of deposing the dog from the position of Exalted Personage and subduing him to that of Motor would not be all clear gain. He would no longer have the spirit to send, Whitmanwise, his barbarous but beneficent yawp over the housetops, nor the leisure to throw off vast quantities of energy by centrifugal efforts at the conquest of his tail. As to the fleas, he would accept them with apathetic satisfaction as preventives of thought upon his fallen fortunes.

Having observed with attention and considered with seriousness the London *Daily News* declares its conviction that the dog, as we have the happiness to know him, is dreadfully bored by civilization. This is one of the gravest accusations that the friends of progress and light have been called out to meet — a challenge that it is impossible to ignore and unprofitable to evade; for the dog as we have the happiness to know him is the only dog that we have the happiness really to know. The wolf is hardly a dog within the meaning of the law, nor is the scalp-yielding coyote, whether he howls or merely sings and plays the piano; moreover, these are beyond the pale of civilization and outside the scope of our sympathies.

With the dog it is different His place is among us; he is with us and of us — a part of our life and love. If we are maintaining and promoting a condition of things that gives him “that tired feeling” it is befitting that we mend our ways lest, shaking the carpet dust from his feet and the tenderloin steaks from his teeth, he depart from our midst and connect himself with the enchanted life of the thrilling barbarian. We can not afford to lose him. The cynophobes may call him a "survival" and sneer at his exhausted mandate — albeit, as Darwin points out, they are indebted for their sneer to his own habit of uncovering his teeth to bite; they may seek to cast opprobrium upon the nature of our affection for him by pronouncing it hereditary — a bequest from our primitive ancestors, for whom he performed important service in other ways than depriving visitors of their tendons; but quite the same we should miss him at his meal time and in the (but for him) silent watches of the night. We should miss his bark and his bite, the feel of his forefeet upon our shirt-fronts, the frou-frou of his dusty sides against our nether habiliments. More than all, we should miss and mourn that visible yearning for chops and steaks, which he has persuaded us to accept as the lovelight of his eye and a tribute to our personal worth. We must keep the dog, and to that end find means to abate his weariness of us and our ways.

Doubtless much might be done to reclaim our dogs from their uncheerful state of mind by abstention from debate on imperialism; by excluding them from the churches, at least during the sermons; by keeping them off the streets and out of hearing when rites of prostration are in performance before visiting notables; by forbidding anyone to read aloud in their hearing the sensational articles in the newspapers, and by educating them to the belief that Labor and Capital are illusions. A limitation of the annual output of popular novels would undoubtedly reduce the dejection, which could be still further mitigated by abolition of the more successful magazines. If the dialect story or poem could be prohibited, under severe penalties, the sum of night-howling (erroneously attributed to lunar influence) would experience an audible decrement, which, also, would enable the fire department to augment its own uproar without reproach. There is, indeed, a considerable number of ways in which we might effect a double reform — promoting the advantage of Man, as well as medicating the mental fatigue of Dog. For another example, it would be "a boon and a blessing to man" if Society would put to death, or at least banish, the mill-man or manufacturer who persists in apprising the entire community many times a day by means of a steam whistle that it is time for his oppressed employees (every one of whom has a gold watch) to go to work or to leave off. Such things not only make a dog tired, they make a man mad. They answer with an accented affirmative Truthful James' plaintive inquiry,

"Is civilization a failure,
Or is the Caucasian played out?"

Unquestionably, from his advantageous point of view as a looker-on at the game, the dog is justified in the conviction that they are.

THE ANCESTRAL BOND

A WELL-KNOWN citizen of Ohio once discovered another man of the same name exactly resembling him, and writing a “hand” which, including the signature, he was unable to distinguish from his own. The two men were unable to discover any blood relationship between them. It is nevertheless almost absolutely certain that a relationship existed, though it may have been so remote a degree that the familiar term “forty-second cousin” would not have exaggerated the slenderness of the tie. The phenomena of heredity have been inattentively noted; its laws are imperfectly understood, even by Herbert Spencer and the prophets. My own small study in this amazing field convinces me that a man is the sum of his ancestors; that his character, moral and intellectual, is determined before his birth. His environment with all its varied suasions, its agencies of good and evil; breeding, training, interest, experience and the rest of it — have little to do with the matter and can not alter the sentence passed upon him at conception, compelling him to be what he is.

Man is the hither end of an immeasurable line extending back to the ultimate Adam — or, as we scientists prefer to name him, Protoplasmos. Man travels, not the mental road that he would, but the one that he must — is pushed this way and that by the resultant of all the forces behind him; for each member of the ancestral line, though dead, yet pusfaedi. In one of what Dr. Nolmes (Holmes, ed.) calls his “medicated novels,” *The Guardian Angel*, this truth is most admirably and lucidly set forth with abundant instance and copious exposition. Upon another work of his, *Elsie Venner* — in which he erroneously affirms the influence of circumstance and environment — let us lay a charitable hand and fling it into the fire.

Clearly all one’s ancestors have not equal power in shaping his character. Conceiving them, according to our figure, as arranged in line behind him and influential in the ratio of their individuality, we shall get the best notion of their method by supposing them to have taken their places in an order somewhat independent of chronology and a little different from their arrangement behind his brother. Immediately at his back, with a controlling hand (a trifle skinny) upon him, may stand his great-grandmother, while his father may be many removes arear. Or the place of power may be held by some fine old Asian gentleman who flourished before the confusion of tongues on the plain of Shinar; or by some cave-dweller who polished the bone of life in Mesopotamia and was perhaps a respectable and honest troglodyte.

Sometimes a whole platoon of ancestors appears to have been moved backward or forward, *en bloc* not, we may be sure, capriciously, but in obedience to some law that we do not understand. I know a man to whose character not an ancestor since the seventeenth century has contributed an element. Intellectually he is a contemporary of John Dryden, whom naturally he reveres as the greatest of poets. I know another who has inherited his handwriting from his greatgrandfather, although he has been trained to the Spencerian system and tried hard to acquire it. Furthermore, his handwriting follows the same order of progressive development as that of his greatgrandfather. At the age of twenty he wrote exactly as his ancestor did at the same age, and, although at forty-five his chirography is nothing like what it was even ten years ago, it is accurately like his greatgrandfather's at forty-five. It was only five years ago that the discovery of some old letters showed him how his greatgrandfather wrote, and accounted for the absolute dissimilarity of his own handwriting to that of any known member of his family.

To suppose that such individual traits as the configuration of the body, the color of the hair and eyes, the shape of hands and feet, the thousand-and-one subtle characteristics that make family resemblances are transmissible, and that the form, texture and capacities of the brain which fix the degree of natural intellect, are *not* transmissible, is illogical and absurd. We see that certain actions, such as gestures, gait, and so forth, resulting from the most complex concurrences of brain, nerves and muscles, are hereditary. Is it reasonable to suppose that the brain alone of all the organs performs its work according to its own sweet will, free from congenital tendencies? Is it not a familiar fact that racial characteristics are persistent? — that one race is stupid and indocile, another quick and intelligent? Does not each generation of a race inherit the intellectual qualities of the preceding generation? How could this be true of generations and not of individuals?

As to stirpiculture, the intelligent and systematic breeding of men and women with a view to improvement of the species — it is a thing of the far future, It is hardly in sight. Yet, what splendid possibilities it carries! Two or three generations of as careful breeding as we bestow on horses, dogs and pigeons would do more good than all the penal, reformatory and educating agencies of the world accomplish in a thousand years. It is the one direction in which human effort to "elevate the race" can be assured of a definitive, speedy and adequate success. It is hardly better than nonsense to prate of any good coming to the race through (for example) medical science, which is mainly concerned in reversing the beneficent operation of natural laws and saving the unfittest to perpetuate their unfitness. Our entire system of charities is of, to the same objection; it cares for the incapables whom Nature is trying to “weed out,” This not only debases the race physically, intellectually and morally, but constantly increases the rate of debasement. The proportion of criminals, paupers and the various kinds of “inmates” of charitable institutions augments its horrible percentage yearly. On the other hand, our wars destroy the capable; so thus we make inroads upon the vitality of the race from two directions. We preserve the feeble and extirpate the strong. He who, in view of this amazing folly can believe in a constant, even slow, progress of the human race toward perfection ought to be happy. He has a mind whose Olympian heights are inaccessible — the Titans of fact can never scale them to storm its ancient reign.

THE RIGHT TO WORK

ALL kinds of relief, charitable or other, doubtless tend to perpetuation of pauperism, inasmuch as paupers are thereby kept alive; and living paupers unquestionably propagate their unthrifty kind more abundantly than dead ones. It is not true, though, that relief interferes with Nature's beneficent law of the survival of the fittest, for the power to excite sympathy and obtain relief is a kind of fitness. I am still a devotee of the homely primitive doctrine that mischance, disability or even unthrift, is not a capital crime justly and profitably punishable by starvation. I still regard the Good Samaritan with a certain toleration and Jesus Christ's tenderness to the poor as something more than a policy of obstruction.

If no such thing as an almshouse, a hospital, an asylum or any one of the many public establishments for relief of the unfortunate were known the proposal to found one would indubitably evoke from thousands of throats notes of deprecation and predictions of disaster. It would be called Socialism of the radical and dangerous kind — of a kind to menace the stability of government and undermine the very foundations of organized society! Yet who is more truly unfortunate than an able-bodied man out of work through no delinquency of will and no default of effort? Is hunger to him and his less poignant than to the feeble in body and mind whom we support for nothing in almshouse or asylum? Are cold and exposure less disagreeable to him than to them? Is not his claim to the right to live as valid as theirs if backed by the will to pay for life with work? And in denial of his claim is there not latent a far greater peril to society than inheres in denial of theirs? So unfortunate and dangerous a creature as a man willing to work, yet having no work to do, should be unknown outside of the literature of satire. Doubtless there would be enormous difficulties in devising a practicable and beneficent system, and doubtless the reform, like all permanent and salutary reforms, will have to grow. The growth naturally will be delayed by opposition of the workingmen themselves — precisely as they oppose prison labor from ignorance that labor makes labor.

It matters not that nine in ten of all our tramps and vagrants are such from choice, and irreclaimable degenerates into the bargain; so long as one worthy man is out of employment and unable to obtain it our duty is to provide it by law. Nay, so long as industrial conditions are such that so pathetic a phenomenon is possible we have not the moral right to disregard that possibility.

The right to employment being the right to life, its denial is homicide. It should be needless to point out the advantages of its concession. It would preserve the life and self-respect of him who is needy through misfortune, and supply an infallible means of detection of his criminal imitator, who could then be dealt with as he deserves, widiout the lenity that finds justification in doubt and compassion. It would diminish crime, for an empty stomach has no morals. With a wage rate lower than the commercial, it would disturb no private industries by luring away their workmen, and with nothing made to sell there would be no competition with private products. Properly directed, it would give us highways, bridges and embankments which we shall not otherwise have.

It is difficult to say if our laws relating to vagrancy and vagrants are more cruel or more absurd. If not so atrocious they would evoke laughter; if less ridiculous we should read them with indignation. Here is an imaginary conversation:

The Law: It is forbidden to you to rob. It is forbidden to you to steal. It is forbidden to you to beg.

The Vagrant: Being without money, and denied employment, I am compelled to obtain food, shelter and clothing in one of these ways, else I shall be hungry and cold.

The Law: That is no affair of mine. Yet I am considerate — you are permitted to be as hungry as you like and as cold as may suit you.

The Vagrant: Hungry, yes, and many thanks to you; but if I go naked I am arrested for indecent exposure. You require me to wear clothing.

The Law: You’ll admit that you need it.

The Vagrant: But not that you provide a way for me to get it. No one will give me shelter at night; you forbid me to sleep in a straw stack.

The Law: Ungrateful man! we provide a cell.

The Vagrant: Even when I obey you, starving all day and freezing all night, and holding my tongue with both hands, I am liable to arrest for being “without visible means of support.”

The Law: A most reprehensible condition.

The Vagrant: One thing has been overlooked — a legal punishment for begging for work.

The Law: True; I am not perfect.

THE RIGHT TO TAKE ONESELF OFF

A PERSON who loses heart and hope through a personal bereavement is like a grain of sand on the seashore complaining that the tide has washed a neighboring grain out of reach. He is worse, for the bereaved grain cannot help itself; it has to be a grain of sand and play the game of tide, win or lose; whereas he can quit — by watching his opportunity can "quit a winner." For sometimes we do beat "the man who keeps the table" — never in the long run, but infrequently and out of small stakes. But this is no time to "cash in" and go, for you can not take your little winning with you. The time to quit is when you have lost a big stake, your fool hope of eventual success, your fortitude and your love of the game. If you stay in the game, which you are not compelled to do, take your losses in good temper and do not whine about them. They are hard to bear, but that is no reason why you should be.

But we are told with tiresome iteration that we are "put here" for some purpose (not disclosed) and have no right to retire until summoned — it may be by small-pox, it may be by the bludgeon of a blackguard, it may be by the kick of a cow; the "summoning" Power (said to be the same as the "putting" Power) has not a nice taste in the choice of messengers. That "argument" is not worth attention, for it is unsupported by either evidence or anything remotely resembling evidence. "Put here." Indeed! And by the keeper of the table who "runs" the "skin game." We were put here by our parents — that is all anybody knows about it; and they had no more authority than we, and probably no more intention.

The notion that we have not the right to take our own lives comes of our consciousness that we have not the courage. It is the plea of the coward — his excuse for continuing to live when he has nothing to live for — or his provision against such a time in the future. If he were not egotist as well as coward he would need no excuse. To one who does not regard himself as the center of creation and his sorrow as the throes of the universe, life, if not worth living, is also not worth leaving. The ancient philosopher who was asked why he did not the if, as he taught, life was no better than death, replied: "Because death is no better than life." We do not know that either proposition is true, but the matter is not worth bothering about, for both states are supportable — life despite its pleasures and death despite its repose.

It was Robert G. Ingersoll's opinion that there is rather too little than too much suicide in the world — that people are so cowardly as to live on long after endurance has ceased to be a virtue. This view is but a return to the wisdom of the ancients, in whose splendid civilization suicide had as honorable place as any other courageous, reasonable and unselfish act. Antony, Brutus, Cato, Seneca — these were not of the kind of men to do deeds of cowardice and folly. The smug, self-righteous modern way of looking upon the act as that of a craven or a lunatic is the creation of priests, Philistines and women. If courage is manifest in endurance of profitless discomfort it is cowardice to warm oneself when cold, to cure oneself when ill, to drive away mosquitoes, to go in when it rains. The "pursuit of happiness," then, is not an "inalienable right," for that implies avoidance of pain. No principle is involved in this matter; suicide is justifiable or not, according to circumstances; each case is to be considered on its merits and he having the act under advisement is sole judge. To his decision, made with whatever light he may chance to have, all honest minds will bow. The appellant has no court to which to take his appeal. Nowhere is a jurisdiction so comprehensive as to embrace the right of condemning the wretched to life.

Suicide is always courageous. We call it courage in a soldier merely to face death — say to lead a forlorn hope — although he has a chance of life and a certainty of "glory." But the suicide does more than face death; he incurs it, and with a certainty, not of glory, but of reproach. If that is not courage we must reform our vocabulary.

True, there may be a higher courage in living than in dying — a moral courage greater than physical. The courage of the suicide, like that of the pirate, is not incompatible with a selfish disregard of the rights and interests of others — a cruel recreancy to duty and decency. I have been asked: "Do you not think it cowardly when a man leaves his family unprovided for, to end his life, because he is dissatisfied with life in general?" No, I do not; I think it selfish and cruel. Is not that enough to say of it? Must we distort words from their true meaning in order more effectually to damn the act and cover its author with a greater infamy? A word means something; despite the maunderings of the lexicographers, it does not mean whatever you want it to mean. "Cowardice" means the fear of danger, not the shirking of duty. The writer who allows himself as much liberty in the use of words as he is allowed by the dictionary-maker and by popular consent is a bad writer. He can make no impression on his reader, and would do better service at the ribbon-counter.

The ethics of suicide is not a simple matter; one can not lay down laws of universal application, but each case is to be judged, if judged at all, with a full knowledge of all the circumstances, including the mental and moral make-up of the person taking his own life — an impossible qualification for judgment.

One’s time, race and religion have much to do with it. Some people, like the ancient Romans and the modern Japanese, have considered suicide in certain circumstances honorable and obligatory; among ourselves it is held in disfavor. A man of sense will not give much attention to considerations of that kind, excepting in so far as they affect others, but in judging weak offenders they are to be taken into the account. Speaking generally, then, I should say that in our time and country the following persons (and some others) are justified in removing themselves, and that to some of them it is a duty:

One afflicted with a painful or loathsome and incurable disease.

One who is a heavy burden to his friends, with no prospect of their relief.

One threatened with permanent insanity.

One irreclaimably addicted to drunkenness or some similarly destructive or offensive habit.

One without friends, property, employment or hope.

One who has disgraced himself.

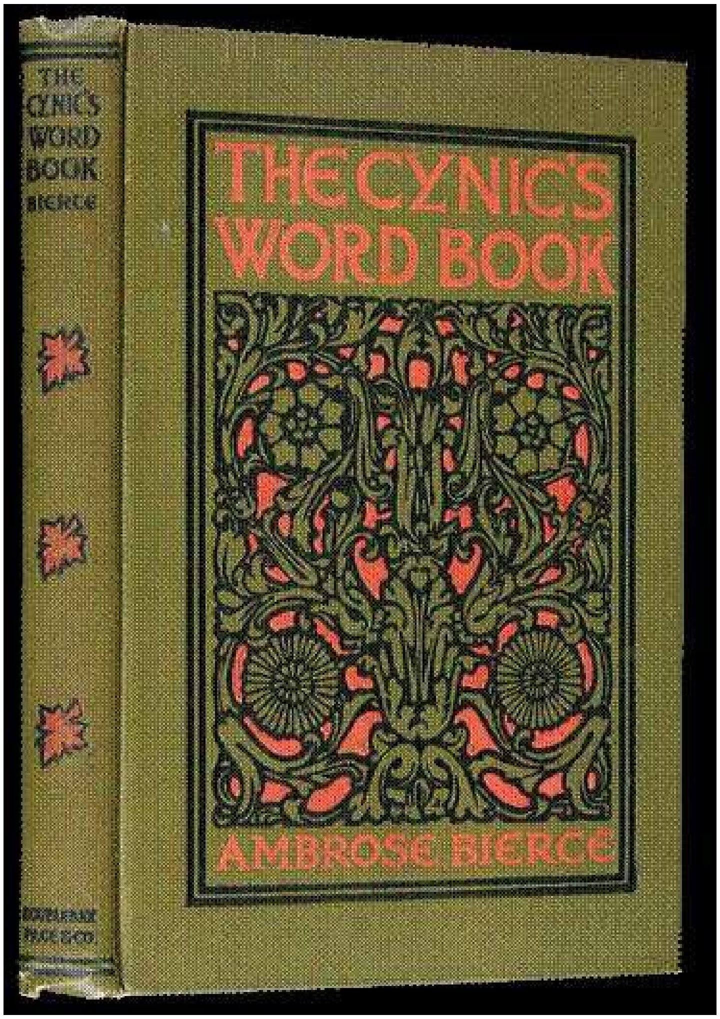
Why do we honor the valiant soldier, sailor, fireman? For obedience to duty? Not at all; that alone — without the peril — seldom elicits remark, never evokes enthusiasm. It is because he faced without flinching the risk of that supreme disaster — or what we feel to be such — death. But look you: the soldier braves the danger of death; the suicide braves death itself! The leader of the forlorn hope may not be struck. The sailor who voluntarily goes down with his ship may be picked up or cast ashore. It is not certain that the wall will topple until the fireman shall have descended with his precious burden. But the suicide — his is the foeman that never missed a mark, his the sea that gives nothing back; the wall that he mounts bears no man’s weight And his, at the end of it all, is the dishonored grave where the wild ass of public opinion

“Stamps o’er his head but can not break his sleep.”

THE DEVIL'S DICTIONARY

The Devil's Dictionary is Ambrose Bierce's most famous book, though it took many years to achieve that status and features a rather convoluted publication history. While editing the "Town Crier" page of the *News Letter* in San Francisco during the 1860's, Bierce suggested the idea of a "Comic Dictionary." In the 1870's he wrote a series of comic definitions for 48 words, which he entitled *The Demon's Dictionary*. Beginning in 1881, as editor-in-chief of a weekly magazine, *The Wasp*, Bierce wrote numerous installments of *The Devil's Dictionary*.

Later that decade, he wrote a series of words for what he called *The Cynic's Dictionary*. In 1906, Doubleday, Page and Company published Bierce's collection, *The Cynic's Word Book,* which contained definitions to 500 words, from A to L. Five years later, Volume Seven of *The Collected Works of Ambrose Bierce* added 500 M to Z words under Bierce's preferred title, *The Devil's Dictionary*. Frederic Tabor Cooper in the July 1911 issue of *The Bookman* described this "greatly amplified edition" as being a "curiously caustic piece of irony." *Vanity Fair* of London praised Bierce as among "the front rank of American critics, if indeed he does not head them all," and then went on to say, "If you have not read Bierce's *Devil's Dictionary* you have a matchless pleasure before you."


THE CYNIC'S WORD BOOK
BIERCE
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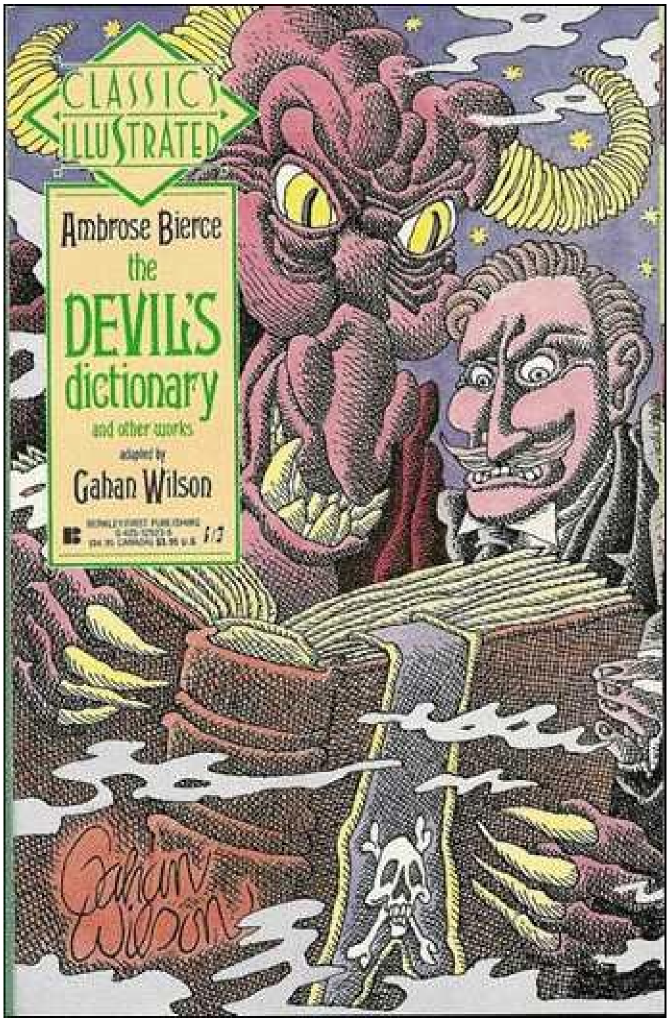
The 1906 edition published by Doubleday, Page and Company


Classics Illustrated
Ambrose Bierce
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A later edition

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Author’s Preface

The Devil’s Dictionary was begun in a weekly paper in 1881, and was continued in a desultory way at long intervals until 1906. In that year a large part of it was published in covers with the title *The Cynic’s Word Book*, a name which the author had not the power to reject or happiness to approve. To quote the publishers of the present work: “This more reverent title had previously been forced upon him by the religious scruples of the last newspaper in which a part of the work had appeared, with the natural consequence that when it came out in covers the country already had been flooded by its imitators with a score of ‘cynic’ books — *The Cynic’s This*, *The Cynic’s That*, and *The Cynic’s t’Other*. Most of these books were merely stupid, though some of them added the distinction of silliness. Among them, they brought the word ‘cynic’ into disfavor so deep that any book bearing it was discredited in advance of publication.”

Meantime, too, some of the enterprising humorists of the country had helped themselves to such parts of the work as served their needs, and many of its definitions, anecdotes, phrases and so forth, had become more or less current in popular speech. This explanation is made, not with any pride of priority in trifles, but in simple denial of possible charges of plagiarism, which is no trifle. In merely resuming his own the author hopes to be held guiltless by those to whom the work is addressed — enlightened souls who prefer dry wines to sweet, sense to sentiment, wit to humor and clean English to slang.

A conspicuous, and it is hoped not unpleasant, feature of the book is its abundant illustrative quotations from eminent poets, chief of whom is that learned and ingenius cleric, Father Gassalasca Jape, S.J., whose lines bear his initials. To Father Jape’s kindly encouragement and assistance the author of the prose text is greatly indebted.

A.B.

A

ABASEMENT, n. A decent and customary mental attitude in the presence of wealth or power. Peculiarly appropriate in an employee when addressing an employer.

ABATIS, n. Rubbish in front of a fort, to prevent the rubbish outside from molesting the rubbish inside.

ABDICATION, n. An act whereby a sovereign attests his sense of the high temperature of the throne.

Poor Isabella's Dead, whose abdication
Set all tongues wagging in the Spanish nation.
For that performance 'twere unfair to scold her:
She wisely left a throne too hot to hold her.
To History she'll be no royal riddle —
Merely a plain parched pea that jumped the griddle.
–G.J.

ABDOMEN, n. The temple of the god Stomach, in whose worship, with sacrificial rights, all true men engage. From women this ancient faith commands but a stammering assent. They sometimes minister at the altar in a half-hearted and ineffective way, but true reverence for the one deity that men really adore they know not. If woman had a free hand in the world's marketing the race would become graminivorous.

ABILITY, n. The natural equipment to accomplish some small part of the meaner ambitions distinguishing able men from dead ones. In the last analysis ability is commonly found to consist mainly in a high degree of solemnity. Perhaps, however, this impressive quality is rightly appraised; it is no easy task to be solemn.

ABNORMAL, adj. Not conforming to standard. In matters of thought and conduct, to be independent is to be abnormal, to be abnormal is to be detested. Wherefore the lexicographer adviseth a striving toward the straiter [sic] resemblance of the Average Man than he hath to himself. Whoso attaineth thereto shall have peace, the prospect of death and the hope of Hell.

ABORIGINIES, n. Persons of little worth found cumbering the soil of a newly discovered country. They soon cease to cumber; they fertilize.

ABRACADABRA.
By *Abracadabra* we signify
An infinite number of things.
‘Tis the answer to What? and How? and Why?
And Whence? and Whither? — a word whereby
The Truth (with the comfort it brings)
Is open to all who grope in night,
Crying for Wisdom’s holy light.
Whether the word is a verb or a noun
Is knowledge beyond my reach.
I only know that ‘tis handed down.
From sage to sage,
From age to age —
An immortal part of speech!
Of an ancient man the tale is told
That he lived to be ten centuries old,
In a cave on a mountain side.
(True, he finally died.)
The fame of his wisdom filled the land,
For his head was bald, and you’ll understand
His beard was long and white
And his eyes uncommonly bright.
Philosophers gathered from far and near
To sit at his feet and hear and hear,
Though he never was heard
To utter a word
But “*Abracadabra, abracadab,*
Abracada, abracad,

Abraca, abrac, abra, ab!”
‘Twas all he had,
‘Twas all they wanted to hear, and each
Made copious notes of the mystical speech,
Which they published next —
A trickle of text
In the meadow of commentary.
Mighty big books were these,
In a number, as leaves of trees;
In learning, remarkably — very!
He’s dead,
As I said,
And the books of the sages have perished,
But his wisdom is sacredly cherished.
In *Abracadabra* it solemnly rings,
Like an ancient bell that forever swings.
O, I love to hear
That word make clear
Humanity’s General Sense of Things.
–Jamrach Holobom

ABRIDGE, v.t. To shorten.

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for people to abridge their king, a decent respect for the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

Oliver Cromwell

ABRUPT, adj. Sudden, without ceremony, like the arrival of a cannon~shot and the departure of the soldier whose interests are most affected by it. Dr. Samuel Johnson beautifully said of another author’s ideas that they were “concatenated without abruption.”

ABSCOND, v.i. To “move in a mysterious way,” commonly with the property of another.

Spring beckons! All things to the call respond;
The trees are leaving and cashiers abscond.
–Phela Orm

ABSENT, adj. Peculiarly exposed to the tooth of detraction; vilifed; hopelessly in the wrong; superseded in the consideration and affection of another.
To men a man is but a mind. Who cares
What face he carries or what form he wears?
But woman's body is the woman. O,
Stay thou, my sweetheart, and do never go,
But heed the warning words the sage hath said:
A woman absent is a woman dead.
–Jogo Tyree

ABSENTEE, n. A person with an income who has had the forethought to remove himself from the sphere of exaction.

ABSOLUTE, adj. Independent, irresponsible. An absolute monarchy is one in which the sovereign does as he pleases so long as he pleases the assassins. Not many absolute monarchies are left, most of them having been replaced by limited monarchies, where the sovereign's power for evil (and for good) is greatly curtailed, and by republics, which are governed by chance.

ABSTAINER, n. A weak person who yields to the temptation of denying himself a pleasure. A total abstainer is one who abstains from everything but abstention, and especially from inactivity in the affairs of others.
Said a man to a crapulent youth: "I thought
You a total abstainer, my son."
"So I am, so I am," said the scapegrace caught —
"But not, sir, a bigoted one."
–G.J.

ABSURDITY, n. A statement or belief manifestly inconsistent with one's own opinion.

ACADEME, n. An ancient school where morality and philosophy were taught.

ACADEMY, n. [from ACADEME] A modern school where football is taught.

ACCIDENT, n. An inevitable occurrence due to the action of immutable natural laws.

ACCOMPLICE, n. One associated with another in a crime, having guilty knowledge and complicity, as an attorney who defends a criminal, knowing him guilty. This view of the attorney's position in the matter has not hitherto commanded the assent of attorneys, no one having offered them a fee for assenting.

ACCORD, n. Harmony.

ACCORDION, n. An instrument in harmony with the sentiments of an assassin.

ACCOUNTABILITY, n. The mother of caution.
"My accountability, bear in mind,"
Said the Grand Vizier: "Yes, yes,"
Said the Shah: "I do—'tis the only kind
Of ability you possess."
–Joram Tate

ACCUSE, v.t. To affirm another's guilt or unworth; most commonly as a justification of ourselves for having wronged him.

ACEPHALOUS, adj. In the surprising condition of the Crusader who absently pulled at his forelock some hours after a Saracen scimitar had, unconsciously to him, passed through his neck, as related by de Joinville.

ACHIEVEMENT, n. The death of endeavor and the birth of disgust.

ACKNOWLEDGE, v.t. To confess. Acknowledgement of one another's faults is the highest duty imposed by our love of truth.

ACQUAINTANCE, n. A person whom we know well enough to borrow from, but not well enough to lend to. A degree of friendship called slight when its object is poor or obscure, and intimate when he is rich or famous.

ACTUALLY, adv. Perhaps; possibly.

ADAGE, n. Boned wisdom for weak teeth.

ADAMANT, n. A mineral frequently found beneath a corset. Soluble in solicitate of gold.

ADDER, n. A species of snake. So called from its habit of adding funeral outlays to the other expenses of living.

ADHERENT, n. A follower who has not yet obtained all that he expects to get.

ADMINISTRATION, n. An ingenious abstraction in politics, designed to receive the kicks and cuffs due to the premier or president. A man of straw, proof against bad-egging and dead-catting.

ADMIRAL, n. That part of a war-ship which does the talking while the figure-head does the thinking.

ADMIRATION, n. Our polite recognition of another’s resemblance to ourselves.

ADMONITION, n. Gentle reproof, as with a meat-axe. Friendly warning.
Consigned by way of admonition,
His soul forever to perdition.

–Judibras

ADORE, v.t. To venerate expectantly.

ADVICE, n. The smallest current coin.
“The man was in such deep distress,”
Said Tom, “that I could do no less
Than give him good advice.” Said Jim:
“If less could have been done for him
I know you well enough, my son,
To know that’s what you would have done.”
–Jebel Jocordy

AFFIANCED, pp. Fitted with an ankle-ring for the ball-and-chain.

AFFLICTION, n. An acclimatizing process preparing the soul for another and bitter world.

AFRICAN, n. A nigger that votes our way.

AGE, n. That period of life in which we compound for the vices that we still cherish by reviling those that we have no longer the enterprise to commit.

AGITATOR, n. A statesman who shakes the fruit trees of his neighbors — to dislodge the worms.

AIM, n. The task we set our wishes to.
“Cheer up! Have you no aim in life?”
She tenderly inquired.
“An aim? Well, no, I haven’t, wife;
The fact is — I have fired.”
–G.J.

AIR, n. A nutritious substance supplied by a bountiful Providence for the fattening of the poor.

ALDERMAN, n. An ingenious criminal who covers his secret thieving with a pretence of open marauding.

ALIEN, n. An American sovereign in his probationary state.

ALLAH, n. The Mahometan Supreme Being, as distinguished from the Christian, Jewish, and so forth.
Allah's good laws I faithfully have kept,
And ever for the sins of man have wept;
And sometimes kneeling in the temple I
Have reverently crossed my hands and slept.
–Junker Barlow

ALLEGIANCE, n.
This thing Allegiance, as I suppose,
Is a ring fitted in the subject's nose,
Whereby that organ is kept rightly pointed
To smell the sweetness of the Lord's anointed.
–G.J.

ALLIANCE, n. In international politics, the union of two thieves who have their hands so deeply inserted in each other's pockets that they cannot separately plunder a third.

ALLIGATOR, n. The crocodile of America, superior in every detail to the crocodile of the effete monarchies of the Old World. Herodotus says the Indus is, with one exception, the only river that produces crocodiles, but they appear to have gone West and grown up with the other rivers. From the notches on his back the alligator is called a sawrian.

ALONE, adj. In bad company.

In contact, lo! the flint and steel,
By spark and flame, the thought reveal
That he the metal, she the stone,
Had cherished secretly alone.
–Booley Fito

ALTAR, n. The place whereupon the priest formerly raveled out the small intestine of the sacrificial victim for purposes of divination and cooked its flesh for the gods. The word is now seldom used, except with reference to the sacrifice of their liberty and peace by a male and a female tool.
They stood before the altar and supplied
The fire themselves in which their fat was fried.
In vain the sacrifice! — no god will claim
An offering burnt with an unholy flame.
–M.P. Nopput

AMBIDEXTROUS, adj. Able to pick with equal skill a right-hand pocket or a left.

AMBITION, n. An overmastering desire to be vilified by enemies while living and made ridiculous by friends when dead.

AMNESTY, n. The state’s magnanimity to those offenders whom it would be too expensive to punish.

ANOINT, v.t. To grease a king or other great functionary already sufficiently slippery.
As sovereigns are anointed by the priesthood,
So pigs to lead the populace are greased good.
–Judibras

ANTIPATHY, n. The sentiment inspired by one’s friend’s friend.

APHORISM, n. Predigested wisdom.
The flabby wine-skin of his brain

Yields to some pathologic strain,
And voids from its unstored abysm
The driblet of an aphorism.
–"The Mad Philosopher," 1697

APOLOGIZE, v.i. To lay the foundation for a future offence.

APOSTATE, n. A leech who, having penetrated the shell of a turtle only to find that the creature has long been dead, deems it expedient to form a new attachment to a fresh turtle.

APOTHECARY, n. The physician's accomplice, undertaker's benefactor and grave worm's provider.
When Jove sent blessings to all men that are,
And Mercury conveyed them in a jar,
That friend of tricksters introduced by stealth
Disease for the apothecary's health,
Whose gratitude impelled him to proclaim:
"My deadliest drug shall bear my patron's name!"
–G.J.

APPEAL, v.t. In law, to put the dice into the box for another throw.

APPETITE, n. An instinct thoughtfully implanted by Providence as a solution to the labor question.

APPLAUSE, n. The echo of a platitude.

APRIL FOOL, n. The March fool with another month added to his folly.

ARCHBISHOP, n. An ecclesiastical dignitary one point holier than a bishop.
If I were a jolly archbishop,
On Fridays I'd eat all the fish up —

Salmon and flounders and smelts;
On other days everything else.
–Jodo Rem

ARCHITECT, n. One who drafts a plan of your house, and plans a draft of your money.

ARDOR, n. The quality that distinguishes love without knowledge.

ARENA, n. In politics, an imaginary rat-pit in which the statesman wrestles with his record.

ARISTOCRACY, n. Government by the best men. (In this sense the word is obsolete; so is that kind of government.) Fellows that wear downy hats and clean shirts — guilty of education and suspected of bank accounts.

ARMOR, n. The kind of clothing worn by a man whose tailor is a blacksmith.

ARRAYED, pp. Drawn up and given an orderly disposition, as a rioter hanged to a lamppost.

ARREST, v.t. Formally to detain one accused of unusualness.
God made the world in six days and was arrested on the seventh.
–*The Unauthorized Version*

ARSENIC, n. A kind of cosmetic greatly affected by the ladies, whom it greatly affects in turn.
“Eat arsenic? Yes, all you get,”
Consenting, he did speak up;
“‘Tis better you should eat it, pet,
Than put it in my teacup.”
–Joel Huck

ART, n. This word has no definition. Its origin is related as follows by the ingenious Father Gassalasca Jape, S.J.
One day a wag — what would the wretch be at? —
Shifted a letter of the cipher RAT,
And said it was a god's name! Straight arose
Fantastic priests and postulants (with shows,
And mysteries, and mummeries, and hymns,
And disputations dire that lamed their limbs)
To serve his temple and maintain the fires,
Expound the law, manipulate the wires.
Amazed, the populace that rites attend,
Believe whate'er they cannot comprehend,
And, inly edified to learn that two
Half-hairs joined so and so (as Art can do)
Have sweeter values and a grace more fit
Than Nature's hairs that never have been split,
Bring cates and wines for sacrificial feasts,
And sell their garments to support the priests.

ARTLESSNESS, n. A certain engaging quality to which women attain by long study and severe practice upon the admiring male, who is pleased to fancy it resembles the candid simplicity of his young.

ASPERSE, v.t. Maliciously to ascribe to another vicious actions which one has not had the temptation and opportunity to commit.

ASS, n. A public singer with a good voice but no ear. In Virginia City, Nevada, he is called the Washoe Canary, in Dakota, the Senator, and everywhere the Donkey. The animal is widely and variously celebrated in the literature, art and religion of every age and country; no other so engages and fires the human imagination as this noble vertebrate. Indeed, it is doubted by some (Ramasilus, *lib. II., De Clem.*, and C. Stantatus, *De Temperamente*) if it is not a god; and as such we know it was worshiped by the Etruscans, and, if we may believe Macrobious, by the Cupasians also. Of the only two animals admitted into the Mahometan Paradise along with the souls of men, the ass that carried Balaam is one, the dog of the Seven Sleepers the other. This is no small distinction. From what has been written about this beast might be compiled a library of great splendor and magnitude, rivalling that of the Shakespearean cult, and that which clusters about the Bible. It may be said, generally, that all literature is more or less Asinine.

"Hail, holy Ass!" the quiring angels sing;
"Priest of Unreason, and of Discords King!"
Great co-Creator, let Thy glory shine:
God made all else, the Mule, the Mule is thine!"
–G.J.

AUCTIONEER, n. The man who proclaims with a hammer that he has picked a pocket with his tongue.

AUSTRALIA, n. A country lying in the South Sea, whose industrial and commercial development has been unspeakably retarded by an unfortunate dispute among geographers as to whether it is a continent or an island.

AVERNUS, n. The lake by which the ancients entered the infernal regions. The fact that access to the infernal regions was obtained by a lake is believed by the learned Marcus Ansello Scrutator to have suggested the Christian rite of baptism by immersion. This, however, has been shown by Lactantius to be an error.

Facilis descensus Averni,
The poet remarks; and the sense
Of it is that when down-hill I turn I
Will get more of punches than pence.
–Jehal Dai Lupe

B

BAAL, n. An old deity formerly much worshiped under various names. As Baal he was popular with the Phoenicians; as Belus or Bel he had the honor to be served by the priest Berosus, who wrote the famous account of the Deluge; as Babel he had a tower partly erected to his glory on the Plain of Shinar. From Babel comes our English word "babble." Under whatever name worshiped, Baal is the Sun-god. As Beelzebub he is the god of flies, which are begotten of the sun's rays on the stagnant water. In Physicia Baal is still worshiped as Bolus, and as Belly he is adored and served with abundant sacrifice by the priests of Guttledom.

BABE or BABY, n. A misshapen creature of no particular age, sex, or condition, chiefly remarkable for the violence of the sympathies and antipathies it excites in others, itself without sentiment or emotion. There have been famous babes; for example, little Moses, from whose adventure in the bulrushes the Egyptian hierophants of seven centuries before doubtless derived their idle tale of the child Osiris being preserved on a floating lotus leaf.
Ere babes were invented
The girls were contended.
Now man is tormented
Until to buy babes he has squandered
His money. And so I have pondered
This thing, and thought may be
'T were better that Baby
The First had been eagled or condored.
–Ro Amil

BACCHUS, n. A convenient deity invented by the ancients as an excuse for getting drunk.
Is public worship, then, a sin,
That for devotions paid to Bacchus
The lictors dare to run us in,
And resolutely thump and whack us?
–Jorace

BACK, n. That part of your friend which it is your privilege to contemplate in your adversity.

BACKBITE, v.t. To speak of a man as you find him when he can’t find you.

BAIT, n. A preparation that renders the hook more palatable. The best kind is beauty.

BAPTISM, n. A sacred rite of such efficacy that he who finds himself in heaven without having undergone it will be unhappy forever. It is performed with water in two ways — by immersion, or plunging, and by aspersion, or sprinkling.

But whether the plan of immersion
Is better than simple aspersion
Let those immersed
And those aspersed
Decide by the Authorized Version,
And by matching their agues tertian.
–G.J.

BAROMETER, n. An ingenious instrument which indicates what kind of weather we are having.

BARRACK, n. A house in which soldiers enjoy a portion of that of which it is their business to deprive others.

BASILISK, n. The cockatrice. A sort of serpent hatched form the egg of a cock. The basilisk had a bad eye, and its glance was fatal. Many infidels deny this creature’s existence, but Semprello Aurator saw and handled one that had been blinded by lightning as a punishment for having fatally gazed on a lady of rank whom Jupiter loved. Juno afterward restored the reptile’s sight and hid it in a cave. Nothing is so well attested by the ancients as the existence of the basilisk, but the cocks have stopped laying.

BASTINADO, n. The act of walking on wood without exertion.

BATH, n. A kind of mystic ceremony substituted for religious worship, with what spiritual efficacy has not been determined.
The man who taketh a steam bath
He loseth all the skin he hath,
And, for he’s boiled a brilliant red,
Thinketh to cleanliness he’s wed,
Forgetting that his lungs he’s soiling
With dirty vapors of the boiling.
–Richard Gwow

BATTLE, n. A method of untying with the teeth of a political knot that would not yield to the tongue.

BEARD, n. The hair that is commonly cut off by those who justly execrate the absurd Chinese custom of shaving the head.

BEAUTY, n. The power by which a woman charms a lover and terrifies a husband.

BEFRIEND, v.t. To make an ingrate.

BEG, v. To ask for something with an earnestness proportioned to the belief that it will not be given.
Who is that, father?
A mendicant, child,
Haggard, morose, and unaffable — wild!
See how he glares through the bars of his cell!
With Citizen Mendicant all is not well.
Why did they put him there, father?
Because
Obeying his belly he struck at the laws.
His belly?

Oh, well, he was starving, my boy —
A state in which, doubtless, there’s little of joy.
No bite had he eaten for days, and his cry
Was “Bread!” ever “Bread!”
What’s the matter with pie?
With little to wear, he had nothing to sell;
To beg was unlawful — improper as well.
Why didn’t he work?
He would even have done that,
But men said: “Get out!” and the State remarked: “Scat!”
I mention these incidents merely to show
That the vengeance he took was uncommonly low.
Revenge, at the best, is the act of a Siou,
But for trifles —
Pray what did bad Mendicant do?
Stole two loaves of bread to replenish his lack
And tuck out the belly that clung to his back.
Is that *all* father dear?
There’s little to tell:
They sent him to jail, and they’ll send him to — well,
The company’s better than here we can boast,
And there’s —
Bread for the needy, dear father?
Um — toast.
–Atka Mip

BEGGAR, n. One who has relied on the assistance of his friends.

BEHAVIOR, n. Conduct, as determined, not by principle, but by breeding. The word seems to be somewhat loosely used in Dr. Jamrach Holobom’s translation of the following lines from the *Dies Irae*:

Recordare, Jesu pie,
Quod sum causa tuae viae.
Ne me perdas illa die.
Pray remember, sacred Savior,
Whose the thoughtless hand that gave your
Death-blow. Pardon such behavior.

BELLADONNA, n. In Italian a beautiful lady; in English a deadly poison. A striking example of the essential identity of the two tongues.

BENEDICTINES, n. An order of monks otherwise known as black friars.
She thought it a crow, but it turn out to be
A monk of St. Benedict croaking a text.
“Here’s one of an order of cooks,” said she —
“Black friars in this world, fried black in the next.”
–”The Devil on Earth” (London, 1712)

BENEFACTOR, n. One who makes heavy purchases of ingratitude, without, however, materially affecting the price, which is still within the means of all.

BERENICE’S HAIR, n. A constellation (*Coma Berenices*) named in honor of one who sacrificed her hair to save her husband.
Her locks an ancient lady gave
Her loving husband’s life to save;
And men — they honored so the dame —
Upon some stars bestowed her name.
But to our modern married fair,
Who’d give their lords to save their hair,
No stellar recognition’s given.
There are not stars enough in heaven.
–G.J.

BIGAMY, n. A mistake in taste for which the wisdom of the future will adjudge a punishment called trigamy.

BIGOT, n. One who is obstinately and zealously attached to an opinion that you do not entertain.

BILLINGSGATE, n. The invective of an opponent.

BIRTH, n. The first and direst of all disasters. As to the nature of it there appears to be no uniformity. Castor and Pollux were born from the egg. Pallas came out of a skull. Galatea was once a block of stone. Peresilis, who wrote in the tenth century, avers that he grew up out of the ground where a priest had spilled holy water. It is known that Arimaxus was derived from a hole in the earth, made by a stroke of lightning. Leucomedon was the son of a cavern in Mount Aetna, and I have myself seen a man come out of a wine cellar.

BLACKGUARD, n. A man whose qualities, prepared for display like a box of berries in a market — the fine ones on top — have been opened on the wrong side. An inverted gentleman.

BLANK-VERSE, n. Unrhymed iambic pentameters — the most difficult kind of English verse to write acceptably; a kind, therefore, much affected by those who cannot acceptably write any kind.

BODY-SNATCHER, n. A robber of grave-worms. One who supplies the young physicians with that with which the old physicians have supplied the undertaker. The hyena.

“One night,” a doctor said, “last fall,
I and my comrades, four in all,
When visiting a graveyard stood
Within the shadow of a wall.
“While waiting for the moon to sink
We saw a wild hyena slink
About a new-made grave, and then
Begin to excavate its brink!
“Shocked by the horrid act, we made
A sally from our ambuscade,
And, falling on the unholy beast,
Dispatched him with a pick and spade.”
–Bettel K. Jhones

BONDSMAN, n. A fool who, having property of his own, undertakes to become responsible for that entrusted to another to a third.

Philippe of Orleans wishing to appoint one of his favorites, a dissolute nobleman, to a high office, asked him what security he would be able to give. “I need no bondsmen,” he replied, “for I can give you my word of honor.” “And pray what may be the value of that?” inquired the amused Regent. “Monsieur, it is worth its weight in gold.”

BORE, n. A person who talks when you wish him to listen.

BOTANY, n. The science of vegetables — those that are not good to eat, as well as those that are. It deals largely with their flowers, which are commonly badly designed, inartistic in color, and ill-smelling.

BOTTLE-NOSED, adj. Having a nose created in the image of its maker.

BOUNDARY, n. In political geography, an imaginary line between two nations, separating the imaginary rights of one from the imaginary rights of the other.

BOUNTY, n. The liberality of one who has much, in permitting one who has nothing to get all that he can.
A single swallow, it is said, devours ten millions of insects
every year. The supplying of these insects I take to be a signal
instance of the Creator’s bounty in providing for the lives of His
creatures.
–Henry Ward Beecher

BRAHMA, n. He who created the Hindoos, who are preserved by Vishnu and destroyed by Siva — a rather neater division of labor than is found among the deities of some other nations. The Abracadabranese, for example, are created by Sin, maintained by Theft and destroyed by Folly. The priests of Brahma, like those of Abracadabranese, are holy and learned men who are never naughty.

O Brahma, thou rare old Divinity,
First Person of the Hindoo Trinity,
You sit there so calm and securely,
With feet folded up so demurely —

You’re the First Person Singular, surely.
–Polydore Smith

BRAIN, n. An apparatus with which we think what we think. That which distinguishes the man who is content to *be* something from the man who wishes to *do* something. A man of great wealth, or one who has been pitchforked into high station, has commonly such a headful of brain that his neighbors cannot keep their hats on. In our civilization, and under our republican form of government, brain is so highly honored that it is rewarded by exemption from the cares of office.

BRANDY, n. A cordial composed of one part thunder-and-lightning, one part remorse, two parts bloody murder, one part death-hell-and-the grave and four parts clarified Satan. Dose, a headful all the time. Brandy is said by Dr. Johnson to be the drink of heroes. Only a hero will venture to drink it.

BRIDE, n. A woman with a fine prospect of happiness behind her.

BRUTE, n. See HUSBAND.

C

CAABA, n. A large stone presented by the archangel Gabriel to the patriarch Abraham, and preserved at Mecca. The patriarch had perhaps asked the archangel for bread.

CABBAGE, n. A familiar kitchen-garden vegetable about as large and wise as a man's head.
The cabbage is so called from Cabagius, a prince who on ascending the throne issued a decree appointing a High Council of Empire consisting of the members of his predecessor's Ministry and the cabbages in the royal garden. When any of his Majesty's measures of state policy miscarried conspicuously it was gravely announced that several members of the High Council had been beheaded, and his murmuring subjects were appeased.

CALAMITY, n. A more than commonly plain and unmistakable reminder that the affairs of this life are not of our own ordering. Calamities are of two kinds: misfortune to ourselves, and good fortune to others.

CALLOUS, adj. Gifted with great fortitude to bear the evils afflicting another.
When Zeno was told that one of his enemies was no more he was observed to be deeply moved. "What!" said one of his disciples, "you weep at the death of an enemy?" "Ah, 'tis true," replied the great Stoic; "but you should see me smile at the death of a friend."

CALUMNUS, n. A graduate of the School for Scandal.

CAMEL, n. A quadruped (the *Splaypes humpidorsus*) of great value to the show business. There are two kinds of camels — the camel proper and the camel improper. It is the latter that is always exhibited.

CANNIBAL, n. A gastronome of the old school who preserves the simple tastes and adheres to the natural diet of the pre-pork period.

CANNON, n. An instrument employed in the rectification of national boundaries.

CANONICALS, n. The motley worm by Jesters of the Court of Heaven.

CAPITAL, n. The seat of misgovernment. That which provides the fire, the pot, the dinner, the table and the knife and fork for the anarchist; the part of the repast that himself supplies is the disgrace before meat. *Capital Punishment*, a penalty regarding the justice and expediency of which many worthy persons — including all the assassins — entertain grave misgivings.

CARMELITE, n. A mendicant friar of the order of Mount Carmel.
As Death was a-rising out one day,
Across Mount Camel he took his way,
Where he met a mendicant monk,
Some three or four quarters drunk,
With a holy leer and a pious grin,
Ragged and fat and as saucy as sin,
Who held out his hands and cried:
“Give, give in Charity’s name, I pray.
Give in the name of the Church. O give,
Give that her holy sons may live!”
And Death replied,
Smiling long and wide:
“I’ll give, holy father, I’ll give thee — a ride.”
With a rattle and bang
Of his bones, he sprang
From his famous Pale Horse, with his spear;
By the neck and the foot
Seized the fellow, and put
Him astride with his face to the rear.
The Monarch laughed loud with a sound that fell
Like clods on the coffin’s sounding shell:

“Ho, ho! A beggar on horseback, they say,
Will ride to the devil!” — and *thump*
Fell the flat of his dart on the rump
Of the charger, which galloped away.
Faster and faster and faster it flew,
Till the rocks and the flocks and the trees that grew
By the road were dim and blended and blue
To the wild, wild eyes
Of the rider — in size
Resembling a couple of blackberry pies.
Death laughed again, as a tomb might laugh
At a burial service spoiled,
And the mourners’ intentions foiled
By the body erecting
Its head and objecting
To further proceedings in its behalf.
Many a year and many a day
Have passed since these events away.
The monk has long been a dusty corse,
And Death has never recovered his horse.
For the friar got hold of its tail,
And steered it within the pale
Of the monastery gray,
Where the beast was stabled and fed
With barley and oil and bread
Till fatter it grew than the fattest friar,
And so in due course was appointed Prior.
–G.J.

CARNIVOROUS, adj. Addicted to the cruelty of devouring the timorous vegetarian, his heirs and assigns.

CARTESIAN, adj. Relating to Descartes, a famous philosopher, author of the celebrated dictum, *Cogito ergo sum* — whereby he was pleased to suppose he demonstrated the reality of human existence. The dictum might be improved, however, thus: *Cogito cogito ergo cogito sum*—”I think that I think, therefore I think that I am;” as close an approach to certainty as any philosopher has yet made.

CAT, n. A soft, indestructible automaton provided by nature to be kicked when things go wrong in the domestic circle.

This is a dog,
This is a cat.
This is a frog,
This is a rat.
Run, dog, mew, cat.
Jump, frog, gnaw, rat.
–Elevenson

CAVILER, n. A critic of our own work.

CEMETERY, n. An isolated suburban spot where mourners match lies, poets write at a target and stone-cutters spell for a wager. The inscriptions following will serve to illustrate the success attained in these Olympian games:

His virtues were so conspicuous that his enemies, unable to
overlook them, denied them, and his friends, to whose loose lives
they were a rebuke, represented them as vices. They are here
commemorated by his family, who shared them.
In the earth we here prepare a
Place to lay our little Clara.
–Thomas M. and Mary Frazer
P.S. — Gabriel will raise her.

CENTAUR, n. One of a race of persons who lived before the division of labor had been carried to such a pitch of differentiation, and who followed the primitive economic maxim, “Every man his own horse.” The best of the lot was Chiron, who to the wisdom and virtues of the horse added the fleetness of man. The scripture story of the head of John the Baptist on a charger shows that pagan myths have somewhat sophisticated sacred history.

CERBERUS, n. The watch-dog of Hades, whose duty it was to guard the entrance — against whom or what does not clearly appear; everybody, sooner or later, had to go there, and nobody wanted to carry off the entrance. Cerberus is known to have had three heads, and some of the poets have credited him with as many as a hundred. Professor Graybill, whose clerky erudition and profound knowledge of Greek give his opinion great weight, has averaged all the estimates, and makes the number twenty-seven — a judgment that would be entirely conclusive is Professor Graybill had known (a) something about dogs, and (b) something about arithmetic.

CHILDHOOD, n. The period of human life intermediate between the idiocy of infancy and the folly of youth — two removes from the sin of manhood and three from the remorse of age.

CHRISTIAN, n. One who believes that the New Testament is a divinely inspired book admirably suited to the spiritual needs of his neighbor. One who follows the teachings of Christ in so far as they are not inconsistent with a life of sin.
I dreamed I stood upon a hill, and, lo!
The godly multitudes walked to and fro
Beneath, in Sabbath garments fitly clad,
With pious mien, appropriately sad,
While all the church bells made a solemn din —
A fire-alarm to those who lived in sin.
Then saw I gazing thoughtfully below,
With tranquil face, upon that holy show
A tall, spare figure in a robe of white,
Whose eyes diffused a melancholy light.
“God keep you, strange,” I exclaimed. “You are
No doubt (your habit shows it) from afar;
And yet I entertain the hope that you,
Like these good people, are a Christian too.”
He raised his eyes and with a look so stern
It made me with a thousand blushes burn
Replied — his manner with disdain was spiced:
“What! I a Christian? No, indeed! I’m Christ.”
–G.J.

CIRCUS, n. A place where horses, ponies and elephants are permitted to see men, women and children acting the fool.

CLAIRVOYANT, n. A person, commonly a woman, who has the power of seeing that which is invisible to her patron, namely, that he is a blockhead.

CLARIONET, n. An instrument of torture operated by a person with cotton in his ears. There are two instruments that are worse than a clarionet — two clarionets.

CLERGYMAN, n. A man who undertakes the management of our spiritual affairs as a method of better his temporal ones.

CLIO, n. One of the nine Muses. Clio's function was to preside over history — which she did with great dignity, many of the prominent citizens of Athens occupying seats on the platform, the meetings being addressed by Messrs. Xenophon, Herodotus and other popular speakers.

CLOCK, n. A machine of great moral value to man, allaying his concern for the future by reminding him what a lot of time remains to him.
A busy man complained one day:
"I get no time!" "What's that you say?"
Cried out his friend, a lazy quiz;
"You have, sir, all the time there is.
There's plenty, too, and don't you doubt it —
We're never for an hour without it."
–Purzil Crofe

CLOSE-FISTED, adj. Unduly desirous of keeping that which many meritorious persons wish to obtain.
"Close-fisted Scotchman!" Johnson cried
To thrifty J. Macpherson;
"See me — I'm ready to divide
With any worthy person."
Sad Jamie: "That is very true —
The boast requires no backing;

And all are worthy, sir, to you,
Who have what you are lacking."
–Anita M. Bobe

COENOBITE, n. A man who piously shuts himself up to meditate upon the sin of wickedness; and to keep it fresh in his mind joins a brotherhood of awful examples.

O Coenobite, O coenobite,
Monastical gregarian,
You differ from the anchorite,
That solitudinarian:
With vollied prayers you wound Old Nick;
With dropping shots he makes him sick.
–Quincy Giles

COMFORT, n. A state of mind produced by contemplation of a neighbor's uneasiness.

COMMENDATION, n. The tribute that we pay to achievements that resembles, but do not equal, our own.

COMMERCE, n. A kind of transaction in which A plunders from B the goods of C, and for compensation B picks the pocket of D of money belonging to E.

COMMONWEALTH, n. An administrative entity operated by an incalculable multitude of political parasites, logically active but fortuitously efficient.
This commonwealth's capitol's corridors view,
So thronged with a hungry and indolent crew
Of clerks, pages, porters and all attaches
Whom rascals appoint and the populace pays
That a cat cannot slip through the thicket of shins
Nor hear its own shriek for the noise of their chins.
On clerks and on pages, and porters, and all,

Misfortune attend and disaster befall!
May life be to them a succession of hurts;
May fleas by the bushel inhabit their shirts;
May aches and diseases encamp in their bones,
Their lungs full of tubercles, bladders of stones;
May microbes, bacilli, their tissues infest,
And tapeworms securely their bowels digest;
May corn-cobs be snared without hope in their hair,
And frequent impalement their pleasure impair.
Disturbed be their dreams by the awful discourse
Of audible sofas sepulchrally hoarse,
By chairs acrobatic and wavering floors —
The mattress that kicks and the pillow that snores!
Sons of cupidity, cradled in sin!
Your criminal ranks may the death angel thin,
Avenging the friend whom I couldn't work in.
–K.Q.

COMPROMISE, n. Such an adjustment of conflicting interests as gives each adversary the satisfaction of thinking he has got what he ought not to have, and is deprived of nothing except what was justly his due.

COMPULSION, n. The eloquence of power.

CONDOLE, v.i. To show that bereavement is a smaller evil than sympathy.

CONFIDANT, CONFIDANTE, n. One entrusted by A with the secrets of B, confided by *him* to C.

CONGRATULATION, n. The civility of envy.

CONGRESS, n. A body of men who meet to repeal laws.

CONNOISSEUR, n. A specialist who knows everything about something and nothing about anything else.

An old wine-bibber having been smashed in a railway collision, some wine was pouted on his lips to revive him. “Pauillac, 1873,” he murmured and died.

CONSERVATIVE, n. A statesman who is enamored of existing evils, as distinguished from the Liberal, who wishes to replace them with others.

CONSOLATION, n. The knowledge that a better man is more unfortunate than yourself.

CONSUL, n. In American politics, a person who having failed to secure an office from the people is given one by the Administration on condition that he leave the country.

CONSULT, v.i. To seek another’s disapproval of a course already decided on.

CONTEMPT, n. The feeling of a prudent man for an enemy who is too formidable safely to be opposed.

CONTROVERSY, n. A battle in which spittle or ink replaces the injurious cannon-ball and the inconsiderate bayonet.

In controversy with the facile tongue —
That bloodless warfare of the old and young —
So seek your adversary to engage
That on himself he shall exhaust his rage,
And, like a snake that’s fastened to the ground,
With his own fangs inflict the fatal wound.
You ask me how this miracle is done?
Adopt his own opinions, one by one,
And taunt him to refute them; in his wrath
He’ll sweep them pitilessly from his path.
Advance then gently all you wish to prove,
Each proposition prefaced with, “As you’ve

So well remarked," or, "As you wisely say,
And I cannot dispute," or, "By the way,
This view of it which, better far expressed,
Runs through your argument." Then leave the rest
To him, secure that he'll perform his trust
And prove your views intelligent and just.
–Conmore Apel Brune

CONVENT, n. A place of retirement for woman who wish for leisure to meditate upon the vice of idleness.

CONVERSATION, n. A fair to the display of the minor mental commodities, each exhibitor being too intent upon the arrangement of his own wares to observe those of his neighbor.

CORONATION, n. The ceremony of investing a sovereign with the outward and visible signs of his divine right to be blown skyhigh with a dynamite bomb.

CORPORAL, n. A man who occupies the lowest rung of the military ladder.
Fiercely the battle raged and, sad to tell,
Our corporal heroically fell!
Fame from her height looked down upon the brawl
And said: "He hadn't very far to fall."
–Giacomo Smith

CORPORATION, n. An ingenious device for obtaining individual profit without individual responsibility.

CORSAIR, n. A politician of the seas.

COURT FOOL, n. The plaintiff.

COWARD, n. One who in a perilous emergency thinks with his legs.

CRAYFISH, n. A small crustacean very much resembling the lobster, but less indigestible.

In this small fish I take it that human wisdom is admirably
figured and symbolized; for whereas the crayfish doth move only
backward, and can have only retrospection, seeing naught but the
perils already passed, so the wisdom of man doth not enable him to
avoid the follies that beset his course, but only to apprehend
their nature afterward.
–Sir James Merivale

CREDITOR, n. One of a tribe of savages dwelling beyond the Financial Straits and dreaded for their desolating incursions.

CREMONA, n. A high-priced violin made in Connecticut.

CRITIC, n. A person who boasts himself hard to please because nobody tries to please him.

There is a land of pure delight,
Beyond the Jordan's flood,
Where saints, apparelled all in white,
Fling back the critic's mud.
And as he legs it through the skies,
His pelt a sable hue,
He sorrows sore to recognize
The missiles that he threw.
–Orrin Goof

CROSS, n. An ancient religious symbol erroneously supposed to owe its significance to the most solemn event in the history of Christianity, but really antedating it by thousands of years. By many it has been believed to be identical with the *crux ansata* of the ancient phallic worship, but it has been traced even beyond all that we know of that, to the rites of primitive peoples. We have to-day the White Cross as a symbol of chastity, and the Red Cross as a badge of benevolent neutrality in war. Having in mind the former, the reverend Father Gassalasca Jape smites the lyre to the effect following:

"Be good, be good!" the sisterhood

Cry out in holy chorus,
And, to dissuade from sin, parade
Their various charms before us.
But why, O why, has ne’er an eye
Seen her of winsome manner
And youthful grace and pretty face
Flaunting the White Cross banner?
Now where’s the need of speech and screed
To better our behaving?
A simpler plan for saving man
(But, first, is he worth saving?)
Is, dears, when he declines to flee
From bad thoughts that beset him,
Ignores the Law as ‘t were a straw,
And wants to sin — don’t let him.

CUI BONO? [Latin] What good would that do *me*?

CUNNING, n. The faculty that distinguishes a weak animal or person from a strong one. It brings its possessor much mental satisfaction and great material adversity. An Italian proverb says: “The furrier gets the skins of more foxes than asses.”

CUPID, n. The so-called god of love. This bastard creation of a barbarous fancy was no doubt inflicted upon mythology for the sins of its deities. Of all unbeautiful and inappropriate conceptions this is the most reasonless and offensive. The notion of symbolizing sexual love by a semisexless babe, and comparing the pains of passion to the wounds of an arrow — of introducing this pudgy homunculus into art grossly to materialize the subtle spirit and suggestion of the work — this is eminently worthy of the age that, giving it birth, laid it on the doorstep of prosperity.

CURIOSITY, n. An objectionable quality of the female mind. The desire to know whether or not a woman is cursed with curiosity is one of the most active and insatiable passions of the masculine soul.

CURSE, v.t. Energetically to belabor with a verbal slap-stick. This is an operation which in literature, particularly in the drama, is commonly fatal to the victim. Nevertheless, the liability to a cursing is a risk that cuts but a small figure in fixing the rates of life insurance.

CYNIC, n. A blackguard whose faulty vision sees things as they are, not as they ought to be. Hence the custom among the Scythians of plucking out a cynic’s eyes to improve his vision.

D

DAMN, v. A word formerly much used by the Paphlagonians, the meaning of which is lost. By the learned Dr. Dolabelly Gak it is believed to have been a term of satisfaction, implying the highest possible degree of mental tranquillity. Professor Groke, on the contrary, thinks it expressed an emotion of tumultuous delight, because it so frequently occurs in combination with the word *jod* or *god*, meaning "joy." It would be with great diffidence that I should advance an opinion conflicting with that of either of these formidable authorities.

DANCE, v.i. To leap about to the sound of tittering music, preferably with arms about your neighbor's wife or daughter. There are many kinds of dances, but all those requiring the participation of the two sexes have two characteristics in common: they are conspicuously innocent, and warmly loved by the vicious.

DANGER, n.
A savage beast which, when it sleeps,
Man girds at and despises,
But takes himself away by leaps
And bounds when it arises.
–Ambat Delaso

DARING, n. One of the most conspicuous qualities of a man in security.

DATARY, n. A high ecclesiastic official of the Roman Catholic Church, whose important function is to brand the Pope's bulls with the words *Datum Romae*. He enjoys a princely revenue and the friendship of God.

DAWN, n. The time when men of reason go to bed. Certain old men prefer to rise at about that time, taking a cold bath and a long walk with an empty stomach, and otherwise mortifying the flesh. They then point with pride to these practices as the cause of their sturdy health and ripe years; the truth being that they are hearty and old, not because of their habits, but in spite of them. The reason we find only robust persons doing this thing is that it has killed all the others who have tried it.

DAY, n. A period of twenty-four hours, mostly misspent. This period is divided into two parts, the day proper and the night, or day improper — the former devoted to sins of business, the latter consecrated to the other sort. These two kinds of social activity overlap.

DEAD, adj.
Done with the work of breathing; done
With all the world; the mad race run
Though to the end; the golden goal
Attained and found to be a hole!
–Squatol Johnes

DEBAUCHEE, n. One who has so earnestly pursued pleasure that he has had the misfortune to overtake it.

DEBT, n. An ingenious substitute for the chain and whip of the slave-driver.
As, pent in an aquarium, the troutlet
Swims round and round his tank to find an outlet,
Pressing his nose against the glass that holds him,
Nor ever sees the prison that enfolds him;
So the poor debtor, seeing naught around him,
Yet feels the narrow limits that impound him,
Grieves at his debt and studies to evade it,
And finds at last he might as well have paid it.
–Barlow S. Vode

DECALOGUE, n. A series of commandments, ten in number — just enough to permit an intelligent selection for observance, but not enough to embarrass the choice. Following is the revised edition of the Decalogue, calculated for this meridian.
Thou shalt no God but me adore:
‘Twere too expensive to have more.
No images nor idols make
For Robert Ingersoll to break.
Take not God’s name in vain; select

A time when it will have effect.
Work not on Sabbath days at all,
But go to see the teams play ball.
Honor thy parents. That creates
For life insurance lower rates.
Kill not, abet not those who kill;
Thou shalt not pay thy butcher's bill.
Kiss not thy neighbor's wife, unless
Thine own thy neighbor doth caress
Don't steal; thou'lt never thus compete
Successfully in business. Cheat.
Bear not false witness — that is low —
But "hear 'tis rumored so and so."
Cover thou naught that thou hast not
By hook or crook, or somehow, got.
–G.J.

DECIDE, v.i. To succumb to the preponderance of one set of influences over another set.

A leaf was riven from a tree,
"I mean to fall to earth," said he.
The west wind, rising, made him veer.
"Eastward," said he, "I now shall steer."
The east wind rose with greater force.
Said he: "'Twere wise to change my course."
With equal power they contend.
He said: "My judgment I suspend."
Down died the winds; the leaf, elate,
Cried: "I've decided to fall straight."
"First thoughts are best?" That's not the moral;
Just choose your own and we'll not quarrel.
Howe'er your choice may chance to fall,
You'll have no hand in it at all.
–G.J.

DEFAME, v.t. To lie about another. To tell the truth about another.

DEFENCELESS, adj. Unable to attack.

DEGENERATE, adj. Less conspicuously admirable than one’s ancestors. The contemporaries of Homer were striking examples of degeneracy; it required ten of them to raise a rock or a riot that one of the heroes of the Trojan war could have raised with ease. Homer never tires of sneering at “men who live in these degenerate days,” which is perhaps why they suffered him to beg his bread — a marked instance of returning good for evil, by the way, for if they had forbidden him he would certainly have starved.

DEGRADATION, n. One of the stages of moral and social progress from private station to political preferment.

DEINOTHERIUM, n. An extinct pachyderm that flourished when the Pterodactyl was in fashion. The latter was a native of Ireland, its name being pronounced Terry Dactyl or Peter O’Dactyl, as the man pronouncing it may chance to have heard it spoken or seen it printed.

DEJEUNER, n. The breakfast of an American who has been in Paris. Variously pronounced.

DELEGATION, n. In American politics, an article of merchandise that comes in sets.

DELIBERATION, n. The act of examining one’s bread to determine which side it is buttered on.

DELUGE, n. A notable first experiment in baptism which washed away the sins (and sinners) of the world.

DELUSION, n. The father of a most respectable family, comprising Enthusiasm, Affection, Self-denial, Faith, Hope, Charity and many other goodly sons and

daughters.
All hail, Delusion! Were it not for thee
The world turned topsy-turvy we should see;
For Vice, respectable with cleanly fancies,
Would fly abandoned Virtue’s gross advances.
–Mumfrey Mappel

DENTIST, n. A prestidigitator who, putting metal into your mouth, pulls coins out of your pocket.

DEPENDENT, adj. Reliant upon another’s generosity for the support which you are not in a position to exact from his fears.

DEPUTY, n. A male relative of an office-holder, or of his bondsman. The deputy is commonly a beautiful young man, with a red necktie and an intricate system of cobwebs extending from his nose to his desk. When accidentally struck by the janitor’s broom, he gives off a cloud of dust.
“Chief Deputy,” the Master cried,
“To-day the books are to be tried
By experts and accountants who
Have been commissioned to go through
Our office here, to see if we
Have stolen injudiciously.
Please have the proper entries made,
The proper balances displayed,
Conforming to the whole amount
Of cash on hand — which they will count.
I’ve long admired your punctual way —
Here at the break and close of day,
Confronting in your chair the crowd
Of business men, whose voices loud
And gestures violent you quell
By some mysterious, calm spell —
Some magic lurking in your look
That brings the noisiest to book
And spreads a holy and profound
Tranquillity o’er all around.

So orderly all’s done that they
Who came to draw remain to pay.
But now the time demands, at last,
That you employ your genius vast
In energies more active. Rise
And shake the lightnings from your eyes;
Inspire your underlings, and fling
Your spirit into everything!”
The Master’s hand here dealt a whack
Upon the Deputy’s bent back,
When straightway to the floor there fell
A shrunken globe, a rattling shell
A blackened, withered, eyeless head!
The man had been a twelvemonth dead.
–Jamrach Holobom

DESTINY, n. A tyrant’s authority for crime and fool’s excuse for failure.

DIAGNOSIS, n. A physician’s forecast of the disease by the patient’s pulse and purse.

DIAPHRAGM, n. A muscular partition separating disorders of the chest from disorders of the bowels.

DIARY, n. A daily record of that part of one’s life, which he can relate to himself without blushing.

Hearst kept a diary wherein were writ
All that he had of wisdom and of wit.
So the Recording Angel, when Hearst died,
Erased all entries of his own and cried:
“I’ll judge you by your diary.” Said Hearst:
“Thank you; ‘twill show you I am Saint the First” —
Straightway producing, jubilant and proud,
That record from a pocket in his shroud.
The Angel slowly turned the pages o’er,
Each stupid line of which he knew before,
Glooming and gleaming as by turns he hit

On Shallow sentiment and stolen wit;
Then gravely closed the book and gave it back.
“My friend, you’ve wandered from your proper track:
You’d never be content this side the tomb —
For big ideas Heaven has little room,
And Hell’s no latitude for making mirth,”
He said, and kicked the fellow back to earth.
–”The Mad Philosopher”

DICTATOR, n. The chief of a nation that prefers the pestilence of despotism to the plague of anarchy.

DICTIONARY, n. A malevolent literary device for cramping the growth of a language and making it hard and inelastic. This dictionary, however, is a most useful work.

DIE, n. The singular of “dice.” We seldom hear the word, because there is a prohibitory proverb, “Never say die.” At long intervals, however, some one says: “The die is cast,” which is not true, for it is cut. The word is found in an immortal couplet by that eminent poet and domestic economist, Senator Depew:
A cube of cheese no larger than a die
May bait the trap to catch a nibbling mie.

DIGESTION, n. The conversion of victuals into virtues. When the process is imperfect, vices are evolved instead — a circumstance from which that wicked writer, Dr. Jeremiah Blenn, infers that the ladies are the greater sufferers from dyspepsia.

DIPLOMACY, n. The patriotic art of lying for one’s country.

DISABUSE, v.t. The present your neighbor with another and better error than the one which he has deemed it advantageous to embrace.

DISCRIMINATE, v.i. To note the particulars in which one person or thing is, if possible, more objectionable than another.

DISCUSSION, n. A method of confirming others in their errors.

DISOBEDIENCE, n. The silver lining to the cloud of servitude.

DISOBEY, v.t. To celebrate with an appropriate ceremony the maturity of a command.

His right to govern me is clear as day,
My duty manifest to disobey;
And if that fit observance e’er I shut
May I and duty be alike undone.
–Israfel Brown

DISSEMBLE, v.i. To put a clean shirt upon the character.

Let us dissemble.
–Adam

DISTANCE, n. The only thing that the rich are willing for the poor to call theirs, and keep.

DISTRESS, n. A disease incurred by exposure to the prosperity of a friend.

DIVINATION, n. The art of nosing out the occult. Divination is of as many kinds as there are fruit-bearing varieties of the flowering dunce and the early fool.

DOG, n. A kind of additional or subsidiary Deity designed to catch the overflow and surplus of the world’s worship. This Divine Being in some of his smaller and silkier incarnations takes, in the affection of Woman, the place to which there is no human male aspirant. The Dog is a survival — an anachronism. He toils not, neither does he spin, yet Solomon in all his glory never lay upon a door-mat all day long, sun-soaked and fly-fed and fat, while his master worked for the means wherewith to purchase the idle wag of the Solomonic tail, seasoned with a look of tolerant recognition.

DRAGOON, n. A soldier who combines dash and steadiness in so equal measure that he makes his advances on foot and his retreats on horseback.

DRAMATIST, n. One who adapts plays from the French.

DRUIDS, n. Priests and ministers of an ancient Celtic religion which did not disdain to employ the humble allurement of human sacrifice. Very little is now known about the Druids and their faith. Pliny says their religion, originating in Britain, spread eastward as far as Persia. Caesar says those who desired to study its mysteries went to Britain. Caesar himself went to Britain, but does not appear to have obtained any high preferment in the Druidical Church, although his talent for human sacrifice was considerable.

Druids performed their religious rites in groves, and knew nothing of church mortgages and the season-ticket system of pew rents. They were, in short, heathens and — as they were once complacently catalogued by a distinguished prelate of the Church of England — Dissenters.

DUCK-BILL, n. Your account at your restaurant during the canvas-back season.

DUEL, n. A formal ceremony preliminary to the reconciliation of two enemies. Great skill is necessary to its satisfactory observance; if awkwardly performed the most unexpected and deplorable consequences sometimes ensue. A long time ago a man lost his life in a duel.

That dueling’s a gentlemanly vice
I hold; and wish that it had been my lot
To live my life out in some favored spot —
Some country where it is considered nice
To split a rival like a fish, or slice
A husband like a spud, or with a shot
Bring down a debtor doubled in a knot
And ready to be put upon the ice.
Some miscreants there are, whom I do long

To shoot, to stab, or some such way reclaim
The scurvy rogues to better lives and manners,
I seem to see them now — a mighty throng.
It looks as if to challenge *me* they came,
Jauntily marching with brass bands and banners!
–Xamba Q. Dar

DULLARD, n. A member of the reigning dynasty in letters and life. The Dullards came in with Adam, and being both numerous and sturdy have overrun the habitable world. The secret of their power is their insensibility to blows; tickle them with a bludgeon and they laugh with a platitude. The Dullards came originally from Boeotia, whence they were driven by stress of starvation, their dullness having blighted the crops. For some centuries they infested Philistia, and many of them are called Philistines to this day. In the turbulent times of the Crusades they withdrew thence and gradually overspread all Europe, occupying most of the high places in politics, art, literature, science and theology. Since a detachment of Dullards came over with the Pilgrims in the *Mayflower* and made a favorable report of the country, their increase by birth, immigration, and conversion has been rapid and steady. According to the most trustworthy statistics the number of adult Dullards in the United States is but little short of thirty millions, including the statisticians. The intellectual centre of the race is somewhere about Peoria, Illinois, but the New England Dullard is the most shockingly moral.

DUTY, n. That which sternly impels us in the direction of profit, along the line of desire.

Sir Lavender Portwine, in favor at court,
Was wroth at his master, who’d kissed Lady Port.
His anger provoked him to take the king’s head,
But duty prevailed, and he took the king’s bread,
Instead.
–G.J.

E

EAT, v.i. To perform successively (and successfully) the functions of mastication, humectation, and deglutition.

“I was in the drawing-room, enjoying my dinner,” said Brillat–Savarin, beginning an anecdote. “What!” interrupted Rochebriant; “eating dinner in a drawing-room?” “I must beg you to observe, monsieur,” explained the great gastronome, “that I did not say I was eating my dinner, but enjoying it. I had dined an hour before.”

EAVESDROP, v.i. Secretly to overhear a catalogue of the crimes and vices of another or yourself.

A lady with one of her ears applied
To an open keyhole heard, inside,
Two female gossips in converse free —
The subject engaging them was she.
“I think,” said one, “and my husband thinks
That she’s a prying, inquisitive minx!”
As soon as no more of it she could hear
The lady, indignant, removed her ear.
“I will not stay,” she said, with a pout,
“To hear my character lied about!”
–Gopete Sherany

ECCENTRICITY, n. A method of distinction so cheap that fools employ it to accentuate their incapacity.

ECONOMY, n. Purchasing the barrel of whiskey that you do not need for the price of the cow that you cannot afford.

EDIBLE, adj. Good to eat, and wholesome to digest, as a worm to a toad, a toad to a snake, a snake to a pig, a pig to a man, and a man to a worm.

EDITOR, n. A person who combines the judicial functions of Minos, Rhadamanthus and Aeacus, but is placable with an obolus; a severely virtuous censor, but so charitable withal that he tolerates the virtues of others and the vices of himself; who flings about him the splintering lightning and sturdy thunders of admonition till he resembles a bunch of firecrackers petulantly uttering his mind at the tail of a dog; then straightway murmurs a mild, melodious lay, soft as the cooing of a donkey intoning its prayer to the evening star. Master of mysteries and lord of law, high-pinnacled upon the throne of thought, his face suffused with the dim splendors of the Transfiguration, his legs intertwisted and his tongue a-cheek, the editor spills his will along the paper and cuts it off in lengths to suit. And at intervals from behind the veil of the temple is heard the voice of the foreman demanding three inches of wit and six lines of religious meditation, or bidding him turn off the wisdom and whack up some pathos.

O, the Lord of Law on the Throne of Thought,
A gilded impostor is he.
Of shreds and patches his robes are wrought,
His crown is brass,
Himself an ass,
And his power is fiddle-dee-dee.
Prankily, crankily prating of naught,
Silly old quilly old Monarch of Thought.
Public opinion’s camp-follower he,
Thundering, blundering, plundering free.
Affected,
Ungracious,
Suspected,
Mendacious,
Respected contemporaree!
J.H. Bumbleshook

EDUCATION, n. That which discloses to the wise and disguises from the foolish their lack of understanding.

EFFECT, n. The second of two phenomena which always occur together in the same order. The first, called a Cause, is said to generate the other — which is no more sensible than it would be for one who has never seen a dog except in the pursuit of a rabbit to declare the rabbit the cause of a dog.

EGOTIST, n. A person of low taste, more interested in himself than in me.
Megaceph, chosen to serve the State
In the halls of legislative debate,
One day with all his credentials came
To the capitol’s door and announced his name.
The doorkeeper looked, with a comical twist
Of the face, at the eminent egotist,
And said: “Go away, for we settle here
All manner of questions, knotty and queer,
And we cannot have, when the speaker demands
To be told how every member stands,
A man who to all things under the sky
Assents by eternally voting ‘I’.”

EJECTION, n. An approved remedy for the disease of garrulity. It is also much used in cases of extreme poverty.

ELECTOR, n. One who enjoys the sacred privilege of voting for the man of another man’s choice.

ELECTRICITY, n. The power that causes all natural phenomena not known to be caused by something else. It is the same thing as lightning, and its famous attempt to strike Dr. Franklin is one of the most picturesque incidents in that great and good man’s career. The memory of Dr. Franklin is justly held in great reverence, particularly in France, where a waxen effigy of him was recently on exhibition, bearing the following touching account of his life and services to science:
“Monsieur Franqulin, inventor of electricity. This
illustrious savant, after having made several voyages around the
world, died on the Sandwich Islands and was devoured by savages,
of whom not a single fragment was ever recovered.”
Electricity seems destined to play a most important part in the
arts and industries. The question of its economical application to some purposes is still unsettled, but experiment has already proved that it will propel a street car better than a gas jet and give more light than a horse.

ELEGY, n. A composition in verse, in which, without employing any of the methods of humor, the writer aims to produce in the reader's mind the dampest kind of dejection. The most famous English example begins somewhat like this:

The cur foretells the knell of parting day;
The loafing herd winds slowly o'er the lea;
The wise man homeward plods; I only stay
To fiddle-faddle in a minor key.

ELOQUENCE, n. The art of orally persuading fools that white is the color that it appears to be. It includes the gift of making any color appear white.

ELYSIUM, n. An imaginary delightful country which the ancients foolishly believed to be inhabited by the spirits of the good. This ridiculous and mischievous fable was swept off the face of the earth by the early Christians — may their souls be happy in Heaven!

EMANCIPATION, n. A bondman's change from the tyranny of another to the despotism of himself.

He was a slave: at word he went and came;
His iron collar cut him to the bone.
Then Liberty erased his owner's name,
Tightened the rivets and inscribed his own.
–G.J.

EMBALM, v.i. To cheat vegetation by locking up the gases upon which it feeds. By embalming their dead and thereby deranging the natural balance between animal and vegetable life, the Egyptians made their once fertile and populous country barren and incapable of supporting more than a meagre crew. The modern metallic burial casket is a step in the same direction, and many a dead man who ought now to be ornamenting his neighbor's lawn as a tree, or enriching his table as a bunch of radishes, is doomed to a long inutility. We shall get him after awhile if we are spared, but in the meantime the violet and rose are languishing for a nibble at his *glutoeus maximus*.

EMOTION, n. A prostrating disease caused by a determination of the heart to the head. It is sometimes accompanied by a copious discharge of hydrated chloride of sodium from the eyes.

ENCOMIAST, n. A special (but not particular) kind of liar.

END, n. The position farthest removed on either hand from the Interlocutor.

The man was perishing apace
Who played the tambourine;
The seal of death was on his face —
‘Twas pallid, for ‘twas clean.
“This is the end,” the sick man said
In faint and failing tones.
A moment later he was dead,
And Tambourine was Bones.
–Tinley Roquot

ENOUGH, pro. All there is in the world if you like it.

Enough is as good as a feast — for that matter
Enougher’s as good as a feast for the platter.
–Arbely C. Strunk

ENTERTAINMENT, n. Any kind of amusement whose inroads stop short of death by injection.

ENTHUSIASM, n. A distemper of youth, curable by small doses of repentance in connection with outward applications of experience. Byron, who recovered long enough to call it “entuzy-muzy,” had a relapse, which carried him off — to Missolonghi.

ENVELOPE, n. The coffin of a document; the scabbard of a bill; the husk of a remittance; the bed-gown of a love-letter.

ENVY, n. Emulation adapted to the meanest capacity.

EPAULET, n. An ornamented badge, serving to distinguish a military officer from the enemy — that is to say, from the officer of lower rank to whom his death would give promotion.

EPICURE, n. An opponent of Epicurus, an abstemious philosopher who, holding that pleasure should be the chief aim of man, wasted no time in gratification from the senses.

EPIGRAM, n. A short, sharp saying in prose or verse, frequently characterize by acidity or acerbity and sometimes by wisdom. Following are some of the more notable epigrams of the learned and ingenious Dr. Jamrach Holobom:
We know better the needs of ourselves than of others. To
serve oneself is economy of administration.
In each human heart are a tiger, a pig, an ass and a
nightingale. Diversity of character is due to their unequal
activity.
There are three sexes; males, females and girls.
Beauty in women and distinction in men are alike in this:
they seem to be the unthinking a kind of credibility.
Women in love are less ashamed than men. They have less to be
ashamed of.
While your friend holds you affectionately by both your hands
you are safe, for you can watch both his.

EPITAPH, n. An inscription on a tomb, showing that virtues acquired by death have a retroactive effect. Following is a touching example:
Here lie the bones of Parson Platt,
Wise, pious, humble and all that,
Who showed us life as all should live it;
Let that be said — and God forgive it!

ERUDITION, n. Dust shaken out of a book into an empty skull.
So wide his erudition’s mighty span,

He knew Creation’s origin and plan
And only came by accident to grief —
He thought, poor man, ‘twas right to be a thief.
–Romach Pute

ESOTERIC, adj. Very particularly abstruse and consummately occult. The ancient philosophies were of two kinds — *exoteric*, those that the philosophers themselves could partly understand, and *esoteric*, those that nobody could understand. It is the latter that have most profoundly affected modern thought and found greatest acceptance in our time.

ETHNOLOGY, n. The science that treats of the various tribes of Man, as robbers, thieves, swindlers, dunces, lunatics, idiots and ethnologists.

EUCHARIST, n. A sacred feast of the religious sect of Theophagi.
A dispute once unhappily arose among the members of this sect as
to what it was that they ate. In this controversy some five hundred thousand have already been slain, and the question is still unsettled.

EULOGY, n. Praise of a person who has either the advantages of wealth and power, or the consideration to be dead.

EVANGELIST, n. A bearer of good tidings, particularly (in a religious sense) such as assure us of our own salvation and the damnation of our neighbors.

EVERLASTING, adj. Lasting forever. It is with no small diffidence that I venture to offer this brief and elementary definition, for I am not unaware of the existence of a bulky volume by a sometime Bishop of Worcester, entitled, *A Partial Definition of the Word “Everlasting,” as Used in the Authorized Version of the Holy Scriptures*. His book was once esteemed of great authority in the Anglican Church, and is still, I understand, studied with pleasure to the mind and profit of the soul.

EXCEPTION, n. A thing which takes the liberty to differ from other things of its class, as an honest man, a truthful woman, *etc*. “The exception proves the rule” is an expression constantly upon the lips of the ignorant, who parrot it from one another with never a thought of its absurdity. In the Latin, “*Exceptio probat regulam*” means that the exception *tests* the rule, puts it to the proof, not *confirms* it. The malefactor who drew the meaning from this excellent dictum and substituted a contrary one of his own exerted an evil power which appears to be immortal.

EXCESS, n. In morals, an indulgence that enforces by appropriate penalties the law of moderation.
Hail, high Excess — especially in wine,
To thee in worship do I bend the knee
Who preach abstemiousness unto me —
My skull thy pulpit, as my paunch thy shrine.
Precept on precept, aye, and line on line,
Could ne’er persuade so sweetly to agree
With reason as thy touch, exact and free,
Upon my forehead and along my spine.
At thy command eschewing pleasure’s cup,
With the hot grape I warm no more my wit;
When on thy stool of penitence I sit
I’m quite converted, for I can’t get up.
Ungrateful he who afterward would falter
To make new sacrifices at thine altar!

EXCOMMUNICATION, n.
This “excommunication” is a word
In speech ecclesiastical oft heard,
And means the damning, with bell, book and candle,
Some sinner whose opinions are a scandal —
A rite permitting Satan to enslave him
Forever, and forbidding Christ to save him.
–Gat Huckle

EXECUTIVE, n. An officer of the Government, whose duty it is to enforce the wishes of the legislative power until such time as the judicial department shall be pleased to pronounce them invalid and of no effect. Following is an extract from an old book entitled, *The Lunarian Astonished* — Pfeiffer & Co., Boston, 1803:

LUNARIAN: Then when your Congress has passed a law it goes directly to the Supreme Court in order that it may at once be known whether it is constitutional?

TERRESTRIAN: O no; it does not require the approval of the Supreme Court until having perhaps been enforced for many years somebody objects to its operation against himself — I mean his client. The President, if he approves it, begins to execute it at once.

LUNARIAN: Ah, the executive power is a part of the legislative. Do your policemen also have to approve the local ordinances that they enforce?

TERRESTRIAN: Not yet — at least not in their character of constables. Generally speaking, though, all laws require the approval of those whom they are intended to restrain.

LUNARIAN: I see. The death warrant is not valid until signed by the murderer.

TERRESTRIAN: My friend, you put it too strongly; we are not so consistent.

LUNARIAN: But this system of maintaining an expensive judicial machinery to pass upon the validity of laws only after they have long been executed, and then only when brought before the court by some private person — does it not cause great confusion?

TERRESTRIAN: It does.

LUNARIAN: Why then should not your laws, previously to being
executed, be validated, not by the signature of your
President, but by that of the Chief Justice of the Supreme
Court?

TERRESTRIAN: There is no precedent for any such course.

LUNARIAN: Precedent. What is that?

TERRESTRIAN: It has been defined by five hundred lawyers in three
volumes each. So how can any one know?

EXHORT, v.t. In religious affairs, to put the conscience of another upon the spit and roast it to a nut-brown discomfort.

EXILE, n. One who serves his country by residing abroad, yet is not an ambassador.

An English sea-captain being asked if he had read “The Exile of Erin,” replied: “No, sir, but I should like to anchor on it.” Years afterwards, when he had been hanged as a pirate after a career of unparalleled atrocities, the following memorandum was found in the ship’s log that he had kept at the time of his reply:

Aug. 3d, 1842. Made a joke on the ex-Isle of Erin. Coldly received. War with the whole world!

EXISTENCE, n.

A transient, horrible, fantastic dream,
Wherein is nothing yet all things do seem:
From which we’re wakened by a friendly nudge
Of our bedfellow Death, and cry: “O fudge!”

EXPERIENCE, n. The wisdom that enables us to recognize as an undesirable old acquaintance the folly that we have already embraced.

To one who, journeying through night and fog,
Is mired neck-deep in an unwholesome bog,
Experience, like the rising of the dawn,
Reveals the path that he should not have gone.
–Joel Frad Bink

EXPOSTULATION, n. One of the many methods by which fools prefer to lose their friends.

EXTINCTION, n. The raw material out of which theology created the future state.

F

FAIRY, n. A creature, variously fashioned and endowed, that formerly inhabited the meadows and forests. It was nocturnal in its habits, and somewhat addicted to dancing and the theft of children. The fairies are now believed by naturalist to be extinct, though a clergyman of the Church of England saw three near Colchester as lately as 1855, while passing through a park after dining with the lord of the manor. The sight greatly staggered him, and he was so affected that his account of it was incoherent. In the year 1807 a troop of fairies visited a wood near Aix and carried off the daughter of a peasant, who had been seen to enter it with a bundle of clothing. The son of a wealthy *bourgeois* disappeared about the same time, but afterward returned. He had seen the abduction been in pursuit of the fairies. Justinian Gaux, a writer of the fourteenth century, avers that so great is the fairies' power of transformation that he saw one change itself into two opposing armies and fight a battle with great slaughter, and that the next day, after it had resumed its original shape and gone away, there were seven hundred bodies of the slain which the villagers had to bury. He does not say if any of the wounded recovered. In the time of Henry III, of England, a law was made which prescribed the death penalty for "Kyllynge, wowndynge, or mamynge" a fairy, and it was universally respected.

FAITH, n. Belief without evidence in what is told by one who speaks without knowledge, of things without parallel.

FAMOUS, adj. Conspicuously miserable.
Done to a turn on the iron, behold
Him who to be famous aspired.
Content? Well, his grill has a plating of gold,
And his twistings are greatly admired.
–Hassan Brubuddy

FASHION, n. A despot whom the wise ridicule and obey.
A king there was who lost an eye
In some excess of passion;
And straight his courtiers all did try

To follow the new fashion.
Each dropped one eyelid when before
The throne he ventured, thinking
‘Twould please the king. That monarch swore
He’d slay them all for winking.
What should they do? They were not hot
To hazard such disaster;
They dared not close an eye — dared not
See better than their master.
Seeing them lacrymose and glum,
A leech consoled the weepers:
He spread small rags with liquid gum
And covered half their peepers.
The court all wore the stuff, the flame
Of royal anger dying.
That’s how court-plaster got its name
Unless I’m greatly lying.
–Naramy Oof

FEAST, n. A festival. A religious celebration usually signalized by gluttony and drunkenness, frequently in honor of some holy person distinguished for abstemiousness. In the Roman Catholic Church feasts are “movable” and “immovable,” but the celebrants are uniformly immovable until they are full. In their earliest development these entertainments took the form of feasts for the dead; such were held by the Greeks, under the name *Nemeseia*, by the Aztecs and Peruvians, as in modern times they are popular with the Chinese; though it is believed that the ancient dead, like the modern, were light eaters. Among the many feasts of the Romans was the *Novemdiale*, which was held, according to Livy, whenever stones fell from heaven.

FELON, n. A person of greater enterprise than discretion, who in embracing an opportunity has formed an unfortunate attachment.

FEMALE, n. One of the opposing, or unfair, sex.
The Maker, at Creation’s birth,
With living things had stocked the earth.
From elephants to bats and snails,

They all were good, for all were males.
But when the Devil came and saw
He said: “By Thine eternal law
Of growth, maturity, decay,
These all must quickly pass away
And leave untenanted the earth
Unless Thou dost establish birth” —
Then tucked his head beneath his wing
To laugh — he had no sleeve — the thing
With deviltry did so accord,
That he’d suggested to the Lord.
The Master pondered this advice,
Then shook and threw the fateful dice
Wherewith all matters here below
Are ordered, and observed the throw;
Then bent His head in awful state,
Confirming the decree of Fate.
From every part of earth anew
The conscious dust consenting flew,
While rivers from their courses rolled
To make it plastic for the mould.
Enough collected (but no more,
For niggard Nature hoards her store)
He kneaded it to flexible clay,
While Nick unseen threw some away.
And then the various forms He cast,
Gross organs first and finer last;
No one at once evolved, but all
By even touches grew and small
Degrees advanced, till, shade by shade,
To match all living things He’d made
Females, complete in all their parts
Except (His clay gave out) the hearts.
“No matter,” Satan cried; “with speed
I’ll fetch the very hearts they need” —
So flew away and soon brought back
The number needed, in a sack.
That night earth range with sounds of strife —
Ten million males each had a wife;

That night sweet Peace her pinions spread
O’er Hell — ten million devils dead!
–G.J.

FIB, n. A lie that has not cut its teeth. An habitual liar’s nearest approach to truth: the perigee of his eccentric orbit.

When David said: “All men are liars,” Dave,
Himself a liar, fibbed like any thief.
Perhaps he thought to weaken disbelief
By proof that even himself was not a slave
To Truth; though I suspect the aged knave
Had been of all her servitors the chief
Had he but known a fig’s reluctant leaf
Is more than e’er she wore on land or wave.
No, David served not Naked Truth when he
Struck that sledge-hammer blow at all his race;
Nor did he hit the nail upon the head:
For reason shows that it could never be,
And the facts contradict him to his face.
Men are not liars all, for some are dead.
–Bartle Quinker

FICKLENESS, n. The iterated satiety of an enterprising affection.

FIDDLE, n. An instrument to tickle human ears by friction of a horse’s tail on the entrails of a cat.

To Rome said Nero: “If to smoke you turn
I shall not cease to fiddle while you burn.”
To Nero Rome replied: “Pray do your worst,
‘Tis my excuse that you were fiddling first.”
–Orm Pludge

FIDELITY, n. A virtue peculiar to those who are about to be betrayed.

FINANCE, n. The art or science of managing revenues and resources for the best advantage of the manager. The pronunciation of this word with the i long and the accent on the first syllable is one of America’s most precious discoveries and possessions.

FLAG, n. A colored rag borne above troops and hoisted on forts and ships. It appears to serve the same purpose as certain signs that one sees and vacant lots in London—”Rubbish may be shot here.”

FLESH, n. The Second Person of the secular Trinity.

FLOP, v. Suddenly to change one’s opinions and go over to another party. The most notable flop on record was that of Saul of Tarsus, who has been severely criticised as a turn-coat by some of our partisan journals.

FLY-SPECK, n. The prototype of punctuation. It is observed by Garvinus that the systems of punctuation in use by the various literary nations depended originally upon the social habits and general diet of the flies infesting the several countries. These creatures, which have always been distinguished for a neighborly and companionable familiarity with authors, liberally or niggardly embellish the manuscripts in process of growth under the pen, according to their bodily habit, bringing out the sense of the work by a species of interpretation superior to, and independent of, the writer’s powers. The “old masters” of literature — that is to say, the early writers whose work is so esteemed by later scribes and critics in the same language — never punctuated at all, but worked right along free-handed, without that abruption of the thought which comes from the use of points. (We observe the same thing in children to-day, whose usage in this particular is a striking and beautiful instance of the law that the infancy of individuals reproduces the methods and stages of development characterizing the infancy of races.) In the work of these primitive scribes all the punctuation is found, by the modern investigator with his optical instruments and chemical tests, to have been inserted by the writers’ ingenious and serviceable collaborator, the common house-fly — *Musca maledicta*. In transcribing these ancient MSS, for the purpose of either making the work their own or preserving what they naturally regard as divine revelations, later writers reverently and accurately copy whatever marks they find upon the papyrus or parchment, to the unspeakable enhancement of the lucidity of the thought and value of the work. Writers contemporary with the copyists naturally avail themselves of the obvious advantages of these marks in their own work, and with such assistance as the flies of their own household may be willing to grant, frequently rival and sometimes surpass the older compositions, in respect at least of punctuation, which is no small glory. Fully to understand the important services that flies perform to literature it is only necessary to lay a page of some popular novelist alongside a saucer of cream-and-molasses in a sunny room and observe "how the wit brightens and the style refines" in accurate proportion to the duration of exposure.

FOLLY, n. That "gift and faculty divine" whose creative and controlling energy inspires Man's mind, guides his actions and adorns his life.
Folly! although Erasmus praised thee once
In a thick volume, and all authors known,
If not thy glory yet thy power have shown,
Deign to take homage from thy son who hunts
Through all thy maze his brothers, fool and dunce,
To mend their lives and to sustain his own,
However feebly be his arrows thrown,
Howe'er each hide the flying weapons blunts.
All–Father Folly! be it mine to raise,
With lusty lung, here on his western strand
With all thine offspring thronged from every land,
Thyself inspiring me, the song of praise.
And if too weak, I'll hire, to help me bawl,
Dick Watson Gilder, gravest of us all.
–Aramis Loto Frope

FOOL, n. A person who pervades the domain of intellectual speculation and diffuses himself through the channels of moral activity. He is omnific, omniform, omnipercipient, omniscience, omnipotent. He it was who invented letters, printing, the railroad, the steamboat, the telegraph, the platitude and the circle of the sciences. He created patriotism and taught the nations war — founded theology, philosophy, law, medicine and Chicago. He established monarchical and republican government. He is from everlasting to everlasting — such as creation's dawn beheld he fooleth now. In the morning of time he sang upon primitive hills, and in the noonday of existence headed the procession of being. His grandmotherly hand was warmly tucked-in the set sun of civilization, and in the twilight he prepares Man's evening meal of milk-and-morality and turns down the covers of the universal grave. And after the rest of us shall have retired for the night of eternal oblivion he will sit up to write a history of human civilization.

FORCE, n.
“Force is but might,” the teacher said —
“That definition’s just.”
The boy said naught but thought instead,
Remembering his pounded head:
“Force is not might but must!”

FOREFINGER, n. The finger commonly used in pointing out two malefactors.

FOREORDINATION, n. This looks like an easy word to define, but when I consider that pious and learned theologians have spent long lives in explaining it, and written libraries to explain their explanations; when I remember the nations have been divided and bloody battles caused by the difference between foreordination and predestination, and that millions of treasure have been expended in the effort to prove and disprove its compatibility with freedom of the will and the efficacy of prayer, praise, and a religious life — recalling these awful facts in the history of the word, I stand appalled before the mighty problem of its signification, abase my spiritual eyes, fearing to contemplate its portentous magnitude, reverently uncover and humbly refer it to His Eminence Cardinal Gibbons and His Grace Bishop Potter.

FORGETFULNESS, n. A gift of God bestowed upon doctors in compensation for their destitution of conscience.

FORK, n. An instrument used chiefly for the purpose of putting dead animals into the mouth. Formerly the knife was employed for this purpose, and by many worthy persons is still thought to have many advantages over the other tool, which, however, they do not altogether reject, but use to assist in charging the knife. The immunity of these persons from swift and awful death is one of the most striking proofs of God’s mercy to those that hate Him.

FORMA PAUPERIS. [Latin] In the character of a poor person — a method by which a litigant without money for lawyers is considerately permitted to lose his case.

When Adam long ago in Cupid's awful court
(For Cupid ruled ere Adam was invented)
Sued for Eve's favor, says an ancient law report,
He stood and pleaded unhabilimented.
"You sue *in forma pauperis*, I see," Eve cried;
"Actions can't here be that way prosecuted."
So all poor Adam's motions coldly were denied:
He went away — as he had come — nonsuited.
–G.J.

FRANKALMOIGNE, n. The tenure by which a religious corporation holds lands on condition of praying for the soul of the donor. In mediaeval times many of the wealthiest fraternities obtained their estates in this simple and cheap manner, and once when Henry VIII of England sent an officer to confiscate certain vast possessions which a fraternity of monks held by frankalmoigne, "What!" said the Prior, "would you master stay our benefactor's soul in Purgatory?" "Ay," said the officer, coldly, "an ye will not pray him thence for naught he must e'en roast." "But look you, my son," persisted the good man, "this act hath rank as robbery of God!" "Nay, nay, good father, my master the king doth but deliver him from the manifold temptations of too great wealth."

FREEBOOTER, n. A conqueror in a small way of business, whose annexations lack of the sanctifying merit of magnitude.

FREEDOM, n. Exemption from the stress of authority in a beggarly half dozen of restraint's infinite multitude of methods. A political condition that every nation supposes itself to enjoy in virtual monopoly. Liberty. The distinction between freedom and liberty is not accurately known; naturalists have never been able to find a living specimen of either.

Freedom, as every schoolboy knows,
Once shrieked as Kosciusko fell;
On every wind, indeed, that blows
I hear her yell.
She screams whenever monarchs meet,

And parliaments as well,
To bind the chains about her feet
And toll her knell.
And when the sovereign people cast
The votes they cannot spell,
Upon the pestilential blast
Her clamors swell.
For all to whom the power's given
To sway or to compel,
Among themselves apportion Heaven
And give her Hell.
–Blary O'Gary

FREEMASONS, n. An order with secret rites, grotesque ceremonies and fantastic costumes, which, originating in the reign of Charles II, among working artisans of London, has been joined successively by the dead of past centuries in unbroken retrogression until now it embraces all the generations of man on the hither side of Adam and is drumming up distinguished recruits among the pre-Creational inhabitants of Chaos and Formless Void. The order was founded at different times by Charlemagne, Julius Caesar, Cyrus, Solomon, Zoroaster, Confucious, Thothmes, and Buddha. Its emblems and symbols have been found in the Catacombs of Paris and Rome, on the stones of the Parthenon and the Chinese Great Wall, among the temples of Karnak and Palmyra and in the Egyptian Pyramids — always by a Freemason.

FRIENDLESS, adj. Having no favors to bestow. Destitute of fortune. Addicted to utterance of truth and common sense.

FRIENDSHIP, n. A ship big enough to carry two in fair weather, but only one in foul.
The sea was calm and the sky was blue;
Merrily, merrily sailed we two.
(High barometer maketh glad.)
On the tipsy ship, with a dreadful shout,
The tempest descended and we fell out.
(O the walking is nasty bad!)
–Armit Huff Bettle

FROG, n. A reptile with edible legs. The first mention of frogs in profane literature is in Homer's narrative of the war between them and the mice. Skeptical persons have doubted Homer's authorship of the work, but the learned, ingenious and industrious Dr. Schliemann has set the question forever at rest by uncovering the bones of the slain frogs. One of the forms of moral suasion by which Pharaoh was besought to favor the Israelities was a plague of frogs, but Pharaoh, who liked them *fricasees*, remarked, with truly oriental stoicism, that he could stand it as long as the frogs and the Jews could; so the programme was changed. The frog is a diligent songster, having a good voice but no ear. The libretto of his favorite opera, as written by Aristophanes, is brief, simple and effective—"brekekex-koax"; the music is apparently by that eminent composer, Richard Wagner. Horses have a frog in each hoof — a thoughtful provision of nature, enabling them to shine in a hurdle race.

FRYING-PAN, n. One part of the penal apparatus employed in that punitive institution, a woman's kitchen. The frying-pan was invented by Calvin, and by him used in cooking span-long infants that had died without baptism; and observing one day the horrible torment of a tramp who had incautiously pulled a fried babe from the waste-dump and devoured it, it occurred to the great divine to rob death of its terrors by introducing the frying-pan into every household in Geneva. Thence it spread to all corners of the world, and has been of invaluable assistance in the propagation of his sombre faith. The following lines (said to be from the pen of his Grace Bishop Potter) seem to imply that the usefulness of this utensil is not limited to this world; but as the consequences of its employment in this life reach over into the life to come, so also itself may be found on the other side, rewarding its devotees:

Old Nick was summoned to the skies.
Said Peter: "Your intentions
Are good, but you lack enterprise
Concerning new inventions.
"Now, broiling in an ancient plan
Of torment, but I hear it
Reported that the frying-pan
Sears best the wicked spirit.
"Go get one — fill it up with fat —
Fry sinners brown and good in't."
"I know a trick worth two o' that,"

Said Nick—”I’ll cook their food in’t.”

FUNERAL, n. A pageant whereby we attest our respect for the dead by enriching the undertaker, and strengthen our grief by an expenditure that deepens our groans and doubles our tears.
The savage dies — they sacrifice a horse
To bear to happy hunting-grounds the corse.
Our friends expire — we make the money fly
In hope their souls will chase it to the sky.
–Jex Wopley

FUTURE, n. That period of time in which our affairs prosper, our friends are true and our happiness is assured.

G

GALLOWS, n. A stage for the performance of miracle plays, in which the leading actor is translated to heaven. In this country the gallows is chiefly remarkable for the number of persons who escape it.
Whether on the gallows high
Or where blood flows the reddest,
The noblest place for man to die —
Is where he died the deadest.
–(Old play)

GARGOYLE, n. A rain-spout projecting from the eaves of mediaeval buildings, commonly fashioned into a grotesque caricature of some personal enemy of the architect or owner of the building. This was especially the case in churches and ecclesiastical structures generally, in which the gargoyles presented a perfect rogues' gallery of local heretics and controversialists. Sometimes when a new dean and chapter were installed the old gargoyles were removed and others substituted having a closer relation to the private animosities of the new incumbents.

GARTHER, n. An elastic band intended to keep a woman from coming out of her stockings and desolating the country.

GENEROUS, adj. Originally this word meant noble by birth and was rightly applied to a great multitude of persons. It now means noble by nature and is taking a bit of a rest.

GENEALOGY, n. An account of one's descent from an ancestor who did not particularly care to trace his own.

GENTEEL, adj. Refined, after the fashion of a gent.
Observe with care, my son, the distinction I reveal:

A gentleman is gentle and a gent genteel.
Heed not the definitions your “Unabridged” presents,
For dictionary makers are generally gents.
–G.J.

GEOGRAPHER, n. A chap who can tell you offhand the difference between the outside of the world and the inside.
Habeam, geographer of wide reknown,
Native of Abu–Keber’s ancient town,
In passing thence along the river Zam
To the adjacent village of Xelam,
Bewildered by the multitude of roads,
Got lost, lived long on migratory toads,
Then from exposure miserably died,
And grateful travelers bewailed their guide.
–Henry Haukhorn

GEOLOGY, n. The science of the earth’s crust — to which, doubtless, will be added that of its interior whenever a man shall come up garrulous out of a well. The geological formations of the globe already noted are catalogued thus: The Primary, or lower one, consists of rocks, bones or mired mules, gas-pipes, miners’ tools, antique statues minus the nose, Spanish doubloons and ancestors. The Secondary is largely made up of red worms and moles. The Tertiary comprises railway tracks, patent pavements, grass, snakes, mouldy boots, beer bottles, tomato cans, intoxicated citizens, garbage, anarchists, snap-dogs and fools.

GHOST, n. The outward and visible sign of an inward fear.
He saw a ghost.
It occupied — that dismal thing! —
The path that he was following.
Before he’d time to stop and fly,
An earthquake trifled with the eye
That saw a ghost.
He fell as fall the early good;
Unmoved that awful vision stood.
The stars that danced before his ken

He wildly brushed away, and then
He saw a post.
–Jared Macphester

Accounting for the uncommon behavior of ghosts, Heine mentions somebody’s ingenious theory to the effect that they are as much afraid of us as we of them. Not quite, if I may judge from such tables of comparative speed as I am able to compile from memories of my own experience.

There is one insuperable obstacle to a belief in ghosts. A ghost never comes naked: he appears either in a winding-sheet or “in his habit as he lived.” To believe in him, then, is to believe that not only have the dead the power to make themselves visible after there is nothing left of them, but that the same power inheres in textile fabrics. Supposing the products of the loom to have this ability, what object would they have in exercising it? And why does not the apparition of a suit of clothes sometimes walk abroad without a ghost in it? These be riddles of significance. They reach away down and get a convulsive grip on the very tap-root of this flourishing faith.

GHOUL, n. A demon addicted to the reprehensible habit of devouring the dead. The existence of ghouls has been disputed by that class of controversialists who are more concerned to deprive the world of comforting beliefs than to give it anything good in their place. In 1640 Father Secchi saw one in a cemetery near Florence and frightened it away with the sign of the cross. He describes it as gifted with many heads an an uncommon allowance of limbs, and he saw it in more than one place at a time. The good man was coming away from dinner at the time and explains that if he had not been “heavy with eating” he would have seized the demon at all hazards. Atholston relates that a ghoul was caught by some sturdy peasants in a churchyard at Sudbury and ducked in a horsepond. (He appears to think that so distinguished a criminal should have been ducked in a tank of rosewater.) The water turned at once to blood “and so contynues unto ys daye.” The pond has since been bled with a ditch. As late as the beginning of the fourteenth century a ghoul was cornered in the crypt of the cathedral at Amiens and the whole population surrounded the place. Twenty armed men with a priest at their head, bearing a crucifix, entered and captured the ghoul, which, thinking to escape by the stratagem, had transformed itself to the semblance of a well known citizen, but was nevertheless hanged, drawn and quartered in the midst of hideous popular orgies. The citizen whose shape the demon had assumed was so affected by the sinister occurrence that he never again showed himself in Amiens and his fate remains a mystery.

GLUTTON, n. A person who escapes the evils of moderation by committing dyspepsia.

GNOME, n. In North–European mythology, a dwarfish imp inhabiting the interior parts of the earth and having special custody of mineral treasures. Bjorsen, who died in 1765, says gnomes were common enough in the southern parts of Sweden in his boyhood, and he frequently saw them scampering on the hills in the evening twilight. Ludwig Binkerhoof saw three as recently as 1792, in the Black Forest, and Sneddeker avers that in 1803 they drove a party of miners out of a Silesian mine. Basing our computations upon data supplied by these statements, we find that the gnomes were probably extinct as early as 1764.

GNOSTICS, n. A sect of philosophers who tried to engineer a fusion between the early Christians and the Platonists. The former would not go into the caucus and the combination failed, greatly to the chagrin of the fusion managers.

GNU, n. An animal of South Africa, which in its domesticated state resembles a horse, a buffalo and a stag. In its wild condition it is something like a thunderbolt, an earthquake and a cyclone.
A hunter from Kew caught a distant view
Of a peacefully meditative gnu,
And he said: “I’ll pursue, and my hands imbrue
In its blood at a closer interview.”
But that beast did ensue and the hunter it threw
O’er the top of a palm that adjacent grew;
And he said as he flew: “It is well I withdrew
Ere, losing my temper, I wickedly slew
That really meritorious gnu.”
–Jarn Leffer

GOOD, adj. Sensible, madam, to the worth of this present writer. Alive, sir, to the advantages of letting him alone.

GOOSE, n. A bird that supplies quills for writing. These, by some occult process of nature, are penetrated and suffused with various degrees of the bird’s intellectual energies and emotional character, so that when inked and drawn mechanically across paper by a person called an “author,” there results a very fair and accurate transcript of the fowl’s thought and feeling. The difference in geese, as discovered by this ingenious method, is considerable: many are found to have only trivial and insignificant powers, but some are seen to be very great geese indeed.

GORGON, n.
The Gorgon was a maiden bold
Who turned to stone the Greeks of old
That looked upon her awful brow.
We dig them out of ruins now,
And swear that workmanship so bad
Proves all the ancient sculptors mad.

GOUT, n. A physician’s name for the rheumatism of a rich patient.

GRACES, n. Three beautiful goddesses, Aglaia, Thalia and Euphrosyne, who attended upon Venus, serving without salary. They were at no expense for board and clothing, for they ate nothing to speak of and dressed according to the weather, wearing whatever breeze happened to be blowing.

GRAMMAR, n. A system of pitfalls thoughtfully prepared for the feet for the self-made man, along the path by which he advances to distinction.

GRAPE, n.
Hail noble fruit! — by Homer sung,
Anacreon and Khayyam;
Thy praise is ever on the tongue
Of better men than I am.
The lyre in my hand has never swept,
The song I cannot offer:
My humbler service pray accept —

I’ll help to kill the scoffer.
The water-drinkers and the cranks
Who load their skins with liquor —
I’ll gladly bear their belly-tanks
And tap them with my sticker.
Fill up, fill up, for wisdom cools
When e’er we let the wine rest.
Here’s death to Prohibition’s fools,
And every kind of vine-pest!
–Jamrach Holobom

GRAPESHOT, n. An argument which the future is preparing in answer to the demands of American Socialism.

GRAVE, n. A place in which the dead are laid to await the coming of the medical student.
Beside a lonely grave I stood —
With brambles ‘twas encumbered;
The winds were moaning in the wood,
Unheard by him who slumbered,
A rustic standing near, I said:
“He cannot hear it blowing!”
“‘Course not,” said he: “the feller’s dead —
He can’t hear nowt [sic] that’s going.”
“Too true,” I said; “alas, too true —
No sound his sense can quicken!”
“Well, mister, wot is that to you? —
The deadster ain’t a-kickin’.”
I knelt and prayed: “O Father, smile
On him, and mercy show him!”
That countryman looked on the while,
And said: “Ye didn’t know him.”
–Pobeter Dunko

GRAVITATION, n. The tendency of all bodies to approach one another with a strength proportion to the quantity of matter they contain — the quantity of matter they contain being ascertained by the strength of their tendency to approach one another. This is a lovely and edifying illustration of how science, having made A the proof of B, makes B the proof of A.

GREAT, adj.
“I’m great,” the Lion said—”I reign
The monarch of the wood and plain!”
The Elephant replied: “I’m great —
No quadruped can match my weight!”
“I’m great — no animal has half
So long a neck!” said the Giraffe.
“I’m great,” the Kangaroo said—”see
My femoral muscularity!”
The ‘Possum said: “I’m great — behold,
My tail is lithe and bald and cold!”
An Oyster fried was understood
To say: “I’m great because I’m good!”
Each reckons greatness to consist
In that in which he heads the list,
And Vierick thinks he tops his class
Because he is the greatest ass.
–Arion Spurl Doke

GUILLOTINE, n. A machine which makes a Frenchman shrug his shoulders with good reason.

In his great work on *Divergent Lines of Racial Evolution,* the learned Professor Brayfugle argues from the prevalence of this gesture — the shrug — among Frenchmen, that they are descended from turtles and it is simply a survival of the habit of retracing the head inside the shell. It is with reluctance that I differ with so eminent an authority, but in my judgment (as more elaborately set forth and enforced in my work entitled *Hereditary Emotions* — lib. II, c. XI) the shrug is a poor foundation upon which to build so important a theory, for previously to the Revolution the gesture was unknown. I have not a doubt that it is directly referable to the terror inspired by the guillotine during the period of that instrument’s activity.

GUNPOWDER, n. An agency employed by civilized nations for the settlement of disputes which might become troublesome if left unadjusted. By most writers the invention of gunpowder is ascribed to the Chinese, but not upon very convincing evidence. Milton says it was invented by the devil to dispel angels with, and this opinion seems to derive some support from the scarcity of angels. Moreover, it has the hearty concurrence of the Hon. James Wilson, Secretary of Agriculture.

Secretary Wilson became interested in gunpowder through an event that occurred on the Government experimental farm in the District of Columbia. One day, several years ago, a rogue imperfectly reverent of the Secretary's profound attainments and personal character presented him with a sack of gunpowder, representing it as the sed of the *Flashawful flabbergastor*, a Patagonian cereal of great commercial value, admirably adapted to this climate. The good Secretary was instructed to spill it along in a furrow and afterward inhume it with soil. This he at once proceeded to do, and had made a continuous line of it all the way across a ten-acre field, when he was made to look backward by a shout from the generous donor, who at once dropped a lighted match into the furrow at the starting-point. Contact with the earth had somewhat dampened the powder, but the startled functionary saw himself pursued by a tall moving pillar of fire and smoke and fierce evolution. He stood for a moment paralyzed and speechless, then he recollected an engagement and, dropping all, absented himself thence with such surprising celerity that to the eyes of spectators along the route selected he appeared like a long, dim streak prolonging itself with inconceivable rapidity through seven villages, and audibly refusing to be comforted. “Great Scott! what is that?” cried a surveyor's chainman, shading his eyes and gazing at the fading line of agriculturist which bisected his visible horizon. “That,” said the surveyor, carelessly glancing at the phenomenon and again centering his attention upon his instrument, “is the Meridian of Washington.”

H

HABEAS CORPUS. A writ by which a man may be taken out of jail when confined for the wrong crime.

HABIT, n. A shackle for the free.

HADES, n. The lower world; the residence of departed spirits; the place where the dead live.

Among the ancients the idea of Hades was not synonymous with our Hell, many of the most respectable men of antiquity residing there in a very comfortable kind of way. Indeed, the Elysian Fields themselves were a part of Hades, though they have since been removed to Paris. When the Jacobean version of the New Testament was in process of evolution the pious and learned men engaged in the work insisted by a majority vote on translating the Greek word “Aides” as “Hell”; but a conscientious minority member secretly possessed himself of the record and struck out the objectional word wherever he could find it. At the next meeting, the Bishop of Salisbury, looking over the work, suddenly sprang to his feet and said with considerable excitement: “Gentlemen, somebody has been razing ‘Hell’ here!” Years afterward the good prelate’s death was made sweet by the reflection that he had been the means (under Providence) of making an important, serviceable and immortal addition to the phraseology of the English tongue.

HAG, n. An elderly lady whom you do not happen to like; sometimes called, also, a hen, or cat. Old witches, sorceresses, etc., were called hags from the belief that their heads were surrounded by a kind of baleful lumination or nimbus — hag being the popular name of that peculiar electrical light sometimes observed in the hair. At one time hag was not a word of reproach: Drayton speaks of a “beautiful hag, all smiles,” much as Shakespeare said, “sweet wench.” It would not now be proper to call your sweetheart a hag — that compliment is reserved for the use of her grandchildren.

HALF, n. One of two equal parts into which a thing may be divided, or considered as divided. In the fourteenth century a heated discussion arose among theologists and philosophers as to whether Omniscience could part an object into three halves; and the pious Father Aldrovinus publicly prayed in the cathedral at Rouen that God would demonstrate the affirmative of the proposition in some signal and unmistakable way, and particularly (if it should please Him) upon the body of that hardy blasphemer, Manutius Procinus, who maintained the negative. Procinus, however, was spared to die of the bite of a viper.

HALO, n. Properly, a luminous ring encircling an astronomical body, but not infrequently confounded with “aureola,” or “nimbus,” a somewhat similar phenomenon worn as a head-dress by divinities and saints. The halo is a purely optical illusion, produced by moisture in the air, in the manner of a rainbow; but the aureola is conferred as a sign of superior sanctity, in the same way as a bishop’s mitre, or the Pope’s tiara. In the painting of the Nativity, by Szedgkin, a pious artist of Pesth, not only do the Virgin and the Child wear the nimbus, but an ass nibbling hay from the sacred manger is similarly decorated and, to his lasting honor be it said, appears to bear his unaccustomed dignity with a truly saintly grace.

HAND, n. A singular instrument worn at the end of the human arm and commonly thrust into somebody’s pocket.

HANDKERCHIEF, n. A small square of silk or linen, used in various ignoble offices about the face and especially serviceable at funerals to conceal the lack of tears. The handkerchief is of recent invention; our ancestors knew nothing of it and intrusted its duties to the sleeve. Shakespeare’s introducing it into the play of “Othello” is an anachronism: Desdemona dried her nose with her skirt, as Dr. Mary Walker and other reformers have done with their coattails in our own day — an evidence that revolutions sometimes go backward.

HANGMAN, n. An officer of the law charged with duties of the highest dignity and utmost gravity, and held in hereditary disesteem by a populace having a criminal ancestry. In some of the American States his functions are now performed by an electrician, as in New Jersey, where executions by electricity have recently been ordered — the first instance known to this lexicographer of anybody questioning the expediency of hanging Jerseymen.

HAPPINESS, n. An agreeable sensation arising from contemplating the misery of another.

HARANGUE, n. A speech by an opponent, who is known as an harrangue-outang.

HARBOR, n. A place where ships taking shelter from stores are exposed to the fury of the customs.

HARMONISTS, n. A sect of Protestants, now extinct, who came from Europe in the beginning of the last century and were distinguished for the bitterness of their internal controversies and dissensions.

HASH, x. There is no definition for this word — nobody knows what hash is.

HATCHET, n. A young axe, known among Indians as a Thomashawk.
“O bury the hatchet, irascible Red,
For peace is a blessing,” the White Man said.
The Savage concurred, and that weapon interred,
With imposing rites, in the White Man’s head.
–John Lukkus

HATRED, n. A sentiment appropriate to the occasion of another’s superiority.

HEAD-MONEY, n. A capitation tax, or poll-tax.
In ancient times there lived a king
Whose tax-collectors could not wring
From all his subjects gold enough
To make the royal way less rough.
For pleasure’s highway, like the dames

Whose premises adjoin it, claims
Perpetual repairing. So
The tax-collectors in a row
Appeared before the throne to pray
Their master to devise some way
To swell the revenue. “So great,”
Said they, “are the demands of state
A tithe of all that we collect
Will scarcely meet them. Pray reflect:
How, if one-tenth we must resign,
Can we exist on t’other nine?”
The monarch asked them in reply:
“Has it occurred to you to try
The advantage of economy?”
“It has,” the spokesman said: “we sold
All of our gray garrotes of gold;
With plated-ware we now compress
The necks of those whom we assess.
Plain iron forceps we employ
To mitigate the miser’s joy
Who hoards, with greed that never tires,
That which your Majesty requires.”
Deep lines of thought were seen to plow
Their way across the royal brow.
“Your state is desperate, no question;
Pray favor me with a suggestion.”
“O King of Men,” the spokesman said,
“If you’ll impose upon each head
A tax, the augmented revenue
We’ll cheerfully divide with you.”
As flashes of the sun illume
The parted storm-cloud’s sullen gloom,
The king smiled grimly. “I decree
That it be so — and, not to be
In generosity outdone,
Declare you, each and every one,
Exempted from the operation
Of this new law of capitation.
But lest the people censure me

Because they're bound and you are free,
'Twere well some clever scheme were laid
By you this poll-tax to evade.
I'll leave you now while you confer
With my most trusted minister."
The monarch from the throne-room walked
And straightway in among them stalked
A silent man, with brow concealed,
Bare-armed — his gleaming axe revealed!
–G.J.

HEARSE, n. Death's baby-carriage.

HEART, n. An automatic, muscular blood-pump. Figuratively, this useful organ is said to be the seat of emotions and sentiments — a very pretty fancy which, however, is nothing but a survival of a once universal belief. It is now known that the sentiments and emotions reside in the stomach, being evolved from food by chemical action of the gastric fluid. The exact process by which a beefsteak becomes a feeling — tender or not, according to the age of the animal from which it was cut; the successive stages of elaboration through which a caviar sandwich is transmuted to a quaint fancy and reappears as a pungent epigram; the marvelous functional methods of converting a hard-boiled egg into religious contrition, or a cream-puff into a sigh of sensibility — these things have been patiently ascertained by M. Pasteur, and by him expounded with convincing lucidity. (See, also, my monograph, *The Essential Identity of the Spiritual Affections and Certain Intestinal Gases Freed in Digestion* — 4to, 687 pp.) In a scientific work entitled, I believe, *Delectatio Demonorum* (John Camden Hotton, London, 1873) this view of the sentiments receives a striking illustration; and for further light consult Professor Dam's famous treatise on *Love as a Product of Alimentary Maceration*.

HEAT, n.
Heat, says Professor Tyndall, is a mode
Of motion, but I know now how he's proving
His point; but this I know — hot words bestowed
With skill will set the human fist a-moving,
And where it stops the stars burn free and wild.

Crede expertum — I have seen them, child.
–Gorton Swope

HEATHEN, n. A benighted creature who has the folly to worship something that he can see and feel. According to Professor Howison, of the California State University, Hebrews are heathens.
“The Hebrews are heathens!” says Howison. He’s

A Christian philosopher. I’m
A scurril agnostical chap, if you please,
Addicted too much to the crime
Of religious discussion in my rhyme.
Though Hebrew and Howison cannot agree
On a *modus vivendi* — not they! —
Yet Heaven has had the designing of me,
And I haven’t been reared in a way
To joy in the thick of the fray.
For this of my creed is the soul and the gist,
And the truth of it I aver:
Who differs from me in his faith is an ‘ist,
And ‘ite, an ‘ie, or an ‘er —
And I’m down upon him or her!
Let Howison urge with perfunctory chin
Toleration — that’s all very well,
But a roast is “nuts” to his nostril thin,
And he’s running — I know by the smell —
A secret and personal Hell!
–Bissell Gip

HEAVEN, n. A place where the wicked cease from troubling you with talk of their personal affairs, and the good listen with attention while you expound your own.

HEBREW, n. A male Jew, as distinguished from the Shebrew, an altogether superior creation.

HELPMATE, n. A wife, or bitter half.
“Now, why is yer wife called a helpmate, Pat?”
Says the priest. “Since the time ‘o yer wooin’
She’s niver [sic] assisted in what ye were at —
For it’s naught ye are ever doin’.”
“That’s true of yer Riverence [sic],” Patrick replies,
And no sign of contrition envices;
“But, bedad, it’s a fact which the word implies,
For she helps to mate the expinses [sic]!”
–Marley Wottel

HEMP, n. A plant from whose fibrous bark is made an article of neckwear which is frequently put on after public speaking in the open air and prevents the wearer from taking cold.

HERMIT, n. A person whose vices and follies are not sociable.

HERS, pron. His.

HIBERNATE, v.i. To pass the winter season in domestic seclusion. There have been many singular popular notions about the hibernation of various animals. Many believe that the bear hibernates during the whole winter and subsists by mechanically sucking its paws. It is admitted that it comes out of its retirement in the spring so lean that it had to try twice before it can cast a shadow. Three or four centuries ago, in England, no fact was better attested than that swallows passed the winter months in the mud at the bottom of their brooks, clinging together in globular masses. They have apparently been compelled to give up the custom and account of the foulness of the brooks. Sotus Ecobius discovered in Central Asia a whole nation of people who hibernate. By some investigators, the fasting of Lent is supposed to have been originally a modified form of hibernation, to which the Church gave a religious significance; but this view was strenuously opposed by that eminent authority, Bishop Kip, who did not wish any honors denied to the memory of the Founder of his family.

HIPPOGRIFF, n. An animal (now extinct) which was half horse and half griffin.

The griffin was itself a compound creature, half lion and half eagle. The hippogriff was actually, therefore, a one-quarter eagle, which is two dollars and fifty cents in gold. The study of zoology is full of surprises.

HISTORIAN, n. A broad-gauge gossip.

HISTORY, n. An account mostly false, of events mostly unimportant, which are brought about by rulers mostly knaves, and soldiers mostly fools.
Of Roman history, great Niebuhr's shown
'Tis nine-tenths lying. Faith, I wish 'twere known,
Ere we accept great Niebuhr as a guide,
Wherein he blundered and how much he lied.
–Salder Bupp

HOG, n. A bird remarkable for the catholicity of its appetite and serving to illustrate that of ours. Among the Mahometans and Jews, the hog is not in favor as an article of diet, but is respected for the delicacy and the melody of its voice. It is chiefly as a songster that the fowl is esteemed; the cage of him in full chorus has been known to draw tears from two persons at once. The scientific name of this dicky-bird is *Porcus Rockefelleri*. Mr. Rockefeller did not discover the hog, but it is considered his by right of resemblance.

HOMOEOPATHIST, n. The humorist of the medical profession.

HOMOEOPATHY, n. A school of medicine midway between Allopathy and Christian Science. To the last both the others are distinctly inferior, for Christian Science will cure imaginary diseases, and they can not.

HOMICIDE, n. The slaying of one human being by another. There are four kinds of homocide: felonious, excusable, justifiable, and praiseworthy, but it makes no great difference to the person slain whether he fell by one kind or another — the classification is for advantage of the lawyers.

HOMILETICS, n. The science of adapting sermons to the spiritual needs,

capacities and conditions of the congregation.
So skilled the parson was in homiletics
That all his normal purges and emetics
To medicine the spirit were compounded
With a most just discrimination founded
Upon a rigorous examination
Of tongue and pulse and heart and respiration.
Then, having diagnosed each one's condition,
His scriptural specifics this physician
Administered — his pills so efficacious
And pukes of disposition so vivacious
That souls afflicted with ten kinds of Adam
Were convalescent ere they knew they had 'em.
But Slander's tongue — itself all coated — uttered
Her bilious mind and scandalously muttered
That in the case of patients having money
The pills were sugar and the pukes were honey.
–*Biography of Bishop Potter*

HONORABLE, adj. Afflicted with an impediment in one's reach. In legislative bodies it is customary to mention all members as honorable; as, "the honorable gentleman is a scurvy cur."

HOPE, n. Desire and expectation rolled into one.
Delicious Hope! when naught to man it left —
Of fortune destitute, of friends bereft;
When even his dog deserts him, and his goat
With tranquil disaffection chews his coat
While yet it hangs upon his back; then thou,
The star far-flaming on thine angel brow,
Descendest, radiant, from the skies to hint
The promise of a clerkship in the Mint.
–Fogarty Weffing

HOSPITALITY, n. The virtue which induces us to feed and lodge certain persons who are not in need of food and lodging.

HOSTILITY, n. A peculiarly sharp and specially applied sense of the earth’s overpopulation. Hostility is classified as active and passive; as (respectively) the feeling of a woman for her female friends, and that which she entertains for all the rest of her sex.

HOURI, n. A comely female inhabiting the Mohammedan Paradise to make things cheery for the good Mussulman, whose belief in her existence marks a noble discontent with his earthly spouse, whom he denies a soul. By that good lady the Houris are said to be held in deficient esteem.

HOUSE, n. A hollow edifice erected for the habitation of man, rat, mouse, beetle, cockroach, fly, mosquito, flea, bacillus and microbe. *House of Correction*, a place of reward for political and personal service, and for the detention of offenders and appropriations. *House of God*, a building with a steeple and a mortgage on it. *House-dog*, a pestilent beast kept on domestic premises to insult persons passing by and appal the hardy visitor. *House-maid*, a youngerly person of the opposing sex employed to be variously disagreeable and ingeniously unclean in the station in which it has pleased God to place her.

HOUSELESS, adj. Having paid all taxes on household goods.

HOVEL, n. The fruit of a flower called the Palace.
Twaddle had a hovel,
Twiddle had a palace;
Twaddle said: “I’ll grovel
Or he’ll think I bear him malice” —
A sentiment as novel
As a castor on a chalice.
Down upon the middle
Of his legs fell Twaddle
And astonished Mr. Twiddle,
Who began to lift his noddle.
Feed upon the fiddle~Faddle flummery, unswaddle
A new-born self-sufficiency and think himself a [mockery.]
–G.J.

HUMANITY, n. The human race, collectively, exclusive of the anthropoid poets.

HUMORIST, n. A plague that would have softened down the hoar austerity of Pharaoh's heart and persuaded him to dismiss Israel with his best wishes, cat-quick.
Lo! the poor humorist, whose tortured mind
See jokes in crowds, though still to gloom inclined —
Whose simple appetite, untaught to stray,
His brains, renewed by night, consumes by day.
He thinks, admitted to an equal sty,
A graceful hog would bear his company.
–Alexander Poke

HURRICANE, n. An atmospheric demonstration once very common but now generally abandoned for the tornado and cyclone. The hurricane is still in popular use in the West Indies and is preferred by certain old-fashioned sea-captains. It is also used in the construction of the upper decks of steamboats, but generally speaking, the hurricane's usefulness has outlasted it.

HURRY, n. The dispatch of bunglers.

HUSBAND, n. One who, having dined, is charged with the care of the plate.

HYBRID, n. A pooled issue.

HYDRA, n. A kind of animal that the ancients catalogued under many heads.

HYENA, n. A beast held in reverence by some oriental nations from its habit of frequenting at night the burial-places of the dead. But the medical student does that.

HYPOCHONDRIASIS, n. Depression of one’s own spirits.
Some heaps of trash upon a vacant lot
Where long the village rubbish had been shot
Displayed a sign among the stuff and stumps —
“Hypochondriasis.” It meant The Dumps.
–Bogul S. Purvy

HYPOCRITE, n. One who, profession virtues that he does not respect secures the advantage of seeming to be what he despises.

I

I is the first letter of the alphabet, the first word of the language, the first thought of the mind, the first object of affection. In grammar it is a pronoun of the first person and singular number. Its plural is said to be *We,* but how there can be more than one myself is doubtless clearer the grammarians than it is to the author of this incomparable dictionary. Conception of two myselfs is difficult, but fine. The frank yet graceful use of "I" distinguishes a good writer from a bad; the latter carries it with the manner of a thief trying to cloak his loot.

ICHOR, n. A fluid that serves the gods and goddesses in place of blood.
Fair Venus, speared by Diomed,
Restrained the raging chief and said:
"Behold, rash mortal, whom you've bled —
Your soul's stained white with ichorshed!"
–Mary Doke

ICONOCLAST, n. A breaker of idols, the worshipers whereof are imperfectly gratified by the performance, and most strenuously protest that he unbuildeth but doth not reedify, that he pulleth down but pileth not up. For the poor things would have other idols in place of those he thwacketh upon the mazzard and dispelleth. But the iconoclast saith: "Ye shall have none at all, for ye need them not; and if the rebuilder fooleth round hereabout, behold I will depress the head of him and sit thereon till he squawk it."

IDIOT, n. A member of a large and powerful tribe whose influence in human affairs has always been dominant and controlling. The Idiot's activity is not confined to any special field of thought or action, but "pervades and regulates the whole." He has the last word in everything; his decision is unappealable. He sets the fashions and opinion of taste, dictates the limitations of speech and circumscribes conduct with a dead-line.

IDLENESS, n. A model farm where the devil experiments with seeds of new sins and promotes the growth of staple vices.

IGNORAMUS, n. A person unacquainted with certain kinds of knowledge familiar to yourself, and having certain other kinds that you know nothing about.
Dumble was an ignoramus,
Mumble was for learning famous.
Mumble said one day to Dumble:
“Ignorance should be more humble.
Not a spark have you of knowledge
That was got in any college.”
Dumble said to Mumble: “Truly
You’re self-satisfied unduly.
Of things in college I’m denied
A knowledge — you of all beside.”
–Borelli

ILLUMINATI, n. A sect of Spanish heretics of the latter part of the sixteenth century; so called because they were light weights — *cunctationes illuminati*.

ILLUSTRIOUS, adj. Suitably placed for the shafts of malice, envy and detraction.

IMAGINATION, n. A warehouse of facts, with poet and liar in joint ownership.

IMBECILITY, n. A kind of divine inspiration, or sacred fire affecting censorious critics of this dictionary.

IMMIGRANT, n. An unenlightened person who thinks one country better than another.

IMMODEST, adj. Having a strong sense of one’s own merit, coupled with a feeble conception of worth in others.
There was once a man in Ispahan
Ever and ever so long ago,

And he had a head, the phrenologists said,
That fitted him for a show.
For his modesty’s bump was so large a lump
(Nature, they said, had taken a freak)
That its summit stood far above the wood
Of his hair, like a mountain peak.
So modest a man in all Ispahan,
Over and over again they swore —
So humble and meek, you would vainly seek;
None ever was found before.
Meantime the hump of that awful bump
Into the heavens contrived to get
To so great a height that they called the wight
The man with the minaret.
There wasn’t a man in all Ispahan
Prouder, or louder in praise of his chump:
With a tireless tongue and a brazen lung
He bragged of that beautiful bump
Till the Shah in a rage sent a trusty page
Bearing a sack and a bow-string too,
And that gentle child explained as he smiled:
“A little present for you.”
The saddest man in all Ispahan,
Sniffed at the gift, yet accepted the same.
“If I’d lived,” said he, “my humility
Had given me deathless fame!”
–Sukker Uffro

IMMORAL, adj. Inexpedient. Whatever in the long run and with regard to the greater number of instances men find to be generally inexpedient comes to be considered wrong, wicked, immoral. If man’s notions of right and wrong have any other basis than this of expediency; if they originated, or could have originated, in any other way; if actions have in themselves a moral character apart from, and nowise dependent on, their consequences — then all philosophy is a lie and reason a disorder of the mind.

IMMORTALITY, n.
A toy which people cry for,

And on their knees apply for,
Dispute, contend and lie for,
And if allowed
Would be right proud
Eternally to die for.
–G.J.

IMPALE, v.t. In popular usage to pierce with any weapon which remains fixed in the wound. This, however, is inaccurate; to impale is, properly, to put to death by thrusting an upright sharp stake into the body, the victim being left in a sitting position. This was a common mode of punishment among many of the nations of antiquity, and is still in high favor in China and other parts of Asia. Down to the beginning of the fifteenth century it was widely employed in “churching” heretics and schismatics. Wolecraft calls it the “stoole of repentynge,” and among the common people it was jocularly known as “riding the one legged horse.” Ludwig Salzmann informs us that in Thibet impalement is considered the most appropriate punishment for crimes against religion; and although in China it is sometimes awarded for secular offences, it is most frequently adjudged in cases of sacrilege. To the person in actual experience of impalement it must be a matter of minor importance by what kind of civil or religious dissent he was made acquainted with its discomforts; but doubtless he would feel a certain satisfaction if able to contemplate himself in the character of a weather-cock on the spire of the True Church.

IMPARTIAL, adj. Unable to perceive any promise of personal advantage from espousing either side of a controversy or adopting either of two conflicting opinions.

IMPENITENCE, n. A state of mind intermediate in point of time between sin and punishment.

IMPIETY, n. Your irreverence toward my deity.

IMPOSITION, n. The act of blessing or consecrating by the laying on of hands — a ceremony common to many ecclesiastical systems, but performed with the

frankest sincerity by the sect known as Thieves.
“Lo! by the laying on of hands,”
Say parson, priest and dervise,
“We consecrate your cash and lands
To ecclesiastical service.
No doubt you’ll swear till all is blue
At such an imposition. Do.”
–Pollo Doncas

IMPOSTOR n. A rival aspirant to public honors.

IMPROBABILITY, n.
His tale he told with a solemn face
And a tender, melancholy grace.
Improbable ‘twas, no doubt,
When you came to think it out,
But the fascinated crowd
Their deep surprise avowed
And all with a single voice averred
‘Twas the most amazing thing they’d heard —
All save one who spake never a word,
But sat as mum
As if deaf and dumb,
Serene, indifferent and unstirred.
Then all the others turned to him
And scrutinized him limb from limb —
Scanned him alive;
But he seemed to thrive
And tranquiler grow each minute,
As if there were nothing in it.
“What! what!” cried one, “are you not amazed
At what our friend has told?” He raised
Soberly then his eyes and gazed
In a natural way
And proceeded to say,
As he crossed his feet on the mantel-shelf:
“O no — not at all; I’m a liar myself.”

IMPROVIDENCE, n. Provision for the needs of to-day from the revenues of to-morrow.

IMPUNITY, n. Wealth.

INADMISSIBLE, adj. Not competent to be considered. Said of certain kinds of testimony which juries are supposed to be unfit to be entrusted with, and which judges, therefore, rule out, even of proceedings before themselves alone. Hearsay evidence is inadmissible because the person quoted was unsworn and is not before the court for examination; yet most momentous actions, military, political, commercial and of every other kind, are daily undertaken on hearsay evidence. There is no religion in the world that has any other basis than hearsay evidence. Revelation is hearsay evidence; that the Scriptures are the word of God we have only the testimony of men long dead whose identity is not clearly established and who are not known to have been sworn in any sense. Under the rules of evidence as they now exist in this country, no single assertion in the Bible has in its support any evidence admissible in a court of law. It cannot be proved that the battle of Blenheim ever was fought, that there was such as person as Julius Caesar, such an empire as Assyria.

But as records of courts of justice are admissible, it can easily be proved that powerful and malevolent magicians once existed and were a scourge to mankind. The evidence (including confession) upon which certain women were convicted of witchcraft and executed was without a flaw; it is still unimpeachable. The judges' decisions based on it were sound in logic and in law. Nothing in any existing court was ever more thoroughly proved than the charges of witchcraft and sorcery for which so many suffered death. If there were no witches, human testimony and human reason are alike destitute of value.

INAUSPICIOUSLY, adv. In an unpromising manner, the auspices being unfavorable. Among the Romans it was customary before undertaking any important action or enterprise to obtain from the augurs, or state prophets, some hint of its probable outcome; and one of their favorite and most trustworthy modes of divination consisted in observing the flight of birds — the omens thence derived being called *auspices*. Newspaper reporters and certain miscreant lexicographers have decided that the word — always in the plural — shall mean "patronage" or "management"; as, "The festivities were under the auspices of the Ancient and Honorable Order of Body–Snatchers"; or, "The hilarities were auspicated by the Knights of Hunger.”

A Roman slave appeared one day
Before the Augur. “Tell me, pray,
If—” here the Augur, smiling, made
A checking gesture and displayed
His open palm, which plainly itched,
For visibly its surface twitched.
A *denarius* (the Latin nickel)
Successfully allayed the tickle,
And then the slave proceeded: “Please
Inform me whether Fate decrees
Success or failure in what I
To-night (if it be dark) shall try.
Its nature? Never mind — I think
‘Tis writ on this” — and with a wink
Which darkened half the earth, he drew
Another denarius to view,
Its shining face attentive scanned,
Then slipped it into the good man’s hand,
Who with great gravity said: “Wait
While I retire to question Fate.”
That holy person then withdrew
His scared clay and, passing through
The temple’s rearward gate, cried “Shoo!”
Waving his robe of office. Straight
Each sacred peacock and its mate
(Maintained for Juno’s favor) fled
With clamor from the trees o’erhead,
Where they were perching for the night.
The temple’s roof received their flight,
For thither they would always go,
When danger threatened them below.
Back to the slave the Augur went:
“My son, forecasting the event
By flight of birds, I must confess
The auspices deny success.”
That slave retired, a sadder man,

Abandoning his secret plan —
Which was (as well the craft seer
Had from the first divined) to clear
The wall and fraudulently seize
On Juno's poultry in the trees.
–G.J.

INCOME, n. The natural and rational gauge and measure of respectability, the commonly accepted standards being artificial, arbitrary and fallacious; for, as "Sir Sycophas Chrysolater" in the play has justly remarked, "the true use and function of property (in whatsoever it consisteth — coins, or land, or houses, or merchant-stuff, or anything which may be named as holden of right to one's own subservience) as also of honors, titles, preferments and place, and all favor and acquaintance of persons of quality or ableness, are but to get money. Hence it followeth that all things are truly to be rated as of worth in measure of their serviceableness to that end; and their possessors should take rank in agreement thereto, neither the lord of an unproducing manor, howsoever broad and ancient, nor he who bears an unremunerate dignity, nor yet the pauper favorite of a king, being esteemed of level excellency with him whose riches are of daily accretion; and hardly should they whose wealth is barren claim and rightly take more honor than the poor and unworthy."

INCOMPATIBILITY, n. In matrimony a similarity of tastes, particularly the taste for domination. Incompatibility may, however, consist of a meek-eyed matron living just around the corner. It has even been known to wear a moustache.

INCOMPOSSIBLE, adj. Unable to exist if something else exists. Two things are incompossible when the world of being has scope enough for one of them, but not enough for both — as Walt Whitman's poetry and God's mercy to man. Incompossibility, it will be seen, is only incompatibility let loose. Instead of such low language as "Go heel yourself — I mean to kill you on sight," the words, "Sir, we are incompossible," would convey and equally significant intimation and in stately courtesy are altogether superior.

INCUBUS, n. One of a race of highly improper demons who, though probably not wholly extinct, may be said to have seen their best nights. For a complete account of *incubi* and *succubi*, including *incubae* and *succubae*, see the *Liber Demonorum* of Protassus (Paris, 1328), which contains much curious information that would be out of place in a dictionary intended as a text-book for the public schools.

Victor Hugo relates that in the Channel Islands Satan himself — tempted more than elsewhere by the beauty of the women, doubtless — sometimes plays at *incubus*, greatly to the inconvenience and alarm of the good dames who wish to be loyal to their marriage vows, generally speaking. A certain lady applied to the parish priest to learn how they might, in the dark, distinguish the hardy intruder from their husbands. The holy man said they must feel his brown for horns; but Hugo is ungallant enough to hint a doubt of the efficacy of the test.

INCUMBENT, n. A person of the liveliest interest to the outcumbents.

INDECISION, n. The chief element of success; "for whereas," saith Sir Thomas Brewbold, "there is but one way to do nothing and divers way to do something, whereof, to a surety, only one is the right way, it followeth that he who from indecision standeth still hath not so many chances of going astray as he who pusheth forwards" — a most clear and satisfactory exposition on the matter.

"Your prompt decision to attack," said Genera Grant on a certain occasion to General Gordon Granger, "was admirable; you had but five minutes to make up your mind in."

"Yes, sir," answered the victorious subordinate, "it is a great thing to be know exactly what to do in an emergency. When in doubt whether to attack or retreat I never hesitate a moment — I toss us a copper."

"Do you mean to say that's what you did this time?"

"Yes, General; but for Heaven's sake don't reprimand me: I disobeyed the coin."

INDIFFERENT, adj. Imperfectly sensible to distinctions among things.

"You tiresome man!" cried Indolentio's wife,
"You've grown indifferent to all in life."
"Indifferent?" he drawled with a slow smile;
"I would be, dear, but it is not worth while."
–Apuleius M. Gokul

INDIGESTION, n. A disease which the patient and his friends frequently mistake for deep religious conviction and concern for the salvation of mankind. As the simple Red Man of the western wild put it, with, it must be confessed, a certain force: “Plenty well, no pray; big bellyache, heap God.”

INDISCRETION, n. The guilt of woman.

INEXPEDIENT, adj. Not calculated to advance one’s interests.

INFANCY, n. The period of our lives when, according to Wordsworth, “Heaven lies about us.” The world begins lying about us pretty soon afterward.

INFERIAE, n. [Latin] Among the Greeks and Romans, sacrifices for propitiation of the *Dii Manes*, or souls of the dead heroes; for the pious ancients could not invent enough gods to satisfy their spiritual needs, and had to have a number of makeshift deities, or, as a sailor might say, jury-gods, which they made out of the most unpromising materials. It was while sacrificing a bullock to the spirit of Agamemnon that Laiaides, a priest of Aulis, was favored with an audience of that illustrious warrior’s shade, who prophetically recounted to him the birth of Christ and the triumph of Christianity, giving him also a rapid but tolerably complete review of events down to the reign of Saint Louis. The narrative ended abruptly at the point, owing to the inconsiderate crowing of a cock, which compelled the ghosted King of Men to scamper back to Hades. There is a fine mediaeval flavor to this story, and as it has not been traced back further than Pere Brateille, a pious but obscure writer at the court of Saint Louis, we shall probably not err on the side of presumption in considering it apocryphal, though Monsignor Capel’s judgment of the matter might be different; and to that I bow — wow.

INFIDEL, n. In New York, one who does not believe in the Christian religion; in Constantinople, one who does. (See GIAOUR.) A kind of scoundrel imperfectly reverent of, and niggardly contributory to, divines, ecclesiastics, popes, parsons, canons, monks, mollahs, voodoos, presbyters, hierophants, prelates, obeah-men, abbes, nuns, missionaries, exhorters, deacons, friars, hadjis, high-priests, muezzins, brahmins, medicine-men, confessors, eminences, elders, primates, prebendaries, pilgrims, prophets, imaums, beneficiaries, clerks, vicars-choral, archbishops, bishops, abbots, priors, preachers, padres, abbotesses, caloyers, palmers, curates, patriarchs, bonezs, santons, beadsmen, canonesses, residentiaries, diocesans, deans, subdeans, rural deans, abdals, charm-sellers, archdeacons, hierarchs, class-leaders, incumbents, capitulars, sheiks, talapoins, postulants, scribes, gooroos, precentors, beadles, fakeers, sextons, reverences, revivalists, cenobites, perpetual curates, chaplains, mudjoes, readers, novices, vicars, pastors, rabbis, ulemas, lamas, sacristans, vergers, dervises, lectors, church wardens, cardinals, prioresses, suffragans, acolytes, rectors, cures, sophis, mutifs and pumpums.

INFLUENCE, n. In politics, a visionary *quo* given in exchange for a substantial *quid*.

INFRALAPSARIAN, n. One who ventures to believe that Adam need not have sinned unless he had a mind to — in opposition to the Supralapsarians, who hold that that luckless person’s fall was decreed from the beginning. Infralapsarians are sometimes called Sublapsarians without material effect upon the importance and lucidity of their views about Adam.

Two theologues once, as they wended their way
To chapel, engaged in colloquial fray —
An earnest logomachy, bitter as gall,
Concerning poor Adam and what made him fall.
“‘Twas Predestination,” cried one—”for the Lord
Decreed he should fall of his own accord.”
“Not so—’twas Free will,” the other maintained,
“Which led him to choose what the Lord had ordained.”
So fierce and so fiery grew the debate
That nothing but bloodshed their dudgeon could sate;
So off flew their cassocks and caps to the ground
And, moved by the spirit, their hands went round.
Ere either had proved his theology right
By winning, or even beginning, the fight,
A gray old professor of Latin came by,
A staff in his hand and a scowl in his eye,
And learning the cause of their quarrel (for still
As they clumsily sparred they disputed with skill
Of foreordination freedom of will)

Cried: “Sirrahs! this reasonless warfare compose:
Atwixt ye’s no difference worthy of blows.
The sects ye belong to — I’m ready to swear
Ye wrongly interpret the names that they bear.
You — Infralapsarian son of a clown! —
Should only contend that Adam slipped down;
While *you* — you Supralapsarian pup! —
Should nothing aver but that Adam slipped up.
It’s all the same whether up or down
You slip on a peel of banana brown.
Even Adam analyzed not his blunder,
But thought he had slipped on a peal of thunder!
–G.J.

INGRATE, n. One who receives a benefit from another, or is otherwise an object of charity.

“All men are ingrates,” sneered the cynic. “Nay,”
The good philanthropist replied;
“I did great service to a man one day
Who never since has cursed me to repay,
Nor vilified.”
“Ho!” cried the cynic, “lead me to him straight —
With veneration I am overcome,
And fain would have his blessing.” “Sad your fate —
He cannot bless you, for I grieve to state
This man is dumb.”
–Ariel Selp

INJURY, n. An offense next in degree of enormity to a slight.

INJUSTICE, n. A burden which of all those that we load upon others and carry ourselves is lightest in the hands and heaviest upon the back.

INK, n. A villainous compound of tannogallate of iron, gum-arabic and water, chiefly used to facilitate the infection of idiocy and promote intellectual crime. The properties of ink are peculiar and contradictory: it may be used to make reputations and unmake them; to blacken them and to make them white; but it is most generally and acceptably employed as a mortar to bind together the stones of an edifice of fame, and as a whitewash to conceal afterward the rascal quality of the material. There are men called journalists who have established ink baths which some persons pay money to get into, others to get out of. Not infrequently it occurs that a person who has paid to get in pays twice as much to get out.

INNATE, adj. Natural, inherent — as innate ideas, that is to say, ideas that we are born with, having had them previously imparted to us. The doctrine of innate ideas is one of the most admirable faiths of philosophy, being itself an innate idea and therefore inaccessible to disproof, though Locke foolishly supposed himself to have given it “a black eye.” Among innate ideas may be mentioned the belief in one’s ability to conduct a newspaper, in the greatness of one’s country, in the superiority of one’s civilization, in the importance of one’s personal affairs and in the interesting nature of one’s diseases.

IN’ARDS, n. The stomach, heart, soul and other bowels. Many eminent investigators do not class the soul as an in’ard, but that acute observer and renowned authority, Dr. Gunsaulus, is persuaded that the mysterious organ known as the spleen is nothing less than our important part. To the contrary, Professor Garrett P. Servis holds that man’s soul is that prolongation of his spinal marrow which forms the pith of his no tail; and for demonstration of his faith points confidently to the fact that no tailed animals have no souls. Concerning these two theories, it is best to suspend judgment by believing both.

INSCRIPTION, n. Something written on another thing. Inscriptions are of many kinds, but mostly memorial, intended to commemorate the fame of some illustrious person and hand down to distant ages the record of his services and virtues. To this class of inscriptions belongs the name of John Smith, penciled on the Washington monument. Following are examples of memorial inscriptions on tombstones: (See EPITAPH.)

“In the sky my soul is found,
And my body in the ground.
By and by my body’ll rise
To my spirit in the skies,
Soaring up to Heaven’s gate.
1878.”

“Sacred to the memory of Jeremiah Tree. Cut down May 9th, 1862,

aged 27 yrs. 4 mos. and 12 ds. Indigenous."
"Affliction sore long time she boar,
Phisicians was in vain,
Till Deth released the dear deceased
And left her a remain.
Gone to join Ananias in the regions of bliss."
"The clay that rests beneath this stone
As Silas Wood was widely known.
Now, lying here, I ask what good
It was to let me be S. Wood.

O Man, let not ambition trouble you,
Is the advice of Silas W."
"Richard Haymon, of Heaven. Fell to Earth Jan. 20, 1807, and had the dust brushed off him Oct. 3, 1874."

INSECTIVORA, n.
"See," cries the chorus of admiring preachers,
"How Providence provides for all His creatures!"
"His care," the gnat said, "even the insects follows:
For us He has provided wrens and swallows."
–Sempen Railey

INSURANCE, n. An ingenious modern game of chance in which the player is permitted to enjoy the comfortable conviction that he is beating the man who keeps the table.

INSURANCE AGENT: My dear sir, that is a fine house — pray let me insure it.

HOUSE OWNER: With pleasure. Please make the annual premium so low that by the time when, according to the tables of your actuary, it will probably be destroyed by fire I will have paid you considerably less than the face of the policy.

INSURANCE AGENT: O dear, no — we could not afford to do that. We must fix the premium so that you will have paid more.

HOUSE OWNER: How, then, can *I* afford *that*?

INSURANCE AGENT: Why, your house may burn down at any time. There was Smith's house, for example, which —

HOUSE OWNER: Spare me — there were Brown's house, on the contrary, and Jones's house, and Robinson's house, which —

INSURANCE AGENT: Spare *me*!

HOUSE OWNER: Let us understand each other. You want me to pay you money on the supposition that something will occur previously to the time set by yourself for its occurrence. In other words, you expect me to bet that my house will not last so long as you say that it will probably last.

INSURANCE AGENT: But if your house burns without insurance it will be a total loss.

HOUSE OWNER: Beg your pardon — by your own actuary's tables I shall probably have saved, when it burns, all the premiums I would otherwise have paid to you — amounting to more than the face of the policy they would have bought. But suppose it to burn, uninsured, before the time upon which your figures are based. If I could not afford that, how could you if it were insured?

INSURANCE AGENT: O, we should make ourselves whole from our luckier ventures with other clients. Virtually, they pay your loss.

HOUSE OWNER: And virtually, then, don't I help to pay their losses? Are not their houses as likely as mine to burn before they have paid you as much as you must pay them? The case stands this way: you expect to take more money from your clients than you pay to them, do you not?

INSURANCE AGENT: Certainly; if we did not —

HOUSE OWNER: I would not trust you with my money. Very well then. If it is *certain*, with reference to the whole body of your clients, that they lose money on you it is *probable,* with reference to any one of them, that *he* will. It is these individual probabilities that make the aggregate certainty.

INSURANCE AGENT: I will not deny it — but look at the figures in this pamph —

HOUSE OWNER: Heaven forbid!

INSURANCE AGENT: You spoke of saving the premiums which you would otherwise pay to me. Will you not be more likely to squander them? We offer you an incentive to thrift.

HOUSE OWNER: The willingness of A to take care of B's money is not peculiar to insurance, but as a charitable institution you command esteem. Deign to accept its expression from a Deserving Object.

INSURRECTION, n. An unsuccessful revolution. Disaffection's failure to substitute misrule for bad government.

INTENTION, n. The mind's sense of the prevalence of one set of influences over another set; an effect whose cause is the imminence, immediate or remote, of the performance of an involuntary act.

INTERPRETER, n. One who enables two persons of different languages to understand each other by repeating to each what it would have been to the interpreter's advantage for the other to have said.

INTERREGNUM, n. The period during which a monarchical country is governed by a warm spot on the cushion of the throne. The experiment of letting the spot grow cold has commonly been attended by most unhappy results from the zeal of many worthy persons to make it warm again.

INTIMACY, n. A relation into which fools are providentially drawn for their mutual destruction.

Two Seidlitz powders, one in blue
And one in white, together drew
And having each a pleasant sense
Of t’other powder’s excellence,
Forsook their jackets for the snug
Enjoyment of a common mug.
So close their intimacy grew
One paper would have held the two.
To confidences straight they fell,
Less anxious each to hear than tell;
Then each remorsefully confessed
To all the virtues he possessed,
Acknowledging he had them in
So high degree it was a sin.
The more they said, the more they felt
Their spirits with emotion melt,
Till tears of sentiment expressed
Their feelings. Then they effervesced!
So Nature executes her feats
Of wrath on friends and sympathetes
The good old rule who don’t apply,
That you are you and I am I.

INTRODUCTION, n. A social ceremony invented by the devil for the gratification of his servants and the plaguing of his enemies. The introduction attains its most malevolent development in this century, being, indeed, closely related to our political system. Every American being the equal of every other American, it follows that everybody has the right to know everybody else, which implies the right to introduce without request or permission. The Declaration of

Independence should have read thus:
“We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, and the right to make that of another miserable by thrusting upon him an incalculable quantity of acquaintances; liberty, particularly the liberty to introduce persons to one another without first ascertaining if they are not already acquainted as enemies; and the pursuit of another’s happiness with a running pack of strangers.”

INVENTOR, n. A person who makes an ingenious arrangement of wheels, levers and springs, and believes it civilization.

IRRELIGION, n. The principal one of the great faiths of the world.

ITCH, n. The patriotism of a Scotchman.

J

J is a consonant in English, but some nations use it as a vowel — than which nothing could be more absurd. Its original form, which has been but slightly modified, was that of the tail of a subdued dog, and it was not a letter but a character, standing for a Latin verb, *jacere*, "to throw," because when a stone is thrown at a dog the dog's tail assumes that shape. This is the origin of the letter, as expounded by the renowned Dr. Jocolpus Bumer, of the University of Belgrade, who established his conclusions on the subject in a work of three quarto volumes and committed suicide on being reminded that the j in the Roman alphabet had originally no curl.

JEALOUS, adj. Unduly concerned about the preservation of that which can be lost only if not worth keeping.

JESTER, n. An officer formerly attached to a king's household, whose business it was to amuse the court by ludicrous actions and utterances, the absurdity being attested by his motley costume. The king himself being attired with dignity, it took the world some centuries to discover that his own conduct and decrees were sufficiently ridiculous for the amusement not only of his court but of all mankind. The jester was commonly called a fool, but the poets and romancers have ever delighted to represent him as a singularly wise and witty person. In the circus of to-day the melancholy ghost of the court fool effects the dejection of humbler audiences with the same jests wherewith in life he gloomed the marble hall, panged the patrician sense of humor and tapped the tank of royal tears.

The widow-queen of Portugal
Had an audacious jester
Who entered the confessional
Disguised, and there confessed her.
"Father," she said, "thine ear bend down —
My sins are more than scarlet:
I love my fool — blaspheming clown,
And common, base-born varlet."
"Daughter," the mimic priest replied,
"That sin, indeed, is awful:

The church’s pardon is denied
To love that is unlawful.
“But since thy stubborn heart will be
For him forever pleading,
Thou’dst better make him, by decree,
A man of birth and breeding.”
She made the fool a duke, in hope
With Heaven’s taboo to palter;
Then told a priest, who told the Pope,
Who damned her from the altar!
–Barel Dort

JEWS-HARP, n. An unmusical instrument, played by holding it fast with the teeth and trying to brush it away with the finger.

JOSS-STICKS, n. Small sticks burned by the Chinese in their pagan tomfoolery, in imitation of certain sacred rites of our holy religion.

JUSTICE, n. A commodity which is a more or less adulterated condition the State sells to the citizen as a reward for his allegiance, taxes and personal service.

K

K is a consonant that we get from the Greeks, but it can be traced away back beyond them to the Cerathians, a small commercial nation inhabiting the peninsula of Smero. In their tongue it was called *Klatch*, which means "destroyed." The form of the letter was originally precisely that of our H, but the erudite Dr. Snedeker explains that it was altered to its present shape to commemorate the destruction of the great temple of Jarute by an earthquake, *circa* 730 B.C. This building was famous for the two lofty columns of its portico, one of which was broken in half by the catastrophe, the other remaining intact. As the earlier form of the letter is supposed to have been suggested by these pillars, so, it is thought by the great antiquary, its later was adopted as a simple and natural — not to say touching — means of keeping the calamity ever in the national memory. It is not known if the name of the letter was altered as an additional mnemonic, or if the name was always *Klatch* and the destruction one of nature's puns. As each theory seems probable enough, I see no objection to believing both — and Dr. Snedeker arrayed himself on that side of the question.

KEEP, v.t.
He willed away his whole estate,
And then in death he fell asleep,
Murmuring: "Well, at any rate,
My name unblemished I shall keep."
But when upon the tomb 'twas wrought
Whose was it? — for the dead keep naught.
–Durang Gophel Arn

KILL, v.t. To create a vacancy without nominating a successor.

KILT, n. A costume sometimes worn by Scotchmen in America and Americans in Scotland.

KINDNESS, n. A brief preface to ten volumes of exaction.

KING, n. A male person commonly known in America as a “crowned head,” although he never wears a crown and has usually no head to speak of.

A king, in times long, long gone by,
Said to his lazy jester:
“If I were you and you were I
My moments merrily would fly —
Nor care nor grief to pester.”
“The reason, Sire, that you would thrive,”
The fool said—”if you’ll hear it —
Is that of all the fools alive
Who own you for their sovereign, I’ve
The most forgiving spirit.”
–Oogum Bem

KING’S EVIL, n. A malady that was formerly cured by the touch of the sovereign, but has now to be treated by the physicians. Thus “the most pious Edward” of England used to lay his royal hand upon the ailing subjects and make them whole —

a crowd of wretched souls
That stay his cure: their malady convinces
The great essay of art; but at his touch,
Such sanctity hath Heaven given his hand,
They presently amend,

as the “Doctor” in *Macbeth* hath it. This useful property of the royal hand could, it appears, be transmitted along with other crown properties; for according to “Malcolm,”

‘tis spoken
To the succeeding royalty he leaves
The healing benediction.

But the gift somewhere dropped out of the line of succession: the later sovereigns of England have not been tactual healers, and the disease once honored with the name “king’s evil” now bears the humbler one of “scrofula,” from *scrofa*, a sow. The date and author of the following epigram are known only to the author of this dictionary, but it is old enough to show that the jest about Scotland’s national disorder is not a thing of yesterday.

Ye Kynge his evill in me laye,
Wh. he of Scottlande charmed awaye.

He layde his hand on mine and sayd:
“Be gone!” Ye ill no longer stayd.
But O ye wofull plyght in wh.
I’m now y-pight: I have ye itche!

The superstition that maladies can be cured by royal taction is dead, but like many a departed conviction it has left a monument of custom to keep its memory green. The practice of forming a line and shaking the President’s hand had no other origin, and when that great dignitary bestows his healing salutation on strangely visited people,

All swoln and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
The mere despair of surgery,

he and his patients are handing along an extinguished torch which once was kindled at the altar-fire of a faith long held by all classes of men. It is a beautiful and edifying “survival” — one which brings the sainted past close home in our “business and bosoms.”

KISS, n. A word invented by the poets as a rhyme for “bliss.” It is supposed to signify, in a general way, some kind of rite or ceremony appertaining to a good understanding; but the manner of its performance is unknown to this lexicographer.

KLEPTOMANIAC, n. A rich thief.

KNIGHT, n.

Once a warrior gentle of birth,
Then a person of civic worth,
Now a fellow to move our mirth.
Warrior, person, and fellow — no more:
We must knight our dogs to get any lower.
Brave Knights Kennelers then shall be,
Noble Knights of the Golden Flea,
Knights of the Order of St. Steboy,
Knights of St. Gorge and Sir Knights Jawy.
God speed the day when this knighting fad
Shall go to the dogs and the dogs go mad.

KORAN, n. A book which the Mohammedans foolishly believe to have been written by divine inspiration, but which Christians know to be a wicked imposture, contradictory to the Holy Scriptures.

L

LABOR, n. One of the processes by which A acquires property for B.

LAND, n. A part of the earth’s surface, considered as property. The theory that land is property subject to private ownership and control is the foundation of modern society, and is eminently worthy of the superstructure. Carried to its logical conclusion, it means that some have the right to prevent others from living; for the right to own implies the right exclusively to occupy; and in fact laws of trespass are enacted wherever property in land is recognized. It follows that if the whole area of *terra firma* is owned by A, B and C, there will be no place for D, E, F and G to be born, or, born as trespassers, to exist.

A life on the ocean wave,
A home on the rolling deep,
For the spark the nature gave
I have there the right to keep.
They give me the cat-o’-nine
Whenever I go ashore.
Then ho! for the flashing brine —
I’m a natural commodore!
–Dodle

LANGUAGE, n. The music with which we charm the serpents guarding another’s treasure.

LAOCOON, n. A famous piece of antique scripture representing a priest of that name and his two sons in the folds of two enormous serpents. The skill and diligence with which the old man and lads support the serpents and keep them up to their work have been justly regarded as one of the noblest artistic illustrations of the mastery of human intelligence over brute inertia.

LAP, n. One of the most important organs of the female system — an admirable provision of nature for the repose of infancy, but chiefly useful in rural festivities to support plates of cold chicken and heads of adult males. The male of our species has a rudimentary lap, imperfectly developed and in no way contributing to the animal's substantial welfare.

LAST, n. A shoemaker's implement, named by a frowning Providence as opportunity to the maker of puns.
Ah, punster, would my lot were cast,
Where the cobbler is unknown,
So that I might forget his last
And hear your own.
–Gargo Repsky

LAUGHTER, n. An interior convulsion, producing a distortion of the features and accompanied by inarticulate noises. It is infectious and, though intermittent, incurable. Liability to attacks of laughter is one of the characteristics distinguishing man from the animals — these being not only inaccessible to the provocation of his example, but impregnable to the microbes having original jurisdiction in bestowal of the disease. Whether laughter could be imparted to animals by inoculation from the human patient is a question that has not been answered by experimentation. Dr. Meir Witchell holds that the infection character of laughter is due to the instantaneous fermentation of *sputa* diffused in a spray. From this peculiarity he names the disorder *Convulsio spargens*.

LAUREATE, adj. Crowned with leaves of the laurel. In England the Poet Laureate is an officer of the sovereign's court, acting as dancing skeleton at every royal feast and singing-mute at every royal funeral. Of all incumbents of that high office, Robert Southey had the most notable knack at drugging the Samson of public joy and cutting his hair to the quick; and he had an artistic color-sense which enabled him so to blacken a public grief as to give it the aspect of a national crime.

LAUREL, n. The *laurus*, a vegetable dedicated to Apollo, and formerly defoliated to wreathe the brows of victors and such poets as had influence at court. (*Vide supra*.)

LAW, n.
Once Law was sitting on the bench,
And Mercy knelt a-weeping.

"Clear out!" he cried, "disordered wench!
Nor come before me creeping.
Upon your knees if you appear,
'Tis plain your have no standing here."
Then Justice came. His Honor cried:
"*Your* status? — devil seize you!"
"*Amica curiae,*" she replied —
"Friend of the court, so please you."
"Begone!" he shouted—"there's the door —
I never saw your face before!"
–G.J.

LAWFUL, adj. Compatible with the will of a judge having jurisdiction.

LAWYER, n. One skilled in circumvention of the law.

LAZINESS, n. Unwarranted repose of manner in a person of low degree.

LEAD, n. A heavy blue-gray metal much used in giving stability to light lovers — particularly to those who love not wisely but other men's wives. Lead is also of great service as a counterpoise to an argument of such weight that it turns the scale of debate the wrong way. An interesting fact in the chemistry of international controversy is that at the point of contact of two patriotisms lead is precipitated in great quantities.

Hail, holy Lead! — of human feuds the great
And universal arbiter; endowed
With penetration to pierce any cloud
Fogging the field of controversial hate,
And with a sift, inevitable, straight,
Searching precision find the unavowed
But vital point. Thy judgment, when allowed
By the chirurgeon, settles the debate.
O useful metal! — were it not for thee
We'd grapple one another's ears alway:
But when we hear thee buzzing like a bee

We, like old Muhlenberg, “care not to stay.”
And when the quick have run away like pellets
Jack Satan smelts the dead to make new bullets.

LEARNING, n. The kind of ignorance distinguishing the studious.

LECTURER, n. One with his hand in your pocket, his tongue in your ear and his faith in your patience.

LEGACY, n. A gift from one who is legging it out of this vale of tears.

LEONINE, adj. Unlike a menagerie lion. Leonine verses are those in which a word in the middle of a line rhymes with a word at the end, as in this famous passage from Bella Peeler Silcox:

The electric light invades the dunnest deep of Hades.
Cries Pluto, ‘twixt his snores: “O tempora! O mores!”

It should be explained that Mrs. Silcox does not undertake to teach pronunciation of the Greek and Latin tongues. Leonine verses are so called in honor of a poet named Leo, whom prosodists appear to find a pleasure in believing to have been the first to discover that a rhyming couplet could be run into a single line.

LETTUCE, n. An herb of the genus *Lactuca*, “Wherewith,” says that pious gastronome, Hengist Pelly, “God has been pleased to reward the good and punish the wicked. For by his inner light the righteous man has discerned a manner of compounding for it a dressing to the appetency whereof a multitude of gustible condiments conspire, being reconciled and ameliorated with profusion of oil, the entire comestible making glad the heart of the godly and causing his face to shine. But the person of spiritual unworth is successfully tempted to the Adversary to eat of lettuce with destitution of oil, mustard, egg, salt and garlic, and with a rascal bath of vinegar polluted with sugar. Wherefore the person of spiritual unworth suffers an intestinal pang of strange complexity and raises the song.”

LEVIATHAN, n. An enormous aquatic animal mentioned by Job. Some suppose it to have been the whale, but that distinguished ichthyologer, Dr. Jordan, of Stanford University, maintains with considerable heat that it was a species of gigantic Tadpole (*Thaddeus Polandensis*) or Polliwig — *Maria pseudo-hirsuta*. For an exhaustive description and history of the Tadpole consult the famous monograph of Jane Potter, *Thaddeus of Warsaw*.

LEXICOGRAPHER, n. A pestilent fellow who, under the pretense of recording some particular stage in the development of a language, does what he can to arrest its growth, stiffen its flexibility and mechanize its methods. For your lexicographer, having written his dictionary, comes to be considered "as one having authority," whereas his function is only to make a record, not to give a law. The natural servility of the human understanding having invested him with judicial power, surrenders its right of reason and submits itself to a chronicle as if it were a statue. Let the dictionary (for example) mark a good word as "obsolete" or "obsolescent" and few men thereafter venture to use it, whatever their need of it and however desirable its restoration to favor — whereby the process of impoverishment is accelerated and speech decays. On the contrary, recognizing the truth that language must grow by innovation if it grow at all, makes new words and uses the old in an unfamiliar sense, has no following and is tartly reminded that "it isn't in the dictionary" — although down to the time of the first lexicographer (Heaven forgive him!) no author ever had used a word that *was* in the dictionary. In the golden prime and high noon of English speech; when from the lips of the great Elizabethans fell words that made their own meaning and carried it in their very sound; when a Shakespeare and a Bacon were possible, and the language now rapidly perishing at one end and slowly renewed at the other was in vigorous growth and hardy preservation — sweeter than honey and stronger than a lion — the lexicographer was a person unknown, the dictionary a creation which his Creator had not created him to create.

God said: "Let Spirit perish into Form,"
And lexicographers arose, a swarm!
Thought fled and left her clothing, which they took,
And catalogued each garment in a book.
Now, from her leafy covert when she cries:
"Give me my clothes and I'll return," they rise
And scan the list, and say without compassion:
"Excuse us — they are mostly out of fashion."
–Sigismund Smith

LIAR, n. A lawyer with a roving commission.

LIBERTY, n. One of Imagination's most precious possessions.
The rising People, hot and out of breath,
Roared around the palace: "Liberty or death!"
"If death will do," the King said, "let me reign;
You'll have, I'm sure, no reason to complain."
–Martha Braymance

LICKSPITTLE, n. A useful functionary, not infrequently found editing a newspaper. In his character of editor he is closely allied to the blackmailer by the tie of occasional identity; for in truth the lickspittle is only the blackmailer under another aspect, although the latter is frequently found as an independent species. Lickspittling is more detestable than blackmailing, precisely as the business of a confidence man is more detestable than that of a highway robber; and the parallel maintains itself throughout, for whereas few robbers will cheat, every sneak will plunder if he dare.

LIFE, n. A spiritual pickle preserving the body from decay. We live in daily apprehension of its loss; yet when lost it is not missed. The question, "Is life worth living?" has been much discussed; particularly by those who think it is not, many of whom have written at great length in support of their view and by careful observance of the laws of health enjoyed for long terms of years the honors of successful controversy.
"Life's not worth living, and that's the truth,"
Carelessly caroled the golden youth.
In manhood still he maintained that view
And held it more strongly the older he grew.
When kicked by a jackass at eighty-three,
"Go fetch me a surgeon at once!" cried he.
–Han Soper

LIGHTHOUSE, n. A tall building on the seashore in which the government maintains a lamp and the friend of a politician.

LIMB, n. The branch of a tree or the leg of an American woman.
'Twas a pair of boots that the lady bought,
And the salesman laced them tight

To a very remarkable height —
Higher, indeed, than I think he ought —
Higher than *can* be right.
For the Bible declares — but never mind:
It is hardly fit
To censure freely and fault to find
With others for sins that I'm not inclined
Myself to commit.
Each has his weakness, and though my own
Is freedom from every sin,
It still were unfair to pitch in,
Discharging the first censorious stone.
Besides, the truth compels me to say,
The boots in question were *made* that way.
As he drew the lace she made a grimace,
And blushingly said to him:
"This boot, I'm sure, is too high to endure,
It hurts my — hurts my — limb."
The salesman smiled in a manner mild,
Like an artless, undesigning child;
Then, checking himself, to his face he gave
A look as sorrowful as the grave,
Though he didn't care two figs
For her paints and throes,
As he stroked her toes,
Remarking with speech and manner just
Befitting his calling: "Madam, I trust
That it doesn't hurt your twigs."
–B. Percival Dike

LINEN, n. "A kind of cloth the making of which, when made of hemp, entails a great waste of hemp." — Calcraft the Hangman.

LITIGANT, n. A person about to give up his skin for the hope of retaining his bones.

LITIGATION, n. A machine which you go into as a pig and come out of as a sausage.

LIVER, n. A large red organ thoughtfully provided by nature to be bilious with. The sentiments and emotions which every literary anatomist now knows to haunt the heart were anciently believed to infest the liver; and even Gascoygne, speaking of the emotional side of human nature, calls it “our hepaticall parte.” It was at one time considered the seat of life; hence its name — liver, the thing we live with. The liver is heaven’s best gift to the goose; without it that bird would be unable to supply us with the Strasbourg *pate*.

LL.D. Letters indicating the degree Legumptionorum Doctor, one learned in laws, gifted with legal gumption. Some suspicion is cast upon this derivation by the fact that the title was formerly LL.d., and conferred only upon gentlemen distinguished for their wealth. At the date of this writing Columbia University is considering the expediency of making another degree for clergymen, in place of the old D.D. — Damnator Diaboli. The new honor will be known as Sanctorum Custus, and written $$c. The name of the Rev. John Satan has been suggested as a suitable recipient by a lover of consistency, who points out that Professor Harry Thurston Peck has long enjoyed the advantage of a degree.

LOCK-AND-KEY, n. The distinguishing device of civilization and enlightenment.

LODGER, n. A less popular name for the Second Person of that delectable newspaper Trinity, the Roomer, the Bedder, and the Mealer.

LOGIC, n. The art of thinking and reasoning in strict accordance with the limitations and incapacities of the human misunderstanding. The basic of logic is the syllogism, consisting of a major and a minor premise and a conclusion — thus:

Major Premise: Sixty men can do a piece of work sixty times as quickly as one man.

Minor Premise: One man can dig a posthole in sixty seconds; therefore —

Conclusion: Sixty men can dig a posthole in one second.

This may be called the syllogism arithmetical, in which, by combining logic and mathematics, we obtain a double certainty and are twice blessed.

LOGOMACHY, n. A war in which the weapons are words and the wounds punctures in the swim-bladder of self-esteem — a kind of contest in which, the vanquished being unconscious of defeat, the victor is denied the reward of success.

‘Tis said by divers of the scholar-men
That poor Salmasius died of Milton’s pen.
Alas! we cannot know if this is true,
For reading Milton’s wit we perish too.

LONGANIMITY, n. The disposition to endure injury with meek forbearance while maturing a plan of revenge.

LONGEVITY, n. Uncommon extension of the fear of death.

LOOKING-GLASS, n. A vitreous plane upon which to display a fleeting show for man’s disillusion given.

The King of Manchuria had a magic looking-glass, whereon whoso looked saw, not his own image, but only that of the king. A certain courtier who had long enjoyed the king’s favor and was thereby enriched beyond any other subject of the realm, said to the king: “Give me, I pray, thy wonderful mirror, so that when absent out of thine august presence I may yet do homage before thy visible shadow, prostrating myself night and morning in the glory of thy benign countenance, as which nothing has so divine splendor, O Noonday Sun of the Universe!”

Please with the speech, the king commanded that the mirror be conveyed to the courtier’s palace; but after, having gone thither without apprisal, he found it in an apartment where was naught but idle lumber. And the mirror was dimmed with dust and overlaced with cobwebs. This so angered him that he fisted it hard, shattering the glass, and was sorely hurt. Enraged all the more by this mischance, he commanded that the ungrateful courtier be thrown into prison, and that the glass be repaired and taken back to his own palace; and this was done. But when the king looked again on the mirror he saw not his image as before, but only the figure of a crowned ass, having a bloody bandage on one of its hinder hooves — as the artificers and all who had looked upon it had before discerned but feared to report. Taught wisdom and charity, the king restored his courtier to liberty, had the mirror set into the back of the throne and reigned many years with justice and humility; and one day when he fell asleep in death while on the throne, the whole court saw in the mirror the luminous figure of an angel, which remains to this day.

LOQUACITY, n. A disorder which renders the sufferer unable to curb his tongue when you wish to talk.

LORD, n. In American society, an English tourist above the state of a costermonger, as, lord ‘Aberdasher, Lord Hartisan and so forth. The traveling Briton of lesser degree is addressed as “Sir,” as, Sir ‘Arry Donkiboi, or ‘Amstead ‘Eath. The word “Lord” is sometimes used, also, as a title of the Supreme Being; but this is thought to be rather flattery than true reverence.

Miss Sallie Ann Splurge, of her own accord,
Wedded a wandering English lord —
Wedded and took him to dwell with her “paw,”
A parent who throve by the practice of Draw.
Lord Cadde I don’t hesitate to declare
Unworthy the father-in-legal care
Of that elderly sport, notwithstanding the truth
That Cadde had renounced all the follies of youth;
For, sad to relate, he’d arrived at the stage
Of existence that’s marked by the vices of age.
Among them, cupidity caused him to urge
Repeated demands on the pocket of Splurge,
Till, wrecked in his fortune, that gentleman saw
Inadequate aid in the practice of Draw,
And took, as a means of augmenting his pelf,
To the business of being a lord himself.
His neat-fitting garments he wilfully shed
And sacked himself strangely in checks instead;
Denuded his chin, but retained at each ear
A whisker that looked like a blasted career.
He painted his neck an incarnadine hue
Each morning and varnished it all that he knew.
The moony monocular set in his eye
Appeared to be scanning the Sweet Bye-and-Bye.
His head was enroofed with a billycock hat,

And his low-necked shoes were aduncous and flat.
In speech he eschewed his American ways,
Denying his nose to the use of his A's
And dulling their edge till the delicate sense
Of a babe at their temper could take no offence.
His H's—'twas most inexpressibly sweet,
The patter they made as they fell at his feet!
Re-outfitted thus, Mr. Splurge without fear
Began as Lord Splurge his recouping career.
Alas, the Divinity shaping his end
Entertained other views and decided to send
His lordship in horror, despair and dismay
From the land of the nobleman's natural prey.
For, smit with his Old World ways, Lady Cadde
Fell — suffering Caesar! — in love with her dad!
–G.J.

LORE, n. Learning — particularly that sort which is not derived from a regular course of instruction but comes of the reading of occult books, or by nature. This latter is commonly designated as folk-lore and embraces popularly myths and superstitions. In Baring–Gould's *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages* the reader will find many of these traced backward, through various people son converging lines, toward a common origin in remote antiquity. Among these are the fables of "Teddy the Giant Killer," "The Sleeping John Sharp Williams," "Little Red Riding Hood and the Sugar Trust," "Beauty and the Brisbane," "The Seven Aldermen of Ephesus," "Rip Van Fairbanks," and so forth. The fable with Goethe so affectingly relates under the title of "The Erl–King" was known two thousand years ago in Greece as "The Demos and the Infant Industry." One of the most general and ancient of these myths is that Arabian tale of "Ali Baba and the Forty Rockefellers."

LOSS, n. Privation of that which we had, or had not. Thus, in the latter sense, it is said of a defeated candidate that he "lost his election"; and of that eminent man, the poet Gilder, that he has "lost his mind." It is in the former and more legitimate sense, that the word is used in the famous epitaph:
Here Huntington's ashes long have lain
Whose loss is our eternal gain,
For while he exercised all his powers

Whatever he gained, the loss was ours.

LOVE, n. A temporary insanity curable by marriage or by removal of the patient from the influences under which he incurred the disorder. This disease, like *caries* and many other ailments, is prevalent only among civilized races living under artificial conditions; barbarous nations breathing pure air and eating simple food enjoy immunity from its ravages. It is sometimes fatal, but more frequently to the physician than to the patient.

LOW-BRED, adj. “Raised” instead of brought up.

LUMINARY, n. One who throws light upon a subject; as an editor by not writing about it.

LUNARIAN, n. An inhabitant of the moon, as distinguished from Lunatic, one whom the moon inhabits. The Lunarians have been described by Lucian, Locke and other observers, but without much agreement. For example, Bragellos avers their anatomical identity with Man, but Professor Newcomb says they are more like the hill tribes of Vermont.

LYRE, n. An ancient instrument of torture. The word is now used in a figurative sense to denote the poetic faculty, as in the following fiery lines of our great poet, Ella Wheeler Wilcox:
I sit astride Parnassus with my lyre,
And pick with care the disobedient wire.
That stupid shepherd lolling on his crook
With deaf attention scarcely deigns to look.
I bide my time, and it shall come at length,
When, with a Titan’s energy and strength,
I’ll grab a fistful of the strings, and O,
The word shall suffer when I let them go!
–Farquharson Harris

M

MACE, n. A staff of office signifying authority. Its form, that of a heavy club, indicates its original purpose and use in dissuading from dissent.

MACHINATION, n. The method employed by one's opponents in baffling one's open and honorable efforts to do the right thing.
So plain the advantages of machination
It constitutes a moral obligation,
And honest wolves who think upon't with loathing
Feel bound to don the sheep's deceptive clothing.
So prospers still the diplomatic art,
And Satan bows, with hand upon his heart.
–R.S.K.

MACROBIAN, n. One forgotten of the gods and living to a great age. History is abundantly supplied with examples, from Methuselah to Old Parr, but some notable instances of longevity are less well known. A Calabrian peasant named Coloni, born in 1753, lived so long that he had what he considered a glimpse of the dawn of universal peace. Scanavius relates that he knew an archbishop who was so old that he could remember a time when he did not deserve hanging. In 1566 a linen draper of Bristol, England, declared that he had lived five hundred years, and that in all that time he had never told a lie. There are instances of longevity (*macrobiosis*) in our own country. Senator Chauncey Depew is old enough to know better. The editor of *The American*, a newspaper in New York City, has a memory that goes back to the time when he was a rascal, but not to the fact. The President of the United States was born so long ago that many of the friends of his youth have risen to high political and military preferment without the assistance of personal merit. The verses following were written by a macrobian:
When I was young the world was fair
And amiable and sunny.
A brightness was in all the air,
In all the waters, honey.
The jokes were fine and funny,

The statesmen honest in their views,
And in their lives, as well,
And when you heard a bit of news
‘Twas true enough to tell.
Men were not ranting, shouting, reeking,
Nor women “generally speaking.”
The Summer then was long indeed:
It lasted one whole season!
The sparkling Winter gave no heed
When ordered by Unreason
To bring the early peas on.
Now, where the dickens is the sense
In calling that a year
Which does no more than just commence
Before the end is near?
When I was young the year extended
From month to month until it ended.
I know not why the world has changed
To something dark and dreary,
And everything is now arranged
To make a fellow weary.
The Weather Man — I fear he
Has much to do with it, for, sure,
The air is not the same:
It chokes you when it is impure,
When pure it makes you lame.
With windows closed you are asthmatic;
Open, neuralgic or sciatic.
Well, I suppose this new regime
Of dun degeneration
Seems eviler than it would seem
To a better observation,
And has for compensation
Some blessings in a deep disguise
Which mortal sight has failed
To pierce, although to angels’ eyes
They’re visible unveiled.
If Age is such a boon, good land!
He’s costumed by a master hand!

–Venable Strigg

MAD, adj. Affected with a high degree of intellectual independence; not conforming to standards of thought, speech and action derived by the conformants from study of themselves; at odds with the majority; in short, unusual. It is noteworthy that persons are pronounced mad by officials destitute of evidence that themselves are sane. For illustration, this present (and illustrious) lexicographer is no firmer in the faith of his own sanity than is any inmate of any madhouse in the land; yet for aught he knows to the contrary, instead of the lofty occupation that seems to him to be engaging his powers he may really be beating his hands against the window bars of an asylum and declaring himself Noah Webster, to the innocent delight of many thoughtless spectators.

MAGDALENE, n. An inhabitant of Magdala. Popularly, a woman found out. This definition of the word has the authority of ignorance, Mary of Magdala being another person than the penitent woman mentioned by St. Luke. It has also the official sanction of the governments of Great Britain and the United States. In England the word is pronounced Maudlin, whence maudlin, adjective, unpleasantly sentimental. With their Maudlin for Magdalene, and their Bedlam for Bethlehem, the English may justly boast themselves the greatest of revisers.

MAGIC, n. An art of converting superstition into coin. There are other arts serving the same high purpose, but the discreet lexicographer does not name them.

MAGNET, n. Something acted upon by magnetism.

MAGNETISM, n. Something acting upon a magnet.
The two definitions immediately foregoing are condensed from the works of one thousand eminent scientists, who have illuminated the subject with a great white light, to the inexpressible advancement of human knowledge.

MAGNIFICENT, adj. Having a grandeur or splendor superior to that to which the spectator is accustomed, as the ears of an ass, to a rabbit, or the glory of a glowworm, to a maggot.

MAGNITUDE, n. Size. Magnitude being purely relative, nothing is large and nothing small. If everything in the universe were increased in bulk one thousand diameters nothing would be any larger than it was before, but if one thing remain unchanged all the others would be larger than they had been. To an understanding familiar with the relativity of magnitude and distance the spaces and masses of the astronomer would be no more impressive than those of the microscopist. For anything we know to the contrary, the visible universe may be a small part of an atom, with its component ions, floating in the life-fluid (luminiferous ether) of some animal. Possibly the wee creatures peopling the corpuscles of our own blood are overcome with the proper emotion when contemplating the unthinkable distance from one of these to another.

MAGPIE, n. A bird whose thievish disposition suggested to someone that it might be taught to talk.

MAIDEN, n. A young person of the unfair sex addicted to clewless conduct and views that madden to crime. The genus has a wide geographical distribution, being found wherever sought and deplored wherever found. The maiden is not altogether unpleasing to the eye, nor (without her piano and her views) insupportable to the ear, though in respect to comeliness distinctly inferior to the rainbow, and, with regard to the part of her that is audible, bleating out of the field by the canary — which, also, is more portable.
A lovelorn maiden she sat and sang —
This quaint, sweet song sang she;
“It’s O for a youth with a football bang
And a muscle fair to see!
The Captain he
Of a team to be!
On the gridiron he shall shine,
A monarch by right divine,
And never to roast on it — me!”
–Opoline Jones

MAJESTY, n. The state and title of a king. Regarded with a just contempt by the Most Eminent Grand Masters, Grand Chancellors, Great Incohonees and Imperial Potentates of the ancient and honorable orders of republican America.

MALE, n. A member of the unconsidered, or negligible sex. The male of the human race is commonly known (to the female) as Mere Man. The genus has two varieties: good providers and bad providers.

MALEFACTOR, n. The chief factor in the progress of the human race.

MALTHUSIAN, adj. Pertaining to Malthus and his doctrines. Malthus believed in artificially limiting population, but found that it could not be done by talking. One of the most practical exponents of the Malthusian idea was Herod of Judea, though all the famous soldiers have been of the same way of thinking.

MAMMALIA, n.pl. A family of vertebrate animals whose females in a state of nature suckle their young, but when civilized and enlightened put them out to nurse, or use the bottle.

MAMMON, n. The god of the world’s leading religion. The chief temple is in the holy city of New York.
He swore that all other religions were gammon,
And wore out his knees in the worship of Mammon.
–Jared Oopf

MAN, n. An animal so lost in rapturous contemplation of what he thinks he is as to overlook what he indubitably ought to be. His chief occupation is extermination of other animals and his own species, which, however, multiplies with such insistent rapidity as to infest the whole habitable earth and Canada.
When the world was young and Man was new,
And everything was pleasant,
Distinctions Nature never drew
‘Mongst kings and priest and peasant.
We’re not that way at present,

Save here in this Republic, where
We have that old regime,
For all are kings, however bare
Their backs, howe’er extreme
Their hunger. And, indeed, each has a voice
To accept the tyrant of his party’s choice.
A citizen who would not vote,
And, therefore, was detested,
Was one day with a tarry coat
(With feathers backed and breasted)
By patriots invested.
“It is your duty,” cried the crowd,
“Your ballot true to cast
For the man o’ your choice.” He humbly bowed,
And explained his wicked past:
“That’s what I very gladly would have done,
Dear patriots, but he has never run.”
–Apperton Duke

MANES, n. The immortal parts of dead Greeks and Romans. They were in a state of dull discomfort until the bodies from which they had exhaled were buried and burned; and they seem not to have been particularly happy afterward.

MANICHEISM, n. The ancient Persian doctrine of an incessant warfare between Good and Evil. When Good gave up the fight the Persians joined the victorious Opposition.

MANNA, n. A food miraculously given to the Israelites in the wilderness. When it was no longer supplied to them they settled down and tilled the soil, fertilizing it, as a rule, with the bodies of the original occupants.

MARRIAGE, n. The state or condition of a community consisting of a master, a mistress and two slaves, making in all, two.

MARTYR, n. One who moves along the line of least reluctance to a desired death.

MATERIAL, adj. Having an actual existence, as distinguished from an imaginary one. Important.
Material things I know, or fell, or see;
All else is immaterial to me.
–Jamrach Holobom

MAUSOLEUM, n. The final and funniest folly of the rich.

MAYONNAISE, n. One of the sauces which serve the French in place of a state religion.
ME, pro. The objectionable case of I. The personal pronoun in English has three cases, the dominative, the objectionable and the oppressive. Each is all three.

MEANDER, n. To proceed sinuously and aimlessly. The word is the ancient name of a river about one hundred and fifty miles south of Troy, which turned and twisted in the effort to get out of hearing when the Greeks and Trojans boasted of their prowess.

MEDAL, n. A small metal disk given as a reward for virtues, attainments or services more or less authentic.
It is related of Bismark, who had been awarded a medal for gallantly rescuing a drowning person, that, being asked the meaning of the medal, he replied: “I save lives sometimes.” And sometimes he didn’t.

MEDICINE, n. A stone flung down the Bowery to kill a dog in Broadway.

MEEKNESS, n. Uncommon patience in planning a revenge that is worth while.
M is for Moses,
Who slew the Egyptian.
As sweet as a rose is
The meekness of Moses.
No monument shows his
Post-mortem inscription,
But M is for Moses

Who slew the Egyptian.
–*The Biographical Alphabet*

MEERSCHAUM, n. (Literally, seafoam, and by many erroneously supposed to be made of it.) A fine white clay, which for convenience in coloring it brown is made into tobacco pipes and smoked by the workmen engaged in that industry. The purpose of coloring it has not been disclosed by the manufacturers.

There was a youth (you've heard before,
This woeful tale, may be),
Who bought a meerschaum pipe and swore
That color it would he!
He shut himself from the world away,
Nor any soul he saw.
He smoke by night, he smoked by day,
As hard as he could draw.
His dog died moaning in the wrath
Of winds that blew aloof;
The weeds were in the gravel path,
The owl was on the roof.
"He's gone afar, he'll come no more,"
The neighbors sadly say.
And so they batter in the door
To take his goods away.
Dead, pipe in mouth, the youngster lay,
Nut-brown in face and limb.
"That pipe's a lovely white," they say,
"But it has colored him!"
The moral there's small need to sing —
'Tis plain as day to you:
Don't play your game on any thing
That is a gamester too.
–Martin Bulstrode

MENDACIOUS, adj. Addicted to rhetoric.

MERCHANT, n. One engaged in a commercial pursuit. A commercial pursuit is one in which the thing pursued is a dollar.

MERCY, n. An attribute beloved of detected offenders.

MESMERISM, n. Hypnotism before it wore good clothes, kept a carriage and asked Incredulity to dinner.

METROPOLIS, n. A stronghold of provincialism.

MILLENNIUM, n. The period of a thousand years when the lid is to be screwed down, with all reformers on the under side.

MIND, n. A mysterious form of matter secreted by the brain. Its chief activity consists in the endeavor to ascertain its own nature, the futility of the attempt being due to the fact that it has nothing but itself to know itself with. From the Latin *mens*, a fact unknown to that honest shoe-seller, who, observing that his learned competitor over the way had displayed the motto "*Mens conscia recti*," emblazoned his own front with the words "Men's, women's and children's conscia recti."

MINE, adj. Belonging to me if I can hold or seize it.

MINISTER, n. An agent of a higher power with a lower responsibility. In diplomacy and officer sent into a foreign country as the visible embodiment of his sovereign's hostility. His principal qualification is a degree of plausible inveracity next below that of an ambassador.

MINOR, adj. Less objectionable.

MINSTREL, adj. Formerly a poet, singer or musician; now a nigger with a color less than skin deep and a humor more than flesh and blood can bear.

MIRACLE, n. An act or event out of the order of nature and unaccountable, as beating a normal hand of four kings and an ace with four aces and a king.

MISCREANT, n. A person of the highest degree of unworth. Etymologically, the word means unbeliever, and its present signification may be regarded as theology's noblest contribution to the development of our language.

MISDEMEANOR, n. An infraction of the law having less dignity than a felony and constituting no claim to admittance into the best criminal society.
By misdemeanors he essays to climb
Into the aristocracy of crime.
O, woe was him! — with manner chill and grand
"Captains of industry" refused his hand,
"Kings of finance" denied him recognition
And "railway magnates" jeered his low condition.
He robbed a bank to make himself respected.
They still rebuffed him, for he was detected.
–S.V. Hanipur

MISERICORDE, n. A dagger which in mediaeval warfare was used by the foot soldier to remind an unhorsed knight that he was mortal.

MISFORTUNE, n. The kind of fortune that never misses.

MISS, n. The title with which we brand unmarried women to indicate that they are in the market. Miss, Missis (Mrs.) and Mister (Mr.) are the three most distinctly disagreeable words in the language, in sound and sense. Two are corruptions of Mistress, the other of Master. In the general abolition of social titles in this our country they miraculously escaped to plague us. If we must have them let us be consistent and give one to the unmarried man. I venture to suggest Mush, abbreviated to Mh.

MOLECULE, n. The ultimate, indivisible unit of matter. It is distinguished from the corpuscle, also the ultimate, indivisible unit of matter, by a closer resemblance to the atom, also the ultimate, indivisible unit of matter. Three great scientific theories of the structure of the universe are the molecular, the corpuscular and the atomic. A fourth affirms, with Haeckel, the condensation of precipitation of matter from ether — whose existence is proved by the condensation of precipitation. The present trend of scientific thought is toward the theory of ions. The ion differs from the molecule, the corpuscle and the atom in that it is an ion. A fifth theory is held by idiots, but it is doubtful if they know any more about the matter than the others.

MONAD, n. The ultimate, indivisible unit of matter. (See *Molecule*.) According to Leibnitz, as nearly as he seems willing to be understood, the monad has body without bulk, and mind without manifestation — Leibnitz knows him by the innate power of considering. He has founded upon him a theory of the universe, which the creature bears without resentment, for the monad is a gentleman. Small as he is, the monad contains all the powers and possibilities needful to his evolution into a German philosopher of the first class — altogether a very capable little fellow. He is not to be confounded with the microbe, or bacillus; by its inability to discern him, a good microscope shows him to be of an entirely distinct species.

MONARCH, n. A person engaged in reigning. Formerly the monarch ruled, as the derivation of the word attests, and as many subjects have had occasion to learn. In Russia and the Orient the monarch has still a considerable influence in public affairs and in the disposition of the human head, but in western Europe political administration is mostly entrusted to his ministers, he being somewhat preoccupied with reflections relating to the status of his own head.

MONARCHICAL GOVERNMENT, n. Government.

MONDAY, n. In Christian countries, the day after the baseball game.

MONEY, n. A blessing that is of no advantage to us excepting when we part with it. An evidence of culture and a passport to polite society. Supportable property.

MONKEY, n. An arboreal animal which makes itself at home in genealogical trees.

MONOSYLLABIC, adj. Composed of words of one syllable, for literary babes who never tire of testifying their delight in the vapid compound by appropriate googoogling. The words are commonly Saxon — that is to say, words of a barbarous people destitute of ideas and incapable of any but the most elementary sentiments and emotions.

The man who writes in Saxon
Is the man to use an ax on
–Judibras

MONSIGNOR, n. A high ecclesiastical title, of which the Founder of our religion overlooked the advantages.

MONUMENT, n. A structure intended to commemorate something which either needs no commemoration or cannot be commemorated.

The bones of Agammemnon are a show,
And ruined is his royal monument,

but Agammemnon’s fame suffers no diminution in consequence. The monument custom has its *reductiones ad absurdum* in monuments “to the unknown dead” — that is to say, monuments to perpetuate the memory of those who have left no memory.

MORAL, adj. Conforming to a local and mutable standard of right. Having the quality of general expediency.

It is sayd there be a raunge of mountaynes in the Easte, on one syde of the which certayn conducts are immorall, yet on the other syde they are holden in good esteeme; wherebye the mountayneer is much conveenyenced, for it is given to him to goe downe eyther way and act as it shall suite his moode, withouten offence.
–Gooke’s Meditations

MORE, adj. The comparative degree of too much.

MOUSE, n. An animal which strews its path with fainting women. As in Rome Christians were thrown to the lions, so centuries earlier in Otumwee, the most ancient and famous city of the world, female heretics were thrown to the mice. Jakak–Zotp, the historian, the only Otumwump whose writings have descended to us, says that these martyrs met their death with little dignity and much exertion. He even attempts to exculpate the mice (such is the malice of bigotry) by declaring that the unfortunate women perished, some from exhaustion, some of broken necks from falling over their own feet, and some from lack of restoratives. The mice, he avers, enjoyed the pleasures of the chase with composure. But if "Roman history is nine-tenths lying," we can hardly expect a smaller proportion of that rhetorical figure in the annals of a people capable of so incredible cruelty to a lovely women; for a hard heart has a false tongue.

MOUSQUETAIRE, n. A long glove covering a part of the arm. Worn in New Jersey. But "mousquetaire" is a might poor way to spell muskeeter.

MOUTH, n. In man, the gateway to the soul; in woman, the outlet of the heart.

MUGWUMP, n. In politics one afflicted with self-respect and addicted to the vice of independence. A term of contempt.

MULATTO, n. A child of two races, ashamed of both.

MULTITUDE, n. A crowd; the source of political wisdom and virtue. In a republic, the object of the statesman's adoration. "In a multitude of counsellors there is wisdom," saith the proverb. If many men of equal individual wisdom are wiser than any one of them, it must be that they acquire the excess of wisdom by the mere act of getting together. Whence comes it? Obviously from nowhere — as well say that a range of mountains is higher than the single mountains composing it. A multitude is as wise as its wisest member if it obey him; if not, it is no wiser than its most foolish.

MUMMY, n. An ancient Egyptian, formerly in universal use among modern civilized nations as medicine, and now engaged in supplying art with an excellent pigment. He is handy, too, in museums in gratifying the vulgar curiosity that serves to distinguish man from the lower animals.

By means of the Mummy, mankind, it is said,
Attests to the gods its respect for the dead.
We plunder his tomb, be he sinner or saint,
Distil him for physic and grind him for paint,
Exhibit for money his poor, shrunken frame,
And with levity flock to the scene of the shame.
O, tell me, ye gods, for the use of my rhyme:
For respecting the dead what’s the limit of time?
–Scopas Brune

MUSTANG, n. An indocile horse of the western plains. In English society, the American wife of an English nobleman.

MYRMIDON, n. A follower of Achilles — particularly when he didn’t lead.

MYTHOLOGY, n. The body of a primitive people’s beliefs concerning its origin, early history, heroes, deities and so forth, as distinguished from the true accounts which it invents later.

N

NECTAR, n. A drink served at banquets of the Olympian deities. The secret of its preparation is lost, but the modern Kentuckians believe that they come pretty near to a knowledge of its chief ingredient.

Juno drank a cup of nectar,
But the draught did not affect her.
Juno drank a cup of rye —
Then she bad herself good-bye.
–J.G.

NEGRO, n. The *piece de resistance* in the American political problem. Representing him by the letter n, the Republicans begin to build their equation thus: “Let n = the white man.” This, however, appears to give an unsatisfactory solution.

NEIGHBOR, n. One whom we are commanded to love as ourselves, and who does all he knows how to make us disobedient.

NEPOTISM, n. Appointing your grandmother to office for the good of the party.

NEWTONIAN, adj. Pertaining to a philosophy of the universe invented by Newton, who discovered that an apple will fall to the ground, but was unable to say why. His successors and disciples have advanced so far as to be able to say when.

NIHILIST, n. A Russian who denies the existence of anything but Tolstoi. The leader of the school is Tolstoi.

NIRVANA, n. In the Buddhist religion, a state of pleasurable annihilation awarded to the wise, particularly to those wise enough to understand it.

NOBLEMAN, n. Nature’s provision for wealthy American minds ambitious to incur social distinction and suffer high life.

NOISE, n. A stench in the ear. Undomesticated music. The chief product and authenticating sign of civilization.

NOMINATE, v. To designate for the heaviest political assessment. To put forward a suitable person to incur the mudgobbling and deadcatting of the opposition.

NOMINEE, n. A modest gentleman shrinking from the distinction of private life and diligently seeking the honorable obscurity of public office.

NON-COMBATANT, n. A dead Quaker.

NONSENSE, n. The objections that are urged against this excellent dictionary.

NOSE, n. The extreme outpost of the face. From the circumstance that great conquerors have great noses, Getius, whose writings antedate the age of humor, calls the nose the organ of quell. It has been observed that one’s nose is never so happy as when thrust into the affairs of others, from which some physiologists have drawn the inference that the nose is devoid of the sense of smell.
There’s a man with a Nose,
And wherever he goes
The people run from him and shout:
“No cotton have we
For our ears if so be
He blow that interminous snout!”
So the lawyers applied
For injunction. “Denied,”
Said the Judge: “the defendant prefixion,
Whate’er it portend,

Appears to transcend
The bounds of this court’s jurisdiction.”
–Arpad Singiny

NOTORIETY, n. The fame of one’s competitor for public honors. The kind of renown most accessible and acceptable to mediocrity. A Jacob’s-ladder leading to the vaudeville stage, with angels ascending and descending.

NOUMENON, n. That which exists, as distinguished from that which merely seems to exist, the latter being a phenomenon. The noumenon is a bit difficult to locate; it can be apprehended only be a process of reasoning — which is a phenomenon. Nevertheless, the discovery and exposition of noumena offer a rich field for what Lewes calls “the endless variety and excitement of philosophic thought.” Hurrah (therefore) for the noumenon!

NOVEL, n. A short story padded. A species of composition bearing the same relation to literature that the panorama bears to art. As it is too long to be read at a sitting the impressions made by its successive parts are successively effaced, as in the panorama. Unity, totality of effect, is impossible; for besides the few pages last read all that is carried in mind is the mere plot of what has gone before. To the romance the novel is what photography is to painting. Its distinguishing principle, probability, corresponds to the literal actuality of the photograph and puts it distinctly into the category of reporting; whereas the free wing of the romancer enables him to mount to such altitudes of imagination as he may be fitted to attain; and the first three essentials of the literary art are imagination, imagination and imagination. The art of writing novels, such as it was, is long dead everywhere except in Russia, where it is new. Peace to its ashes — some of which have a large sale.

NOVEMBER, n. The eleventh twelfth of a weariness.

O

OATH, n. In law, a solemn appeal to the Deity, made binding upon the conscience by a penalty for perjury.

OBLIVION, n. The state or condition in which the wicked cease from struggling and the dreary are at rest. Fame's eternal dumping ground. Cold storage for high hopes. A place where ambitious authors meet their works without pride and their betters without envy. A dormitory without an alarm clock.

OBSERVATORY, n. A place where astronomers conjecture away the guesses of their predecessors.

OBSESSED, p.p. Vexed by an evil spirit, like the Gadarene swine and other critics. Obsession was once more common than it is now. Arasthus tells of a peasant who was occupied by a different devil for every day in the week, and on Sundays by two. They were frequently seen, always walking in his shadow, when he had one, but were finally driven away by the village notary, a holy man; but they took the peasant with them, for he vanished utterly. A devil thrown out of a woman by the Archbishop of Rheims ran through the trees, pursued by a hundred persons, until the open country was reached, where by a leap higher than a church spire he escaped into a bird. A chaplain in Cromwell's army exorcised a soldier's obsessing devil by throwing the soldier into the water, when the devil came to the surface. The soldier, unfortunately, did not.

OBSOLETE, adj. No longer used by the timid. Said chiefly of words. A word which some lexicographer has marked obsolete is ever thereafter an object of dread and loathing to the fool writer, but if it is a good word and has no exact modern equivalent equally good, it is good enough for the good writer. Indeed, a writer's attitude toward "obsolete" words is as true a measure of his literary ability as anything except the character of his work. A dictionary of obsolete and obsolescent words would not only be singularly rich in strong and sweet parts of speech; it would add large possessions to the vocabulary of every competent writer who might not happen to be a competent reader.

OBSTINATE, adj. Inaccessible to the truth as it is manifest in the splendor and stress of our advocacy.

The popular type and exponent of obstinacy is the mule, a most intelligent animal.

OCCASIONAL, adj. Afflicting us with greater or less frequency. That, however, is not the sense in which the word is used in the phrase “occasional verses,” which are verses written for an “occasion,” such as an anniversary, a celebration or other event. True, they afflict us a little worse than other sorts of verse, but their name has no reference to irregular recurrence.

OCCIDENT, n. The part of the world lying west (or east) of the Orient. It is largely inhabited by Christians, a powerful subtribe of the Hypocrites, whose principal industries are murder and cheating, which they are pleased to call “war” and “commerce.” These, also, are the principal industries of the Orient.

OCEAN, n. A body of water occupying about two-thirds of a world made for man — who has no gills.

OFFENSIVE, adj. Generating disagreeable emotions or sensations, as the advance of an army against its enemy.

“Were the enemy’s tactics offensive?” the king asked. “I should say so!” replied the unsuccessful general. “The blackguard wouldn’t come out of his works!”

OLD, adj. In that stage of usefulness which is not inconsistent with general inefficiency, as an *old man*. Discredited by lapse of time and offensive to the popular taste, as an *old* book.

“Old books? The devil take them!” Goby said.
“Fresh every day must be my books and bread.”
Nature herself approves the Goby rule
And gives us every moment a fresh fool.
–Harley Shum

OLEAGINOUS, adj. Oily, smooth, sleek.
Disraeli once described the manner of Bishop Wilberforce as “unctuous, oleaginous, saponaceous.” And the good prelate was ever afterward known as Soapy Sam. For every man there is something in the vocabulary that would stick to him like a second skin. His enemies have only to find it.

OLYMPIAN, adj. Relating to a mountain in Thessaly, once inhabited by gods, now a repository of yellowing newspapers, beer bottles and mutilated sardine cans, attesting the presence of the tourist and his appetite.
His name the smirking tourist scrawls
Upon Minerva’s temple walls,
Where thundered once Olympian Zeus,
And marks his appetite’s abuse.
–Averil Joop

OMEN, n. A sign that something will happen if nothing happens.

ONCE, adv. Enough.

OPERA, n. A play representing life in another world, whose inhabitants have no speech but song, no motions but gestures and no postures but attitudes. All acting is simulation, and the word *simulation* is from *simia*, an ape; but in opera the actor takes for his model *Simia audibilis* (or *Pithecanthropos stentor*) — the ape that howls.
The actor apes a man — at least in shape;
The opera performer apes and ape.

OPIATE, n. An unlocked door in the prison of Identity. It leads into the jail yard.

OPPORTUNITY, n. A favorable occasion for grasping a disappointment.

OPPOSE, v. To assist with obstructions and objections.
How lonely he who thinks to vex

With bandinage the Solemn Sex!
Of levity, Mere Man, beware;
None but the Grave deserve the Unfair.
–Percy P. Orminder

OPPOSITION, n. In politics the party that prevents the Government from running amuck by hamstringing it.

The King of Ghargaroo, who had been abroad to study the science of government, appointed one hundred of his fattest subjects as members of a parliament to make laws for the collection of revenue. Forty of these he named the Party of Opposition and had his Prime Minister carefully instruct them in their duty of opposing every royal measure. Nevertheless, the first one that was submitted passed unanimously. Greatly displeased, the King vetoed it, informing the Opposition that if they did that again they would pay for their obstinacy with their heads. The entire forty promptly disemboweled themselves.

“What shall we do now?” the King asked. “Liberal institutions cannot be maintained without a party of Opposition.”

“Splendor of the universe,” replied the Prime Minister, “it is true these dogs of darkness have no longer their credentials, but all is not lost. Leave the matter to this worm of the dust.”

So the Minister had the bodies of his Majesty’s Opposition embalmed and stuffed with straw, put back into the seats of power and nailed there. Forty votes were recorded against every bill and the nation prospered. But one day a bill imposing a tax on warts was defeated — the members of the Government party had not been nailed to their seats! This so enraged the King that the Prime Minister was put to death, the parliament was dissolved with a battery of artillery, and government of the people, by the people, for the people perished from Ghargaroo.

OPTIMISM, n. The doctrine, or belief, that everything is beautiful, including what is ugly, everything good, especially the bad, and everything right that is wrong. It is held with greatest tenacity by those most accustomed to the mischance of falling into adversity, and is most acceptably expounded with the grin that apes a smile. Being a blind faith, it is inaccessible to the light of disproof — an intellectual disorder, yielding to no treatment but death. It is hereditary, but fortunately not contagious.

OPTIMIST, n. A proponent of the doctrine that black is white.

A pessimist applied to God for relief.

“Ah, you wish me to restore your hope and cheerfulness,” said God.

“No,” replied the petitioner, “I wish you to create something that would justify them.”

“The world is all created,” said God, “but you have overlooked something — the mortality of the optimist.”

ORATORY, n. A conspiracy between speech and action to cheat the understanding. A tyranny tempered by stenography.

ORPHAN, n. A living person whom death has deprived of the power of filial ingratitude — a privation appealing with a particular eloquence to all that is sympathetic in human nature. When young the orphan is commonly sent to an asylum, where by careful cultivation of its rudimentary sense of locality it is taught to know its place. It is then instructed in the arts of dependence and servitude and eventually turned loose to prey upon the world as a bootblack or scullery maid.

ORTHODOX, n. An ox wearing the popular religious joke.

ORTHOGRAPHY, n. The science of spelling by the eye instead of the ear. Advocated with more heat than light by the outmates of every asylum for the insane. They have had to concede a few things since the time of Chaucer, but are none the less hot in defence of those to be conceded hereafter.

A spelling reformer indicted
For fudge was before the court cicted.
The judge said: “Enough —
His candle we’ll snough,
And his sepulchre shall not be whicted.”

OSTRICH, n. A large bird to which (for its sins, doubtless) nature has denied that hinder toe in which so many pious naturalists have seen a conspicuous evidence of design. The absence of a good working pair of wings is no defect, for, as has been ingeniously pointed out, the ostrich does not fly.

OTHERWISE, adv. No better.

OUTCOME, n. A particular type of disappointment. By the kind of intelligence that sees in an exception a proof of the rule the wisdom of an act is judged by the outcome, the result. This is immortal nonsense; the wisdom of an act is to be juded by the light that the doer had when he performed it.

OUTDO, v.t. To make an enemy.

OUT-OF-DOORS, n. That part of one's environment upon which no government has been able to collect taxes. Chiefly useful to inspire poets.
I climbed to the top of a mountain one day
To see the sun setting in glory,
And I thought, as I looked at his vanishing ray,
Of a perfectly splendid story.
'Twas about an old man and the ass he bestrode
Till the strength of the beast was o'ertested;
Then the man would carry him miles on the road
Till Neddy was pretty well rested.
The moon rising solemnly over the crest
Of the hills to the east of my station
Displayed her broad disk to the darkening west
Like a visible new creation.
And I thought of a joke (and I laughed till I cried)
Of an idle young woman who tarried
About a church-door for a look at the bride,
Although 'twas herself that was married.
To poets all Nature is pregnant with grand
Ideas — with thought and emotion.
I pity the dunces who don't understand
The speech of earth, heaven and ocean.
–Stromboli Smith

OVATION, n. n ancient Rome, a definite, formal pageant in honor of one who had been disserviceable to the enemies of the nation. A lesser “triumph.” In modern English the word is improperly used to signify any loose and spontaneous expression of popular homage to the hero of the hour and place.

“I had an ovation!” the actor man said,
But I thought it uncommonly queer,
That people and critics by him had been led
By the ear.
The Latin lexicon makes his absurd
Assertion as plain as a peg;
In “ovum” we find the true root of the word.
It means egg.
–Dudley Spink

OVEREAT, v. To dine.

Hail, Gastronome, Apostle of Excess,
Well skilled to overeat without distress!
Thy great invention, the unfatal feast,
Shows Man’s superiority to Beast.
–John Boop

OVERWORK, n. A dangerous disorder affecting high public functionaries who want to go fishing.

OWE, v. To have (and to hold) a debt. The word formerly signified not indebtedness, but possession; it meant “own,” and in the minds of debtors there is still a good deal of confusion between assets and liabilities.

OYSTER, n. A slimy, gobby shellfish which civilization gives men the hardihood to eat without removing its entrails! The shells are sometimes given to the poor.

P

PAIN, n. An uncomfortable frame of mind that may have a physical basis in something that is being done to the body, or may be purely mental, caused by the good fortune of another.

PAINTING, n. The art of protecting flat surfaces from the weather and exposing them to the critic.
Formerly, painting and sculpture were combined in the same work: the ancients painted their statues. The only present alliance between the two arts is that the modern painter chisels his patrons.

PALACE, n. A fine and costly residence, particularly that of a great official. The residence of a high dignitary of the Christian Church is called a palace; that of the Founder of his religion was known as a field, or wayside. There is progress.

PALM, n. A species of tree having several varieties, of which the familiar “itching palm” (*Palma hominis*) is most widely distributed and sedulously cultivated. This noble vegetable exudes a kind of invisible gum, which may be detected by applying to the bark a piece of gold or silver. The metal will adhere with remarkable tenacity. The fruit of the itching palm is so bitter and unsatisfying that a considerable percentage of it is sometimes given away in what are known as “benefactions.”

PALMISTRY, n. The 947th method (according to Mimbleshaw’s classification) of obtaining money by false pretences. It consists in “reading character” in the wrinkles made by closing the hand. The pretence is not altogether false; character can really be read very accurately in this way, for the wrinkles in every hand submitted plainly spell the word “dupe.” The imposture consists in not reading it aloud.

PANDEMONIUM, n. Literally, the Place of All the Demons. Most of them have escaped into politics and finance, and the place is now used as a lecture hall by the Audible Reformer. When disturbed by his voice the ancient echoes clamor appropriate responses most gratifying to his pride of distinction.

PANTALOONS, n. A nether habiliment of the adult civilized male. The garment is tubular and unprovided with hinges at the points of flexion. Supposed to have been invented by a humorist. Called "trousers" by the enlightened and "pants" by the unworthy.

PANTHEISM, n. The doctrine that everything is God, in contradistinction to the doctrine that God is everything.

PANTOMIME, n. A play in which the story is told without violence to the language. The least disagreeable form of dramatic action.

PARDON, v. To remit a penalty and restore to the life of crime. To add to the lure of crime the temptation of ingratitude.

PASSPORT, n. A document treacherously inflicted upon a citizen going abroad, exposing him as an alien and pointing him out for special reprobation and outrage.

PAST, n. That part of Eternity with some small fraction of which we have a slight and regrettable acquaintance. A moving line called the Present parts it from an imaginary period known as the Future. These two grand divisions of Eternity, of which the one is continually effacing the other, are entirely unlike. The one is dark with sorrow and disappointment, the other bright with prosperity and joy. The Past is the region of sobs, the Future is the realm of song. In the one crouches Memory, clad in sackcloth and ashes, mumbling penitential prayer; in the sunshine of the other Hope flies with a free wing, beckoning to temples of success and bowers of ease. Yet the Past is the Future of yesterday, the Future is the Past of to-morrow. They are one — the knowledge and the dream.

PASTIME, n. A device for promoting dejection. Gentle exercise for intellectual debility.

PATIENCE, n. A minor form of despair, disguised as a virtue.

PATRIOT, n. One to whom the interests of a part seem superior to those of the whole. The dupe of statesmen and the tool of conquerors.

PATRIOTISM, n. Combustible rubbish read to the torch of any one ambitious to illuminate his name.
In Dr. Johnson’s famous dictionary patriotism is defined as the last resort of a scoundrel. With all due respect to an enlightened but inferior lexicographer I beg to submit that it is the first.

PEACE, n. In international affairs, a period of cheating between two periods of fighting.

O, what’s the loud uproar assailing
Mine ears without cease?
‘Tis the voice of the hopeful, all-hailing
The horrors of peace.
Ah, Peace Universal; they woo it —
Would marry it, too.
If only they knew how to do it
‘Twere easy to do.
They’re working by night and by day
On their problem, like moles.
Have mercy, O Heaven, I pray,
On their meddlesome souls!
–Ro Amil

PEDESTRIAN, n. The variable (an audible) part of the roadway for an automobile.

PEDIGREE, n. The known part of the route from an arboreal ancestor with a swim bladder to an urban descendant with a cigarette.

PENITENT, adj. Undergoing or awaiting punishment.

PERFECTION, n. An imaginary state of quality distinguished from the actual by an element known as excellence; an attribute of the critic.

The editor of an English magazine having received a letter pointing out the erroneous nature of his views and style, and signed “Perfection,” promptly wrote at the foot of the letter: “I don’t agree with you,” and mailed it to Matthew Arnold.

PERIPATETIC, adj. Walking about. Relating to the philosophy of Aristotle, who, while expounding it, moved from place to place in order to avoid his pupil’s objections. A needless precaution — they knew no more of the matter than he.

PERORATION, n. The explosion of an oratorical rocket. It dazzles, but to an observer having the wrong kind of nose its most conspicuous peculiarity is the smell of the several kinds of powder used in preparing it.

PERSEVERANCE, n. A lowly virtue whereby mediocrity achieves an inglorious success.

“Persevere, persevere!” cry the homilists all,
Themselves, day and night, persevering to bawl.
“Remember the fable of tortoise and hare —
The one at the goal while the other is — where?”
Why, back there in Dreamland, renewing his lease
Of life, all his muscles preserving the peace,
The goal and the rival forgotten alike,
And the long fatigue of the needless hike.
His spirit a-squat in the grass and the dew
Of the dogless Land beyond the Stew,
He sleeps, like a saint in a holy place,
A winner of all that is good in a race.
–Sukker Uffro

PESSIMISM, n. A philosophy forced upon the convictions of the observer by the disheartening prevalence of the optimist with his scarecrow hope and his unsightly smile.

PHILANTHROPIST, n. A rich (and usually bald) old gentleman who has trained himself to grin while his conscience is picking his pocket.

PHILISTINE, n. One whose mind is the creature of its environment, following the fashion in thought, feeling and sentiment. He is sometimes learned, frequently prosperous, commonly clean and always solemn.

PHILOSOPHY, n. A route of many roads leading from nowhere to nothing.

PHOENIX, n. The classical prototype of the modern “small hot bird.”

PHONOGRAPH, n. An irritating toy that restores life to dead noises.

PHOTOGRAPH, n. A picture painted by the sun without instruction in art. It is a little better than the work of an Apache, but not quite so good as that of a Cheyenne.

PHRENOLOGY, n. The science of picking the pocket through the scalp. It consists in locating and exploiting the organ that one is a dupe with.

PHYSICIAN, n. One upon whom we set our hopes when ill and our dogs when well.

PHYSIOGNOMY, n. The art of determining the character of another by the resemblances and differences between his face and our own, which is the standard of excellence.
“There is no art,” says Shakespeare, foolish man,
“To read the mind’s construction in the face.”

The physiognomists his portrait scan,
And say: “How little wisdom here we trace!
He knew his face disclosed his mind and heart,
So, in his own defence, denied our art.”
–Lavatar Shunk

PIANO, n. A parlor utensil for subduing the impenitent visitor. It is operated by pressing the keys of the machine and the spirits of the audience.

PICKANINNY, n. The young of the *Procyanthropos*, or *Americanus dominans*. It is small, black and charged with political fatalities.

PICTURE, n. A representation in two dimensions of something wearisome in three.
“Behold great Daubert’s picture here on view —
Taken from Life.” If that description’s true,
Grant, heavenly Powers, that I be taken, too.
–Jali Hane

PIE, n. An advance agent of the reaper whose name is Indigestion.
Cold pie was highly esteemed by the remains.
–Rev. Dr. Mucker
(in a funeral sermon over a British nobleman)
Cold pie is a detestable
American comestible.
That’s why I’m done — or undone —
So far from that dear London.
–(from the headstone of a British nobleman in Kalamazoo)

PIETY, n. Reverence for the Supreme Being, based upon His supposed resemblance to man.
The pig is taught by sermons and epistles
To think the God of Swine has snout and bristles.
–Judibras

PIG, n. An animal (*Porcus omnivorus*) closely allied to the human race by the splendor and vivacity of its appetite, which, however, is inferior in scope, for it sticks at pig.

PIGMY, n. One of a tribe of very small men found by ancient travelers in many parts of the world, but by modern in Central Africa only. The Pigmies are so called to distinguish them from the bulkier Caucasians — who are Hogmies.

PILGRIM, n. A traveler that is taken seriously. A Pilgrim Father was one who, leaving Europe in 1620 because not permitted to sing psalms through his nose, followed it to Massachusetts, where he could personate God according to the dictates of his conscience.

PILLORY, n. A mechanical device for inflicting personal distinction — prototype of the modern newspaper conducted by persons of austere virtues and blameless lives.

PIRACY, n. Commerce without its folly-swaddles, just as God made it.

PITIFUL, adj. The state of an enemy of opponent after an imaginary encounter with oneself.

PITY, n. A failing sense of exemption, inspired by contrast.

PLAGIARISM, n. A literary coincidence compounded of a discreditable priority and an honorable subsequence.

PLAGIARIZE, v. To take the thought or style of another writer whom one has never, never read.

PLAGUE, n. In ancient times a general punishment of the innocent for admonition of their ruler, as in the familiar instance of Pharaoh the Immune. The plague as we of to-day have the happiness to know it is merely Nature's fortuitous manifestation of her purposeless objectionableness.

PLAN, v.t. To bother about the best method of accomplishing an accidental result.

PLATITUDE, n. The fundamental element and special glory of popular literature. A thought that snores in words that smoke. The wisdom of a million fools in the diction of a dullard. A fossil sentiment in artificial rock. A moral without the fable. All that is mortal of a departed truth. A demi-tasse of milk-and-mortality. The Pope's-nose of a featherless peacock. A jelly-fish withering on the shore of the sea of thought. The cackle surviving the egg. A desiccated epigram.

PLATONIC, adj. Pertaining to the philosophy of Socrates. Platonic Love is a fool's name for the affection between a disability and a frost.

PLAUDITS, n. Coins with which the populace pays those who tickle and devour it.

PLEASE, v. To lay the foundation for a superstructure of imposition.

PLEASURE, n. The least hateful form of dejection.

PLEBEIAN, n. An ancient Roman who in the blood of his country stained nothing but his hands. Distinguished from the Patrician, who was a saturated solution.

PLEBISCITE, n. A popular vote to ascertain the will of the sovereign.

PLENIPOTENTIARY, adj. Having full power. A Minister Plenipotentiary is a diplomatist possessing absolute authority on condition that he never exert it.

PLEONASM, n. An army of words escorting a corporal of thought.

PLOW, n. An implement that cries aloud for hands accustomed to the pen.

PLUNDER, v. To take the property of another without observing the decent and customary reticences of theft. To effect a change of ownership with the candid concomitance of a brass band. To wrest the wealth of A from B and leave C lamenting a vanishing opportunity.

POCKET, n. The cradle of motive and the grave of conscience. In woman this organ is lacking; so she acts without motive, and her conscience, denied burial, remains ever alive, confessing the sins of others.

POETRY, n. A form of expression peculiar to the Land beyond the Magazines.

POKER, n. A game said to be played with cards for some purpose to this lexicographer unknown.

POLICE, n. An armed force for protection and participation.

POLITENESS, n. The most acceptable hypocrisy.

POLITICS, n. A strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles. The conduct of public affairs for private advantage.

POLITICIAN, n. An eel in the fundamental mud upon which the superstructure of organized society is reared. When we wriggles he mistakes the agitation of his tail for the trembling of the edifice. As compared with the statesman, he suffers the disadvantage of being alive.

POLYGAMY, n. A house of atonement, or expiatory chapel, fitted with several stools of repentance, as distinguished from monogamy, which has but one.

POPULIST, n. A fossil patriot of the early agricultural period, found in the old red soapstone underlying Kansas; characterized by an uncommon spread of ear, which some naturalists contend gave him the power of flight, though Professors Morse and Whitney, pursuing independent lines of thought, have ingeniously pointed out that had he possessed it he would have gone elsewhere. In the picturesque speech of his period, some fragments of which have come down to us, he was known as “The Matter with Kansas.”

PORTABLE, adj. Exposed to a mutable ownership through vicissitudes of possession.

His light estate, if neither he did make it
Nor yet its former guardian forsake it,
Is portable improperly, I take it.
–Worgum Slupsky

PORTUGUESE, n.pl. A species of geese indigenous to Portugal. They are mostly without feathers and imperfectly edible, even when stuffed with garlic.

POSITIVE, adj. Mistaken at the top of one’s voice.

POSITIVISM, n. A philosophy that denies our knowledge of the Real and affirms our ignorance of the Apparent. Its longest exponent is Comte, its broadest Mill and its thickest Spencer.

POSTERITY, n. An appellate court which reverses the judgment of a popular author’s contemporaries, the appellant being his obscure competitor.

POTABLE, n. Suitable for drinking. Water is said to be potable; indeed, some declare it our natural beverage, although even they find it palatable only when suffering from the recurrent disorder known as thirst, for which it is a medicine. Upon nothing has so great and diligent ingenuity been brought to bear in all ages and in all countries, except the most uncivilized, as upon the invention of substitutes for water. To hold that this general aversion to that liquid has no basis in the preservative instinct of the race is to be unscientific — and without science we are as the snakes and toads.

POVERTY, n. A file provided for the teeth of the rats of reform. The number of plans for its abolition equals that of the reformers who suffer from it, plus that of the philosophers who know nothing about it. Its victims are distinguished by possession of all the virtues and by their faith in leaders seeking to conduct them into a prosperity where they believe these to be unknown.

PRAY, v. To ask that the laws of the universe be annulled in behalf of a single petitioner confessedly unworthy.

PRE-ADAMITE, n. One of an experimental and apparently unsatisfactory race of antedated Creation and lived under conditions not easily conceived. Melsius believed them to have inhabited "the Void" and to have been something intermediate between fishes and birds. Little its known of them beyond the fact that they supplied Cain with a wife and theologians with a controversy.

PRECEDENT, n. In Law, a previous decision, rule or practice which, in the absence of a definite statute, has whatever force and authority a Judge may choose to give it, thereby greatly simplifying his task of doing as he pleases. As there are precedents for everything, he has only to ignore those that make against his interest and accentuate those in the line of his desire. Invention of the precedent elevates the trial-at-law from the low estate of a fortuitous ordeal to the noble attitude of a dirigible arbitrament.

PRECIPITATE, adj. Anteprandial.
Precipitate in all, this sinner
Took action first, and then his dinner.

–Judibras

PREDESTINATION, n. The doctrine that all things occur according to programme. This doctrine should not be confused with that of foreordination, which means that all things are programmed, but does not affirm their occurrence, that being only an implication from other doctrines by which this is entailed. The difference is great enough to have deluged Christendom with ink, to say nothing of the gore. With the distinction of the two doctrines kept well in mind, and a reverent belief in both, one may hope to escape perdition if spared.

PREDICAMENT, n. The wage of consistency.

PREDILECTION, n. The preparatory stage of disillusion.

PRE-EXISTENCE, n. An unnoted factor in creation.

PREFERENCE, n. A sentiment, or frame of mind, induced by the erroneous belief that one thing is better than another.

An ancient philosopher, expounding his conviction that life is no better than death, was asked by a disciple why, then, he did not die. “Because,” he replied, “death is no better than life.”

It is longer.

PREHISTORIC, adj. Belonging to an early period and a museum. Antedating the art and practice of perpetuating falsehood.

He lived in a period prehistoric,
When all was absurd and phantasmagoric.
Born later, when Clio, celestial recorded,
Set down great events in succession and order,
He surely had seen nothing droll or fortuitous
In anything here but the lies that she threw at us.
–Orpheus Bowen

PREJUDICE, n. A vagrant opinion without visible means of support.

PRELATE, n. A church officer having a superior degree of holiness and a fat preferment. One of Heaven's aristocracy. A gentleman of God.

PREROGATIVE, n. A sovereign's right to do wrong.

PRESBYTERIAN, n. One who holds the conviction that the government authorities of the Church should be called presbyters.

PRESCRIPTION, n. A physician's guess at what will best prolong the situation with least harm to the patient.

PRESENT, n. That part of eternity dividing the domain of disappointment from the realm of hope.

PRESENTABLE, adj. Hideously appareled after the manner of the time and place.

In Boorioboola–Gha a man is presentable on occasions of ceremony if he have his abdomen painted a bright blue and wear a cow's tail; in New York he may, if it please him, omit the paint, but after sunset he must wear two tails made of the wool of a sheep and dyed black.

PRESIDE, v. To guide the action of a deliberative body to a desirable result. In Journalese, to perform upon a musical instrument; as, "He presided at the piccolo."

The Headliner, holding the copy in hand,
Read with a solemn face:
"The music was very uncommonly grand —
The best that was every provided,
For our townsman Brown presided
At the organ with skill and grace."
The Headliner discontinued to read,
And, spread the paper down
On the desk, he dashed in at the top of the screed:

"Great playing by President Brown."
–Orpheus Bowen

PRESIDENCY, n. The greased pig in the field game of American politics.

PRESIDENT, n. The leading figure in a small group of men of whom — and of whom only — it is positively known that immense numbers of their countrymen did not want any of them for President.
If that's an honor surely 'tis a greater
To have been a simple and undamned spectator.
Behold in me a man of mark and note
Whom no elector e'er denied a vote! —
An undiscredited, unhooted gent
Who might, for all we know, be President
By acclimation. Cheer, ye varlets, cheer —
I'm passing with a wide and open ear!
–Jonathan Fomry

PREVARICATOR, n. A liar in the caterpillar estate.

PRICE, n. Value, plus a reasonable sum for the wear and tear of conscience in demanding it.

PRIMATE, n. The head of a church, especially a State church supported by involuntary contributions. The Primate of England is the Archbishop of Canterbury, an amiable old gentleman, who occupies Lambeth Palace when living and Westminster Abbey when dead. He is commonly dead.

PRISON, n. A place of punishments and rewards. The poet assures us that —
"Stone walls do not a prison make,"
but a combination of the stone wall, the political parasite and the moral instructor is no garden of sweets.

PRIVATE, n. A military gentleman with a field-marshal's baton in his knapsack and an impediment in his hope.

PROBOSCIS, n. The rudimentary organ of an elephant which serves him in place of the knife-and-fork that Evolution has as yet denied him. For purposes of humor it is popularly called a trunk.
Asked how he knew that an elephant was going on a journey, the illustrious Jo. Miller cast a reproachful look upon his tormentor, and answered, absently: “When it is ajar,” and threw himself from a high promontory into the sea. Thus perished in his pride the most famous humorist of antiquity, leaving to mankind a heritage of woe! No successor worthy of the title has appeared, though Mr. Edward Bok, of *The Ladies’ Home Journal*, is much respected for the purity and sweetness of his personal character.

PROJECTILE, n. The final arbiter in international disputes. Formerly these disputes were settled by physical contact of the disputants, with such simple arguments as the rudimentary logic of the times could supply — the sword, the spear, and so forth. With the growth of prudence in military affairs the projectile came more and more into favor, and is now held in high esteem by the most courageous. Its capital defect is that it requires personal attendance at the point of propulsion.

PROOF, n. Evidence having a shade more of plausibility than of unlikelihood. The testimony of two credible witnesses as opposed to that of only one.

PROOF-READER, n. A malefactor who atones for making your writing nonsense by permitting the compositor to make it unintelligible.

PROPERTY, n. Any material thing, having no particular value, that may be held by A against the cupidity of B. Whatever gratifies the passion for possession in one and disappoints it in all others. The object of man’s brief rapacity and long indifference.

PROPHECY, n. The art and practice of selling one’s credibility for future delivery.

PROSPECT, n. An outlook, usually forbidding. An expectation, usually forbidden.

Blow, blow, ye spicy breezes —
O’er Ceylon blow your breath,
Where every prospect pleases,
Save only that of death.
–Bishop Sheber

PROVIDENTIAL, adj. Unexpectedly and conspicuously beneficial to the person so describing it.

PRUDE, n. A bawd hiding behind the back of her demeanor.

PUBLISH, n. In literary affairs, to become the fundamental element in a cone of critics.

PUSH, n. One of the two things mainly conducive to success, especially in politics. The other is Pull.

PYRRHONISM, n. An ancient philosophy, named for its inventor. It consisted of an absolute disbelief in everything but Pyrrhonism. Its modern professors have added that.

Q

QUEEN, n. A woman by whom the realm is ruled when there is a king, and through whom it is ruled when there is not.

QUILL, n. An implement of torture yielded by a goose and commonly wielded by an ass. This use of the quill is now obsolete, but its modern equivalent, the steel pen, is wielded by the same everlasting Presence.

QUIVER, n. A portable sheath in which the ancient statesman and the aboriginal lawyer carried their lighter arguments.
He extracted from his quiver,
Did the controversial Roman,
An argument well fitted
To the question as submitted,
Then addressed it to the liver,
Of the unpersuaded foeman.
–Oglum P. Boomp

QUIXOTIC, adj. Absurdly chivalric, like Don Quixote. An insight into the beauty and excellence of this incomparable adjective is unhappily denied to him who has the misfortune to know that the gentleman’s name is pronounced Ke-ho-tay.
When ignorance from out of our lives can banish
Philology, ‘tis folly to know Spanish.
–Juan Smith

QUORUM, n. A sufficient number of members of a deliberative body to have their own way and their own way of having it. In the United States Senate a quorum consists of the chairman of the Committee on Finance and a messenger from the White House; in the House of Representatives, of the Speaker and the devil.

QUOTATION, n. The act of repeating erroneously the words of another. The

words erroneously repeated.
Intent on making his quotation truer,
He sought the page infallible of Brewer,
Then made a solemn vow that we would be
Condemned eternally. Ah, me, ah, me!
–Stumpo Gaker

QUOTIENT, n. A number showing how many times a sum of money belonging to one person is contained in the pocket of another — usually about as many times as it can be got there.

R

RABBLE, n. In a republic, those who exercise a supreme authority tempered by fraudulent elections. The rabble is like the sacred Simurgh, of Arabian fable — omnipotent on condition that it do nothing. (The word is Aristocratese, and has no exact equivalent in our tongue, but means, as nearly as may be, “soaring swine.”)

RACK, n. An argumentative implement formerly much used in persuading devotees of a false faith to embrace the living truth. As a call to the unconverted the rack never had any particular efficacy, and is now held in light popular esteem.

RANK, n. Relative elevation in the scale of human worth.
He held at court a rank so high
That other noblemen asked why.
“Because,” ‘twas answered, “others lack
His skill to scratch the royal back.”
–Aramis Jukes

RANSOM, n. The purchase of that which neither belongs to the seller, nor can belong to the buyer. The most unprofitable of investments.

RAPACITY, n. Providence without industry. The thrift of power.

RAREBIT, n. A Welsh rabbit, in the speech of the humorless, who point out that it is not a rabbit. To whom it may be solemnly explained that the comestible known as toad-in-a-hole is really not a toad, and that *riz-de-veau a la financiere* is not the smile of a calf prepared after the recipe of a she banker.

RASCAL, n. A fool considered under another aspect.

RASCALITY, n. Stupidity militant. The activity of a clouded intellect.

RASH, adj. Insensible to the value of our advice.
“Now lay your bet with mine, nor let
These gamblers take your cash.”
“Nay, this child makes no bet.” “Great snakes!
How can you be so rash?”
–Bootle P. Gish

RATIONAL, adj. Devoid of all delusions save those of observation, experience and reflection.

RATTLESNAKE, n. Our prostrate brother, *Homo ventrambulans*.

RAZOR, n. An instrument used by the Caucasian to enhance his beauty, by the Mongolian to make a guy of himself, and by the Afro–American to affirm his worth.

REACH, n. The radius of action of the human hand. The area within which it is possible (and customary) to gratify directly the propensity to provide.
This is a truth, as old as the hills,
That life and experience teach:
The poor man suffers that keenest of ills,
An impediment of his reach.
–G.J.

READING, n. The general body of what one reads. In our country it consists, as a rule, of Indiana novels, short stories in “dialect” and humor in slang.
We know by one’s reading
His learning and breeding;
By what draws his laughter
We know his Hereafter.
Read nothing, laugh never —
The Sphinx was less clever!
–Jupiter Muke

RADICALISM, n. The conservatism of to-morrow injected into the affairs of to-day.

RADIUM, n. A mineral that gives off heat and stimulates the organ that a scientist is a fool with.

RAILROAD, n. The chief of many mechanical devices enabling us to get away from where we are to where we are no better off. For this purpose the railroad is held in highest favor by the optimist, for it permits him to make the transit with great expedition.

RAMSHACKLE, adj. Pertaining to a certain order of architecture, otherwise known as the Normal American. Most of the public buildings of the United States are of the Ramshackle order, though some of our earlier architects preferred the Ironic. Recent additions to the White House in Washington are Theo–Doric, the ecclesiastic order of the Dorians. They are exceedingly fine and cost one hundred dollars a brick.

REALISM, n. The art of depicting nature as it is seen by toads. The charm suffusing a landscape painted by a mole, or a story written by a measuring-worm.

REALITY, n. The dream of a mad philosopher. That which would remain in the cupel if one should assay a phantom. The nucleus of a vacuum.

REALLY, adv. Apparently.

REAR, n. In American military matters, that exposed part of the army that is nearest to Congress.

REASON, v.i. To weight probabilities in the scales of desire.

REASON, n. Propensitate of prejudice.

REASONABLE, adj. Accessible to the infection of our own opinions. Hospitable to persuasion, dissuasion and evasion.

REBEL, n. A proponent of a new misrule who has failed to establish it.

RECOLLECT, v. To recall with additions something not previously known.

RECONCILIATION, n. A suspension of hostilities. An armed truce for the purpose of digging up the dead.

RECONSIDER, v. To seek a justification for a decision already made.

RECOUNT, n. In American politics, another throw of the dice, accorded to the player against whom they are loaded.

RECREATION, n. A particular kind of dejection to relieve a general fatigue.

RECRUIT, n. A person distinguishable from a civilian by his uniform and from a soldier by his gait.
Fresh from the farm or factory or street,
His marching, in pursuit or in retreat,
Were an impressive martial spectacle
Except for two impediments — his feet.
–Thompson Johnson

RECTOR, n. In the Church of England, the Third Person of the parochial Trinity, the Cruate and the Vicar being the other two.

REDEMPTION, n. Deliverance of sinners from the penalty of their sin, through their murder of the deity against whom they sinned. The doctrine of Redemption is the fundamental mystery of our holy religion, and whoso believeth in it shall not perish, but have everlasting life in which to try to understand it.

We must awake Man's spirit from his sin,
And take some special measure for redeeming it;
Though hard indeed the task to get it in
Among the angels any way but teaming it,
Or purify it otherwise than steaming it.
I'm awkward at Redemption — a beginner:
My method is to crucify the sinner.
–Golgo Brone

REDRESS, n. Reparation without satisfaction.

Among the Anglo–Saxon a subject conceiving himself wronged by the king was permitted, on proving his injury, to beat a brazen image of the royal offender with a switch that was afterward applied to his own naked back. The latter rite was performed by the public hangman, and it assured moderation in the plaintiff's choice of a switch.

RED-SKIN, n. A North American Indian, whose skin is not red — at least not on the outside.

REDUNDANT, adj. Superfluous; needless; *de trop*.

The Sultan said: "There's evidence abundant
To prove this unbelieving dog redundant."
To whom the Grand Vizier, with mien impressive,
Replied: "His head, at least, appears excessive."
–Habeeb Suleiman

Mr. Debs is a redundant citizen.
–Theodore Roosevelt

REFERENDUM, n. A law for submission of proposed legislation to a popular vote to learn the nonsensus of public opinion.

REFLECTION, n. An action of the mind whereby we obtain a clearer view of our relation to the things of yesterday and are able to avoid the perils that we shall not again encounter.

REFORM, v. A thing that mostly satisfies reformers opposed to reformation.

REFUGE, n. Anything assuring protection to one in peril. Moses and Joshua provided six cities of refuge — Bezer, Golan, Ramoth, Kadesh, Schekem and Hebron — to which one who had taken life inadvertently could flee when hunted by relatives of the deceased. This admirable expedient supplied him with wholesome exercise and enabled them to enjoy the pleasures of the chase; whereby the soul of the dead man was appropriately honored by observations akin to the funeral games of early Greece.

REFUSAL, n. Denial of something desired; as an elderly maiden's hand in marriage, to a rich and handsome suitor; a valuable franchise to a rich corporation, by an alderman; absolution to an impenitent king, by a priest, and so forth. Refusals are graded in a descending scale of finality thus: the refusal absolute, the refusal condition, the refusal tentative and the refusal feminine. The last is called by some casuists the refusal assentive.

REGALIA, n. Distinguishing insignia, jewels and costume of such ancient and honorable orders as Knights of Adam; Visionaries of Detectable Bosh; the Ancient Order of Modern Troglodytes; the League of Holy Humbug; the Golden Phalanx of Phalangers; the Genteel Society of Expurgated Hoodlums; the Mystic Alliances of Georgeous Regalians; Knights and Ladies of the Yellow Dog; the Oriental Order of Sons of the West; the Blatherhood of Insufferable Stuff; Warriors of the Long Bow; Guardians of the Great Horn Spoon; the Band of Brutes; the Impenitent Order of Wife–Beaters; the Sublime Legion of Flamboyant Conspicuants; Worshipers at the Electroplated Shrine; Shining Inaccessibles; Fee–Faw-Fummers of the inimitable Grip; Jannissaries of the Broad–Blown Peacock; Plumed Increscencies of the Magic Temple; the Grand Cabal of Able–Bodied Sedentarians; Associated Deities of the Butter Trade; the Garden of Galoots; the Affectionate Fraternity of Men Similarly Warted; the Flashing Astonishers; Ladies of Horror; Cooperative Association for Breaking into the Spotlight; Dukes of Eden; Disciples Militant of the Hidden Faith; Knights–Champions of the Domestic Dog; the Holy Gregarians; the Resolute Optimists; the Ancient Sodality of Inhospitable Hogs; Associated Sovereigns of Mendacity; Dukes–Guardian of the Mystic Cess–Pool; the Society for Prevention of Prevalence; Kings of Drink; Polite Federation of Gents–Consequential; the Mysterious Order of the Undecipherable Scroll; Uniformed Rank of Lousy Cats; Monarchs of Worth and Hunger; Sons of the South Star; Prelates of the Tub-and-Sword.

RELIGION, n. A daughter of Hope and Fear, explaining to Ignorance the nature of the Unknowable.
“What is your religion my son?” inquired the Archbishop of Rheims.
“Pardon, monseigneur,” replied Rochebriant; “I am ashamed of it.”
“Then why do you not become an atheist?”
“Impossible! I should be ashamed of atheism.”
“In that case, monsieur, you should join the Protestants.”

RELIQUARY, n. A receptacle for such sacred objects as pieces of the true cross, short-ribs of the saints, the ears of Balaam’s ass, the lung of the cock that called Peter to repentance and so forth. Reliquaries are commonly of metal, and provided with a lock to prevent the contents from coming out and performing miracles at unseasonable times. A feather from the wing of the Angel of the Annunciation once escaped during a sermon in Saint Peter’s and so tickled the noses of the congregation that they woke and sneezed with great vehemence three times each. It is related in the “Gesta Sanctorum” that a sacristan in the Canterbury cathedral surprised the head of Saint Dennis in the library. Reprimanded by its stern custodian, it explained that it was seeking a body of doctrine. This unseemly levity so raged the diocesan that the offender was publicly anathematized, thrown into the Stour and replaced by another head of Saint Dennis, brought from Rome.

RENOWN, n. A degree of distinction between notoriety and fame — a little more supportable than the one and a little more intolerable than the other. Sometimes it is conferred by an unfriendly and inconsiderate hand.
I touched the harp in every key,
But found no heeding ear;
And then Ithuriel touched me

With a revealing spear.
Not all my genius, great as ‘tis,
Could urge me out of night.
I felt the faint appulse of his,
And leapt into the light!
–W.J. Candleton

REPARATION, n. Satisfaction that is made for a wrong and deducted from the satisfaction felt in committing it.

REPARTEE, n. Prudent insult in retort. Practiced by gentlemen with a constitutional aversion to violence, but a strong disposition to offend. In a war of words, the tactics of the North American Indian.

REPENTANCE, n. The faithful attendant and follower of Punishment. It is usually manifest in a degree of reformation that is not inconsistent with continuity of sin.

Desirous to avoid the pains of Hell,
You will repent and join the Church, Parnell?
How needless! — Nick will keep you off the coals
And add you to the woes of other souls.
–Jomater Abemy

REPLICA, n. A reproduction of a work of art, by the artist that made the original. It is so called to distinguish it from a “copy,” which is made by another artist. When the two are mae with equal skill the replica is the more valuable, for it is supposed to be more beautiful than it looks.

REPORTER, n. A writer who guesses his way to the truth and dispels it with a tempest of words.

“More dear than all my bosom knows, O thou
Whose ‘lips are sealed’ and will not disavow!”
So sang the blithe reporter-man as grew
Beneath his hand the leg-long “interview.”
–Barson Maith

REPOSE, v.i. To cease from troubling.

REPRESENTATIVE, n. In national politics, a member of the Lower House in this world, and without discernible hope of promotion in the next.

REPROBATION, n. In theology, the state of a luckless mortal prenatally damned. The doctrine of reprobation was taught by Calvin, whose joy in it was somewhat marred by the sad sincerity of his conviction that although some are foredoomed to perdition, others are predestined to salvation.

REPUBLIC, n. A nation in which, the thing governing and the thing governed being the same, there is only a permitted authority to enforce an optional obedience. In a republic, the foundation of public order is the ever lessening habit of submission inherited from ancestors who, being truly governed, submitted because they had to. There are as many kinds of republics as there are graduations between the despotism whence they came and the anarchy whither they lead.

REQUIEM, n. A mass for the dead which the minor poets assure us the winds sing o'er the graves of their favorites. Sometimes, by way of providing a varied entertainment, they sing a dirge.

RESIDENT, adj. Unable to leave.

RESIGN, v.t. To renounce an honor for an advantage. To renounce an advantage for a greater advantage.

‘Twas rumored Leonard Wood had signed
A true renunciation
Of title, rank and every kind
Of military station —
Each honorable station.
By his example fired — inclined
To noble emulation,
The country humbly was resigned

To Leonard's resignation —
His Christian resignation.
–Politian Greame

RESOLUTE, adj. Obstinate in a course that we approve.

RESPECTABILITY, n. The offspring of a *liaison* between a bald head and a bank account.

RESPIRATOR, n. An apparatus fitted over the nose and mouth of an inhabitant of London, whereby to filter the visible universe in its passage to the lungs.

RESPITE, n. A suspension of hostilities against a sentenced assassin, to enable the Executive to determine whether the murder may not have been done by the prosecuting attorney. Any break in the continuity of a disagreeable expectation.
Altgeld upon his incandescent bed
Lay, an attendant demon at his head.
"O cruel cook, pray grant me some relief —
Some respite from the roast, however brief."
"Remember how on earth I pardoned all
Your friends in Illinois when held in thrall."
"Unhappy soul! for that alone you squirm
O'er fire unquenched, a never-dying worm.
"Yet, for I pity your uneasy state,
Your doom I'll mollify and pains abate.
"Naught, for a season, shall your comfort mar,
Not even the memory of who you are."
Throughout eternal space dread silence fell;
Heaven trembled as Compassion entered Hell.
"As long, sweet demon, let my respite be
As, governing down here, I'd respite thee."
"As long, poor soul, as any of the pack
You thrust from jail consumed in getting back."
A genial chill affected Altgeld's hide
While they were turning him on t'other side.
–Joel Spate Woop

RESPLENDENT, adj. Like a simple American citizen beduking himself in his lodge, or affirming his consequence in the Scheme of Things as an elemental unit of a parade.
The Knights of Dominion were so resplendent in their velvet~and-gold that their masters would hardly have known them.
–”Chronicles of the Classes”

RESPOND, v.i. To make answer, or disclose otherwise a consciousness of having inspired an interest in what Herbert Spencer calls “external coexistences,” as Satan “squat like a toad” at the ear of Eve, responded to the touch of the angel’s spear. To respond in damages is to contribute to the maintenance of the plaintiff’s attorney and, incidentally, to the gratification of the plaintiff.

RESPONSIBILITY, n. A detachable burden easily shifted to the shoulders of God, Fate, Fortune, Luck or one’s neighbor. In the days of astrology it was customary to unload it upon a star.
Alas, things ain’t what we should see
If Eve had let that apple be;
And many a feller which had ought
To set with monarchses of thought,
Or play some rosy little game
With battle-chaps on fields of fame,
Is downed by his unlucky star
And hollers: “Peanuts! — here you are!”
–”The Sturdy Beggar”

RESTITUTIONS, n. The founding or endowing of universities and public libraries by gift or bequest.

RESTITUTOR, n. Benefactor; philanthropist.

RETALIATION, n. The natural rock upon which is reared the Temple of Law.

RETRIBUTION, n. A rain of fire-and-brimstone that falls alike upon the just and such of the unjust as have not procured shelter by evicting them.

In the lines following, addressed to an Emperor in exile by Father Gassalasca Jape, the reverend poet appears to hint his sense of the improduence of turning about to face Retribution when it is talking exercise:

What, what! Dom Pedro, you desire to go
Back to Brazil to end your days in quiet?
Why, what assurance have you ‘twould be so?
‘Tis not so long since you were in a riot,
And your dear subjects showed a will to fly at
Your throat and shake you like a rat. You know
That empires are ungrateful; are you certain
Republics are less handy to get hurt in?

REVEILLE, n. A signal to sleeping soldiers to dream of battlefields no more, but get up and have their blue noses counted. In the American army it is ingeniously called “rev-e-lee,” and to that pronunciation our countrymen have pledged their lives, their misfortunes and their sacred dishonor.

REVELATION, n. A famous book in which St. John the Divine concealed all that he knew. The revealing is done by the commentators, who know nothing.

REVERENCE, n. The spiritual attitude of a man to a god and a dog to a man.

REVIEW, v.t.

To set your wisdom (holding not a doubt of it,
Although in truth there’s neither bone nor skin to it)
At work upon a book, and so read out of it
The qualities that you have first read into it.

REVOLUTION, n. In politics, an abrupt change in the form of misgovernment. Specifically, in American history, the substitution of the rule of an Administration for that of a Ministry, whereby the welfare and happiness of the people were advanced a full half-inch. Revolutions are usually accompanied by a considerable effusion of blood, but are accounted worth it — this appraisement being made by beneficiaries whose blood had not the mischance to be shed. The

French revolution is of incalculable value to the Socialist of to-day; when he pulls the string actuating its bones its gestures are inexpressibly terrifying to gory tyrants suspected of fomenting law and order.

RHADOMANCER, n. One who uses a divining-rod in prospecting for precious metals in the pocket of a fool.

RIBALDRY, n. Censorious language by another concerning oneself.

RIBROASTER, n. Censorious language by oneself concerning another. The word is of classical refinement, and is even said to have been used in a fable by Georgius Coadjutor, one of the most fastidious writers of the fifteenth century — commonly, indeed, regarded as the founder of the Fastidiotic School.

RICE-WATER, n. A mystic beverage secretly used by our most popular novelists and poets to regulate the imagination and narcotize the conscience. It is said to be rich in both obtundite and lethargine, and is brewed in a midnight fog by a fat which of the Dismal Swamp.

RICH, adj. Holding in trust and subject to an accounting the property of the indolent, the incompetent, the unthrifty, the envious and the luckless. That is the view that prevails in the underworld, where the Brotherhood of Man finds its most logical development and candid advocacy. To denizens of the midworld the word means good and wise.

RICHES, n.
A gift from Heaven signifying, “This is my beloved son, in
whom I am well pleased.”
–John D. Rockefeller
The reward of toil and virtue.
–J.P. Morgan
The sayings of many in the hands of one.
–Eugene Debs
To these excellent definitions the inspired lexicographer feels that he can add

nothing of value.

RIDICULE, n. Words designed to show that the person of whom they are uttered is devoid of the dignity of character distinguishing him who utters them. It may be graphic, mimetic or merely rident. Shaftesbury is quoted as having pronounced it the test of truth — a ridiculous assertion, for many a solemn fallacy has undergone centuries of ridicule with no abatement of its popular acceptance. What, for example, has been more valorously derided than the doctrine of Infant Respectability?

RIGHT, n. Legitimate authority to be, to do or to have; as the right to be a king, the right to do one's neighbor, the right to have measles, and the like. The first of these rights was once universally believed to be derived directly from the will of God; and this is still sometimes affirmed *in partibus infidelium* outside the enlightened realms of Democracy; as the well known lines of Sir Abednego Bink, following:

By what right, then, do royal rulers rule?
Whose is the sanction of their state and pow'r?
He surely were as stubborn as a mule
Who, God unwilling, could maintain an hour
His uninvited session on the throne, or air
His pride securely in the Presidential chair.
Whatever is is so by Right Divine;
Whate'er occurs, God wills it so. Good land!
It were a wondrous thing if His design
A fool could baffle or a rogue withstand!
If so, then God, I say (intending no offence)
Is guilty of contributory negligence.

RIGHTEOUSNESS, n. A sturdy virtue that was once found among the Pantidoodles inhabiting the lower part of the peninsula of Oque. Some feeble attempts were made by returned missionaries to introduce it into several European countries, but it appears to have been imperfectly expounded. An example of this faulty exposition is found in the only extant sermon of the pious Bishop Rowley, a characteristic passage from which is here given:

"Now righteousness consisteth not merely in a holy state of
mind, nor yet in performance of religious rites and obedience to

the letter of the law. It is not enough that one be pious and
just: one must see to it that others also are in the same state;
and to this end compulsion is a proper means. Forasmuch as my
injustice may work ill to another, so by his injustice may evil be
wrought upon still another, the which it is as manifestly my duty
to estop as to forestall mine own tort. Wherefore if I would be
righteous I am bound to restrain my neighbor, by force if needful,
in all those injurious enterprises from which, through a better
disposition and by the help of Heaven, I do myself restrain."

RIME, n. Agreeing sounds in the terminals of verse, mostly bad. The verses themselves, as distinguished from prose, mostly dull. Usually (and wickedly) spelled "rhyme."

RIMER, n. A poet regarded with indifference or disesteem.
The rimer quenches his unheeded fires,
The sound surceases and the sense expires.
Then the domestic dog, to east and west,
Expounds the passions burning in his breast.
The rising moon o'er that enchanted land
Pauses to hear and yearns to understand.
–Mowbray Myles

RIOT, n. A popular entertainment given to the military by innocent bystanders.
R.I.P. A careless abbreviation of *requiescat in pace*, attesting to indolent goodwill to the dead. According to the learned Dr. Drigge, however, the letters originally meant nothing more than *reductus in pulvis*.

RITE, n. A religious or semi-religious ceremony fixed by law, precept or custom, with the essential oil of sincerity carefully squeezed out of it.

RITUALISM, n. A Dutch Garden of God where He may walk in rectilinear freedom, keeping off the grass.

ROAD, n. A strip of land along which one may pass from where it is too

tiresome to be to where it is futile to go.
All roads, howsoe’er they diverge, lead to Rome,
Whence, thank the good Lord, at least one leads back home.
–Borey the Bald

ROBBER, n. A candid man of affairs.
It is related of Voltaire that one night he and some traveling
companion lodged at a wayside inn. The surroundings were suggestive, and after supper they agreed to tell robber stories in turn. “Once there was a Farmer–General of the Revenues.” Saying nothing more, he was encouraged to continue. “That,” he said, “is the story.”

ROMANCE, n. Fiction that owes no allegiance to the God of Things as They Are. In the novel the writer’s thought is tethered to probability, as a domestic horse to the hitching-post, but in romance it ranges at will over the entire region of the imagination — free, lawless, immune to bit and rein. Your novelist is a poor creature, as Carlyle might say — a mere reporter. He may invent his characters and plot, but he must not imagine anything taking place that might not occur, albeit his entire narrative is candidly a lie. Why he imposes this hard condition on himself, and “drags at each remove a lengthening chain” of his own forging he can explain in ten thick volumes without illuminating by so much as a candle’s ray the black profound of his own ignorance of the matter. There are great novels, for great writers have “laid waste their powers” to write them, but it remains true that far and away the most fascinating fiction that we have is “The Thousand and One Nights.”

ROPE, n. An obsolescent appliance for reminding assassins that they too are mortal. It is put about the neck and remains in place one’s whole life long. It has been largely superseded by a more complex electrical device worn upon another part of the person; and this is rapidly giving place to an apparatus known as the preachment.

ROSTRUM, n. In Latin, the beak of a bird or the prow of a ship. In America, a place from which a candidate for office energetically expounds the wisdom, virtue and power of the rabble.

ROUNDHEAD, n. A member of the Parliamentarian party in the English civil war — so called from his habit of wearing his hair short, whereas his enemy, the Cavalier, wore his long. There were other points of difference between them, but the fashion in hair was the fundamental cause of quarrel. The Cavaliers were royalists because the king, an indolent fellow, found it more convenient to let his hair grow than to wash his neck. This the Roundheads, who were mostly barbers and soap-boilers, deemed an injury to trade, and the royal neck was therefore the object of their particular indignation. Descendants of the belligerents now wear their hair all alike, but the fires of animosity enkindled in that ancient strife smoulder to this day beneath the snows of British civility.

RUBBISH, n. Worthless matter, such as the religions, philosophies, literatures, arts and sciences of the tribes infesting the regions lying due south from Boreaplas.

RUIN, v. To destroy. Specifically, to destroy a maid's belief in the virtue of maids.

RUM, n. Generically, fiery liquors that produce madness in total abstainers.

RUMOR, n. A favorite weapon of the assassins of character.
Sharp, irresistible by mail or shield,
By guard unparried as by flight unstayed,
O serviceable Rumor, let me wield
Against my enemy no other blade.
His be the terror of a foe unseen,
His the inutile hand upon the hilt,
And mine the deadly tongue, long, slender, keen,
Hinting a rumor of some ancient guilt.
So shall I slay the wretch without a blow,
Spare me to celebrate his overthrow,
And nurse my valor for another foe.
–Joel Buxter

RUSSIAN, n. A person with a Caucasian body and a Mongolian soul. A Tartar Emetic.

S

SABBATH, n. A weekly festival having its origin in the fact that God made the world in six days and was arrested on the seventh. Among the Jews observance of the day was enforced by a Commandment of which this is the Christian version: “Remember the seventh day to make thy neighbor keep it wholly.” To the Creator it seemed fit and expedient that the Sabbath should be the last day of the week, but the Early Fathers of the Church held other views. So great is the sanctity of the day that even where the Lord holds a doubtful and precarious jurisdiction over those who go down to (and down into) the sea it is reverently recognized, as is manifest in the following deep-water version of the Fourth Commandment:

Six days shalt thou labor and do all thou art able,
And on the seventh holystone the deck and scrape the cable.

Decks are no longer holystoned, but the cable still supplies the captain with opportunity to attest a pious respect for the divine ordinance.

SACERDOTALIST, n. One who holds the belief that a clergyman is a priest. Denial of this momentous doctrine is the hardest challenge that is now flung into the teeth of the Episcopalian church by the Neo–Dictionarians.

SACRAMENT, n. A solemn religious ceremony to which several degrees of authority and significance are attached. Rome has seven sacraments, but the Protestant churches, being less prosperous, feel that they can afford only two, and these of inferior sanctity. Some of the smaller sects have no sacraments at all — for which mean economy they will indubitable be damned.

SACRED, adj. Dedicated to some religious purpose; having a divine character; inspiring solemn thoughts or emotions; as, the Dalai Lama of Thibet; the Moogum of M’bwango; the temple of Apes in Ceylon; the Cow in India; the Crocodile, the Cat and the Onion of ancient Egypt; the Mufti of Moosh; the hair of the dog that bit Noah, *etc.*

All things are either sacred or profane.
The former to ecclesiasts bring gain;

The latter to the devil appertain.
–Dumbo Omohundro

SANDLOTTER, n. A vertebrate mammal holding the political views of Denis Kearney, a notorious demagogue of San Francisco, whose audiences gathered in the open spaces (sandlots) of the town. True to the traditions of his species, this leader of the proletariat was finally bought off by his law-and-order enemies, living prosperously silent and dying impenitently rich. But before his treason he imposed upon California a constitution that was a confection of sin in a diction of solecisms. The similarity between the words "sandlotter" and "sansculotte" is problematically significant, but indubitably suggestive.

SAFETY-CLUTCH, n. A mechanical device acting automatically to prevent the fall of an elevator, or cage, in case of an accident to the hoisting apparatus.

Once I seen a human ruin
In an elevator-well,
And his members was bestrewin'
All the place where he had fell.
And I says, apostrophisin'
That uncommon woful wreck:
"Your position's so surprisin'
That I tremble for your neck!"
Then that ruin, smilin' sadly
And impressive, up and spoke:
"Well, I wouldn't tremble badly,
For it's been a fortnight broke."
Then, for further comprehension
Of his attitude, he begs
I will focus my attention
On his various arms and legs —
How they all are contumacious;
Where they each, respective, lie;
How one trotter proves ungracious,
T'other one an *alibi*.
These particulars is mentioned
For to show his dismal state,
Which I wasn't first intentioned
To specifical relate.

None is worser to be dreaded
That I ever have heard tell
Than the gent’s who there was spreaded
In that elevator-well.
Now this tale is allegoric —
It is figurative all,
For the well is metaphoric
And the feller didn’t fall.
I opine it isn’t moral
For a writer-man to cheat,
And despise to wear a laurel
As was gotten by deceit.
For ‘tis Politics intended
By the elevator, mind,
It will boost a person splendid
If his talent is the kind.
Col. Bryan had the talent
(For the busted man is him)
And it shot him up right gallant
Till his head begun to swim.
Then the rope it broke above him
And he painful come to earth
Where there’s nobody to love him
For his detrimented worth.
Though he’s livin’ none would know him,
Or at leastwise not as such.
Moral of this woful poem:
Frequent oil your safety-clutch.
–Porfer Poog

SAINT, n. A dead sinner revised and edited.
The Duchess of Orleans relates that the irreverent old calumniator, Marshal Villeroi, who in his youth had known St. Francis de Sales, said, on hearing him called saint: “I am delighted to hear that Monsieur de Sales is a saint. He was fond of saying indelicate things, and used to cheat at cards. In other respects he was a perfect gentleman, though a fool.”

SALACITY, n. A certain literary quality frequently observed in popular novels, especially in those written by women and young girls, who give it another name and think that in introducing it they are occupying a neglected field of letters and reaping an overlooked harvest. If they have the misfortune to live long enough they are tormented with a desire to burn their sheaves.

SALAMANDER, n. Originally a reptile inhabiting fire; later, an anthropomorphous immortal, but still a pyrophile. Salamanders are now believed to be extinct, the last one of which we have an account having been seen in Carcassonne by the Abbe Belloc, who exorcised it with a bucket of holy water.

SARCOPHAGUS, n. Among the Greeks a coffin which being made of a certain kind of carnivorous stone, had the peculiar property of devouring the body placed in it. The sarcophagus known to modern obsequiographers is commonly a product of the carpenter’s art.

SATAN, n. One of the Creator’s lamentable mistakes, repented in sashcloth and axes. Being instated as an archangel, Satan made himself multifariously objectionable and was finally expelled from Heaven. Halfway in his descent he paused, bent his head in thought a moment and at last went back. “There is one favor that I should like to ask,” said he.
“Name it.”
“Man, I understand, is about to be created. He will need laws.”
“What, wretch! you his appointed adversary, charged from the dawn of eternity with hatred of his soul — you ask for the right to make his laws?”
“Pardon; what I have to ask is that he be permitted to make them himself.”
It was so ordered.

SATIETY, n. The feeling that one has for the plate after he has eaten its contents, madam.

SATIRE, n. An obsolete kind of literary composition in which the vices and follies of the author’s enemies were expounded with imperfect tenderness. In this country satire never had more than a sickly and uncertain existence, for the soul of it is wit, wherein we are dolefully deficient, the humor that we mistake for it, like all humor, being tolerant and sympathetic. Moreover, although Americans are “endowed by their Creator” with abundant vice and folly, it is not

generally known that these are reprehensible qualities, wherefore the satirist is popularly regarded as a soul-spirited knave, and his ever victim's outcry for codefendants evokes a national assent.
Hail Satire! be thy praises ever sung
In the dead language of a mummy's tongue,
For thou thyself art dead, and damned as well —
Thy spirit (usefully employed) in Hell.
Had it been such as consecrates the Bible
Thou hadst not perished by the law of libel.
–Barney Stims

SATYR, n. One of the few characters of the Grecian mythology accorded recognition in the Hebrew. (Leviticus, xvii, 7.) The satyr was at first a member of the dissolute community acknowledging a loose allegiance with Dionysius, but underwent many transformations and improvements. Not infrequently he is confounded with the faun, a later and decenter creation of the Romans, who was less like a man and more like a goat.

SAUCE, n. The one infallible sign of civilization and enlightenment. A people with no sauces has one thousand vices; a people with one sauce has only nine hundred and ninety-nine. For every sauce invented and accepted a vice is renounced and forgiven.

SAW, n. A trite popular saying, or proverb. (Figurative and colloquial.) So called because it makes its way into a wooden head. Following are examples of old saws fitted with new teeth.
A penny saved is a penny to squander.
A man is known by the company that he organizes.
A bad workman quarrels with the man who calls him that.
A bird in the hand is worth what it will bring.
Better late than before anybody has invited you.
Example is better than following it.
Half a loaf is better than a whole one if there is much else.
Think twice before you speak to a friend in need.
What is worth doing is worth the trouble of asking somebody to do it.
Least said is soonest disavowed.
He laughs best who laughs least.

Speak of the Devil and he will hear about it.
Of two evils choose to be the least.
Strike while your employer has a big contract.
Where there’s a will there’s a won’t.

SCARABAEUS, n. The sacred beetle of the ancient Egyptians, allied to our familiar “tumble-bug.” It was supposed to symbolize immortality, the fact that God knew why giving it its peculiar sanctity. Its habit of incubating its eggs in a ball of ordure may also have commended it to the favor of the priesthood, and may some day assure it an equal reverence among ourselves. True, the American beetle is an inferior beetle, but the American priest is an inferior priest.

SCARABEE, n. The same as scarabaeus.
He fell by his own hand
Beneath the great oak tree.
He’d traveled in a foreign land.
He tried to make her understand
The dance that’s called the Saraband,
But he called it Scarabee.
He had called it so through an afternoon,
And she, the light of his harem if so might be,
Had smiled and said naught. O the body was fair to see,
All frosted there in the shine o’ the moon —
Dead for a Scarabee
And a recollection that came too late.

O Fate!
They buried him where he lay,
He sleeps awaiting the Day,
In state,
And two Possible Puns, moon-eyed and wan,
Gloom over the grave and then move on.
Dead for a Scarabee!
Fernando Tapple

SCARIFICATION, n. A form of penance practised by the mediaeval pious. The rite was performed, sometimes with a knife, sometimes with a hot iron, but always, says Arsenius Asceticus, acceptably if the penitent spared himself no pain nor harmless disfigurement. Scarification, with other crude penances, has now been superseded by benefaction. The founding of a library or endowment of a university is said to yield to the penitent a sharper and more lasting pain than is conferred by the knife or iron, and is therefore a surer means of grace. There are, however, two grave objections to it as a penitential method: the good that it does and the taint of justice.

SCEPTER, n. A king's staff of office, the sign and symbol of his authority. It was originally a mace with which the sovereign admonished his jester and vetoed ministerial measures by breaking the bones of their proponents.

SCIMETAR, n. A curved sword of exceeding keenness, in the conduct of which certain Orientals attain a surprising proficiency, as the incident here related will serve to show. The account is translated from the Japanese by Shusi Itama, a famous writer of the thirteenth century.
When the great Gichi–Kuktai was Mikado he condemned to
decapitation Jijiji Ri, a high officer of the Court. Soon after
the hour appointed for performance of the rite what was his
Majesty's surprise to see calmly approaching the throne the man
who should have been at that time ten minutes dead!
"Seventeen hundred impossible dragons!" shouted the enraged
monarch. "Did I not sentence you to stand in the market-place and
have your head struck off by the public executioner at three
o'clock? And is it not now 3:10?"
"Son of a thousand illustrious deities," answered the
condemned minister, "all that you say is so true that the truth is
a lie in comparison. But your heavenly Majesty's sunny and
vitalizing wishes have been pestilently disregarded. With joy I
ran and placed my unworthy body in the market-place. The
executioner appeared with his bare scimetar, ostentatiously
whirled it in air, and then, tapping me lightly upon the neck,
strode away, pelted by the populace, with whom I was ever a
favorite. I am come to pray for justice upon his own dishonorable
and treasonous head."
"To what regiment of executioners does the black-boweled
caitiff belong?" asked the Mikado.

“To the gallant Ninety-eight Hundred and Thirty-seventh — I know the man. His name is Sakko–Samshi.”

“Let him be brought before me,” said the Mikado to an attendant, and a half-hour later the culprit stood in the Presence.

“Thou bastard son of a three-legged hunchback without thumbs!” roared the sovereign—”why didst thou but lightly tap the neck that it should have been thy pleasure to sever?”

“Lord of Cranes of Cherry Blooms,” replied the executioner, unmoved, “command him to blow his nose with his fingers.”

Being commanded, Jijiji Ri laid hold of his nose and trumpeted like an elephant, all expecting to see the severed head flung violently from him. Nothing occurred: the performance prospered peacefully to the close, without incident.

All eyes were now turned on the executioner, who had grown as white as the snows on the summit of Fujiama. His legs trembled and his breath came in gasps of terror.

“Several kinds of spike-tailed brass lions!” he cried; “I am a ruined and disgraced swordsman! I struck the villain feebly because in flourishing the scimetar I had accidentally passed it through my own neck! Father of the Moon, I resign my office.”

So saying, he gasped his top-knot, lifted off his head, and advancing to the throne laid it humbly at the Mikado’s feet.

SCRAP-BOOK, n. A book that is commonly edited by a fool. Many persons of some small distinction compile scrap-books containing whatever they happen to read about themselves or employ others to collect. One of these egotists was addressed in the lines following, by Agamemnon Melancthon Peters:

Dear Frank, that scrap-book where you boast
You keep a record true
Of every kind of peppered roast
That’s made of you;
Wherein you paste the printed gibes
That revel round your name,
Thinking the laughter of the scribes
Attests your fame;
Where all the pictures you arrange
That comic pencils trace —

Your funny figure and your strange
Semitic face —
Pray lend it me. Wit I have not,
Nor art, but there I'll list
The daily drubbings you'd have got
Had God a fist.

SCRIBBLER, n. A professional writer whose views are antagonistic to one's own.

SCRIPTURES, n. The sacred books of our holy religion, as distinguished from the false and profane writings on which all other faiths are based.

SEAL, n. A mark impressed upon certain kinds of documents to attest their authenticity and authority. Sometimes it is stamped upon wax, and attached to the paper, sometimes into the paper itself. Sealing, in this sense, is a survival of an ancient custom of inscribing important papers with cabalistic words or signs to give them a magical efficacy independent of the authority that they represent. In the British museum are preserved many ancient papers, mostly of a sacerdotal character, validated by necromantic pentagrams and other devices, frequently initial letters of words to conjure with; and in many instances these are attached in the same way that seals are appended now. As nearly every reasonless and apparently meaningless custom, rite or observance of modern times had origin in some remote utility, it is pleasing to note an example of ancient nonsense evolving in the process of ages into something really useful. Our word "sincere" is derived from *sine cero*, without wax, but the learned are not in agreement as to whether this refers to the absence of the cabalistic signs, or to that of the wax with which letters were formerly closed from public scrutiny. Either view of the matter will serve one in immediate need of an hypothesis. The initials L.S., commonly appended to signatures of legal documents, mean *locum sigillis*, the place of the seal, although the seal is no longer used — an admirable example of conservatism distinguishing Man from the beasts that perish. The words *locum sigillis* are humbly suggested as a suitable motto for the Pribyloff Islands whenever they shall take their place as a sovereign State of the American Union.

SEINE, n. A kind of net for effecting an involuntary change of environment. For fish it is made strong and coarse, but women are more easily taken with a singularly delicate fabric weighted with small, cut stones.

The devil casting a seine of lace,
(With precious stones ‘twas weighted)
Drew it into the landing place
And its contents calculated.
All souls of women were in that sack —
A draft miraculous, precious!
But ere he could throw it across his back
They’d all escaped through the meshes.
–Baruch de Loppis

SELF-ESTEEM, n. An erroneous appraisement.

SELF-EVIDENT, adj. Evident to one’s self and to nobody else.

SELFISH, adj. Devoid of consideration for the selfishness of others.

SENATE, n. A body of elderly gentlemen charged with high duties and misdemeanors.

SERIAL, n. A literary work, usually a story that is not true, creeping through several issues of a newspaper or magazine. Frequently appended to each installment is a “synposis of preceding chapters” for those who have not read them, but a direr need is a synposis of succeeding chapters for those who do not intend to read *them*. A synposis of the entire work would be still better.

The late James F. Bowman was writing a serial tale for a weekly paper in collaboration with a genius whose name has not come down to us. They wrote, not jointly but alternately, Bowman supplying the installment for one week, his friend for the next, and so on, world without end, they hoped. Unfortunately they quarreled, and one Monday morning when Bowman read the paper to prepare himself for his task, he found his work cut out for him in a way to surprise and pain him. His collaborator had embarked every character of the narrative on a ship and sunk them all in the deepest part of the Atlantic.

SEVERALTY, n. Separateness, as, lands in severalty, i.e., lands held individually, not in joint ownership. Certain tribes of Indians are believed now to be sufficiently civilized to have in severalty the lands that they have hitherto held as tribal organizations, and could not sell to the Whites for waxen beads and potato whiskey.

Lo! the poor Indian whose unsuited mind
Saw death before, hell and the grave behind;
Whom thrifty settler ne'er besought to stay —
His small belongings their appointed prey;
Whom Dispossession, with alluring wile,
Persuaded elsewhere every little while!
His fire unquenched and his undying worm
By "land in severalty" (charming term!)
Are cooled and killed, respectively, at last,
And he to his new holding anchored fast!

SHERIFF, n. In America the chief executive office of a country, whose most characteristic duties, in some of the Western and Southern States, are the catching and hanging of rogues.

John Elmer Pettibone Cajee
(I write of him with little glee)
Was just as bad as he could be.
'Twas frequently remarked: "I swon!
The sun has never looked upon
So bad a man as Neighbor John."
A sinner through and through, he had
This added fault: it made him mad
To know another man was bad.
In such a case he thought it right
To rise at any hour of night
And quench that wicked person's light.
Despite the town's entreaties, he
Would hale him to the nearest tree
And leave him swinging wide and free.
Or sometimes, if the humor came,
A luckless wight's reluctant frame
Was given to the cheerful flame.
While it was turning nice and brown,

All unconcerned John met the frown
Of that austere and righteous town.
“How sad,” his neighbors said, “that he
So scornful of the law should be —
An anar c, h, i, s, t.”
(That is the way that they preferred
To utter the abhorrent word,
So strong the aversion that it stirred.)
“Resolved,” they said, continuing,
“That Badman John must cease this thing
Of having his unlawful fling.
“Now, by these sacred relics” — here
Each man had out a souvenir
Got at a lynching yesteryear —
“By these we swear he shall forsake
His ways, nor cause our hearts to ache
By sins of rope and torch and stake.
“We’ll tie his red right hand until
He’ll have small freedom to fulfil
The mandates of his lawless will.”
So, in convention then and there,
They named him Sheriff. The affair
Was opened, it is said, with prayer.
–J. Milton Sloluck

SIREN, n. One of several musical prodigies famous for a vain attempt to dissuade Odysseus from a life on the ocean wave. Figuratively, any lady of splendid promise, dissembled purpose and disappointing performance.

SLANG, n. The grunt of the human hog (*Pignoramus intolerabilis*) with an audible memory. The speech of one who utters with his tongue what he thinks with his ear, and feels the pride of a creator in accomplishing the feat of a parrot. A means (under Providence) of setting up as a wit without a capital of sense.

SMITHAREEN, n. A fragment, a decomponent part, a remain. The word is used variously, but in the following verse on a noted female reformer who opposed bicycle-riding by women because it “led them to the devil” it is seen at its best:

The wheels go round without a sound —
The maidens hold high revel;
In sinful mood, insanely gay,
True spinsters spin adown the way
From duty to the devil!
They laugh, they sing, and — ting-a-ling!
Their bells go all the morning;
Their lanterns bright bestar the night
Pedestrians a-warning.
With lifted hands Miss Charlotte stands,
Good–Lording and O-mying,
Her rheumatism forgotten quite,
Her fat with anger frying.
She blocks the path that leads to wrath,
Jack Satan's power defying.
The wheels go round without a sound
The lights burn red and blue and green.
What's this that's found upon the ground?
Poor Charlotte Smith's a smithareen!
–John William Yope

SOPHISTRY, n. The controversial method of an opponent, distinguished from one's own by superior insincerity and fooling. This method is that of the later Sophists, a Grecian sect of philosophers who began by teaching wisdom, prudence, science, art and, in brief, whatever men ought to know, but lost themselves in a maze of quibbles and a fog of words.

His bad opponent's "facts" he sweeps away,
And drags his sophistry to light of day;
Then swears they're pushed to madness who resort
To falsehood of so desperate a sort.
Not so; like sods upon a dead man's breast,
He lies most lightly who the least is pressed.
–Polydore Smith

SORCERY, n. The ancient prototype and forerunner of political influence. It was, however, deemed less respectable and sometimes was punished by torture and death. Augustine Nicholas relates that a poor peasant who had been accused of sorcery was put to the torture to compel a confession. After enduring a few gentle agonies the suffering simpleton admitted his guilt, but naively asked his tormentors if it were not possible to be a sorcerer without knowing it.

SOUL, n. A spiritual entity concerning which there hath been brave disputation. Plato held that those souls which in a previous state of existence (antedating Athens) had obtained the clearest glimpses of eternal truth entered into the bodies of persons who became philosophers. Plato himself was a philosopher. The souls that had least contemplated divine truth animated the bodies of usurpers and despots. Dionysius I, who had threatened to decapitate the broad-browed philosopher, was a usurper and a despot. Plato, doubtless, was not the first to construct a system of philosophy that could be quoted against his enemies; certainly he was not the last.

"Concerning the nature of the soul," saith the renowned author of *Diversiones Sanctorum*, "there hath been hardly more argument than that of its place in the body. Mine own belief is that the soul hath her seat in the abdomen — in which faith we may discern and interpret a truth hitherto unintelligible, namely that the glutton is of all men most devout. He is said in the Scripture to 'make a god of his belly' — why, then, should he not be pious, having ever his Deity with him to freshen his faith? Who so well as he can know the might and majesty that he shrines? Truly and soberly, the soul and the stomach are one Divine Entity; and such was the belief of Promasius, who nevertheless erred in denying it immortality. He had observed that its visible and material substance failed and decayed with the rest of the body after death, but of its immaterial essence he knew nothing. This is what we call the Appetite, and it survives the wreck and reek of mortality, to be rewarded or punished in another world, according to what it hath demanded in the flesh. The Appetite whose coarse clamoring was for the unwholesome viands of the general market and the public refectory shall be cast into eternal famine, whilst that which firmly through civilly insisted on ortolans, caviare, terrapin, anchovies, *pates de foie gras* and all such Christian comestibles shall flesh its spiritual tooth in the souls of them forever and ever, and wreak its divine thirst upon the immortal parts of the rarest and richest wines ever quaffed here below. Such is my religious faith, though I grieve to confess that neither His Holiness the Pope nor His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury (whom I equally and profoundly revere) will assent to its dissemination."

SPOOKER, n. A writer whose imagination concerns itself with supernatural phenomena, especially in the doings of spooks. One of the most illustrious spookers of our time is Mr. William D. Howells, who introduces a well-credentialed reader to as respectable and mannerly a company of spooks as one could wish to meet. To the terror that invests the chairman of a district school board, the Howells ghost adds something of the mystery enveloping a farmer from another township.

STORY, n. A narrative, commonly untrue. The truth of the stories here following has, however, not been successfully impeached.

One evening Mr. Rudolph Block, of New York, found himself seated at dinner alongside Mr. Percival Pollard, the distinguished critic.

“Mr. Pollard,” said he, “my book, *The Biography of a Dead Cow*, is published anonymously, but you can hardly be ignorant of its authorship. Yet in reviewing it you speak of it as the work of the Idiot of the Century. Do you think that fair criticism?”

“I am very sorry, sir,” replied the critic, amiably, “but it did not occur to me that you really might not wish the public to know who wrote it.”

Mr. W.C. Morrow, who used to live in San Jose, California, was addicted to writing ghost stories which made the reader feel as if a stream of lizards, fresh from the ice, were streaking it up his back and hiding in his hair. San Jose was at that time believed to be haunted by the visible spirit of a noted bandit named Vasquez, who had been hanged there. The town was not very well lighted, and it is putting it mildly to say that San Jose was reluctant to be out o’ nights. One particularly dark night two gentlemen were abroad in the loneliest spot within the city limits, talking loudly to keep up their courage, when they came upon Mr. J.J. Owen, a well-known journalist.

“Why, Owen,” said one, “what brings you here on such a night as this? You told me that this is one of Vasquez’ favorite haunts! And you are a believer. Aren’t you afraid to be out?”

“My dear fellow,” the journalist replied with a drear autumnal cadence in his speech, like the moan of a leaf-laden wind, “I am afraid to be in. I have one of Will Morrow’s stories in my pocket and I don’t dare to go where there is light enough to read it.”

Rear–Admiral Schley and Representative Charles F. Joy were standing near the Peace Monument, in Washington, discussing the question, Is success a failure? Mr. Joy suddenly broke off in the middle of an eloquent sentence, exclaiming: “Hello! I’ve heard that band before. Santlemann’s, I think.”

“I don’t hear any band,” said Schley.

“Come to think, I don’t either,” said Joy; “but I see General Miles coming down the avenue, and that pageant always affects me in the same way as a brass band.

One has to scrutinize one’s impressions pretty closely, or one will mistake their origin.”

While the Admiral was digesting this hasty meal of philosophy General Miles passed in review, a spectacle of impressive dignity. When the tail of the seeming procession had passed and the two observers had recovered from the transient blindness caused by its effulgence —

“He seems to be enjoying himself,” said the Admiral.

“There is nothing,” assented Joy, thoughtfully, “that he enjoys one-half so well.”

The illustrious statesman, Champ Clark, once lived about a mile from the village of Jebigue, in Missouri. One day he rode into town on a favorite mule, and, hitching the beast on the sunny side of a street, in front of a saloon, he went inside in his character of teetotaler, to apprise the barkeeper that wine is a mocker. It was a dreadfully hot day. Pretty soon a neighbor came in and seeing Clark, said:

“Champ, it is not right to leave that mule out there in the sun. He’ll roast, sure! — he was smoking as I passed him.”

“O, he’s all right,” said Clark, lightly; “he’s an inveterate smoker.”

The neighbor took a lemonade, but shook his head and repeated that it was not right.

He was a conspirator. There had been a fire the night before: a stable just around the corner had burned and a number of horses had put on their immortality, among them a young colt, which was roasted to a rich nut-brown. Some of the boys had turned Mr. Clark’s mule loose and substituted the mortal part of the colt. Presently another man entered the saloon.

“For mercy’s sake!” he said, taking it with sugar, “do remove that mule, barkeeper: it smells.”

“Yes,” interposed Clark, “that animal has the best nose in Missouri. But if he doesn’t mind, you shouldn’t.”

In the course of human events Mr. Clark went out, and there, apparently, lay the incinerated and shrunken remains of his charger. The boys did not have any fun out of Mr. Clarke, who looked at the body and, with the non-committal expression to which he owes so much of his political preferment, went away. But walking home late that night he saw his mule standing silent and solemn by the wayside in the misty moonlight. Mentioning the name of Helen Blazes with uncommon emphasis, Mr. Clark took the back track as hard as ever he could hook it, and passed the night in town.

General H.H. Wotherspoon, president of the Army War College, has a pet rib-nosed baboon, an animal of uncommon intelligence but imperfectly beautiful. Returning to his apartment one evening, the General was surprised and pained to find Adam (for so the creature is named, the general being a Darwinian) sitting up for him and wearing his master's best uniform coat, epaulettes and all.

"You confounded remote ancestor!" thundered the great strategist, "what do you mean by being out of bed after naps? — and with my coat on!"

Adam rose and with a reproachful look got down on all fours in the manner of his kind and, scuffling across the room to a table, returned with a visiting-card: General Barry had called and, judging by an empty champagne bottle and several cigar-stumps, had been hospitably entertained while waiting. The general apologized to his faithful progenitor and retired. The next day he met General Barry, who said:

"Spoon, old man, when leaving you last evening I forgot to ask you about those excellent cigars. Where did you get them?"

General Wotherspoon did not deign to reply, but walked away.

"Pardon me, please," said Barry, moving after him; "I was joking of course. Why, I knew it was not you before I had been in the room fifteen minutes."

SUCCESS, n. The one unpardonable sin against one's fellows. In literature, and particularly in poetry, the elements of success are exceedingly simple, and are admirably set forth in the following lines by the reverend Father Gassalasca Jape, entitled, for some mysterious reason, "John A. Joyce."

The bard who would prosper must carry a book,
Do his thinking in prose and wear
A crimson cravat, a far-away look
And a head of hexameter hair.
Be thin in your thought and your body'll be fat;
If you wear your hair long you needn't your hat.

SUFFRAGE, n. Expression of opinion by means of a ballot. The right of suffrage (which is held to be both a privilege and a duty) means, as commonly interpreted, the right to vote for the man of another man's choice, and is highly prized. Refusal to do so has the bad name of "incivism." The incivilian, however, cannot be properly arraigned for his crime, for there is no legitimate accuser. If the accuser is himself guilty he has no standing in the court of opinion; if not, he profits by the crime, for A's abstention from voting gives greater weight to the vote of B. By female suffrage is meant the right of a woman to vote as some man tells her to. It is based on female responsibility, which is somewhat limited. The woman most eager to jump out of her petticoat to assert her rights is first to jump back into it when threatened with a switching for misusing them.

SYCOPHANT, n. One who approaches Greatness on his belly so that he may not be commanded to turn and be kicked. He is sometimes an editor.

As the lean leech, its victim found, is pleased
To fix itself upon a part diseased
Till, its black hide distended with bad blood,
It drops to die of surfeit in the mud,
So the base sycophant with joy descries
His neighbor's weak spot and his mouth applies,
Gorges and prospers like the leech, although,
Unlike that reptile, he will not let go.
Gelasma, if it paid you to devote
Your talent to the service of a goat,
Showing by forceful logic that its beard
Is more than Aaron's fit to be revered;
If to the task of honoring its smell
Profit had prompted you, and love as well,
The world would benefit at last by you
And wealthy malefactors weep anew —
Your favor for a moment's space denied
And to the nobler object turned aside.
Is't not enough that thrifty millionaires
Who loot in freight and spoliate in fares,
Or, cursed with consciences that bid them fly
To safer villainies of darker dye,
Forswearing robbery and fain, instead,
To steal (they call it "cornering") our bread
May see you groveling their boots to lick
And begging for the favor of a kick?
Still must you follow to the bitter end
Your sycophantic disposition's trend,
And in your eagerness to please the rich
Hunt hungry sinners to their final ditch?
In Morgan's praise you smite the sounding wire,
And sing hosannas to great Havemeyher!
What's Satan done that him you should eschew?
He too is reeking rich — deducting *you*.

SYLLOGISM, n. A logical formula consisting of a major and a minor assumption and an inconsequent. (See LOGIC.)

SYLPH, n. An immaterial but visible being that inhabited the air when the air was an element and before it was fatally polluted with factory smoke, sewer gas and similar products of civilization. Sylphs were allied to gnomes, nymphs and salamanders, which dwelt, respectively, in earth, water and fire, all now insalubrious. Sylphs, like fowls of the air, were male and female, to no purpose, apparently, for if they had progeny they must have nested in accessible places, none of the chicks having ever been seen.

SYMBOL, n. Something that is supposed to typify or stand for something else. Many symbols are mere “survivals” — things which having no longer any utility continue to exist because we have inherited the tendency to make them; as funereal urns carved on memorial monuments. They were once real urns holding the ashes of the dead. We cannot stop making them, but we can give them a name that conceals our helplessness.

SYMBOLIC, adj. Pertaining to symbols and the use and interpretation of symbols.
They say ‘tis conscience feels compunction;
I hold that that’s the stomach’s function,
For of the sinner I have noted
That when he’s sinned he’s somewhat bloated,
Or ill some other ghastly fashion
Within that bowel of compassion.
True, I believe the only sinner
Is he that eats a shabby dinner.
You know how Adam with good reason,
For eating apples out of season,
Was “cursed.” But that is all symbolic:
The truth is, Adam had the colic.
–G.J.

T

T, the twentieth letter of the English alphabet, was by the Greeks absurdly called *tau*. In the alphabet whence ours comes it had the form of the rude corkscrew of the period, and when it stood alone (which was more than the Phoenicians could always do) signified *Tallegal*, translated by the learned Dr. Brownrigg, "tanglefoot."

TABLE D'HOTE, n. A caterer's thrifty concession to the universal passion for irresponsibility.
Old Paunchinello, freshly wed,
Took Madam P. to table,
And there deliriously fed
As fast as he was able.
"I dote upon good grub," he cried,
Intent upon its throatage.
"Ah, yes," said the neglected bride,
"You're in your *table d'hotage*."
–Associated Poets

TAIL, n. The part of an animal's spine that has transcended its natural limitations to set up an independent existence in a world of its own. Excepting in its foetal state, Man is without a tail, a privation of which he attests an hereditary and uneasy consciousness by the coat-skirt of the male and the train of the female, and by a marked tendency to ornament that part of his attire where the tail should be, and indubitably once was. This tendency is most observable in the female of the species, in whom the ancestral sense is strong and persistent. The tailed men described by Lord Monboddo are now generally regarded as a product of an imagination unusually susceptible to influences generated in the golden age of our pithecan past.

TAKE, v.t. To acquire, frequently by force but preferably by stealth.

TALK, v.t. To commit an indiscretion without temptation, from an impulse without purpose.

TARIFF, n. A scale of taxes on imports, designed to protect the domestic producer against the greed of his consumer.
The Enemy of Human Souls
Sat grieving at the cost of coals;
For Hell had been annexed of late,
And was a sovereign Southern State.
“It were no more than right,” said he,
“That I should get my fuel free.
The duty, neither just nor wise,
Compels me to economize —
Whereby my broilers, every one,
Are execrably underdone.
What would they have? — although I yearn
To do them nicely to a turn,
I can’t afford an honest heat.
This tariff makes even devils cheat!
I’m ruined, and my humble trade
All rascals may at will invade:
Beneath my nose the public press
Outdoes me in sulphureousness;
The bar ingeniously applies
To my undoing my own lies;
My medicines the doctors use
(Albeit vainly) to refuse
To me my fair and rightful prey
And keep their own in shape to pay;
The preachers by example teach
What, scorning to perform, I teach;
And statesmen, aping me, all make
More promises than they can break.
Against such competition I
Lift up a disregarded cry.
Since all ignore my just complaint,
By Hokey–Pokey! I’ll turn saint!”
Now, the Republicans, who all

Are saints, began at once to bawl
Against *his* competition; so
There was a devil of a go!
They locked horns with him, tete-a-tete
In acrimonious debate,
Till Democrats, forlorn and lone,
Had hopes of coming by their own.
That evil to avert, in haste
The two belligerents embraced;
But since 'twere wicked to relax
A tittle of the Sacred Tax,
'Twas finally agreed to grant
The bold Insurgent-protestant
A bounty on each soul that fell
Into his ineffectual Hell.
–Edam Smith

TECHNICALITY, n. In an English court a man named Home was tried for slander in having accused his neighbor of murder. His exact words were: "Sir Thomas Holt hath taken a cleaver and stricken his cook upon the head, so that one side of the head fell upon one shoulder and the other side upon the other shoulder." The defendant was acquitted by instruction of the court, the learned judges holding that the words did not charge murder, for they did not affirm the death of the cook, that being only an inference.

TEDIUM, n. Ennui, the state or condition of one that is bored. Many fanciful derivations of the word have been affirmed, but so high an authority as Father Jape says that it comes from a very obvious source — the first words of the ancient Latin hymn *Te Deum Laudamus*. In this apparently natural derivation there is something that saddens.

TEETOTALER, n. One who abstains from strong drink, sometimes totally, sometimes tolerably totally.

TELEPHONE, n. An invention of the devil which abrogates some of the advantages of making a disagreeable person keep his distance.

TELESCOPE, n. A device having a relation to the eye similar to that of the telephone to the ear, enabling distant objects to plague us with a multitude of needless details. Luckily it is unprovided with a bell summoning us to the sacrifice.

TENACITY, n. A certain quality of the human hand in its relation to the coin of the realm. It attains its highest development in the hand of authority and is considered a serviceable equipment for a career in politics. The following illustrative lines were written of a Californian gentleman in high political preferment, who has passed to his accounting:

Of such tenacity his grip
That nothing from his hand can slip.
Well-buttered eels you may o’erwhelm
In tubs of liquid slippery-elm
In vain — from his detaining pinch
They cannot struggle half an inch!
‘Tis lucky that he so is planned
That breath he draws not with his hand,
For if he did, so great his greed
He’d draw his last with eager speed.
Nay, that were well, you say. Not so
He’d draw but never let it go!

THEOSOPHY, n. An ancient faith having all the certitude of religion and all the mystery of science. The modern Theosophist holds, with the Buddhists, that we live an incalculable number of times on this earth, in as many several bodies, because one life is not long enough for our complete spiritual development; that is, a single lifetime does not suffice for us to become as wise and good as we choose to wish to become. To be absolutely wise and good — that is perfection; and the Theosophist is so keen-sighted as to have observed that everything desirous of improvement eventually attains perfection. Less competent observers are disposed to except cats, which seem neither wiser nor better than they were last year. The greatest and fattest of recent Theosophists was the late Madame Blavatsky, who had no cat.

TIGHTS, n. An habiliment of the stage designed to reinforce the general acclamation of the press agent with a particular publicity. Public attention was once somewhat diverted from this garment to Miss Lillian Russell's refusal to wear it, and many were the conjectures as to her motive, the guess of Miss Pauline Hall showing a high order of ingenuity and sustained reflection. It was Miss Hall's belief that nature had not endowed Miss Russell with beautiful legs. This theory was impossible of acceptance by the male understanding, but the conception of a faulty female leg was of so prodigious originality as to rank among the most brilliant feats of philosophical speculation! It is strange that in all the controversy regarding Miss Russell's aversion to tights no one seems to have thought to ascribe it to what was known among the ancients as "modesty." The nature of that sentiment is now imperfectly understood, and possibly incapable of exposition with the vocabulary that remains to us. The study of lost arts has, however, been recently revived and some of the arts themselves recovered. This is an epoch of *renaissances*, and there is ground for hope that the primitive "blush" may be dragged from its hiding-place amongst the tombs of antiquity and hissed on to the stage.

TOMB, n. The House of Indifference. Tombs are now by common consent invested with a certain sanctity, but when they have been long tenanted it is considered no sin to break them open and rifle them, the famous Egyptologist, Dr. Huggyns, explaining that a tomb may be innocently "glened" as soon as its occupant is done "smellynge," the soul being then all exhaled. This reasonable view is now generally accepted by archaeologists, whereby the noble science of Curiosity has been greatly dignified.

TOPE, v. To tipple, booze, swill, soak, guzzle, lush, bib, or swig. In the individual, toping is regarded with disesteem, but toping nations are in the forefront of civilization and power. When pitted against the hard-drinking Christians the abstemious Mahometans go down like grass before the scythe. In India one hundred thousand beef-eating and brandy-and-soda guzzling Britons hold in subjection two hundred and fifty million vegetarian abstainers of the same Aryan race. With what an easy grace the whisky-loving American pushed the temperate Spaniard out of his possessions! From the time when the Berserkers ravaged all the coasts of western Europe and lay drunk in every conquered port it has been the same way: everywhere the nations that drink too much are observed to fight rather well and not too righteously. Wherefore the estimable old ladies who abolished the canteen from the American army may justly boast of having materially augmented the nation's military power.

TORTOISE, n. A creature thoughtfully created to supply occasion for the following lines by the illustrious Ambat Delaso:

TO MY PET TORTOISE
My friend, you are not graceful — not at all;
Your gait's between a stagger and a sprawl.
Nor are you beautiful: your head's a snake's
To look at, and I do not doubt it aches.
As to your feet, they'd make an angel weep.
'Tis true you take them in whene'er you sleep.
No, you're not pretty, but you have, I own,
A certain firmness — mostly you're [sic] backbone.
Firmness and strength (you have a giant's thews)
Are virtues that the great know how to use —
I wish that they did not; yet, on the whole,
You lack — excuse my mentioning it — Soul.
So, to be candid, unreserved and true,
I'd rather you were I than I were you.
Perhaps, however, in a time to be,
When Man's extinct, a better world may see
Your progeny in power and control,
Due to the genesis and growth of Soul.
So I salute you as a reptile grand
Predestined to regenerate the land.
Father of Possibilities, O deign
To accept the homage of a dying reign!
In the far region of the unforeknown
I dream a tortoise upon every throne.
I see an Emperor his head withdraw
Into his carapace for fear of Law;

A King who carries something else than fat,
Howe'er acceptably he carries that;

A President not strenuously bent

On punishment of audible dissent —
Who never shot (it were a vain attack)
An armed or unarmed tortoise in the back;
Subject and citizens that feel no need
To make the March of Mind a wild stampede;
All progress slow, contemplative, sedate,
And “Take your time” the word, in Church and State.

O Tortoise, ‘tis a happy, happy dream,
My glorious testudinous regime!
I wish in Eden you’d brought this about
By slouching in and chasing Adam out.

TREE, n. A tall vegetable intended by nature to serve as a penal apparatus, though through a miscarriage of justice most trees bear only a negligible fruit, or none at all. When naturally fruited, the tree is a beneficient agency of civilization and an important factor in public morals. In the stern West and the sensitive South its fruit (white and black respectively) though not eaten, is agreeable to the public taste and, though not exported, profitable to the general welfare. That the legitimate relation of the tree to justice was no discovery of Judge Lynch (who, indeed, conceded it no primacy over the lamp-post and the bridge-girder) is made plain by the following passage from Morryster, who antedated him by two centuries:

While in yt londe I was carried to see ye Ghogo tree, whereof
I had hearde moch talk; but sayynge yt I saw naught remarkabyll in
it, ye hed manne of ye villayge where it grewe made answer as
followeth:
“Ye tree is not nowe in fruite, but in his seasonne you shall
see dependynge fr. his braunches all soch as have affroynted ye
King his Majesty.”
And I was furder tolde yt ye worde “Ghogo” sygnifyeth in yr
tong ye same as “rapscal” in our owne.
–*Trauvells in ye Easte*

TRIAL, n. A formal inquiry designed to prove and put upon record the blameless characters of judges, advocates and jurors. In order to effect this purpose it is necessary to supply a contrast in the person of one who is called the defendant, the prisoner, or the accused. If the contrast is made sufficiently clear this person is made to undergo such an affliction as will give the virtuous gentlemen a comfortable sense of their immunity, added to that of their worth. In our day the accused is usually a human being, or a socialist, but in mediaeval times, animals, fishes, reptiles and insects were brought to trial. A beast that had taken human life, or practiced sorcery, was duly arrested, tried and, if condemned, put to death by the public executioner. Insects ravaging grain fields, orchards or vineyards were cited to appeal by counsel before a civil tribunal, and after testimony, argument and condemnation, if they continued *in contumaciam* the matter was taken to a high ecclesiastical court, where they were solemnly excommunicated and anathematized. In a street of Toledo, some pigs that had wickedly run between the viceroy's legs, upsetting him, were arrested on a warrant, tried and punished. In Naples and ass was condemned to be burned at the stake, but the sentence appears not to have been executed. D'Addosio relates from the court records many trials of pigs, bulls, horses, cocks, dogs, goats, etc., greatly, it is believed, to the betterment of their conduct and morals. In 1451 a suit was brought against the leeches infesting some ponds about Berne, and the Bishop of Lausanne, instructed by the faculty of Heidelberg University, directed that some of "the aquatic worms" be brought before the local magistracy. This was done and the leeches, both present and absent, were ordered to leave the places that they had infested within three days on pain of incurring "the malediction of God." In the voluminous records of this *cause celebre* nothing is found to show whether the offenders braved the punishment, or departed forthwith out of that inhospitable jurisdiction.

TRICHINOSIS, n. The pig's reply to proponents of porcophagy.
Moses Mendlessohn having fallen ill sent for a Christian physician, who at once diagnosed the philosopher's disorder as trichinosis, but tactfully gave it another name. "You need and immediate change of diet," he said; "you must eat six ounces of pork every other day."
"Pork?" shrieked the patient—"pork? Nothing shall induce me to touch it!"
"Do you mean that?" the doctor gravely asked.
"I swear it!"
"Good! — then I will undertake to cure you."

TRINITY, n. In the multiplex theism of certain Christian churches, three entirely distinct deities consistent with only one. Subordinate deities of the polytheistic faith, such as devils and angels, are not dowered with the power of combination, and must urge individually their claims to adoration and propitiation. The Trinity is one of the most sublime mysteries of our holy religion. In rejecting it because it is incomprehensible, Unitarians betray their inadequate sense of theological fundamentals. In religion we believe only what we do not understand, except in the instance of an intelligible doctrine that contradicts an incomprehensible one. In that case we believe the former as a part of the latter.

TROGLODYTE, n. Specifically, a cave-dweller of the paleolithic period, after the Tree and before the Flat. A famous community of troglodytes dwelt with David in the Cave of Adullam. The colony consisted of “every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented” — in brief, all the Socialists of Judah.

TRUCE, n. Friendship.

TRUTH, n. An ingenious compound of desirability and appearance. Discovery of truth is the sole purpose of philosophy, which is the most ancient occupation of the human mind and has a fair prospect of existing with increasing activity to the end of time.

TRUTHFUL, adj. Dumb and illiterate.

TRUST, n. In American politics, a large corporation composed in greater part of thrifty working men, widows of small means, orphans in the care of guardians and the courts, with many similar malefactors and public enemies.

TURKEY, n. A large bird whose flesh when eaten on certain religious anniversaries has the peculiar property of attesting piety and gratitude. Incidentally, it is pretty good eating.

TWICE, adv. Once too often.

TYPE, n. Pestilent bits of metal suspected of destroying civilization and enlightenment, despite their obvious agency in this incomparable dictionary.

TZETZE (or TSETSE) FLY, n. An African insect (*Glossina morsitans*) whose bite is commonly regarded as nature’s most efficacious remedy for insomnia, though some patients prefer that of the American novelist (*Mendax interminabilis*).

U

UBIQUITY, n. The gift or power of being in all places at one time, but not in all places at all times, which is omnipresence, an attribute of God and the luminiferous ether only. This important distinction between ubiquity and omnipresence was not clear to the mediaeval Church and there was much bloodshed about it. Certain Lutherans, who affirmed the presence everywhere of Christ's body were known as Ubiquitarians. For this error they were doubtless damned, for Christ's body is present only in the eucharist, though that sacrament may be performed in more than one place simultaneously. In recent times ubiquity has not always been understood — not even by Sir Boyle Roche, for example, who held that a man cannot be in two places at once unless he is a bird.

UGLINESS, n. A gift of the gods to certain women, entailing virtue without humility.

ULTIMATUM, n. In diplomacy, a last demand before resorting to concessions.

Having received an ultimatum from Austria, the Turkish Ministry met to consider it.

"O servant of the Prophet," said the Sheik of the Imperial Chibouk to the Mamoosh of the Invincible Army, "how many unconquerable soldiers have we in arms?"

"Upholder of the Faith," that dignitary replied after examining his memoranda, "they are in numbers as the leaves of the forest!"

"And how many impenetrable battleships strike terror to the hearts of all Christian swine?" he asked the Imaum of the Ever Victorious Navy.

"Uncle of the Full Moon," was the reply, "deign to know that they are as the waves of the ocean, the sands of the desert and the stars of Heaven!"

For eight hours the broad brow of the Sheik of the Imperial Chibouk was corrugated with evidences of deep thought: he was calculating the chances of war. Then, "Sons of angels," he said, "the die is cast! I shall suggest to the Ulema of the Imperial Ear that he advise inaction. In the name of Allah, the council is adjourned."

UN-AMERICAN, adj. Wicked, intolerable, heathenish.

UNCTION, n. An oiling, or greasing. The rite of extreme unction consists in touching with oil consecrated by a bishop several parts of the body of one engaged in dying. Marbury relates that after the rite had been administered to a certain wicked English nobleman it was discovered that the oil had not been properly consecrated and no other could be obtained. When informed of this the sick man said in anger: “Then I’ll be damned if I die!”
“My son,” said the priest, “this is what we fear.”

UNDERSTANDING, n. A cerebral secretion that enables one having it to know a house from a horse by the roof on the house. Its nature and laws have been exhaustively expounded by Locke, who rode a house, and Kant, who lived in a horse.
His understanding was so keen
That all things which he’d felt, heard, seen,
He could interpret without fail
If he was in or out of jail.
He wrote at Inspiration’s call
Deep disquisitions on them all,
Then, pent at last in an asylum,
Performed the service to compile ‘em.
So great a writer, all men swore,
They never had not read before.
–Jorrock Wormley

UNITARIAN, n. One who denies the divinity of a Trinitarian.

UNIVERSALIST, n. One who forgoes the advantage of a Hell for persons of another faith.

URBANITY, n. The kind of civility that urban observers ascribe to dwellers in all cities but New York. Its commonest expression is heard in the words, “I beg your pardon,” and it is not consistent with disregard of the rights of others.
The owner of a powder mill
Was musing on a distant hill —
Something his mind foreboded —
When from the cloudless sky there fell

A deviled human kidney! Well,
The man’s mill had exploded.
His hat he lifted from his head;
“I beg your pardon, sir,” he said;
“I didn’t know ‘twas loaded.”
–Swatkin

USAGE, n. The First Person of the literary Trinity, the Second and Third being Custom and Conventionality. Imbued with a decent reverence for this Holy Triad an industrious writer may hope to produce books that will live as long as the fashion.

UXORIOUSNESS, n. A perverted affection that has strayed to one’s own wife.

V

VALOR, n. A soldierly compound of vanity, duty and the gambler’s hope.
“Why have you halted?” roared the commander of a division and Chickamauga, who had ordered a charge; “move forward, sir, at once.”
“General,” said the commander of the delinquent brigade, “I am persuaded that any further display of valor by my troops will bring them into collision with the enemy.”

VANITY, n. The tribute of a fool to the worth of the nearest ass.
They say that hens do cackle loudest when
There’s nothing vital in the eggs they’ve laid;
And there are hens, professing to have made
A study of mankind, who say that men
Whose business ‘tis to drive the tongue or pen
Make the most clamorous fanfaronade
O’er their most worthless work; and I’m afraid
They’re not entirely different from the hen.
Lo! the drum-major in his coat of gold,
His blazing breeches and high-towering cap —
Imperiously pompous, grandly bold,
Grim, resolute, an awe-inspiring chap!
Who’d think this gorgeous creature’s only virtue
Is that in battle he will never hurt you?
–Hannibal Hunsiker

VIRTUES, n.pl. Certain abstentions.

VITUPERATION, n. Saite, as understood by dunces and all such as suffer from an impediment in their wit.

VOTE, n. The instrument and symbol of a freeman’s power to make a fool of himself and a wreck of his country.

W

W (double U) has, of all the letters in our alphabet, the only cumbrous name, the names of the others being monosyllabic. This advantage of the Roman alphabet over the Grecian is the more valued after audibly spelling out some simple Greek word, like *epixoriambikos*. Still, it is now thought by the learned that other agencies than the difference of the two alphabets may have been concerned in the decline of “the glory that was Greece” and the rise of “the grandeur that was Rome.” There can be no doubt, however, that by simplifying the name of W (calling it “wow,” for example) our civilization could be, if not promoted, at least better endured.

WALL STREET, n. A symbol for sin for every devil to rebuke. That Wall Street is a den of thieves is a belief that serves every unsuccessful thief in place of a hope in Heaven. Even the great and good Andrew Carnegie has made his profession of faith in the matter.

Carnegie the dauntless has uttered his call
To battle: “The brokers are parasites all!”
Carnegie, Carnegie, you’ll never prevail;
Keep the wind of your slogan to belly your sail,
Go back to your isle of perpetual brume,
Silence your pibroch, doff tartan and plume:
Ben Lomond is calling his son from the fray —
Fly, fly from the region of Wall Street away!
While still you’re possessed of a single baubee
(I wish it were pledged to endowment of me)
‘Twere wise to retreat from the wars of finance
Lest its value decline ere your credit advance.
For a man ‘twixt a king of finance and the sea,
Carnegie, Carnegie, your tongue is too free!
–Anonymus Bink

WAR, n. A by-product of the arts of peace. The most menacing political condition is a period of international amity. The student of history who has not been taught to expect the unexpected may justly boast himself inaccessible to the

light. “In time of peace prepare for war” has a deeper meaning than is commonly discerned; it means, not merely that all things earthly have an end — that change is the one immutable and eternal law — but that the soil of peace is thickly sown with the seeds of war and singularly suited to their germination and growth. It was when Kubla Khan had decreed his “stately pleasure dome” — when, that is to say, there were peace and fat feasting in Xanadu — that he
heard from afar
Ancestral voices prophesying war.
One of the greatest of poets, Coleridge was one of the wisest of men, and it was not for nothing that he read us this parable. Let us have a little less of “hands across the sea,” and a little more of that elemental distrust that is the security of nations. War loves to come like a thief in the night; professions of eternal amity provide the night.

WASHINGTONIAN, n. A Potomac tribesman who exchanged the privilege of governing himself for the advantage of good government. In justice to him it should be said that he did not want to.
They took away his vote and gave instead
The right, when he had earned, to *eat* his bread.
In vain — he clamors for his “boss,” pour soul,
To come again and part him from his roll.
–Offenbach Stutz

WEAKNESSES, n.pl. Certain primal powers of Tyrant Woman wherewith she holds dominion over the male of her species, binding him to the service of her will and paralyzing his rebellious energies.

WEATHER, n. The climate of the hour. A permanent topic of conversation among persons whom it does not interest, but who have inherited the tendency to chatter about it from naked arboreal ancestors whom it keenly concerned. The setting up official weather bureaus and their maintenance in mendacity prove that even governments are accessible to suasion by the rude forefathers of the jungle.
Once I dipt into the future far as human eye could see,
And I saw the Chief Forecaster, dead as any one can be —
Dead and damned and shut in Hades as a liar from his birth,
With a record of unreason seldom paralleled on earth.

While I looked he reared him solemnly, that incandescent youth,
From the coals that he’d preferred to the advantages of truth.
He cast his eyes about him and above him; then he wrote
On a slab of thin asbestos what I venture here to quote —
For I read it in the rose-light of the everlasting glow:
“Cloudy; variable winds, with local showers; cooler; snow.”
–Halcyon Jones

WEDDING, n. A ceremony at which two persons undertake to become one, one undertakes to become nothing, and nothing undertakes to become supportable.

WEREWOLF, n. A wolf that was once, or is sometimes, a man. All werewolves are of evil disposition, having assumed a bestial form to gratify a beastial appetite, but some, transformed by sorcery, are as humane and is consistent with an acquired taste for human flesh.

Some Bavarian peasants having caught a wolf one evening, tied it to a post by the tail and went to bed. The next morning nothing was there! Greatly perplexed, they consulted the local priest, who told them that their captive was undoubtedly a werewolf and had resumed its human for during the night. “The next time that you take a wolf,” the good man said, “see that you chain it by the leg, and in the morning you will find a Lutheran.”

WHANGDEPOOTENAWAH, n. In the Ojibwa tongue, disaster; an unexpected affliction that strikes hard.

Should you ask me whence this laughter,
Whence this audible big-smiling,
With its labial extension,
With its maxillar distortion
And its diaphragmic rhythmus
Like the billowing of an ocean,
Like the shaking of a carpet,
I should answer, I should tell you:
From the great deeps of the spirit,
From the unplummeted abysmus
Of the soul this laughter welleth
As the fountain, the gug-guggle,
Like the river from the canon [sic],

To entoken and give warning
That my present mood is sunny.
Should you ask me further question —
Why the great deeps of the spirit,
Why the unplummeted abysmus
Of the soule extrudes this laughter,
This all audible big-smiling,
I should answer, I should tell you
With a white heart, tumpitumpy,
With a true tongue, honest Injun:
William Bryan, he has Caught It,
Caught the Whangdepootenawah!
Is’t the sandhill crane, the shankank,
Standing in the marsh, the kneedeep,
Standing silent in the kneedeep
With his wing-tips crossed behind him
And his neck close-reefed before him,
With his bill, his william, buried
In the down upon his bosom,
With his head retracted inly,
While his shoulders overlook it?
Does the sandhill crane, the shankank,
Shiver grayly in the north wind,
Wishing he had died when little,
As the sparrow, the chipchip, does?
No ‘tis not the Shankank standing,
Standing in the gray and dismal
Marsh, the gray and dismal kneedeep.
No, ‘tis peerless William Bryan
Realizing that he’s Caught It,
Caught the Whangdepootenawah!

WHEAT, n. A cereal from which a tolerably good whisky can with some difficulty be made, and which is used also for bread. The French are said to eat more bread *per capita* of population than any other people, which is natural, for only they know how to make the stuff palatable.

WHITE, adj. and n. Black.

WIDOW, n. A pathetic figure that the Christian world has agreed to take humorously, although Christ's tenderness towards widows was one of the most marked features of his character.

WINE, n. Fermented grape-juice known to the Women's Christian Union as "liquor," sometimes as "rum." Wine, madam, is God's next best gift to man.

WIT, n. The salt with which the American humorist spoils his intellectual cookery by leaving it out.

WITCH, n. (1) Any ugly and repulsive old woman, in a wicked league with the devil. (2) A beautiful and attractive young woman, in wickedness a league beyond the devil.

WITTICISM, n. A sharp and clever remark, usually quoted, and seldom noted; what the Philistine is pleased to call a "joke."

WOMAN, n.
An animal usually living in the vicinity of Man, and having a
rudimentary susceptibility to domestication. It is credited by
many of the elder zoologists with a certain vestigial docility
acquired in a former state of seclusion, but naturalists of the
postsusananthony period, having no knowledge of the seclusion,
deny the virtue and declare that such as creation's dawn beheld,
it roareth now. The species is the most widely distributed of all
beasts of prey, infesting all habitable parts of the globe, from
Greeland's spicy mountains to India's moral strand. The popular
name (wolfman) is incorrect, for the creature is of the cat kind.
The woman is lithe and graceful in its movement, especially the
American variety (*felis pugnans*), is omnivorous and can be
taught not to talk.
–Balthasar Pober

WORMS'-MEAT, n. The finished product of which we are the raw material. The contents of the Taj Mahal, the Tombeau Napoleon and the Granitarium. Worms'-meat is usually outlasted by the structure that houses it, but "this too must pass away." Probably the silliest work in which a human being can engage is construction of a tomb for himself. The solemn purpose cannot dignify, but only accentuates by contrast the foreknown futility.

Ambitious fool! so mad to be a show!
How profitless the labor you bestow
Upon a dwelling whose magnificence
The tenant neither can admire nor know.
Build deep, build high, build massive as you can,
The wanton grass-roots will defeat the plan
By shouldering asunder all the stones
In what to you would be a moment's span.
Time to the dead so all unreckoned flies
That when your marble is all dust, arise,
If wakened, stretch your limbs and yawn —
You'll think you scarcely can have closed your eyes.
What though of all man's works your tomb alone
Should stand till Time himself be overthrown?
Would it advantage you to dwell therein
Forever as a stain upon a stone?
–Joel Huck

WORSHIP, n. Homo Creator's testimony to the sound construction and fine finish of Deus Creatus. A popular form of abjection, having an element of pride.

WRATH, n. Anger of a superior quality and degree, appropriate to exalted characters and momentous occasions; as, "the wrath of God," "the day of wrath," *etc*. Amongst the ancients the wrath of kings was deemed sacred, for it could usually command the agency of some god for its fit manifestation, as could also that of a priest. The Greeks before Troy were so harried by Apollo that they jumped out of the frying-pan of the wrath of Cryses into the fire of the wrath of Achilles, though Agamemnon, the sole offender, was neither fried nor roasted. A similar noted immunity was that of David when he incurred the wrath of Yahveh by numbering his people, seventy thousand of whom paid the penalty with their lives. God is now Love, and a director of the census performs his work without apprehension of disaster.

X

X in our alphabet being a needless letter has an added invincibility to the attacks of the spelling reformers, and like them, will doubtless last as long as the language. X is the sacred symbol of ten dollars, and in such words as Xmas, Xn, etc., stands for Christ, not, as is popular supposed, because it represents a cross, but because the corresponding letter in the Greek alphabet is the initial of his name — *Xristos*. If it represented a cross it would stand for St. Andrew, who “testified” upon one of that shape. In the algebra of psychology x stands for Woman’s mind. Words beginning with X are Grecian and will not be defined in this standard English dictionary.

Y

YANKEE, n. In Europe, an American. In the Northern States of our Union, a New Englander. In the Southern States the word is unknown. (See DAMNYANK.)

YEAR, n. A period of three hundred and sixty-five disappointments.

YESTERDAY, n. The infancy of youth, the youth of manhood, the entire past of age.

But yesterday I should have thought me blest
To stand high-pinnacled upon the peak
Of middle life and look adown the bleak
And unfamiliar foreslope to the West,
Where solemn shadows all the land invest
And stilly voices, half-remembered, speak
Unfinished prophecy, and witch-fires freak
The haunted twilight of the Dark of Rest.
Yea, yesterday my soul was all aflame
To stay the shadow on the dial's face
At manhood's noonmark! Now, in God His name
I chide aloud the little interspace
Disparting me from Certitude, and fain
Would know the dream and vision ne'er again.
–Baruch Arnegriff

It is said that in his last illness the poet Arnegriff was attended at different times by seven doctors.

YOKE, n. An implement, madam, to whose Latin name, *jugum*, we owe one of the most illuminating words in our language — a word that defines the matrimonial situation with precision, point and poignancy. A thousand apologies for withholding it.

YOUTH, n. The Period of Possibility, when Archimedes finds a fulcrum, Cassandra has a following and seven cities compete for the honor of endowing a living Homer.

Youth is the true Saturnian Reign, the Golden Age on earth again, when figs are grown on thistles, and pigs betailed with whistles and, wearing silken bristles, live ever in clover, and cows fly over, delivering milk at every door, and Justice never is heard to snore, and every assassin is made a ghost and, howling, is cast into Baltimost!

–Polydore Smith

Z

ZANY, n. A popular character in old Italian plays, who imitated with ludicrous incompetence the *buffone*, or clown, and was therefore the ape of an ape; for the clown himself imitated the serious characters of the play. The zany was progenitor to the specialist in humor, as we to-day have the unhappiness to know him. In the zany we see an example of creation; in the humorist, of transmission. Another excellent specimen of the modern zany is the curate, who apes the rector, who apes the bishop, who apes the archbishop, who apes the devil.

ZANZIBARI, n. An inhabitant of the Sultanate of Zanzibar, off the eastern coast of Africa. The Zanzibaris, a warlike people, are best known in this country through a threatening diplomatic incident that occurred a few years ago. The American consul at the capital occupied a dwelling that faced the sea, with a sandy beach between. Greatly to the scandal of this official's family, and against repeated remonstrances of the official himself, the people of the city persisted in using the beach for bathing. One day a woman came down to the edge of the water and was stooping to remove her attire (a pair of sandals) when the consul, incensed beyond restraint, fired a charge of bird-shot into the most conspicuous part of her person. Unfortunately for the existing *entente cordiale* between two great nations, she was the Sultana.

ZEAL, n. A certain nervous disorder afflicting the young and inexperienced. A passion that goeth before a sprawl.
When Zeal sought Gratitude for his reward
He went away exclaiming: "O my Lord!"
"What do you want?" the Lord asked, bending down.
"An ointment for my cracked and bleeding crown."
–Jum Coople

ZENITH, n. The point in the heavens directly overhead to a man standing or a growing cabbage. A man in bed or a cabbage in the pot is not considered as having a zenith, though from this view of the matter there was once a considerably dissent among the learned, some holding that the posture of the body was immaterial. These were called Horizontalists, their opponents, Verticalists. The Horizontalist heresy was finally extinguished by Xanobus, the philosopher-king of Abara, a zealous Verticalist. Entering an assembly of philosophers who were debating the matter, he cast a severed human head at the feet of his opponents and asked them to determine its zenith, explaining that its body was hanging by the heels outside. Observing that it was the head of their leader, the Horizontalists hastened to profess themselves converted to whatever opinion the Crown might be pleased to hold, and Horizontalism took its place among *fides defuncti*.

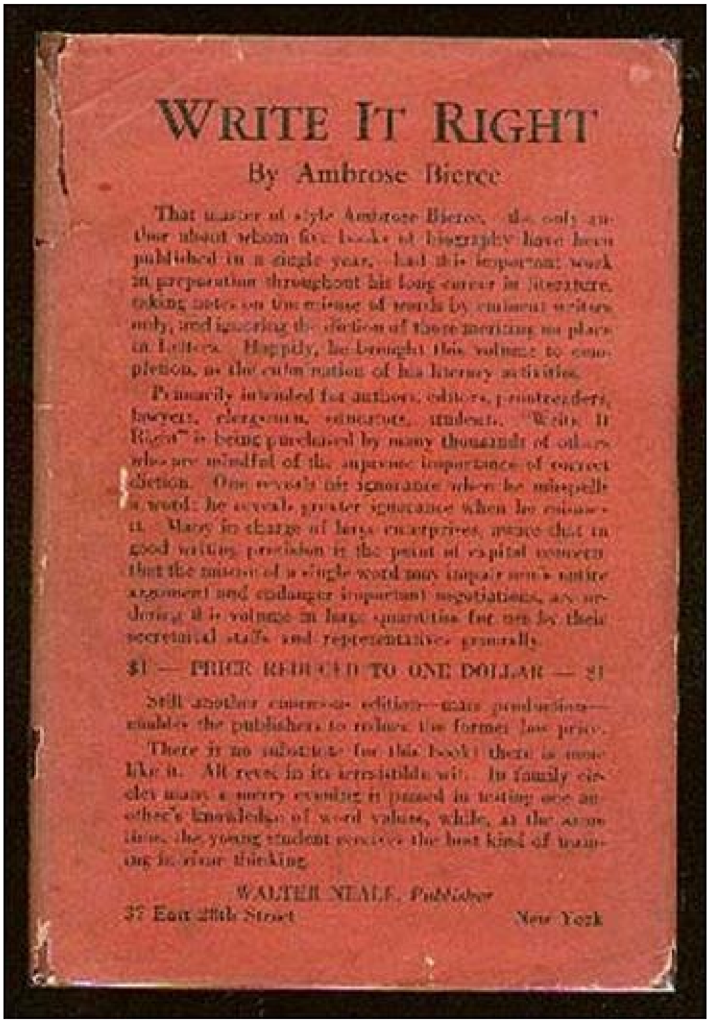
ZEUS, n. The chief of Grecian gods, adored by the Romans as Jupiter and by the modern Americans as God, Gold, Mob and Dog. Some explorers who have touched upon the shores of America, and one who professes to have penetrated a considerable distance to the interior, have thought that these four names stand for as many distinct deities, but in his monumental work on Surviving Faiths, Frumpp insists that the natives are monotheists, each having no other god than himself, whom he worships under many sacred names.

ZIGZAG, v.t. To move forward uncertainly, from side to side, as one carrying the white man’s burden. (From *zed*, *z*, and *jag*, an Icelandic word of unknown meaning.)
He zedjagged so uncomen wyde
Thet non coude pas on eyder syde;
So, to com saufly thruh, I been
Constreynet for to doodge betwene.
–Munwele

ZOOLOGY, n. The science and history of the animal kingdom, including its king, the House Fly (*Musca maledicta*). The father of Zoology was Aristotle, as is universally conceded, but the name of its mother has not come down to us. Two of the science’s most illustrious expounders were Buffon and Oliver Goldsmith, from both of whom we learn (*L’Histoire generale des animaux* and *A History of Animated Nature*) that the domestic cow sheds its horn every two years.

WRITE IT RIGHT

The Neale Publishing Company of New York issued Bierce's advice for writers, *Write It Right*, in 1909. The publisher boasted in advertisements that "this volume should be in the waistcoat pocket of every professional writer" and claimed that "the book is in daily use by the employees of the more important newspapers, some having purchased more than 100 copies each." *Write it Right* is something of a literary manifesto in which Bierce compiled a laundry list of writing do's and don'ts from A to Z, which he set out in his preface as teaching "precision in writing (which, essentially, is clear thinking made visible)…" In particular he despised use of the vernacular and common slang and sought to protect the purity of the English language.



WRITE IT RIGHT

By Ambrose Bierce

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Aims and the Plan

The author’s main purpose in this book is to teach precision in writing; and of good writing (which, essentially, is clear thinking made visible) precision is the point of capital concern. It is attained by choice of the word that accurately and adequately expresses what the writer has in mind, and by exclusion of that which either denotes or connotes something else. As Quintilian puts it, the writer should so write that his reader not only may, but must, understand.

Few words have more than one literal and serviceable meaning, however many metaphorical, derivative, related, or even unrelated, meanings lexicographers may think it worth while to gather from all sorts and conditions of men, with which to bloat their absurd and misleading dictionaries. This actual and serviceable meaning — not always determined by derivation, and seldom by popular usage — is the one affirmed, according to his light, by the author of this little manual of solecisms. Narrow etymons of the mere scholar and loose locutions of the ignorant are alike denied a standing.

The plan of the book is more illustrative than expository, the aim being to use the terms of etymology and syntax as little as is compatible with clarity, familiar example being more easily apprehended than technical precept. When both are employed the precept is commonly given after the example has prepared the student to apply it, not only to the matter in mind, but to similar matters not mentioned. Everything in quotation marks is to be understood as disapproved.

Not all locutions blacklisted herein are always to be reprobated as universal outlaws. Excepting in the case of capital offenders — expressions ancestrally vulgar or irreclaimably degenerate — absolute proscription is possible as to serious composition only; in other forms the writer must rely on his sense of values and the fitness of things. While it is true that some colloquialisms and, with less of license, even some slang, may be sparingly employed in light literature, for point, piquancy or any of the purposes of the skilled writer sensible to the necessity and charm of keeping at least one foot on the ground, to others the virtue of restraint may be commended as distinctly superior to the joy of indulgence.

Precision is much, but not all; some words and phrases are disallowed on the ground of taste. As there are neither standards nor arbiters of taste, the book can do little more than reflect that of its author, who is far indeed from professing impeccability. In neither taste nor precision is any man’s practice a court of last appeal, for writers all, both great and small, are habitual sinners against the light; and their accuser is cheerfully aware that his own work will supply (as in making this book it has supplied) many “awful examples” — his later work less abundantly, he hopes, than his earlier. He nevertheless believes that this does not disqualify him for showing by other instances than his own how not to write. The infallible teacher is still in the forest primeval, throwing seeds to the white blackbirds.

A.B.

The Blacklist

A for *An*. “A hotel.” “A heroic man.” Before an unaccented aspirate use an. The contrary usage in this country comes of too strongly stressing our aspirates.

Action for *Act*. “In wrestling, a blow is a reprehensible action.” A blow is not an action but an act. An action may consist of many acts.

Admission for *Admittance*. “The price of admission is one dollar.”

Admit for *Confess*. To admit is to concede something affirmed. An unaccused offender cannot admit his guilt.

Adopt. “He adopted a disguise.” One may adopt a child, or an opinion, but a disguise is assumed.

Advisedly for *Advertently*, *Intentionally*. “It was done advisedly” should mean that it was done after advice.

Afford. It is not well to say “the fact affords a reasonable presumption”; “the house afforded ample accommodation.” The fact supplies a reasonable presumption. The house offered, or gave, ample accommodation.

Afraid. Do not say, “I am afraid it will rain.” Say, I fear that it will rain.

Afterwards for *Afterward*.

Aggravate for *Irritate*. “He aggravated me by his insolence.” To aggravate is to augment the disagreeableness of something already disagreeable, or the badness of something bad. But a person cannot be aggravated, even if disagreeable or bad. Women are singularly prone to misuse of this word.

All of. “He gave all of his property.” The words are contradictory: an entire thing cannot be of itself. Omit the preposition.

Alleged. “The alleged murderer.” One can allege a murder, but not a murderer; a crime, but not a criminal. A man that is merely suspected of crime would not, in any case, be an alleged criminal, for an allegation is a definite and positive statement. In their tiresome addiction to this use of alleged, the newspapers, though having mainly in mind the danger of libel suits, can urge in further justification the lack of any other single word that exactly expresses their meaning; but the fact that a mud-puddle supplies the shortest route is not a compelling reason for walking through it. One can go around.

Allow for *Permit*. “I allow you to go.” Precision is better attained by saying permit, for allow has other meanings.

Allude to for *Mention*. What is alluded to is not mentioned, but referred to indirectly. Originally, the word implied a playful, or sportive, reference. That meaning is gone out of it.

And so. *And yet*. “And so they were married.” “And yet a woman.” Omit the conjunction.

And which. *And who*. These forms are incorrect unless the relative pronoun has been used previously in the sentence. “The colt, spirited and strong, and which was unbroken, escaped from the pasture.” “John Smith, one of our leading merchants, and who fell from a window yesterday, died this morning.” Omit the conjunction.

Antecedents for *Personal History*. Antecedents are predecessors.

Anticipate for *Expect*. “I anticipate trouble.” To anticipate is to act on an expectation in a way to promote or forestall the event expected.

Anxious for *Eager*. “I was anxious to go.” Anxious should not be followed by an infinitive. Anxiety is contemplative; eagerness, alert for action.

Appreciate for *Highly Value*. In the sense of value, it means value justly, not highly. In another and preferable sense it means to increase in value.

Approach. "The juror was approached"; that is, overtures were made to him with a view to bribing him. As there is no other single word for it, approach is made to serve, figuratively; and being graphic, it is not altogether objectionable.

Appropriated for *Took*. "He appropriated his neighbor's horse to his own use." To appropriate is to set apart, as a sum of money, for a special purpose.

Approve of for *Approve*. There is no sense in making approve an intransitive verb.

Apt for *Likely*. "One is apt to be mistaken." Apt means facile, felicitous, ready, and the like; but even the dictionary-makers cannot persuade a person of discriminating taste to accept it as synonymous with likely.

Around for *About*. "The débris of battle lay around them." "The huckster went around, crying his wares." Around carries the concept of circularity.

Article. A good and useful word, but used without meaning by shopkeepers; as, "A good article of vinegar," for a good vinegar.

As for *That*, or *If*. "I do not know as he is living." This error is not very common among those who can write at all, but one sometimes sees it in high place.

As — as for *So — as*. "He is not as good as she." Say, not so good. In affirmative sentences the rule is different: He is as good as she.

As for for *As to*. "As for me, I am well." Say, as to me.

At Auction for *by Auction*. “The goods were sold at auction.”

At for *By*. “She was shocked at his conduct.” This very common solecism is without excuse.

Attain for *Accomplish*. “By diligence we attain our purpose.” A purpose is accomplished; success is attained.

Authoress. A needless word — as needless as “poetess.”

Avocation for *Vocation*. A vocation is, literally, a calling; that is, a trade or profession. An avocation is something that calls one away from it. If I say that farming is some one’s avocation I mean that he practises it, not regularly, but at odd times.

Avoid for *Avert*. “By displaying a light the skipper avoided a collision.” To avoid is to shun; the skipper could have avoided a collision only by getting out of the way.

Avoirdupois for *Weight*. Mere slang.

Back of for *Behind*, *At the Back of*. “Back of law is force.”

Backwards for *Backward*.

Badly for *Bad*. “I feel badly.” “He looks badly.” The former sentence implies defective nerves of sensation, the latter, imperfect vision. Use the adjective.

Balance for *Remainder*. “The balance of my time is given to recreation.” In this sense balance is a commercial word, and relates to accounting.

Banquet. A good enough word in its place, but its place is the dictionary. Say, dinner.

Bar for *Bend*. “Bar sinister.” There is no such thing in heraldry as a bar sinister.

Because for *For*. “I knew it was night, because it was dark.” “He will not go, because he is ill.”

Bet for *Betted*. The verb to bet forms its preterite regularly, as do wet, wed, knit, quit and others that are commonly misconjugated. It seems that we clip our short words more than we do our long.

Body for *Trunk*. “The body lay here, the head there.” The body is the entire physical person (as distinguished from the soul, or mind) and the head is a part of it. As distinguished from head, trunk may include the limbs, but anatomically it is the torso only.

Bogus for *Counterfeit*, or *False*. The word is slang; keep it out.

Both. This word is frequently misplaced; as, “A large mob, both of men and women.” Say, of both men and women.

Both alike. “They are both alike.” Say, they are alike. One of them could not be alike.

Brainy. Pure slang, and singularly disagreeable.

Bug for *Beetle*, or for anything. Do not use it.

Business for *Right*. “He has no business to go there.”

Build for *Make*. “Build a fire.” “Build a canal.” Even “build a tunnel” is not unknown, and probably if the wood-chuck is skilled in the American tongue he speaks of building a hole.

But. By many writers this word (in the sense of except) is regarded as a preposition, to be followed by the objective case: “All went but him.” It is not a preposition and may take either the nominative or objective case, to agree with the subject or the object of the verb. All went but he. The natives killed all but him.

But what. “I did not know but what he was an enemy.” Omit what. If condemnation of this dreadful locution seem needless bear the matter in mind in your reading and you will soon be of a different opinion.

By for *Of*. “A man by the name of Brown.” Say, of the name. Better than either form is: a man named Brown.

Calculated for *Likely*. “The bad weather is calculated to produce sickness.” Calculated implies calculation, design.

Can for *May*. “Can I go fishing?” “He can call on me if he wishes to.”

Candidate for *Aspirant*. In American politics, one is not a candidate for an office until formally named (nominated) for it by a convention, or otherwise, as provided by law or custom. So when a man who is moving Heaven and Earth to procure the nomination protests that he is “not a candidate” he tells the truth in order to deceive.

Cannot for *Can*. “I cannot but go.” Say, I can but go.

Capable. “Men are capable of being flattered.” Say, susceptible to flattery. “Capable of being refuted.” Vulnerable to refutation. Unlike capacity, capability is not passive, but active. We are capable of doing, not of having something done to us.

Capacity for *Ability*. “A great capacity for work.” Capacity is receptive; ability, potential. A sponge has capacity for water; the hand, ability to squeeze it out.

Casket for *Coffin*. A needless euphemism affected by undertakers.

Casualties for *Losses* in Battle. The essence of casualty is accident, absence of design. Death and wounds in battle are produced otherwise, are expectable and expected, and, by the enemy, intentional.

Chance for *Opportunity*. “He had a good chance to succeed.”

Chin Whiskers. The whisker grows on the cheek, not the chin.

Chivalrous. The word is popularly used in the Southern States only, and commonly has reference to men’s manner toward women. Archaic, stilted and fantastic.

Citizen for *Civilian*. A soldier may be a citizen, but is not a civilian.

Claim for *Affirm*. “I claim that he is elected.” To claim is to assert ownership.

Clever for *Obliging*. In this sense the word was once in general use in the United States, but is now seldom heard and life here is less insupportable.

Climb down. In climbing one ascends.

Coat for *Coating*. “A coat of paint, or varnish.” If we coat something we produce a coating, not a coat.

Collateral Descendant. There can be none: a “collateral descendant” is not a descendant.

Colonel, *Judge*, *Governor*, etc., for *Mister*. Give a man a title only if it belongs to him, and only while it belongs to him.

Combine for *Combination*. The word, in this sense, has something of the meaning of conspiracy, but there is no justification for it as a noun, in any sense.

Commence for *Begin*. This is not actually incorrect, but — well, it is a matter of taste.

Commencement for *Termination*. A contribution to our noble tongue by its scholastic conservators, “commencement day” being their name for the last day of the collegiate year. It is ingeniously defended on the ground that on that day those on whom degrees are bestowed commence to hold them. Lovely!

Commit Suicide. Instead of “He committed suicide,” say, He killed himself, or, He took his life. For married we do not say “committed matrimony.” Unfortunately most of us do say, “got married,” which is almost as bad. For lack of a suitable verb we just sometimes say committed this or that, as in the instance of bigamy, for the verb to bigam is a blessing that is still in store for us.

Compare with for *Compare to*. “He had the immodesty to compare himself with Shakespeare.” Nothing necessarily immodest in that. Comparison with may be for observing a difference; comparison to affirms a similarity.

Complected. Anticipatory past participle of the verb “to complect.” Let us wait for that.

Conclude for *Decide*. “I concluded to go to town.” Having concluded a course of reasoning (implied) I decided to go to town. A decision is supposed to be made at the conclusion of a course of reasoning, but is not the conclusion itself. Conversely, the conclusion of a syllogism is not a decision, but an inference.

Connection. “In this connection I should like to say a word or two.” In connection with this matter.

Conscious for *Aware*. “The King was conscious of the conspiracy.” We are conscious of what we feel; aware of what we know.

Consent for *Assent*. “He consented to that opinion.” To consent is to agree to a proposal; to assent is to agree with a proposition.

Conservative for *Moderate*. “A conservative estimate”; “a conservative forecast"; "a conservative statement," and so on. These and many other abuses of the word are of recent growth in the newspapers and "halls of legislation." Having been found to have several meanings, conservative seems to be thought to mean everything.

Continually and *Continuously*. It seems that these words should have the same meaning, but in their use by good writers there is a difference. What is done continually is not done all the time, but continuous action is without interruption. A loquacious fellow, who nevertheless finds time to eat and sleep, is continually talking; but a great river flows continuously.

Convoy for *Escort*. "A man-of-war acted as convoy to the flotilla." The flotilla is the convoy, the man-of-war the escort.

Couple for *Two*. For two things to be a couple they must be of one general kind, and their number unimportant to the statement made of them. It would be weak to say, "He gave me only one, although he took a couple for himself." Couple expresses indifference to the exact number, as does several. That is true, even in the phrase, a married couple, for the number is carried in the adjective and needs no emphasis.

Created for *First Performed*. Stage slang. "Burbage created the part of Hamlet." What was it that its author did to it?

Critically for *Seriously*. "He has long been critically ill." A patient is critically ill only at the crisis of his disease.

Criticise for *Condemn*, or *Disparage*. Criticism is not necessarily censorious; it may approve.

Cunning for *Amusing*. Usually said of a child, or pet. This is pure Americanese, as is its synonym, "cute."

Curious for *Odd*, or *Singular*. To be curious is to have an inquiring mind, or mood — curiosity.

Custom for *Habit*. Communities have customs; individuals, habits — commonly bad ones.

Decease for *Die*.

Decidedly for *Very*, or *Certainly*. “It is decidedly cold.”

Declared for *Said*. To a newspaper reporter no one seems ever to say anything; all “declare.” Like “alleged” (which see) the word is tiresome exceedingly.

Defalcation for *Default*. A defalcation is a cutting off, a subtraction; a default is a failure in duty.

Definitely for *Definitively*. “It was definitely decided.” Definitely means precisely, with exactness; definitively means finally, conclusively.

Deliver. “He delivered an oration,” or “delivered a lecture.” Say, He made an oration, or gave a lecture.

Demean for *Debase* or *Degrade*. “He demeaned himself by accepting charity.” The word relates, not to meanness, but to demeanor, conduct, behavior. One may demean oneself with dignity and credit.

Demise for *Death*. Usually said of a person of note. Demise means the lapse, as by death, of some authority, distinction or privilege, which passes to another than the one that held it; as the demise of the Crown.

Democracy for *Democratic Party*. One could as properly call the Christian Church “the Christianity.”

Dépôt for *Station*. “Railroad dépôt.” A dépôt is a place of deposit; as, a dépôt of supply for an army.

Deprivation for *Privation*. “The mendicant showed the effects of deprivation.”

Deprivation refers to the act of depriving, taking away from; privation is the state of destitution, of not having.

Dilapidated for *Ruined*. Said of a building, or other structure. But the word is from the Latin *lapis*, a stone, and cannot properly be used of any but a stone structure.

Directly for *Immediately*. "I will come directly" means that I will come by the most direct route.

Dirt for *Earth*, *Soil*, or *Gravel*. A most disagreeable Americanism, discredited by general (and Presidential) use. "Make the dirt fly." Dirt means filth.

Distinctly for *Distinctively*. "The custom is distinctly Oriental." Distinctly is plainly; distinctively, in a way to distinguish one thing from others.

Donate for *Give*. Good American, but not good English.

Doubtlessly. A doubly adverbial form, like "illy."

Dress for *Gown*. Not so common as it was a few years ago. Dress means the entire costume.

Each Other for *One Another*. "The three looked at each other." That is, each looked at the other. But there were more than one other; so we should say they looked at one another, which means that each looked at another. Of two, say each other; of more than two, one another.

Edify for *Please*, or *Entertain*. Edify means to build; it has, therefore, the sense of uplift, improvement — usually moral, or spiritual.

Electrocution. To one having even an elementary knowledge of Latin grammar this word is no less than disgusting, and the thing meant by it is felt to be altogether too good for the word's inventor.

Empty for *Vacant*. Say, an empty bottle; but, a vacant house.

Employé. Good French, but bad English. Say, employee.

Endorse for *Approve*. To endorse is to write upon the back of, or to sign the promissory note of another. It is a commercial word, having insufficient dignity for literary use. You may endorse a check, but you approve a policy, or statement.

Endways. A corruption of endwise.

Entitled for *Authorized, Privileged.* “The man is not entitled to draw rations.” Say, entitled to rations. Entitled is not to be followed by an infinitive.

Episode for *Occurrence, Event, etc*. Properly, an episode is a narrative that is a subordinate part of another narrative. An occurrence considered by itself is not an episode.

Equally as for *Equally*. “This is equally as good.” Omit as. “He was of the same age, and equally as tall.” Say, equally tall.

Equivalent for *Equal*. “My salary is equivalent to yours.”

Essential for *Necessary*. This solecism is common among the best writers of this country and England. “It is essential to go early”; “Irrigation is essential to cultivation of arid lands,” and so forth. One thing is essential to another thing only if it is of the essence of it — an important and indispensable part of it, determining its nature; the soul of it.

Even for *Exact*. “An even dozen.”

Every for *Entire, Full*. “The president had every confidence in him.”

Every for *Ever*. “Every now and then.” This is nonsense: there can be no such thing as a now and then, nor, of course, a number of now and thens. Now and then is itself bad enough, reversing as it does the sequence of things, but it is idiomatic and there is no quarreling with it. But “every” is here a corruption of ever, meaning repeatedly, continually.

Ex. “Ex–President,” “an exconvict,” and the like. Say, former. In England one may say, Mr. Roosevelt, sometime President; though the usage is a trifle archaic.

Example for *Problem*. A heritage from the text-books. “An example in arithmetic.” An equally bad word for the same thing is “sum”: “Do the sum,” for Solve the problem.

Excessively for *Exceedingly*. “The disease is excessively painful.” “The weather is excessively cold.” Anything that is painful at all is excessively so. Even a slight degree or small amount of what is disagreeable or injurious is excessive — that is to say, redundant, superfluous, not required.

Executed. “The condemned man was executed.” He was hanged, or otherwise put to death; it is the sentence that is executed.

Executive for *Secret*. An executive session of a deliberative body is a session for executive business, as distinguished from legislative. It is commonly secret, but a secret session is not necessarily executive.

Expect for *Believe*, or *Suppose*. “I expect he will go.” Say, I believe (suppose or think) he will go; or, I expect him to go.

Expectorate for *Spit*. The former word is frequently used, even in laws and ordinances, as a euphemism for the latter. It not only means something entirely different, but to one with a Latin ear is far more offensive.

Experience for *Suffer*, or *Undergo*. “The sinner experienced a change of heart.” This will do if said lightly or mockingly. It does not indicate a serious frame of mind in the speaker.

Extend for *Proffer*. “He extended an invitation.” One does not always hold out an invitation in one’s hand; it may be spoken or sent.

Fail. “He failed to note the hour.” That implies that he tried to note it, but did not succeed. Failure carries always the sense of endeavor; when there has been no endeavor there is no failure. A falling stone cannot fail to strike you, for it does not try; but a marksman firing at you may fail to hit you; and I hope he always will.

Favor for *Resemble*. “The child favors its father.”

Feel of for *Feel*. “The doctor felt of the patient’s head.” “Smell of” and “taste of” are incorrect too.

Feminine for *Female*. “A feminine member of the club.” Feminine refers, not to sex proper, but to gender, which may be defined as the sex of words. The same is true of masculine.

Fetch for *Bring*. Fetching includes, not only bringing, but going to get — going for and returning with. You may bring what you did not go for.

Finances for *Wealth,* or *Pecuniary Resources*.

Financial for *Pecuniary*. “His financial reward”; “he is financially responsible,” and so forth.

Firstly. If this word could mean anything it would mean firstlike, whatever that might mean. The ordinal numbers should have no adverbial form: “firstly,” “secondly,” and the rest are words without meaning.

Fix. This is, in America, a word-of-all-work, most frequently meaning repair, or prepare. Do not so use it.

Forebears for *Ancestors*. The word is sometimes spelled forbears, a worse spelling than the other, but not much. If used at all it should be spelled *forebeers*, for it means those who have *been* before. A forebeer is one who fore-was. Considered in any way, it is a senseless word.

Forecasted. For this abominable word we are indebted to the weather bureau — at least it was not sent upon us until that affliction was with us. Let us hope that it may some day be losted from the language.

Former and *Latter*. Indicating the first and the second of things previously named, these words are unobjectionable if not too far removed from the names that they stand for. If they are they confuse, for the reader has to look back to the names. Use them sparingly.

Funeral Obsequies. Tautological. Say, obsequies; the word is now used in none but a funereal sense.

Fully for *Definitively,* or *Finally*. "After many preliminary examinations he was fully committed for trial." The adverb is meaningless: a defendant is never partly committed for trial. This is a solecism to which lawyers are addicted. And sometimes they have been heard to say "fullied."

Funds for *Money*. "He was out of funds." Funds are not money in general, but sums of money or credit available for particular purposes.

Furnish for *Provide*, or *Supply*. "Taxation furnished the money." A pauper may furnish a house if some one will provide the furniture, or the money to buy it. "His flight furnishes a presumption of guilt." It supplies it.

Generally for *Usually*. "The winds are generally high." "A fool is generally vain." This misuse of the word appears to come of abbreviating: Generally speaking, the weather is bad. A fool, to speak generally, is vain.

Gent for *Gentleman*. Vulgar exceedingly.

Genteel. This word, meaning polite, or well mannered, was once in better repute than it is now, and its noun, gentility, is still not infrequently found in the work of good writers. Genteel is most often used by those who write, as the Scotchman of the anecdote joked — wi’ deeficulty.

Gentleman. It is not possible to teach the correct use of this overworked word: one must be bred to it. Everybody knows that it is not synonymous with man, but among the “genteel” and those ambitious to be thought “genteel” it is commonly so used in discourse too formal for the word “gent.” To use the word gentleman correctly, be one.

Genuine for *Authentic*, or *Veritable*. “A genuine document,” “a genuine surprise,” and the like.

Given. “The soldier was given a rifle.” What was given is the rifle, not the soldier. “The house was given a coat (coating) of paint.” Nothing can be “given” anything.

Goatee. In this country goatee is frequently used for a tuft of beard on the point of the chin — what is sometimes called “an imperial,” apparently because the late Emperor Napoleon III wore his beard so. His Majesty the Goat is graciously pleased to wear his beneath the chin.

Got Married for *Married*. If this is correct we should say, also, “got dead” for died; one expression is as good as the other.

Gotten for *Got*. This has gone out of good use, though in such compounded words as begotten and misbegotten it persists respectably.

Graduated for *Was Graduated*.

Gratuitous for *Unwarranted*. “A gratuitous assertion.” Gratuitous means without cost.

Grueling. Used chiefly by newspaper reporters; as, “He was subjected to a grueling cross-examination.” “It was grueling weather.” Probably a corruption of grilling.

Gubernatorial. Eschew it; it is not English, is needless and bombastic. Leave it to those who call a political office a “chair.” “Gubernatorial chair” is good enough for them. So is hanging.

Had Better for *Would Better*. This is not defensible as an idiom, as those who always used it before their attention was directed to it take the trouble to point out. It comes of such contractions as he’d for he would, I’d for I would. These clipped words are erroneously restored as “he had,” “I had.” So we have such monstrosities as “He had better beware,” “I had better go.”

Hail for *Come*. “He hails from Chicago.” This is sea speech, and comes from the custom of hailing passing ships. It will not do for serious discourse.

Have Got for *Have*. “I have got a good horse” directs attention rather to the act of getting than to the state of having, and represents the capture as recently completed.

Head over Heels. A transposition of words hardly less surprising than (to the person most concerned) the mischance that it fails to describe. What is meant is heels over head.

Healthy for *Wholesome*. “A healthy climate.” “A healthy occupation.” Only a living thing can be healthy.

Helpmeet for *Helpmate*. In Genesis Adam’s wife is called “an help meet for him,” that is, fit for him. The ridiculous word appears to have had no other origin.

Hereafter for *Henceforth*. Hereafter means at some time in the future; henceforth, always in the future. The penitent who promises to be good hereafter commits himself to the performance of a single good act, not to a course of good conduct.

Honeymoon. Moon here means month, so it is incorrect to say, “a week’s honeymoon,” or, “Their honeymoon lasted a year.”

Horseflesh for *Horses*. A singularly senseless and disagreeable word which, when used, as it commonly is, with reference to hippophilism, savors rather more of the spit than of the spirit.

Humans as a Noun. We have no single word having the general yet limited meaning that this is sometimes used to express — a meaning corresponding to that of the word animals, as the word men would if it included women and children. But there is time enough to use two words.

Hung for *Hanged*. A bell, or a curtain, is hung, but a man is hanged. Hung is the junior form of the participle, and is now used for everything but man. Perhaps it is our reverence for the custom of hanging men that sacredly preserves the elder form — as some, even, of the most zealous American spelling reformers still respect the u in Saviour.

Hurry for *Haste* and *Hasten*. To hurry is to hasten in a more or less disorderly manner. Hurry is misused, also, in another sense: “There is no hurry” — meaning, There is no reason for haste.

Hurt for *Harm*. “It does no hurt.” To be hurt is to feel pain, but one may be harmed without knowing it. To spank a child, or flout a fool, hurts without harming.

Idea for *Thought, Purpose, Expectation, etc*. “I had no idea that it was so cold.” “When he went abroad it was with no idea of remaining.”

Identified with. “He is closely identified with the temperance movement.” Say, connected.

Ilk for *Kind*. “Men of that ilk.” This Scotch word has a narrowly limited and specific meaning. It relates to an ancestral estate having the same name as the person spoken of. Macdonald of that ilk means, Macdonald of Macdonald. The phrase quoted above is without meaning.

Illy for *Ill*. There is no such word as illy, for ill itself is an adverb.

Imaginary Line. The adjective is needless. Geometrically, every line is imaginary; its graphic representation is a mark. True the text-books say, draw a line, but in a mathematical sense the line already exists; the drawing only makes its course visible.

In for *Into*. “He was put in jail.” “He went in the house.” A man may be in jail, or be in a house, but when the act of entrance — the movement of something from the outside to the inside of another thing — is related the correct word is into if the latter thing is named.

Inaugurate for *Begin, Establish, etc*. Inauguration implies some degree of formality and ceremony.

Incumbent for *Obligatory*. “It was incumbent upon me to relieve him.” Infelicitous and work-worn. Say, It was my duty, or, if enamored of that particular metaphor, It lay upon me.

Individual. As a noun, this word means something that cannot be considered as divided, a unit. But it is incorrect to call a man, woman or child an individual, except with reference to mankind, to society or to a class of persons. It will not do to say, “An individual stood in the street,” when no mention nor allusion has been made, nor is going to be made, to some aggregate of individuals considered as a whole.

Indorse. See *Endorse*.

Insane Asylum. Obviously an asylum cannot be unsound in mind. Say, asylum for the insane.

In Spite of. In most instances it is better to say despite.

Inside of. Omit the preposition.

Insignificant for *Trivial*, or *Small*. Insignificant means not signifying anything, and should be used only in contrast, expressed or implied, with something that is important for what it implies. The bear's tail may be insignificant to a naturalist tracing the animal's descent from an earlier species, but to the rest of us, not concerned with the matter, it is merely small.

Insoluble for *Unsolvable*. Use the former word for material substances, the latter for problems.

Inst., Prox., Ult. These abbreviations of *instante mense* (in the present month), *proximo mense* (in the next month) and *ultimo mense* (in the last month), are serviceable enough in commercial correspondence, but, like A.M., P.M. and many other contractions of Latin words, could profitably be spared from literature.

Integrity for *Honesty*. The word means entireness, wholeness. It may be rightly used to affirm possession of all the virtues, that is, unity of moral character.

Involve for *Entail*. "Proof of the charges will involve his dismissal." Not at all; it will entail it. To involve is, literally, to infold, not to bring about, nor cause to ensue. An unofficial investigation, for example, may involve character and reputation, but the ultimate consequence is entailed. A question, in the parliamentary sense, may involve a principle; its settlement one way or another may entail expense, or injury to interests. An act may involve one's honor and entail disgrace.

It for *So*. "Going into the lion's cage is dangerous; you should not do it." Do so is the better expression, as a rule, for the word it is a pronoun, meaning a thing, or object, and therefore incapable of being done. Colloquially we may say do it, or do this, or do that, but in serious written discourse greater precision is desirable, and is better obtained, in most cases, by use of the adverb.

Item for *Brief Article*. Commonly used of a narrative in a newspaper. Item connotes an aggregate of which it is a unit — one thing of many. Hence it suggests more than we may wish to direct attention to.

Jackies for *Sailors*. Vulgar, and especially offensive to seamen.

Jeopardize for *Imperil*, or *Endanger*. The correct word is jeopard, but in any case there is no need for anything so farfetched and stilted.

Juncture. Juncture means a joining, a junction; its use to signify a time, however critical a time, is absurd. “At this juncture the woman screamed.” In reading that account of it we scream too.

Just Exactly. Nothing is gained in strength nor precision by this kind of pleonasm. Omit just.

Juvenile for *Child*. This needless use of the adjective for the noun is probably supposed to be humorous, like “canine” for dog, “optic” for eye, “anatomy” for body, and the like. Happily the offense is not very common.

Kind of a for *Kind of*. “He was that kind of a man.” Say that kind of man. Man here is generic, and a genus comprises many kinds. But there cannot be more than one kind of one thing. *Kind of* followed by an adjective, as, “kind of good,” is almost too gross for censure.

Landed Estate for *Property in Land*. Dreadful!

Last and *Past*. “Last week.” “The past week.” Neither is accurate: a week cannot be the last if another is already begun; and all weeks except this one are past. Here two wrongs seem to make a right: we can say the week last past. But will we? I trow not.

Later on. On is redundant; say, later.

Laundry. Meaning a place where clothing is washed, this word cannot mean, also, clothing sent there to be washed.

Lay (to place) for *Lie* (to recline). “The ship lays on her side.” A more common error is made in the past tense, as, “He laid down on the grass.” The confusion comes of the identity of a present tense of the transitive verb to lay and the past tense of the intransitive verb to lie.

Leading Question. A leading question is not necessarily an important one; it is one that is so framed as to suggest, or lead to, the answer desired. Few others than lawyers use the term correctly.

Lease. To say of a man that he leases certain premises leaves it doubtful whether he is lessor or lessee. Being ambiguous, the word should be used with caution.

Leave for *Go away*. “He left yesterday.” Leave is a transitive verb; name the place of departure.

Leave for *Let*. “Leave it alone.” By this many persons mean, not that it is to be left in solitude, but that it is to be untouched, or unmolested.

Lengthways for *Lengthwise*.

Lengthy. Usually said in disparagement of some wearisome discourse. It is no better than breadthy, or thicknessy.

Leniency for *Lenity*. The words are synonymous, but the latter is the better.

Less for *Fewer*. “The regiment had less than five hundred men.” Less relates to quantity, fewer, to number.

Limited for *Small, Inadequate, etc.* “The army’s operations were confined to a limited area.” “We had a limited supply of food.” A large area and an adequate supply would also be limited. Everything that we know about is limited.

Liable for *Likely*. “Man is liable to err.” Man is not liable to err, but to error. Liable should be followed, not by an infinitive, but by a preposition.

Like for *As*, or *As if*. “The matter is now like it was.” “The house looked like it would fall.”

Likely for *Probably*. “He will likely be elected.” If likely is thought the better word (and in most cases it is) put it this way: “It is likely that he will be elected,” or, “He is likely to be elected.”

Line for *Kind*, or *Class*. “This line of goods.” Leave the word to “salesladies” and “salesgentlemen.” “That line of business.” Say, that business.

Literally for *Figuratively*. “The stream was literally alive with fish.” “His eloquence literally swept the audience from its feet.” It is bad enough to exaggerate, but to affirm the truth of the exaggeration is intolerable.

Loan for *Lend*. “I loaned him ten dollars.” We lend, but the act of lending, or, less literally, the thing lent, is a loan.

Locate. “After many removals the family located at Smithville.” Some dictionaries give locate as an intransitive verb having that meaning, but — well, dictionaries are funny.

Lots, or *a Lot*, for *Much*, or *Many*. “Lots of things.” “A lot of talk.”

Love for *Like*. “I love to travel.” “I love apples.” Keep the stronger word for a stronger feeling.

Lunch for *Luncheon*. But do not use luncheon as a verb.

Mad for *Angry*. An Americanism of lessening prevalence. It is probable that anger is a kind of madness (insanity), but that is not what the misusers of the word mad mean to affirm.

Maintain for *Contend*. “The senator maintained that the tariff was iniquitous.” He maintained it only if he proved it.

Majority for *Plurality*. Concerning votes cast in an election, a majority is more than half the total; a plurality is the excess of one candidate’s votes over another’s. Commonly the votes compared are those for the successful candidate and those for his most nearly successful competitor.

Make for *Earn*. “He makes fifty dollars a month by manual labor.”

Mansion for *Dwelling*, or *House*. Usually mere hyperbole, a lamentable fault of our national literature. Even our presidents, before Roosevelt, called their dwelling the Executive Mansion.

Masculine for *Male*. See *Feminine*.

Mend for *Repair*. “They mended the road.” To mend is to repair, but to repair is not always to mend. A stocking is mended, a road repaired.

Meet for *Meeting*. This belongs to the language of sport, which persons of sense do not write — nor read.

Militate. “Negligence militates against success.” If “militate” meant anything it would mean fight, but there is no such word.

Mind for *Obey*. This is a reasonless extension of one legitimate meaning of mind, namely, to heed, to give attention.

Minus for *Lacking*, or *Without*. “After the battle he was minus an ear.” It is better in serious composition to avoid such alien words as have vernacular equivalents.

Mistaken for *Mistake*. “You are mistaken.” For whom? Say, You mistake.

Monarch for *King*, *Emperor*, or *Sovereign*. Not only hyperbolical, but inaccurate. There is not a monarch in Christendom.

Moneyed for *Wealthy*. “The moneyed men of New York.” One might as sensibly say, “The cattled men of Texas,” or, “The lobstered men of the fish market.”

Most for *Almost*. “The apples are most all gone.” “The returning travelers were most home.”

Moved for *Removed*. “The family has moved to another house.” “The Joneses were moving.”

Mutual. By this word we express a reciprocal relation. It implies exchange, a giving and taking, not a mere possessing in common. There can be a mutual affection, or a mutual hatred, but not a mutual friend, nor a mutual horse.

Name for *Title and Name*. “His name was Mr. Smith.” Surely no babe was ever christened Mister.

Necessaries for *Means*. “Bread and meat are necessaries of life.” Not so; they are the mere means, for one can, and many do, live comfortably without them. Food and drink are necessaries of life, but particular kinds of food and drink are not.

Necessities for *Necessaries*. “Necessities of life are those things without which we cannot live.”

Née. Feminine of *né*, born. “Mrs. Jones, *née* Lucy Smith.” She could hardly have been christened before her birth. If you must use the French word say, *née* Smith.

Negotiate. From the Latin *negotium*. It means, as all know, to fix the terms for a transaction, to bargain. But when we say, “The driver negotiated a difficult turn of the road,” or, “The chauffeur negotiated a hill,” we speak nonsense.

Neither — or for *Neither — nor*. “Neither a cat or fish has wool.” Always after neither use nor.

New Beginner for *Beginner*.

Nice for *Good*, or *Agreeable*. “A nice girl.” Nice means fastidious, delicately discriminative, and the like. Pope uses the word admirably of a dandy who was skilled in the nice conduct [management] of a clouded cane.

Noise for *Sound*. “A noise like a flute”; “a noise of twittering birds,” *etc.* A noise is a loud or disagreeable sound, or combination or succession of sounds.

None. Usually, and in most cases, singular; as, None has come. But it is not singular because it always means not one, for frequently it does not, as, The bottle was full of milk, but none is left. When it refers to numbers, not quantity, popular usage stubbornly insists that it is plural, and at least one respectable authority says that as a singular it is offensive. One is sorry to be offensive to a good man.

No Use. “He tried to smile, but it was no use.” Say, of no use, or, less colloquially, in vain.

Novel for *Romance*. In a novel there is at least an apparent attention to considerations of probability; it is a narrative of what might occur. Romance flies with a free wing and owns no allegiance to likelihood. Both are fiction, both works of imagination, but should not be confounded. They are as distinct as beast and bird.

Numerous for *Many*. Rightly used, numerous relates to numbers, but does not imply a great number. A correct use is seen in the term numerous verse — verse consisting of poetic numbers; that is, rhythmical feet.

Obnoxious for *Offensive*. Obnoxious means exposed to evil. A soldier in battle is obnoxious to danger.

Occasion for *Induce*, or *Cause*. “His arrival occasioned a great tumult.” As a verb, the word is needless and unpleasing.

Occasional Poems. These are not, as so many authors and compilers seem to think, poems written at irregular and indefinite intervals, but poems written for *occasions*, such as anniversaries, festivals, celebrations and the like.

Of Any for *Of All*. “The greatest poet of any that we have had.”

Offhanded and *Offhandedly*. Offhand is both adjective and adverb; these are bastard forms.

On the Street. A street comprises the roadway and the buildings at each side. Say, in the street. He lives in Broadway.

One Another for *Each Other*. See *Each Other*.

Only. “He only had one.” Say, He had only one, or, better, one only. The other sentence might be taken to mean that only he had one; that, indeed, is what it distinctly says. The correct placing of only in a sentence requires attention and skill.

Opine for *Think*. The word is not very respectably connected.

Opposite for *Contrary*. “I hold the opposite opinion.” “The opposite practice.”

Or for *Nor*. Probably our most nearly universal solecism. “I cannot see the sun or the moon.” This means that I am unable to see one of them, though I may see the other. By using nor, I affirm the invisibility of both, which is what I wanted to do. If a man is not white or black he may nevertheless be a Negro or a Caucasian; but if he is not white nor black he belongs to some other race. See *Neither*.

Ordinarily for *Usually*. Clumsy.

Ovation. In ancient Rome an ovation was an inferior triumph accorded to victors in minor wars or unimportant battle. Its character and limitations, like those of the triumph, were strictly defined by law and custom. An enthusiastic demonstration in honor of an American civilian is nothing like that, and should not be called by its name.

Over for *About*, *In*, or *Concerning*. “Don’t cry over spilt milk.” “He rejoiced over his acquittal.”

Over for *More than*. “A sum of over ten thousand dollars.” “Upward of ten thousand dollars” is equally objectionable.

Over for *On*. “The policeman struck him over the head.” If the blow was over the head it did not hit him.

Over with. “Let us have it over with.” Omit with. A better expression is, Let us get done with it.

Outside of. Omit the preposition.

Pair for *Pairs*. If a word has a good plural use each form in its place.

Pants for *Trousers*. Abbreviated from pantaloons, which are no longer worn. Vulgar exceedingly.

Partially for *Partly*. A dictionary word, to swell the book.

Party for *Person*. “A party named Brown.” The word, used in that sense, has the excuse that it is a word. Otherwise it is no better than “pants” and “gent.” A person making an agreement, however, is a party to that agreement.

Patron for *Customer*.

Pay for *Give*, *Make*, *etc*. “He pays attention.” “She paid a visit to Niagara.” It is conceivable that one may owe attention or a visit to another person, but one cannot be indebted to a place.

Pay. “Laziness does not pay.” “It does not pay to be uncivil.” This use of the word is grossly commercial. Say, Indolence is unprofitable. There is no advantage in incivility.

Peek for *Peep*. Seldom heard in England, though common here. “I peeked out through the curtain and saw him.” That it is a variant of peep is seen in the child’s word peek-a-boo, equivalent to bo-peep. Better use the senior word.

Peculiar for *Odd*, or *Unusual*. Also sometimes used to denote distinction, or particularity. Properly a thing is peculiar only to another thing, of which it is characteristic, nothing else having it; as knowledge of the use of fire is peculiar to Man.

People for *Persons*. “Three people were killed.” “Many people are superstitious.” People has retained its parity of meaning with the Latin *populus*, whence it comes, and the word is not properly used except to designate a population, or large fractions of it considered in the mass. To speak of any stated or small number of persons as people is incorrect.

Per. “Five dollars *per* day.” “Three *per* hundred.” Say, three dollars a day; three in a hundred. If you must use the Latin preposition use the Latin noun too: *per diem; per centum*.

Perpetually for *Continually*. “The child is perpetually asking questions.” What is done perpetually is done continually and forever.

Phenomenal for *Extraordinary*, or *Surprising*. Everything that occurs is phenomenal, for all that we know about is phenomena, appearances. Of realities, noumena, we are ignorant.

Plead (pronounced “pled”) for *Pleaded*. “He plead guilty.”

Plenty for *Plentiful*. “Fish and fowl were plenty.”

Poetess. A foolish word, like “authoress.”

Poetry for *Verse*. Not all verse is poetry; not all poetry is verse. Few persons can know, or hope to know, the one from the other, but he who has the humility to doubt (if such a one there be) should say verse if the composition is metrical.

Point Blank. “He fired at him point blank.” This usually is intended to mean directly, or at short range. But point blank means the point at which the line of sight is crossed downward by the trajectory — the curve described by the missile.

Poisonous for *Venomous*. Hemlock is poisonous, but a rattlesnake is venomous.

Politics. The word is not plural because it happens to end with s.

Possess for *Have*. “To possess knowledge is to possess power.” Possess is lacking in naturalness and unduly emphasizes the concept of ownership.

Practically for *Virtually*. This error is very common. “It is practically conceded.” “The decision was practically unanimous.” “The panther and the cougar are practically the same animal.” These and similar misapplications of the word are virtually without excuse.

Predicate for *Found*, or *Base*. “I predicate my argument on universal experience.” What is predicated of something is affirmed as an attribute of it, as omnipotence is predicated of the Deity.

Prejudice for *Prepossession*. Literally, a prejudice is merely a prejudgment — a decision before evidence — and may be favorable or unfavorable, but it is so much more frequently used in the latter sense than in the former that clarity is better got by the other word for reasonless approval.

Preparedness for *Readiness*. An awkward and needless word much used in discussion of national armaments, as, “Our preparedness for war.”

Preside. “Professor Swackenhauer presided at the piano.” “The deviled crab table was presided over by Mrs. Dooley.” How would this sound? “The ginger pop stand was under the administration of President Woolwit, and Professor Sooffle presided at the flute.”

Pretend for *Profess*. “I do not pretend to be infallible.” Of course not; one does not care to confess oneself a pretender. To pretend is to try to deceive; one may profess quite honestly.

Preventative for *Preventive*. No such word as preventative.

Previous for *Previously*. “The man died previous to receipt of the letter.”

Prior to for *Before*. Stilted.

Propose for *Purpose*, or *Intend*. “I propose to go to Europe.” A mere intention is not a proposal.

Proposition for *Proposal*. “He made a proposition.” In current slang almost anything is a proposition. A difficult enterprise is “a tough proposition,” an agile wrestler, “a slippery proposition,” and so forth.

Proportions for *Dimensions*. “A rock of vast proportions.” Proportions relate to form; dimensions to magnitude.

Proven for *Proved*. Good Scotch, but bad English.

Proverbial for *Familiar*. “The proverbial dog in the manger.” The animal is not “proverbial” for it is not mentioned in a proverb, but in a fable.

Quit for *Cease*, *Stop*. “Jones promises to quit drinking.” In another sense, too, the word is commonly misused, as, “He has quit the town.” Say, quitted.

Quite. “She is quite charming.” If it is meant that she is entirely charming this is right, but usually the meaning intended to be conveyed is less than that — that she is rather, or somewhat, charming.

Raise for *Bring up, Grow, Breed, etc.* In this country a word-of-all-work: “raise children,” “raise wheat,” “raise cattle.” Children are brought up, grain, hay and vegetables are grown, animals and poultry are bred.

Real for *Really*, or *Very*. “It is real good of him.” “The weather was real cold.”

Realize for *Conceive*, or *Comprehend*. “I could not realize the situation.” Writers caring for precision use this word in the sense of to make real, not to make seem real. A dream seems real, but is actually realized when made to come true.

Recollect for *Remember*. To remember is to have in memory; to recollect is to recall what has escaped from memory. We remember automatically; in recollecting we make a conscious effort.

Redeem for *Retrieve*. “He redeemed his good name.” Redemption (Latin *redemptio*, from *re* and *dimere*) is allied to ransom, and carries the sense of buying back; whereas to retrieve is merely to recover what was lost.

Redound for *Conduce*. “A man’s honesty redounds to his advantage.” We make a better use of the word if we say of one (for example) who has squandered a fortune, that its loss redounds to his advantage, for the word denotes a fluctuation, as from seeming evil to actual good; as villification may direct attention to one’s excellent character.

Refused. “He was refused a crown.” It is the crown that was refused to him. See *Given*.

Regular for *Natural*, or *Customary*. “Flattery of the people is the demagogue’s regular means to political preferment.” Regular properly relates to a rule (*regula*) more definite than the law of antecedent and consequent.

Reliable for *Trusty*, or *Trustworthy*. A word not yet admitted to the vocabulary of the fastidious, but with a strong backing for the place.

Remit for *Send*. “On receiving your bill I will remit the money.” Remit does not mean that; it means give back, yield up, relinquish, *etc*. It means, also, to cancel, as in the phrase, the remission of sins.

Rendition for *Interpretation*, or *Performance*. “The actor’s rendition of the part was good.” Rendition means a surrender, or a giving back.

Reportorial. A vile word, improperly made. It assumes the Latinized spelling, “reporter.” The Romans had not the word, for they were, fortunately for them, without the thing.

Repudiate for *Deny*. “He repudiated the accusation.”

Reside for *Live*. “They reside in Hohokus.” Stilted.

Residence for *Dwelling*, or *House*. See *Mansion*.

Respect for *Way*, or *Matter*. “They were alike in that respect.” The misuse comes of abbreviating: the sentence properly written might be, They were alike in respect of that — i.e., with regard to that. The word in the bad sense has even been pluralized: “In many respects it is admirable.”

Respective. “They went to their respective homes.” The adjective here (if an adjective is thought necessary) should be several. In the adverbial form the word is properly used in the sentence following: John and James are bright and dull, respectively. That is, John is bright and James dull.

Responsible. “The bad weather is responsible for much sickness.” “His intemperance was responsible for his crime.” Responsibility is not an attribute of anything but human beings, and few of these can respond, in damages or otherwise. Responsible is nearly synonymous with accountable and answerable, which, also, are frequently misused.

Restive for *Restless*. These words have directly contrary meanings; the dictionaries’ disallowance of their identity would be something to be thankful for, but that is a dream.

Retire for *Go to Bed*. English of the “genteel” sort. See *Genteel*.

Rev. for *The Rev*. “Rev. Dr. Smith.”

Reverence for *Revere*.

Ride for *Drive*. On horseback one does drive, and in a vehicle one does ride, but a distinction is needed here, as in England; so, here as there, we may profitably make it, riding in the saddle and driving in the carriage.

Roomer for *Lodger*. See *Bedder* and *Mealer* — if you can find them.

Round for *About*. “They stood round.” See *Around*.

Ruination for *Ruin*. Questionably derived and problematically needful.

Run for *Manage*, or *Conduct*. Vulgar — hardly better than slang.

Say for *Voice*. “He had no say in determining the matter.” Vulgar.

Scholar for *Student*, or *Pupil*. A scholar is a person who is learned, not a person who is learning.

Score for *Win*, *Obtain*, *etc*. “He scored an advantage over his opponent.” To score is not to win a point, but to record it.

Second-handed for *Second-hand*. There is no such word.

Secure for *Procure*. “He secured a position as book-keeper.” “The dwarf secured a stick and guarded the jewels that he had found.” Then it was the jewels that were secured.

Seldom ever. A most absurd locution.

Self-confessed. “A self-confessed assassin.” Self is superfluous: one’s sins cannot be confessed by another.

Sensation for *Emotion*. “The play caused a great sensation.” “A sensational newspaper.” A sensation is a physical feeling; an emotion, a mental. Doubtless the one usually accompanies the other, but the good writer will name the one that he has in mind, not the other. There are few errors more common than the one here noted.

Sense for *Smell*. “She sensed the fragrance of roses.” Society English.

Set for *Sit*. “A setting hen.”

Settee for *Settle*. This word belongs to the peasantry of speech.

Settle for *Pay*. “Settle the bill.” “I shall take it now and settle for it later.”

Shades for *Shade*. “Shades of Noah! how it rained!” “O shades of Caesar!” A shade is a departed soul, as conceived by the ancients; one to each mortal part is the proper allowance.

Show for *Chance*, or *Opportunity*. “He didn’t stand a show.” Say, He had no chance.

Sick for *Ill*. Good usage now limits this word to cases of nausea, but it is still legitimate in sickly, sickness, love-sick, and the like.

Side for *Agree*, or *Stand*. “I side with the Democrats.” “He always sided with what he thought right.”

Sideburns for *Burnsides*. A form of whiskers named from a noted general of the civil war, Ambrose E. Burnside. It seems to be thought that the word side has something to do with it, and that as an adjective it should come first, according to our idiom.

Side-hill for *Hillside*. A reasonless transposition for which it is impossible to assign a cause, unless it is abbreviated from side o’ the hill.

Sideways for *Sidewise*. See *Endways*.

Since for *Ago*. “He came here not long since and died.”

Smart for *Bright*, or *Able*. An Americanism that is dying out. But “smart” has recently come into use for fashionable, which is almost as bad.

Snap for *Period* (of time) or *Spell*. “A cold snap.” This is a word of incomprehensible origin in that sense; we can know only that its parents were not respectable. “Spell” is itself not very well-born.

So — as. See *As — as*.

So for *True*. “If you see it in the Daily Livercomplaint it is so.” “Is that so?” Colloquial and worse.

Solemnize. This word rightly means to make solemn, not to perform, or celebrate, ceremoniously something already solemn, as a marriage, or a mass. We have no exact synonym, but this explains, rather than justifies, its use.

Some for *Somewhat*. “He was hurt some.”

Soon for *Willingly*. “I would as soon go as stay.” “That soldier would sooner eat than fight.” Say, rather eat.

Space for *Period*. “A long space of time.” Space is so different a thing from time that the two do not go well together.

Spend for *Pass*. “We shall spend the summer in Europe.” Spend denotes a voluntary relinquishment, but time goes from us against our will.

Square for *Block*. “He lives three squares away.” A city block is seldom square.

Squirt for *Spurt*. Absurd.

Stand and *Stand for* for *Endure*. “The patient stands pain well.” “He would not stand for misrepresentation.”

Standpoint for *Point of View*, or *Viewpoint*.

State for *Say*. “He stated that he came from Chicago.” “It is stated that the president is angry.” We state a proposition, or a principle, but say that we are well. And we say our prayers — some of us.

Still Continue. “The rain still continues.” Omit still; it is contained in the other word.

Stock. “I take no stock in it.” Disagreeably commercial. Say, I have no faith in it. Many such metaphorical expressions were unobjectionable, even pleasing, in the mouth of him who first used them, but by constant repetition by others have become mere slang, with all the offensiveness of plagiarism. The prime objectionableness of slang is its hideous lack of originality. Until mouth-worn it is not slang.

Stop for *Stay*. “Prayer will not stop the ravages of cholera.” Stop is frequently misused for stay in another sense of the latter word: “He is stopping at the hotel.” Stopping is not a continuing act; one cannot be stopping who has already stopped.

Stunt. A word recently introduced and now overworked, meaning a task, or performance in one’s trade, or calling — doubtless a variant of stint, without that word’s suggestion of allotment and limitation. It is still in the reptilian stage of evolution.

Subsequent for *Later*, or *Succeeding*. Legitimate enough, but ugly and needless.

“He was subsequently hanged.” Say, afterward.

Substantiate for *Prove*. Why?

Success. “The project was a success.” Say, was successful. Success should not have the indefinite article.

Such Another for *Another Such*. There is illustrious authority for this — in poetry. Poets are a lawless folk, and may do as they please so long as they do please.

Such for *So*. “He had such weak legs that he could not stand.” The absurdity of this is made obvious by changing the form of the statement: “His legs were such weak that he could not stand.” If the word is an adverb in the one sentence it is in the other. “He is such a great bore that none can endure him.” Say, so great a bore.

Suicide. This is never a verb. “He suicided.” Say, He killed himself, or He took his own life. See *Commit Suicide*.

Supererogation. To supererogate is to overpay, or to do more than duty requires. But the excess must be in the line of duty; merely needless and irrelevant action is not supererogation. The word is not a natural one, at best.

Sure for *Surely*. “They will come, sure.” Slang.

Survive for *Live*, or *Persist*. Survival is an outliving, or outlasting of something else. “The custom survives” is wrong, but a custom may survive its utility. Survive is a transitive verb.

Sustain for *Incur*. “He sustained an injury.” “He sustained a broken neck.” That means that although his neck was broken he did not yield to the mischance.

Talented for *Gifted*. These are both past participles, but there was once the verb to gift, whereas there was never the verb “to talent.” If Nature did not talent a person the person is not talented.

Tantamount for *Equivalent*. “Apology is tantamount to confession.” Let this ugly word alone; it is not only illegitimate, but ludicrously suggests catamount.

Tasty for *Tasteful*. Vulgar.

Tear Down for *Pull Down*. “The house was torn down.” This is an indigenous solecism; they do not say so in England.

Than Whom. See *Whom*.

The. A little word that is terribly overworked. It is needlessly affixed to names of most diseases: “the cholera,” “the smallpox,” “the scarlet fever,” and such. Some escape it: we do not say, “the sciatica,” nor “the locomotor ataxia.” It is too common in general propositions, as, “The payment of interest is the payment of debt.” “The virtues that are automatic are the best.” “The tendency to falsehood should be checked.” “Kings are not under the control of the law.” It is impossible to note here all forms of this misuse, but a page of almost any book will supply abundant instance. We do not suffer so abject slavery to the definite article as the French, but neither do we manifest their spirit of rebellion by sometimes cutting off the oppressor’s tail. One envies the Romans, who had no article, definite or indefinite.

The Following. “Washington wrote the following.” The following what? Put in the noun. “The following animals are ruminants.” It is not the animals that follow, but their names.

The Same. “They cooked the flesh of the lion and ate the same.” “An old man lived in a cave, and the same was a cripple.” In humorous composition this may do, though it is not funny; but in serious work use the regular pronoun.

Then as an Adjective. “The then governor of the colony.” Say, the governor of the colony at that time.

Those Kind for *That Kind*. “Those kind of things.” Almost too absurd for condemnation, and happily not very common out of the class of analphabets.

Though for *If*. “She wept as though her heart was broken.” Many good writers, even some devoid of the lexicographers’ passion for inclusion and approval, have specifically defended this locution, backing their example by their precept. Perhaps it is a question of taste; let us attend their cry and pass on.

Thrifty for *Thriving*. “A thrifty village.” To thrive is an end; thrift is a means to that end.

Through for *Done*. “The lecturer is through talking.” “I am through with it.” Say, I have done with it.

To. As part of an infinitive it should not be separated from the other part by an adverb, as, “to hastily think,” for hastily to think, or, to think hastily. Condemnation of the split infinitive is now pretty general, but it is only recently that any one seems to have thought of it. Our forefathers and we elder writers of this generation used it freely and without shame — perhaps because it had not a name, and our crime could not be pointed out without too much explanation.

To for *At*. “We have been to church,” “I was to the theater.” One can go to a place, but one cannot be to it.

Total. “The figures totaled 10,000.” Say, The total of the figures was 10,000.

Transaction for *Action,* or *Incident*. “The policeman struck the man with his club, but the transaction was not reported.” “The picking of a pocket is a criminal transaction.” In a transaction two or more persons must have an active or assenting part; as, a business transaction, Transactions of the Geographical Society, *etc.* The Society’s action would be better called Proceedings.

Transpire for *Occur*, *Happen*, *etc*. "This event transpired in 1906." Transpire (*trans*, through, and *spirare*, to breathe) means leak out, that is, become known. What transpired in 1906 may have occurred long before.

Trifling for *Trivial*. "A trifling defect"; "a trifling error."

Trust for *Wealthy Corporation*. There are few trusts; capitalists have mostly abandoned the trust form of combination.

Try an Experiment. An experiment is a trial; we cannot try a trial. Say, make.

Try and for *Try to*. "I will try and see him." This plainly says that my effort to see him will succeed — which I cannot know and do not wish to affirm. "Please try and come." This colloquial slovenliness of speech is almost universal in this country, but freedom of speech is one of our most precious possessions.

Ugly for *Ill-natured*, *Quarrelsome*. What is ugly is the temper, or disposition, not the person having it.

Under-handed and *Under-handedly* for *Under-hand*. See *Offhanded*.

Unique. "This is very unique." "The most unique house in the city." There are no degrees of uniqueness: a thing is unique if there is not another like it. The word has nothing to do with oddity, strangeness, nor picturesqueness.

United States as a Singular Noun. "The United States is for peace." The fact that we are in some ways one nation has nothing to do with it; it is enough to know that the word States is plural — if not, what is State? It would be pretty hard on a foreigner skilled in the English tongue if he could not venture to use our national name without having made a study of the history of our Constitution and political institutions. Grammar has not a speaking acquaintance with politics, and patriotic pride is not schoolmaster to syntax.

Unkempt for *Disordered*, *Untidy*, *etc*. Unkempt means uncombed, and can properly be said of nothing but the hair.

Use for *Treat*. “The inmates were badly used.” “They use him harshly.”

Utter for *Absolute*, *Entire*, *etc.* Utter has a damnatory signification and is to be used of evil things only. It is correct to say utter misery, but not “utter happiness;” utterly bad, but not “utterly good.”

Various for *Several*. “Various kinds of men.” Kinds are various of course, for they vary — that is what makes them kinds. Use various only when, in speaking of a number of things, you wish to direct attention to their variety — their difference, one from another. “The dividend was distributed among the various stockholders.” The stockholders vary, as do all persons, but that is irrelevant and was not in mind. “Various persons have spoken to me of you.” Their variation is unimportant; what is meant is that there was a small indefinite number of them; that is, several.

Ventilate for *Express*, *Disclose*, *etc.* “The statesman ventilated his views.” A disagreeable and dog-eared figure of speech.

Verbal for *Oral*. All language is verbal, whether spoken or written, but audible speech is oral. “He did not write, but communicated his wishes verbally.” It would have been a verbal communication, also, if written.

Vest for *Waistcoat*. This is American, but as all Americans are not in agreement about it it is better to use the English word.

Vicinity for *Vicinage*, or *Neighborhood*. “He lives in this vicinity.” If neither of the other words is desired say, He lives in the vicinity of this place, or, better, He lives near by.

View of. “He invested with the view of immediate profit.” “He enlisted with the view of promotion.” Say, with a view to.

Vulgar for *Immodest*, *Indecent*. It is from *vulgus*, the common people, the mob, and means both common and unrefined, but has no relation to indecency.

Way for *Away*. “Way out at sea.” “Way down South.”

Ways for *Way*. “A squirrel ran a little ways along the road.” “The ship looked a long ways off.” This surprising word calls loudly for depluralization.

Wed for *Wedded*. “They were wed at noon.” “He wed her in Boston.” The word wed in all its forms as a substitute for marry, is pretty hard to bear.

Well. As a mere meaningless prelude to a sentence this word is overtasked. “Well, I don’t know about that.” “Well, you may try.” “Well, have your own way.”

Wet for *Wetted*. See *Bet*.

Where for *When*. “Where there is reason to expect criticism write discreetly.”

Which for *That*. “The boat which I engaged had a hole in it.” But a parenthetical clause may rightly be introduced by which; as, The boat, which had a hole in it, I nevertheless engaged. Which and that are seldom interchangeable; when they are, use that. It sounds better.

Whip for *Chastise*, or *Defeat*. To whip is to beat with a whip. It means nothing else.

Whiskers for *Beard*. The whisker is that part of the beard that grows on the cheek. See *Chin Whiskers*.

Who for *Whom*. “Who do you take me for?”

Whom for *Who*. “The man whom they thought was dead is living.” Here the needless introduction of was entails the alteration of whom to who. “Remember whom it is that you speak of.” “George Washington, than whom there was no greater man, loved a jest.” The misuse of whom after than is almost universal. Who and whom trip up many a good writer, although, unlike which and who, they require nothing but knowledge of grammar.

Widow Woman. Omit woman.

Will and *Shall*. Proficiency in the use of these apparently troublesome words must be sought in text-books on grammar and rhetoric, where the subject will be found treated with a more particular attention, and at greater length, than is possible in a book of the character of this. Briefly and generally, in the first person, a mere intention is indicated by shall, as, I shall go; whereas will denotes some degree of compliance or determination, as, I will go — as if my going had been requested or forbidden. In the second and the third person, will merely forecasts, as, You (or he) will go; but shall implies something of promise, permission or compulsion by the speaker, as, You (or he) shall go. Another and less obvious compulsion — that of circumstance — speaks in shall, as sometimes used with good effect: In Germany you shall not turn over a chip without uncovering a philosopher. The sentence is barely more than indicative, shall being almost, but not quite, equivalent to can.

Win out. Like its antithesis, “lose out,” this reasonless phrase is of sport, “sporty.”

Win for *Won*. “I went to the race and win ten dollars.” This atrocious solecism seems to be unknown outside the world of sport, where may it ever remain.

Without for *Unless*. “I cannot go without I recover.” Peasantese.

Witness for *See*. To witness is more than merely to see, or observe; it is to observe, and to tell afterward.

Would-be. “The would-be assassin was arrested.” The word doubtless supplies a want, but we can better endure the want than the word. In the instance of the assassin, it is needless, for he who attempts to murder is an assassin, whether he succeeds or not.

ASHES OF THE BEACON

AN HISTORICAL MONOGRAPH WRITTEN IN 4930

Ashes of the Beacon

Of the many causes that conspired to bring about the lamentable failure of "self-government" in ancient America the most general and comprehensive was, of course, the impracticable nature of the system itself. In the light of modern culture, and instructed by history, we readily discern the folly of those crude ideas upon which the ancient Americans based what they knew as "republican institutions," and maintained, as long as maintenance was possible, with something of a religious fervor, even when the results were visibly disastrous. To us of to-day it is clear that the word "self-government" involves a contradiction, for government means control by something other than the thing to be controlled. When the thing governed is the same as the thing governing there is no government, though for a time there may be, as in the case under consideration there was, a considerable degree of forbearance, giving a misleading appearance of public order. This, however, soon must, as in fact it soon did, pass away with the delusion that gave it birth. The habit of obedience to written law, inculcated by generations of respect for actual government able to enforce its authority, will persist for a long time, with an ever lessening power upon the imagination of the people; but there comes a time when the tradition is forgotten and the delusion exhausted. When men perceive that nothing is restraining them but their consent to be restrained, then at last there is nothing to obstruct the free play of that selfishness which is the dominant characteristic and fundamental motive of human nature and human action respectively. Politics, which may have had something of the character of a contest of principles, becomes a struggle of interests, and its methods are frankly serviceable to personal and class advantage. Patriotism and respect for law pass like a tale that is told. Anarchy, no longer disguised as "government by consent," reveals his hidden hand, and in the words of our greatest living poet,

lets the curtain fall,
And universal darkness buries all!

The ancient Americans were a composite people; their blood was a blend of all the strains known in their time. Their government, while they had one, being merely a loose and mutable expression of the desires and caprices of the majority — that is to say, of the ignorant, restless and reckless — gave the freest rein and play to all the primal instincts and elemental passions of the race. In so far and for so long as it had any restraining force, it was only the restraint of the present over the power of the past — that of a new habit over an old and insistent tendency ever seeking expression in large liberties and indulgences impatient of control. In the history of that unhappy people, therefore, we see unveiled the workings of the human will in its most lawless state, without fear of authority or care of consequence. Nothing could be more instructive.

Of the American form of government, although itself the greatest of evils afflicting the victims of those that it entailed, but little needs to be said here; it has perished from the earth, a system discredited by an unbroken record of failure in all parts of the world, from the earliest historic times to its final extinction. Of living students of political history not one professes to see in it anything but a mischievous creation of theorists and visionaries — persons whom our gracious sovereign has deigned to brand for the world's contempt as "dupes of hope purveying to sons of greed." The political philosopher of to-day is spared the trouble of pointing out the fallacies of republican government, as the mathematician is spared that of demonstrating the absurdity of the convergence of parallel lines; yet the ancient Americans not only clung to their error with a blind, unquestioning faith, even when groaning under its most insupportable burdens, but seem to have believed it of divine origin. It was thought by them to have been established by the god Washington, whose worship, with that of such *dii minores* as Gufferson, Jaxon and Lincon (identical probably with the Hebru Abrem) runs like a shining thread through all the warp and woof of the stuff that garmented their moral nakedness. Some stones, very curiously inscribed in many tongues, were found by the explorer Droyhors in the wilderness bordering the river Bhitt (supposed by him to be the ancient Potomac) as lately as the reign of Barukam IV. These stones appear to be fragments of a monument or temple erected to the glory of Washington in his divine character of Founder and Preserver of republican institutions. If this tutelary deity of the ancient Americans really invented representative government they were not the first by many to whom he imparted the malign secret of its inauguration and denied that of its maintenance.

Although many of the causes which finally, in combination, brought about the downfall of the great American republic were in operation from the beginning — being, as has been said, inherent in the system — it was not until the year 1995 (as the ancients for some reason not now known reckoned time) that the collapse of the vast, formless fabric was complete. In that year the defeat and massacre of the last army of law and order in the lava beds of California extinguished the final fires of enlightened patriotism and quenched in blood the monarchical revival. Thenceforth armed opposition to anarchy was confined to desultory and insignificant warfare waged by small gangs of mercenaries in the service of wealthy individuals and equally feeble bands of prescripts fighting for their lives. In that year, too, “the Three Presidents” were driven from their capitals, Cincinnati, New Orleans and Duluth, their armies dissolving by desertion and themselves meeting death at the hands of the populace.

The turbulent period between 1920 and 1995, with its incalculable waste of blood and treasure, its dreadful conflicts of armies and more dreadful massacres by passionate mobs, its kaleidoscopic changes of government and incessant effacement and redrawing of boundaries of states, its interminable tale of political assassinations and proscriptions — all the horrors incident to intestinal wars of a naturally lawless race — had so exhausted and dispirited the surviving protagonists of legitimate government that they could make no further head against the inevitable, and were glad indeed and most fortunate to accept life on any terms that they could obtain.

But the purpose of this sketch is not bald narration of historic fact, but examination of antecedent germinal conditions; not to recount calamitous events familiar to students of that faulty civilization, but to trace, as well as the meager record will permit, the genesis and development of the causes that brought them about. Historians in our time have left little undone in the matter of narration of political and military phenomena. In Golpek’s “Decline and Fall of the American Republics,” in Soseby’s “History of Political Fallacies,” in Holobom’s “Monarchical Renasence,” and notably in Gunkux’s immortal work, “The Rise, Progress, Failure and Extinction of The Connected States of America” the fruits of research have been garnered, a considerable harvest. The events are set forth with such conscientiousness and particularity as to have exhausted the possibilities of narration. It remains only to expound causes and point the awful moral.

To a delinquent observation it may seem needless to point out the inherent defects of a system of government which the logic of events has swept like political rubbish from the face of the earth, but we must not forget that ages before the inception of the American republics and that of France and Ireland this form of government had been discredited by emphatic failures among the most enlightened and powerful nations of antiquity: the Greeks, the Romans, and long before them (as we now know) the Egyptians and the Chinese. To the lesson of these failures the founders of the eighteenth and nineteenth century republics were blind and deaf. Have we then reason to believe that our posterity will be wiser because instructed by a greater number of examples? And is the number of examples which they will have in memory really greater? Already the instances of China, Egypt, Greece and Rome are almost lost in the mists of antiquity; they are known, except by infrequent report, to the archæologist only, and but dimly and uncertainly to him. The brief and imperfect record of yesterdays which we call History is like that traveling vine of India which, taking new root as it advances, decays at one end while it grows at the other, and so is constantly perishing and finally lost in all the spaces which it has overpassed.

From the few and precious writings that have descended to us from the early period of the American republic we get a clear if fragmentary view of the disorders and lawlessness affecting that strange and unhappy nation. Leaving the historically famous "labor troubles" for more extended consideration, we may summarize here a few of the results of hardly more than a century and a quarter of "self-government" as it existed on this continent just previously to the awful end. At the beginning of the "twentieth century" a careful study by trustworthy contemporary statisticians of the public records and those apparently private ones known as "newspapers" showed that in a population of about 80,000,000 the annual number of homicides was not less than 10,000; and this continued year after year to increase, not only absolutely, but proportionately, until, in the words of Dumbleshaw, who is thought to have written his famous "Memoirs of a Survivor" in the year 1908 of their era, "it would seem that the practice of suicide is a needless custom, for if a man but have patience his neighbor is sure to put him out of his misery." Of the 10,000 assassins less than three per cent. were punished, further than by incidental imprisonment if unable to give bail while awaiting trial. If the chief end of government is the citizen's security of life and his protection from aggression, what kind of government do these appalling figures disclose? Yet so infatuated with their imaginary "liberty" were these singular people that the contemplation of all this crime abated nothing of the volume and persistence of their patriotic ululations, and affected not their faith in the perfection of their system. They were like a man standing on a rock already submerged by the rising tide, and calling to his neighbors on adjacent cliffs to observe his superior security.

When three men engage in an undertaking in which they have an equal interest, and in the direction of which they have equal power, it necessarily results that any action approved by two of them, with or without the assent of the third, will be taken. This is called — or was called when it was an accepted principle in political and other affairs—"the rule of the majority." Evidently, under the malign conditions supposed, it is the only practicable plan of getting anything done. A and B rule and overrule C, not because they ought, but because they can; not because they are wiser, but because they are stronger. In order to avoid a conflict in which he is sure to be worsted, C submits as soon as the vote is taken. C is as likely to be right as A and B; nay, that eminent ancient philosopher, Professor Richard A. Proctor (or Proroctor, as the learned now spell the name), has clearly shown by the law of probabilities that any one of the three, all being of the same intelligence, is far likelier to be right than the other two.

It is thus that the “rule of the majority” as a political system is established. It is in essence nothing but the discredited and discreditable principle that “might makes right”; but early in the life of a republic this essential character of government by majority is not seen. The habit of submitting all questions of policy to the arbitrament of counting noses and assenting without question to the result invests the ordeal with a seeming sanctity, and what was at first obeyed as the command of power comes to be revered as the oracle of wisdom. The innumerable instances — such as the famous ones of Galileo and Keeley — in which one man has been right and all the rest of the race wrong, are overlooked, or their significance missed, and “public opinion” is followed as a divine and infallible guide through every bog into which it blindly stumbles and over every precipice in its fortuitous path. Clearly, sooner or later will be encountered a bog that will smother or a precipice that will crush. Thoroughly to apprehend the absurdity of the ancient faith in the wisdom of majorities let the loyal reader try to fancy our gracious Sovereign by any possibility wrong, or his unanimous Ministry by any possibility right!

During the latter half of the “nineteenth century” there arose in the Connected States a political element opposed to all government, which frankly declared its object to be anarchy. This astonishing heresy was not of indigenous growth: its seeds were imported from Europe by the emigration or banishment thence of criminals congenitally incapable of understanding and valuing the blessings of monarchical institutions, and whose method of protest was murder. The governments against which they conspired in their native lands were too strong in authority and too enlightened in policy for them to overthrow. Hundreds of them were put to death, thousands imprisoned and sent into exile. But in America, whither those who escaped fled for safety, they found conditions entirely favorable to the prosecution of their designs.

A revered fetish of the Americans was “freedom of speech”: it was believed that if bad men were permitted to proclaim their evil wishes they would go no further in the direction of executing them — that if they might say what they would like to do they would not care to do it. The close relation between speech and action was not understood. Because the Americans themselves had long been accustomed, in their own political debates and discussions, to the use of unmeaning declamations and threats which they had no intention of executing, they reasoned that others were like them, and attributed to the menaces of these desperate and earnest outcasts no greater importance than to their own. They thought also that the foreign anarchists, having exchanged the tyranny of kings for that of majorities, would be content with their new and better lot and become in time good and law-abiding citizens.

The anarchist of that far day (thanks to the firm hands of our gracious sovereigns the species is now extinct) was a very different person from what our infatuated ancestors imagined him. He struck at government, not because it was bad, but because it was government. He hated authority, not for its tyranny, but for its power. And in order to make this plain to observation he frequently chose his victim from amongst those whose rule was most conspicuously benign.

Of the seven early Presidents of the American republic who perished by assassination no fewer than four were slain by anarchists with no personal wrongs to impel them to the deed — nothing but an implacable hostility to law and authority. The fifth victim, indeed, was a notorious demagogue who had pardoned the assassin of the fourth.

The field of the anarchist's greatest activity was always a republic, not only to emphasize his impartial hatred of all government, but because of the inherent feebleness of that form of government, its inability to protect itself against any kind of aggression by any considerable number of its people having a common malevolent purpose. In a republic the crust that confined the fires of violence and sedition was thinnest.

No improvement in the fortunes of the original anarchists through immigration to what was then called the New World would have made them good citizens. From centuries of secret war against particular forms of authority in their own countries they had inherited a bitter antagonism to all authority, even the most beneficent. In their new home they were worse than in their old. In the sunshine of opportunity the rank and sickly growth of their perverted natures became hardy, vigorous, bore fruit. They surrounded themselves with proselytes from the ranks of the idle, the vicious, the unsuccessful. They stimulated and organized discontent. Every one of them became a center of moral and political contagion. To those as yet unprepared to accept anarchy was offered the milder dogma of Socialism, and to those even weaker in the faith something vaguely called Reform. Each was initiated into that degree to which the induration of his conscience and the character of his discontent made him eligible, and in which he could be most serviceable, the body of the people still cheating themselves with the false sense of security begotten of the belief that they were somehow exempt from the operation of all agencies inimical to their national welfare and integrity. Human nature, they thought, was different in the West from what it was in the East: in the New World the old causes would not have the old effects: a republic had some inherent vitality of its own, entirely independent of any action intended to keep it alive. They felt that words and phrases had some talismanic power, and charmed themselves asleep by repeating “liberty,” “all men equal before the law,” “dictates of conscience,” “free speech” and all manner of such incantation to exorcise the spirits of the night. And when they could no longer close their eyes to the dangers environing them; when they saw at last that what they had mistaken for the magic power of their form of government and its assured security was really its radical weakness and subjective peril — they found their laws inadequate to repression of the enemy, the enemy too strong to permit the enactment of adequate laws. The belief that a malcontent armed with freedom of speech, a newspaper, a vote and a rifle is less dangerous than a malcontent with a still tongue in his head, empty hands and under police surveillance was abandoned, but all too late. From its fatuous dream the nation was awakened by the noise of arms, the shrieks of women and the red glare of burning cities.

Beginning with the slaughter at St. Louis on a night in the year 1920, when no fewer than twenty-two thousand citizens were slain in the streets and half the city destroyed, massacre followed massacre with frightful rapidity. New York fell in the month following, many thousands of its inhabitants escaping fire and sword only to be driven into the bay and drowned, “the roaring of the water in their ears,” says Bardeal, “augmented by the hoarse clamor of their red-handed pursuers, whose blood-thirst was unsated by the sea.” A week later Washington was destroyed, with all its public buildings and archives; the President and his Ministry were slain, Congress was dispersed, and an unknown number of officials and private citizens perished. Of all the principal cities only Chicago and San Francisco escaped. The people of the former were all anarchists and the latter was valorously and successfully defended by the Chinese.

The urban anarchists were eventually subdued and some semblance of order was restored, but greater woes and sharper shames awaited this unhappy nation, as we shall see.

In turning from this branch of our subject to consider the causes of the failure and bloody disruption of the great American republic other than those inherent in the form of government, it may not be altogether unprofitable to glance briefly at what seems to a superficial view the inconsistent phenomenon of great material prosperity. It is not to be denied that this unfortunate people was at one time singularly prosperous, in so far as national wealth is a measure and proof of prosperity. Among nations it was the richest nation. But at how great a sacrifice of better things was its wealth obtained! By the neglect of all education except that crude, elementary sort which fits men for the coarse delights of business and affairs but confers no capacity of rational enjoyment; by exalting the worth of wealth and making it the test and touchstone of merit; by ignoring art, scorning literature and despising science, except as these might contribute to the glutting of the purse; by setting up and maintaining an artificial standard of morals which condoned all offenses against the property and peace of every one but the condoner; by pitilessly crushing out of their natures every sentiment and aspiration unconnected with accumulation of property, these civilized savages and commercial barbarians attained their sordid end. Before they had rounded the first half-century of their existence as a nation they had sunk so low in the scale of morality that it was considered nothing discreditable to take the hand and even visit the house of a man who had grown rich by means notoriously corrupt and dishonorable; and Harley declares that even the editors and writers of newspapers, after fiercely assailing such men in their journals, would be seen "hobnobbing" with them in public places. (The nature of the social ceremony named the "hobnob" is not now understood, but it is known that it was a sign of amity and favor.) When men or nations devote all the powers of their minds and bodies to the heaping up of wealth, wealth is heaped up. But what avails it? It may not be amiss to quote here the words of one of the greatest of the ancients whose works — fragmentary, alas — have come down to us.

"Wealth has accumulated itself into masses; and poverty, also in accumulation enough, lies impassably separated from it; opposed, uncommunicating, like forces in positive and negative poles. The gods of this lower world sit aloft on glittering thrones, less happy than Epicurus's gods, but as indolent, as impotent; while the boundless living chaos of ignorance and hunger welters, terrific in its dark fury, under their feet. How much among us might be likened to a whited sepulcher: outwardly all pomp and strength, but inwardly full of horror and despair and dead men's bones! Iron highways, with their wains fire-winged, are uniting all the ends of the land; quays and moles, with their innumerable stately fleets, tame the ocean into one pliant bearer of burdens; labor's thousand arms, of sinew and of metal, all-conquering everywhere, from the tops of the mount down to the depths of the mine and the caverns of the sea, ply unweariedly for the service of man; yet man remains unserved. He has subdued this planet, his habitation and inheritance, yet reaps no profit from the victory. Sad to look upon: in the highest stage of civilization nine-tenths of mankind have to struggle in the lowest battle of savage or even animal man — the battle against famine. Countries are rich, prosperous in all manner of increase, beyond example; but the men of these countries are poor, needier than ever of all sustenance, outward and inward; of belief, of knowledge, of money, of food."

To this somber picture of American "prosperity" in the nineteenth century nothing of worth can be added by the most inspired artist. Let us simply inscribe upon the gloomy canvas the memorable words of an illustrious poet of the period:

That country speeds to an untoward fate,
Where men are trivial and gold is great.

One of the most “sacred” rights of the ancient American was the trial of an accused person by “a jury of his peers.” This, in America, was a right secured to him by a written constitution. It was almost universally believed to have had its origin in Magna Carta, a famous document which certain rebellious noblemen of another country had compelled their sovereign to sign under a threat of death. That celebrated “bill of rights” has not all come down to us, but researches of the learned have made it certain that it contained no mention of trial by jury, which, indeed, was unknown to its authors. The words *judicium parium* meant to them something entirely different — the judgment of the entire community of freemen. The words and the practice they represented antedated Magna Carta by many centuries and were common to the Franks and other Germanic nations, amongst whom a trial “jury” consisted of persons having a knowledge of the matter to be determined — persons who in later times were called “witnesses” and rigorously excluded from the seats of judgment.

It is difficult to conceive a more clumsy and ineffective machinery for ascertaining truth and doing justice than a jury of twelve men of the average intelligence, even among ourselves. What, then, must this device have been among the half-civilized tribes of the Connected States of America! Nay, the case is worse than that, for it was the practice to prevent men of even the average intelligence from serving as jurors. Jurors had to be residents of the locality of the crime charged, and every crime was made a matter of public notoriety long before the accused was brought to trial; yet, as a rule, he who had read or talked about the trial was held disqualified to serve. This in a country where, when a man who could read was not reading about local crimes he was talking about them, or if doing neither was doing something worse!

To the twelve men so chosen the opposing lawyers addressed their disingenuous pleas and for their consideration the witnesses presented their carefully rehearsed testimony, most of it false. So unintelligent were these juries that a great part of the time in every trial was consumed in keeping from them certain kinds of evidence with which they could not be trusted; yet the lawyers were permitted to submit to them any kind of misleading argument that they pleased and fortify it with innuendoes without relevancy and logic without sense. Appeals to their passions, their sympathies, their prejudices, were regarded as legitimate influences and tolerated by the judges on the theory that each side’s offenses would about offset those of the other. In a criminal case it was expected that the prosecutor would declare repeatedly and in the most solemn manner his belief in the guilt of the person accused, and that the attorney for the defense would affirm with equal gravity his conviction of his client's innocence. How could they impress the jury with a belief which they did not themselves venture to affirm? It is not recorded that any lawyer ever rebelled against the iron authority of these conditions and stood for truth and conscience. They were, indeed, the conditions of his existence as a lawyer, a fact which they easily persuaded themselves mitigated the baseness of their obedience to them, or justified it altogether.

The judges, as a rule, were no better, for before they could become judges they must have been advocates, with an advocate's fatal disabilities of judgment. Most of them depended for their office upon the favor of the people, which, also, was fatal to the independence, the dignity and the impartiality to which they laid so solemn claim. In their decisions they favored, so far as they dared, every interest, class or person powerful enough to help or hurt them in an election. Holding their high office by so precarious a tenure, they were under strong temptation to enrich themselves from the serviceable purses of wealthy litigants, and in disregard of justice to cultivate the favor of the attorneys practicing before them, and before whom they might soon be compelled themselves to practice.

In the higher courts of the land, where juries were unknown and appointed judges held their seats for life, these awful conditions did not obtain, and there Justice might have been content to dwell, and there she actually did sometimes set her foot. Unfortunately, the great judges had the consciences of their education. They had crept to place through the slime of the lower courts and their robes of office bore the damnatory evidence. Unfortunately, too, the attorneys, the jury habit strong upon them, brought into the superior tribunals the moral characteristics and professional methods acquired in the lower. Instead of assisting the judges to ascertain the truth and the law, they cheated in argument and took liberties with fact, deceiving the court whenever they deemed it to the interest of their cause to do so, and as willingly won by a technicality or a trick as by the justice of their contention and their ability in supporting it. Altogether, the entire judicial system of the Connected States of America was inefficient, disreputable, corrupt.

The result might easily have been foreseen and doubtless was predicted by patriots whose admonitions have not come down to us. Denied protection of the law, neither property nor life was safe. Greed filled his coffers from the meager hoards of Thrift, private vengeance took the place of legal redress, mad multitudes rioted and slew with virtual immunity from punishment or blame, and the land was red with crime.

A singular phenomenon of the time was the immunity of criminal women. Among the Americans woman held a place unique in the history of nations. If not actually worshiped as a deity, as some historians, among them the great Sagab–Joffoy, have affirmed, she was at least regarded with feelings of veneration which the modern mind has a difficulty in comprehending. Some degree of compassion for her mental inferiority, some degree of forbearance toward her infirmities of temper, some degree of immunity for the offenses which these peculiarities entail — these are common to all peoples above the grade of barbarians. In ancient America these chivalrous sentiments found open and lawful expression only in relieving woman of the burden of participation in political and military service; the laws gave her no express exemption from responsibility for crime. When she murdered, she was arrested; when arrested, brought to trial — though the origin and meaning of those observances are not now known. Gunkux, whose researches into the jurisprudence of antiquity enable him to speak with commanding authority of many things, gives us here nothing better than the conjecture that the trial of women for murder, in the nineteenth century and a part of the twentieth, was the survival of an earlier custom of actually convicting and punishing them, but it seems extremely improbable that a people that once put its female assassins to death would ever have relinquished the obvious advantages of the practice while retaining with purposeless tenacity some of its costly preliminary forms. Whatever may have been the reason, the custom was observed with all the gravity of a serious intention. Gunkux professes knowledge of one or two instances (he does not name his authorities) where matters went so far as conviction and sentence, and adds that the mischievous sentimentalists who had always lent themselves to the solemn jest by protestations of great *vraisemblance* against “the judicial killing of women,” became really alarmed and filled the land with their lamentations. Among the phenomena of brazen effrontery he classes the fact that some of these loud protagonists of the right of women to assassinate unpunished were themselves women! Howbeit, the sentences, if ever pronounced, were never executed, and during the first quarter of the twentieth century the meaningless custom of bringing female assassins to trial was abandoned. What the effect was of their exemption from this considerable inconvenience we have not the data to conjecture, unless we understand as an allusion to it some otherwise obscure words of the famous Edward Bok, the only writer of the period whose work has survived. In his monumental essay on barbarous penology, entitled “Slapping the Wrist,” he couples “woman’s emancipation from the trammels of law” and “man’s better prospect of death” in a way that some have construed as meaning that he regarded them as cause and effect. It must be said, however, that this interpretation finds no support in the general character of his writing, which is exceedingly humane, refined and womanly.

It has been said that the writings of this great man are the only surviving work of his period, but of that we are not altogether sure. There exists a fragment of an anonymous essay on woman's legal responsibility which many Americologists think belongs to the beginning of the twentieth century. Certainly it could not have been written later than the middle of it, for at that time woman had been definitely released from any responsibility to any law but that of her own will. The essay is an argument against even such imperfect exemption as she had in its author's time.

"It has been urged," the writer says, "that women, being less rational and more emotional than men, should not be held accountable in the same degree. To this it may be answered that punishment for crime is not intended to be retaliatory, but admonitory and deterrent. It is, therefore, peculiarly necessary to those not easily reached by other forms of warning and dissuasion. Control of the wayward is not to be sought in reduction of restraints, but in their multiplication. One who cannot be curbed by reason may be curbed by fear, a familiar truth which lies at the foundation of all penological systems. The argument for exemption of women is equally cogent for exemption of habitual criminals, for they too are abnormally inaccessible to reason, abnormally disposed to obedience to the suasion of their unregulated impulses and passions. To free them from the restraints of the fear of punishment would be a bold innovation which has as yet found no respectable proponent outside their own class.

"Very recently this dangerous enlargement of the meaning of the phrase 'emancipation of woman' has been fortified with a strange advocacy by the female 'champions of their sex.' Their argument runs this way: 'We are denied a voice in the making of the laws relating to infliction of the death penalty; it is unjust to hold us to an accountability to which we have not assented.' Of course this argument is as broad as the entire body of law; it amounts to nothing less than a demand for general immunity from all laws, for to none of them has woman's assent been asked or given. But let us consider this amazing claim with reference only to the proposal in the service and promotion of which it is now urged: exemption of women from the death penalty for murder. In the last analysis it is seen to be a simple demand for compensation. It says: 'You owe us a *solatium*. Since you deny us the right to vote, you should give us the right to assassinate. We do not appraise it at so high a valuation as the other franchise, but we do value it.'

"Apparently they do: without legal, but with virtual, immunity from punishment, the women of this country take an average of one thousand lives annually, nine in ten being the lives of men. Juries of men, incited and sustained by public opinion, have actually deprived every adult male American of the right to live. If the death of any man is desired by any woman for any reason he is without protection. She has only to kill him and say that he wronged or insulted her. Certain almost incredible recent instances prove that no woman is too base for immunity, no crime against life sufficiently rich in all the elements of depravity to compel a conviction of the assassin, or, if she is convicted and sentenced, her punishment by the public executioner."

In this interesting fragment, quoted by Bogul in his "History of an Extinct Civilization," we learn something of the shame and peril of American citizenship under institutions which, not having run their foreordained course to the unhappy end, were still in some degree supportable. What these institutions became afterward is a familiar story. It is true that the law of trial by jury was repealed. It had broken down, but not until it had sapped the whole nation's respect for all law, for all forms of authority, for order and private virtues. The people whose rude forefathers in another land it had served roughly to protect against their tyrants, it had lamentably failed to protect against themselves, and when in madness they swept it away, it was not as one renouncing an error, but as one impatient of the truth which the error is still believed to contain. They flung it away, not as an ineffectual restraint, but as a restraint; not because it was no longer an instrument of justice for the determination of truth, but because they feared that it might again become such. In brief, trial by jury was abolished only when it had provoked anarchy.

Before turning to another phase of this ancient civilization I cannot forbear to relate, after the learned and ingenious Gunkux, the only known instance of a public irony expressing itself in the sculptor's noble art. In the ancient city of Hohokus once stood a monument of colossal size and impressive dignity. It was erected by public subscription to the memory of a man whose only distinction consisted in a single term of service as a juror in a famous murder trial, the details of which have not come down to us. This occupied the court and held public attention for many weeks, being bitterly contested by both prosecution and defense. When at last it was given to the jury by the judge in the most celebrated charge that had ever been delivered from the bench, a ballot was taken at once. The jury stood eleven for acquittal to one for conviction. And so it stood at every ballot of the more than fifty that were taken during the fortnight that the jury was locked up for deliberation. Moreover, the dissenting juror would not argue the matter; he would listen with patient attention while his eleven indignant opponents thundered their opinions into his ears, even when they supported them with threats of personal violence; but not a word would he say. At last a disagreement was formally entered, the jury discharged and the obstinate juror chased from the city by the maddened populace. Despairing of success in another trial and privately admitting his belief in the prisoner's innocence, the public prosecutor moved for his release, which the judge ordered with remarks plainly implying his own belief that the wrong man had been tried.

Years afterward the accused person died confessing his guilt, and a little later one of the jurors who had been sworn to try the case admitted that he had attended the trial on the first day only, having been personated during the rest of the proceedings by a twin brother, the obstinate member, who was a deaf-mute.

The monument to this eminent public servant was overthrown and destroyed by an earthquake in the year 2342.

One of the causes of that popular discontent which brought about the stupendous events resulting in the disruption of the great republic, historians and archæologists are agreed in reckoning "insurance." Of the exact nature of that factor in the problem of the national life of that distant day we are imperfectly informed; many of its details have perished from the record, yet its outlines loom large through the mist of ages and can be traced with greater precision than is possible in many more important matters.

In the monumental work of Professor Golunk–Dorsto ("Some Account of the Insurance Delusion in Ancient America") we have its most considerable modern exposition; and Gakler's well-known volume, "The Follies of Antiquity," contains much interesting matter relating to it. From these and other sources the student of human unreason can reconstruct that astounding fallacy of insurance as, from three joints of its tail, the great naturalist Bogramus restored the ancient elephant, from hoof to horn.

The game of insurance, as practiced by the ancient Americans (and, as Gakler conjectures, by some of the tribesmen of Europe), was gambling, pure and simple, despite the sentimental character that its proponents sought to impress upon some forms of it for the greater prosperity of their dealings with its dupes. Essentially, it was a bet between the insurer and the insured. The number of ways in which the wager was made — all devised by the insurer — was almost infinite, but in none of them was there a departure from the intrinsic nature of the transaction as seen in its simplest, frankest form, which we shall here expound.

To those unlearned in the economical institutions of antiquity it is necessary to explain that in ancient America, long prior to the disastrous Japanese war, individual ownership of property was unrestricted; every person was permitted to get as much as he was able, and to hold it as his own without regard to his needs, or whether he made any good use of it or not. By some plan of distribution not now understood even the habitable surface of the earth, with the minerals beneath, was parceled out among the favored few, and there was really no place except at sea where children of the others could lawfully be born. Upon a part of the dry land that he had been able to acquire, or had leased from another for the purpose, a man would build a house worth, say, ten thousand *drusoes*. (The ancient unit of value was the "dollar," but nothing is now known as to its actual worth.) Long before the building was complete the owner was beset by "touts" and "cappers" of the insurance game, who poured into his ears the most ingenious expositions of the advantages of betting that it would burn down — for with incredible fatuity the people of that time continued, generation after generation, to build inflammable habitations. The persons whom the capper represented — they called themselves an "insurance company" — stood ready to accept the bet, a fact which seems to have generated no suspicion in the mind of the house-owner. Theoretically, of course, if the house did burn payment of the wager would partly or wholly recoup the winner of the bet for the loss of his house, but in fact the result of the transaction was commonly very different. For the privilege of betting that his property would be destroyed by fire the owner had to pay to the gentleman betting that it would not be, a certain percentage of its value every year, called a "premium." The amount of this was determined by the company, which employed statisticians and actuaries to fix it at such a sum that, according to the law of probabilities, long before the house was "due to burn," the company would have received more than the value of it in premiums. In other words, the owner of the house would himself supply the money to pay his bet, and a good deal more.

But how, it may be asked, could the company's actuary know that the man's house would last until he had paid in more than its insured value in premiums — more, that is to say, than the company would have to pay back? He could not, but from his statistics he could know how many houses in ten thousand of that kind burned in their first year, how many in their second, their third, and so on. That was all that he needed to know, the house-owners knowing nothing about it. He fixed his rates according to the facts, and the occasional loss of a bet in an individual instance did not affect the certainty of a general winning. Like other professional gamblers, the company expected to lose sometimes, yet knew that in the long run it *must* win; which meant that in any special case it would *probably* win. With a thousand gambling games open to him in which the chances were equal, the infatuated dupe chose to "sit into" one where they were against him! Deceived by the cappers' fairy tales, dazed by the complex and incomprehensible "calculations" put forth for his undoing, and having ever in the ear of his imagination the crackle and roar of the impoverishing flames, he grasped at the hope of beating — in an unwelcome way, it is true—"the man that kept the table.” He must have known for a certainty that if the company could afford to insure him he could not afford to let it. He must have known that the whole body of the insured paid to the insurers more than the insurers paid to them; otherwise the business could not have been conducted. This they cheerfully admitted; indeed, they proudly affirmed it. In fact, insurance companies were the only professional gamblers that had the incredible hardihood to parade their enormous winnings as an inducement to play against their game. These winnings (“assets,” they called them) proved their ability, they said, to pay when they lost; and that was indubitably true. What they did not prove, unfortunately, was the *will* to pay, which from the imperfect court records of the period that have come down to us, appears frequently to have been lacking. Gakler relates that in the instance of the city of San Francisco (somewhat doubtfully identified by Macronus as the modern fishing-village of Gharoo) the disinclination of the insurance companies to pay their bets had the most momentous consequences.

In the year 1906 San Francisco was totally destroyed by fire. The conflagration was caused by the friction of a pig scratching itself against an angle of a wooden building. More than one hundred thousand persons perished, and the loss of property is estimated by Kobo–Dogarque at one and a half million *drusoes*. On more than two-thirds of this enormous sum the insurance companies had laid bets, and the greater part of it they refused to pay. In justification they pointed out that the deed performed by the pig was “an act of God,” who in the analogous instance of the express companies had been specifically forbidden to take any action affecting the interests of parties to a contract, or the result of an agreed undertaking.

In the ensuing litigation their attorneys cited two notable precedents. A few years before the San Francisco disaster, another American city had experienced a similar one through the upsetting of a lamp by the kick of a cow. In that case, also, the insurance companies had successfully denied their liability on the ground that the cow, manifestly incited by some supernatural power, had unlawfully influenced the result of a wager to which she was not a party. The companies defendant had contended that the recourse of the property-owners was against, not them, but the owner of the cow. In his decision sustaining that view and dismissing the case, a learned judge (afterward president of one of the defendant companies) had in the legal phraseology of the period pronounced the action of the cow an obvious and flagrant instance of unwarrantable intervention. Kobo–Dogarque believes that this decision was afterward reversed by an appellate court of contrary political complexion and the companies were compelled to compromise, but of this there is no record. It is certain that in the

San Francisco case the precedent was urged.

Another precedent which the companies cited with particular emphasis related to an unfortunate occurrence at a famous millionaires' club in London, the capital of the renowned king, John Bui. A gentleman passing in the street fell in a fit and was carried into the club in convulsions. Two members promptly made a bet upon his life. A physician who chanced to be present set to work upon the patient, when one of the members who had laid the wager came forward and restrained him, saying: "Sir, I beg that you will attend to your own business. I have my money on that fit."

Doubtless these two notable precedents did not constitute the entire case of the defendants in the San Francisco insurance litigation, but the additional pleas are lost to us.

Of the many forms of gambling known as insurance that called life insurance appears to have been the most vicious. In essence it was the same as fire insurance, marine insurance, accident insurance and so forth, with an added offensiveness in that it was a betting on human lives — commonly by the policy-holder on lives that should have been held most sacred and altogether immune from the taint of traffic. In point of practical operation this ghastly business was characterized by a more fierce and flagrant dishonesty than any of its kindred pursuits. To such lengths of robbery did the managers go that at last the patience of the public was exhausted and a comparatively trivial occurrence fired the combustible elements of popular indignation to a white heat in which the entire insurance business of the country was burned out of existence, together with all the gamblers who had invented and conducted it. The president of one of the companies was walking one morning in a street of New York, when he had the bad luck to step on the tail of a dog and was bitten in retaliation. Frenzied by the pain of the wound, he gave the creature a savage kick and it ran howling toward a group of idlers in front of a grocery store. In ancient America the dog was a sacred animal, worshiped by all sorts and conditions of tribesmen. The idlers at once raised a great cry, and setting upon the offender beat him so that he died.

Their act was infectious: men, women and children trooped out of their dwellings by thousands to join them, brandishing whatever weapons they could snatch, and uttering wild cries of vengeance. This formidable mob overpowered the police, and marching from one insurance office to another, successively demolished them all, slew such officers as they could lay hands on, and chased the fugitive survivors into the sea, "where," says a quaint chronicle of the time, "they were eaten by their kindred, the sharks." This carnival of violence continued all the day, and at set of sun not one person connected with any form of insurance remained alive.

Ferocious and bloody as was the massacre, it was only the beginning. As the news of it went blazing and coruscating along the wires by which intelligence was then conveyed across the country, city after city caught the contagion. Everywhere, even in the small hamlets and the agricultural districts, the dupes rose against their dupers. The smoldering resentment of years burst into flame, and within a week all that was left of insurance in America was the record of a monstrous and cruel delusion written in the blood of its promoters.

A remarkable feature of the crude and primitive civilization of the Americans was their religion. This was polytheistic, as is that of all backward peoples, and among their minor deities were their own women. This has been disputed by respectable authorities, among them Gunkux and the younger Kekler, but the weight of archæological testimony is against them, for, as Sagab–Joffy ingeniously points out, none of less than divine rank would by even the lowest tribes be given unrestricted license to kill. Among the Americans woman, as already pointed out, indubitably had that freedom, and exercised it with terrible effect, a fact which makes the matter of their religion pertinent to the purpose of this monograph. If ever an American woman was punished by law for murder of a man no record of the fact is found; whereas, such American literature as we possess is full of the most enthusiastic adulation of the impossible virtues and imaginary graces of the human female. One writer even goes to the length of affirming that respect for the sex is the foundation of political stability, the cornerstone of civil and religious liberty! After the break-up of the republic and the savage intertribal wars that followed, Gyneolatry was an exhausted cult and woman was relegated to her old state of benign subjection.

Unfortunately, we know little of the means of travel in ancient America, other than the names. It seems to have been done mainly by what were called “railroads,” upon which wealthy associations of men transported their fellow-citizens in some kind of vehicle at a low speed, seldom exceeding fifty or sixty miles an hour, as distance and time were then reckoned — about equal to seven *kaltabs* a *grillog*. Notwithstanding this slow movement of the vehicles, the number and fatality of accidents were incredible. In the Zopetroq Museum of Archæology is preserved an official report (found in the excavations made by Droyhors on the supposed site of Washington) of a Government Commission of the Connected States. From that document we learn that in the year 1907 of their era the railroads of the country killed 5,000 persons and wounded 72,286 — a mortality which is said by the commissioners to be twice that of the battle of Gettysburg, concerning which we know nothing but the name. This was about the annual average of railroad casualties of the period, and if it provoked comment it at least led to no reform, for at a later period we find the mortality even greater. That it was preventable is shown by the fact that in the same year the railroads of Great Britain, where the speed was greater and the intervals between vehicles less, killed only one passenger. It was a difference of government: Great Britain had a government that governed; America had not. Happily for humanity, the kind of government that does not govern, self-government, "government of the people, by the people and for the people" (to use a meaningless paradox of that time) has perished from the face of the earth.

An inherent weakness in republican government was that it assumed the honesty and intelligence of the majority, "the masses," who were neither honest nor intelligent. It would doubtless have been an excellent government for a people so good and wise as to need none. In a country having such a system the leaders, the politicians, must necessarily all be demagogues, for they can attain to place and power by no other method than flattery of the people and subserviency to the will of the majority. In all the ancient American political literature we look in vain for a single utterance of truth and reason regarding these matters. In none of it is a hint that the multitude was ignorant and vicious, as we know it to have been, and as it must necessarily be in any country, to whatever high average of intelligence and morality the people attain; for "intelligence" and "morality" are comparative terms, the standard of comparison being the intelligence and morality of the wisest and best, who must always be the few. Whatever general advance is made, those not at the head are behind — are ignorant and immoral according to the new standard, and unfit to control in the higher and broader policies demanded by the progress made. Where there is true and general progress the philosopher of yesterday would be the ignoramus of to-day, the honorable of one generation the vicious of another. The peasant of our time is incomparably superior to the statesman of ancient America, yet he is unfit to govern, for there are others more fit.

That a body of men can be wiser than its wisest member seems to the modern understanding so obvious and puerile an error that it is inconceivable that any people, even the most primitive, could ever have entertained it; yet we know that in America it was a fixed and steadfast political faith. The people of that day did not, apparently, attempt to explain how the additional wisdom was acquired by merely assembling in council, as in their "legislatures"; they seem to have assumed that it was so, and to have based their entire governmental system upon that assumption, with never a suspicion of its fallacy. It is like assuming that a mountain range is higher than its highest peak. In the words of Golpek, "The early Americans believed that units of intelligence were addable quantities," or as Soseby more wittily puts it, "They thought that in a combination of idiocies they had the secret of sanity."

The Americans, as has been said, never learned that even among themselves majorities ruled, not because they ought, but because they could — not because they were wise, but because they were strong. The count of noses determined, not the better policy, but the more powerful party. The weaker submitted, as a rule, for it had to or risk a war in which it would be at a disadvantage. Yet in all the early years of the republic they seem honestly to have dignified their submission as "respect for the popular verdict." They even quoted from the Latin language the sentiment that "the voice of the people is the voice of God." And this hideous blasphemy was as glib upon the lips of those who, without change of mind, were defeated at the polls year after year as upon those of the victors.

Of course, their government was powerless to restrain any aggression or encroachment upon the general welfare as soon as a considerable body of voters had banded together to undertake it. A notable instance has been recorded by Bamscot in his great work, "Some Evil Civilizations." After the first of America's great intestinal wars the surviving victors formed themselves into an organization which seems at first to have been purely social and benevolent, but afterward fell into the hands of rapacious politicians who in order to preserve their power corrupted their followers by distributing among them enormous sums of money exacted from the government by threats of overturning it. In less than a half century after the war in which they had served, so great was the fear which they inspired in whatever party controlled the national treasury that the total sum of their exactions was no less annually than seventeen million *prastams*! As Dumbleshaw naïvely puts it, "having saved their country, these gallant gentlemen naturally took it for themselves." The eventual massacre of the remnant of this hardy and impenitent organization by the labor unions more accustomed to the use of arms is beyond the province of this monograph to relate. The matter is mentioned at all only because it is a typical example of the open robbery that marked that period of the republic's brief and inglorious existence; the Grand Army, as it called itself, was no worse and no better than scores of other organizations having no purpose but plunder and no method but menace. A little later nearly all classes and callings became organized conspiracies, each seeking an unfair advantage through laws which the party in power had not the firmness to withhold, nor the party hoping for power the courage to oppose. The climax of absurdity in this direction was reached in 1918, when an association of barbers, known as Noblemen of the Razor, procured from the parliament of the country a law giving it a representative in the President's Cabinet, and making it a misdemeanor to wear a beard.

In Soseby's "History of Popular Government" he mentions "a monstrous political practice known as 'Protection to American Industries.'" Modern research has not ascertained precisely what it was; it is known rather from its effects than in its true character, but from what we can learn of it to-day I am disposed to number it among those malefic agencies concerned in the destruction of the American republics, particularly the Connected States, although it appears not to have been peculiar to "popular government." Some of the contemporary monarchies of Europe were afflicted with it, but by the divine favor which ever guards a throne its disastrous effects were averted. "Protection" consisted in a number of extraordinary expedients, the purposes of which and their relations to one another cannot with certainty be determined in the present state of our knowledge. Debrethin and others agree that one feature of it was the support, by general taxation, of a few favored citizens in public palaces, where they passed their time in song and dance and all kinds of revelry. They were not, however, altogether idle, being required out of the sums bestowed upon them, to employ a certain number of men each in erecting great piles of stone and pulling them down again, digging holes in the ground and then filling them with earth, pouring water into casks and then drawing it off, and so forth. The unhappy laborers were subject to the most cruel oppressions, but the knowledge that their wages came from the pockets of those whom their work nowise benefited was so gratifying to them that nothing could induce them to leave the service of their heartless employers to engage in lighter and more useful labor.

Another characteristic of "Protection" was the maintenance at the principal seaports of "customs-houses," which were strong fortifications armed with heavy guns for the purpose of destroying or driving away the trading ships of foreign nations. It was this that caused the Connected States to be known abroad as the "Hermit Republic," a name of which its infatuated citizens were strangely proud, although they had themselves sent armed ships to open the ports of Japan and other Oriental countries to their own commerce. In their own case, if a foreign ship came empty and succeeded in evading the fire of the "customs-house," as sometimes occurred, she was permitted to take away a cargo.

It is obvious that such a system was distinctly evil, but it must be confessed our uncertainty regarding the whole matter of "Protection" does not justify us in assigning it a definite place among the causes of national decay. That in some way it produced an enormous revenue is certain, and that the method was dishonest is no less so; for this revenue — known as a "surplus" — was so abhorred while it lay in the treasury that all were agreed upon the expediency of getting rid of it, two great political parties existing for apparently no other purpose than the patriotic one of taking it out.

But how, it may be asked, could people so misgoverned get on, even as well as they did?

From the records that have come down to us it does not appear that they got on very well. They were preyed upon by all sorts of political adventurers, whose power in most instances was limited only by the contemporaneous power of other political adventurers equally unscrupulous. A full half of the taxes wrung from them was stolen. Their public lands, millions of square miles, were parceled out among banded conspirators. Their roads and the streets of their cities were nearly impassable. Their public buildings, conceived in abominable taste and representing enormous sums of money, which never were used in their construction, began to tumble about the ears of the workmen before they were completed. The most delicate and important functions of government were intrusted to men with neither knowledge, heart nor experience, who by their corruption imperiled the public interest and by their blundering disgraced the national name. In short, all the train of evils inseparable from government of any kind beset this unhappy people with tenfold power, together with hundreds of worse ones peculiar to their own faulty and unnatural system. It was thought that their institutions would give them peace, yet in the first three-quarters of a century of their existence they fought three important wars: one of revenge, one of aggression and one — the bloodiest and most wasteful known up to that time — among themselves. And before a century and a half had passed they had the humiliation to see many of their seaport cities destroyed by the Emperor of Japan in a quarrel which they had themselves provoked by their greed of Oriental dominion.

By far the most important factor concerned in bringing about the dissolution of the republic and the incredible horrors that followed it was what was known as “the contest between capital and labor.” This momentous struggle began in a rather singular way through an agitation set afoot by certain ambitious women who preached at first to inattentive and inhospitable ears, but with ever increasing acceptance, the doctrine of equality of the sexes, and demanded the “emancipation” of woman. True, woman was already an object of worship and had, as noted before, the right to kill. She was treated with profound and sincere deference, because of certain humble virtues, the product of her secluded life. Men of that time appear to have felt for women, in addition to religious reverence, a certain sentiment known as “love.” The nature of this feeling is not clearly known to us, and has been for ages a matter of controversy evolving more heat than light. This much is plain: it was largely composed of good will, and had its root in woman’s dependence. Perhaps it had something of the character of the benevolence with which we regard our slaves, our children and our domestic animals — everything, in fact, that is weak, helpless and inoffensive.

Woman was not satisfied; her superserviceable advocates taught her to demand the right to vote, to hold office, to own property, to enter into employment in competition with man. Whatever she demanded she eventually got. With the effect upon her we are not here concerned; the predicted gain to political purity did not ensue, nor did commercial integrity receive any stimulus from her participation in commercial pursuits. What indubitably did ensue was a more sharp and bitter competition in the industrial world through this increase of more than thirty per cent, in its wage-earning population. In no age nor country has there ever been sufficient employment for those requiring it. The effect of so enormously increasing the already disproportionate number of workers in a single generation could be no other than disastrous. Every woman employed displaced or excluded some man, who, compelled to seek a lower employment, displaced another, and so on, until the least capable or most unlucky of the series became a tramp — a nomadic mendicant criminal! The number of these dangerous vagrants in the beginning of the twentieth century of their era has been estimated by Holobom at no less than seven and a half *blukuks*! Of course, they were as tow to the fires of sedition, anarchy and insurrection. It does not very nearly relate to our present purpose, but it is impossible not to note in passing that this unhappy result, directly flowing from woman's invasion of the industrial field, was unaccompanied by any material advantage to herself. Individual women, here and there one, may themselves have earned the support that they would otherwise not have received, but the sex as a whole was not benefited. They provided for themselves no better than they had previously been provided for, and would still have been provided for, by the men whom they displaced. The whole somber incident is unrelieved by a single gleam of light.

Previously to this invasion of the industrial field by woman there had arisen conditions that were in themselves peculiarly menacing to the social fabric. Some of the philosophers of the period, rummaging amongst the dubious and misunderstood facts of commercial and industrial history, had discovered what they were pleased to term "the law of supply and demand"; and this they expounded with so ingenious a sophistry, and so copious a wealth of illustration and example that what is at best but a faulty and imperfectly applicable principle, limited and cut into by all manner of other considerations, came to be accepted as the sole explanation and basis of material prosperity and an infallible rule for the proper conduct of industrial affairs. In obedience to this "law" — for, interpreting it in its straitest sense they understood it to be mandatory — employers and employees alike regulated by its iron authority all their dealings with one another, throwing off the immemorial relations of mutual dependence and mutual esteem as tending to interfere with beneficent operation. The employer came to believe conscientiously that it was not only profitable and expedient, but under all circumstances his duty, to obtain his labor for as little money as possible, even as he sold its product for as much. Considerations of humanity were not banished from his heart, but most sternly excluded from his business. Many of these misguided men would give large sums to various charities; would found universities, hospitals, libraries; would even stop on their way to relieve beggars in the street; but for their own work-people they had no care. Straman relates in his “Memoirs” that a wealthy manufacturer once said to one of his mill-hands who had asked for an increase of his wages because unable to support his family on the pay that he was getting: “Your family is nothing to me. I cannot afford to mix benevolence with my business.” Yet this man, the author adds, had just given a thousand *drusoes* to a “sea-man’s home.” He could afford to care for other men’s employees, but not for his own. He could not see that the act which he performed as truly, and to the same degree, cut down his margin of profit in his business as the act which he refused to perform would have done, and had not the advantage of securing him better service from a grateful workman.

On their part the laborers were no better. Their relations to their employers being “purely commercial,” as it was called, they put no heart into their work, seeking ever to do as little as possible for their money, precisely as their employers sought to pay as little as possible for the work they got. The interests of the two classes being thus antagonized, they grew to distrust and hate each other, and each accession of ill feeling produced acts which tended to broaden the breach more and more. There was neither cheerful service on the one side nor ungrudging payment on the other.

The harder industrial conditions generated by woman’s irruption into a new domain of activity produced among laboring men a feeling of blind discontent and concern. Like all men in apprehension, they drew together for mutual protection, they knew not clearly against what. They formed “labor unions,” and believed them to be something new and effective in the betterment of their condition; whereas, from the earliest historical times, in Rome, in Greece, in Egypt, in Assyria, labor unions with their accepted methods of “striking” and rioting had been discredited by an almost unbroken record of failure. One of the oldest manuscripts then in existence, preserved in a museum at Turin, but now lost, related how the workmen employed in the necropolis at Thebes, dissatisfied with their allowance of corn and oil, had refused to work, broken out of their quarters and, after much rioting, been subdued by the arrows of the military. And such, despite the sympathies and assistance of brutal mobs of the populace, was sometimes the end of the American “strike.” Originally organized for self-protection, and for a time partly successful, these leagues became great tyrannies, so reasonless in their demands and so unscrupulous in their methods of enforcing them that the laws were unable to deal with them, and frequently the military forces of the several States were ordered out for the protection of life and property; but in most cases the soldiers fraternized with the leagues, ran away, or were easily defeated. The cruel and mindless mobs had always the hypocritical sympathy and encouragement of the newspapers and the politicians, for both feared their power and courted their favor. The judges, dependent for their offices not only on “the labor vote,” but, to obtain it, on the approval of the press and the politicians, boldly set aside the laws against conspiracy and strained to the utmost tension those relating to riot, arson and murder. To such a pass did all this come that in the year 1931 an inn-keeper’s denial of a half-holiday to an under-cook resulted in the peremptory closing of half the factories in the country, the stoppage of all railroad travel and movement of freight by land and water and a general paralysis of the industries of the land. Many thousands of families, including those of the “strikers” and their friends, suffered from famine; armed conflicts occurred in every State; hundreds were slain and incalculable amounts of property wrecked and destroyed.

Failure, however, was inherent in the method, for success depended upon unanimity, and the greater the membership of the unions and the more serious their menace to the industries of the country, the higher was the premium for defection; and at last strike-breaking became a regular employment, organized, officered and equipped for the service required by the wealth and intelligence that directed it. From that moment the doom of labor unionism was decreed and inevitable. But labor unionism did not live long enough to die that way.

Naturally combinations of labor entailed combinations of capital. These were at first purely protective. They were brought into being by the necessity of resisting the aggressions of the others. But the trick of combination once learned, it was seen to have possibilities of profit in directions not dreamed of by its early promoters; its activities were not long confined to fighting the labor unions with their own weapons and with superior cunning and address. The shrewd and energetic men whose capacity and commercial experience had made them rich while the laborers remained poor were not slow to discern the advantages of coöperation over their own former method of competition among themselves. They continued to fight the labor unions, but ceased to fight one another. The result was that in the brief period of two generations almost the entire business of the country fell into the hands of a few gigantic corporations controlled by bold and unscrupulous men, who, by daring and ingenious methods, made the body of the people pay tribute to their greed.

In a country where money was all-powerful the power of money was used without stint and without scruple. Judges were bribed to do their duty, juries to convict, newspapers to support and legislators to betray their constituents and pass the most oppressive laws. By these corrupt means, and with the natural advantage of greater skill in affairs and larger experience in concerted action, the capitalists soon restored their ancient reign and the state of the laborer was worse than it had ever been before. Straman says that in his time two millions of unoffending workmen in the various industries were once discharged without warning and promptly arrested as vagrants and deprived of their ears because a sulking canal-boatman had kicked his captain’s dog into the water. And the dog was a retriever.

Had the people been honest and intelligent, as the politicians affirmed them to be, the combination of capital could have worked no public injury — would, in truth, have been a great public benefit. It enormously reduced the expense of production and distribution, assured greater permanency of employment, opened better opportunities to general and special aptitude, gave an improved product, and at first supplied it at a reduced price. Its crowning merit was that the industries of the country, being controlled by a few men from a central source, could themselves be easily controlled by law if law had been honestly administered. Under the old order of scattered jurisdictions, requiring a multitude of actions at law, little could be done, and little was done, to put a check on commercial greed; under the new, much was possible, and at times something was accomplished. But not for long; the essential dishonesty of the American character enabled these capable and conscienceless managers —”captains of industry” and “kings of finance” — to buy with money advantages and immunities superior to those that the labor unions could obtain by menaces and the promise of votes. The legislatures, the courts, the executive officers, all the sources of authority and springs of control, were defiled and impested until right and justice fled affrighted from the land, and the name of the country became a stench in the nostrils of the world.

Let us pause in our narrative to say here that much of the abuse of the so-called “trusts” by their victims took no account of the folly, stupidity and greed of the victims themselves. A favorite method by which the great corporations crushed out the competition of the smaller ones and of the “individual dealers” was by underselling them — a method made possible by nothing but the selfishness of the purchasing consumers who loudly complained of it. These could have stood by their neighbor, the “small dealer,” if they had wanted to, and no underselling could, have been done. When the trust lowered the price of its product they eagerly took the advantage offered, then cursed the trust for ruining the small dealer. When it raised the price they cursed it for ruining themselves. It is not easy to see what the trust could have done that would have been acceptable, nor is it surprising that it soon learned to ignore their clamor altogether and impenitently plunder those whom it could not hope to appease.

Another of the many sins justly charged against the "kings of finance" was this: They would buy properties worth, say, ten millions of "dollars" (the value of the dollar is now unknown) and issue stock upon it to the face value of, say, fifty millions. This their clamorous critics called "creating" for themselves forty millions of dollars. They created nothing; the stock had no dishonest value unless sold, and even at the most corrupt period of the government nobody was compelled by law to buy. In nine cases in ten the person who bought did so in the hope and expectation of getting much for little and something for nothing. The buyer was no better than the seller. He was a gambler. He "played against the game of the man who kept the table" (as the phrase went), and naturally he lost. Naturally, too, he cried out, but his lamentations, though echoed shrilly by the demagogues, seem to have been unavailing. Even the rudimentary intelligence of that primitive people discerned the impracticability of laws forbidding the seller to set his own price on the thing he would sell and declare it worth that price. Then, as now, nobody had to believe him. Of the few who bought these "watered" stocks in good faith as an investment in the honest hope of dividends it seems sufficient to say, in the words of an ancient Roman, "Against stupidity the gods themselves are powerless." Laws that would adequately protect the foolish from the consequence of their folly would put an end to all commerce. The sin of "over-capitalization" differed in magnitude only, not in kind, from the daily practice of every salesman in every shop. Nevertheless, the popular fury that it aroused must be reckoned among the main causes contributory to the savage insurrections that accomplished the downfall of the republic.

With the formation of powerful and unscrupulous trusts of both labor and capital to subdue each other the possibilities of combination were not exhausted; there remained the daring plan of combining the two belligerents! And this was actually effected. The laborer's demand for an increased wage was always based upon an increased cost of living, which was itself chiefly due to increased cost of production from reluctant concessions of his former demands. But in the first years of the twentieth century observers noticed on the part of capital a lessening reluctance. More frequent and more extortionate and reasonless demands encountered a less bitter and stubborn resistance; capital was apparently weakening just at the time when, with its strong organizations of trained and willing strike-breakers, it was most secure. Not so; an ingenious malefactor, whose name has perished from history, had thought out a plan for bringing the belligerent forces together to plunder the rest of the population. In the accounts that have come down to us details are wanting, but we know that, little by little, this amazing project was accomplished. Wages rose to incredible rates. The cost of living rose with them, for employers — their new allies wielding in their service the weapons previously used against them, intimidation, the boycott, and so forth — more than recouped themselves from the general public. Their employees got rebates on the prices of products, but for consumers who were neither laborers nor capitalists there was no mercy. Strikes were a thing of the past; strike-breakers threw themselves gratefully into the arms of the unions; "industrial discontent" vanished, in the words of a contemporary poet, "as by the stroke of an enchanter's wand." All was peace, tranquillity and order! Then the storm broke.

A man in St. Louis purchased a sheep's kidney for seven-and-a-half dollars. In his rage at the price he exclaimed: "As a public man I have given twenty of the best years of my life to bringing about a friendly understanding between capital and labor. I have succeeded, and may God have mercy on my meddlesome soul!"

The remark was resented, a riot ensued, and when the sun went down that evening his last beams fell upon a city reeking with the blood of a hundred millionaires and twenty thousand citizens and sons of toil!

Students of the history of those troublous times need not to be told what other and more awful events followed that bloody reprisal. Within forty-eight hours the country was ablaze with insurrection, followed by intestinal wars which lasted three hundred and seventy years and were marked by such hideous barbarities as the modern historian can hardly bring himself to relate. The entire stupendous edifice of popular government, temple and citadel of fallacies and abuses, had crashed to ruin. For centuries its fallen columns and scattered stones sheltered an ever diminishing number of skulking anarchists, succeeded by hordes of skin-clad savages subsisting on offal and raw flesh — the race-remnant of an extinct civilization. All finally vanished from history into a darkness impenetrable to conjecture.

In concluding this hasty and imperfect sketch I cannot forbear to relate an episode of the destructive and unnatural contest between labor and capital, which I find recorded in the almost forgotten work of Antrolius, who was an eye-witness to the incident.

At a time when the passions of both parties were most inflamed and scenes of violence most frequent it was somehow noised about that at a certain hour of a certain day some one — none could say who — would stand upon the steps of the Capitol and speak to the people, expounding a plan for reconciliation of all conflicting interests and pacification of the quarrel. At the appointed hour thousands had assembled to hear — glowering capitalists attended by hireling body-guards with firearms, sullen laborers with dynamite bombs concealed in their clothing. All eyes were directed to the specified spot, where suddenly appeared (none saw whence — it seemed as if he had been there all the time, such his tranquillity) a tall, pale man clad in a long robe, bare-headed, his hair falling lightly upon his shoulders, his eyes full of compassion, and with such majesty of face and mien that all were awed to silence ere he spoke. Stepping slowly forward toward the throng and raising his right hand from the elbow, the index finger extended upward, he said, in a voice ineffably sweet and serious: “Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them.”

These strange words he repeated in the same solemn tones three times; then, as the expectant multitude waited breathless for his discourse, stepped quietly down into the midst of them, every one afterward declaring that he passed within a pace of where himself had stood. For a moment the crowd was speechless with surprise and disappointment, then broke into wild, fierce cries: “Lynch him, lynch him!” and some have testified that they heard the word “crucify.” Struggling into looser order, the infuriated mob started in mad pursuit; but each man ran a different way and the stranger was seen again by none of them.

“ON WITH THE DANCE!”: A REVIEW

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The Prude in Letters and Life

It is deserving of remark and censure that American literature is become shockingly moral. There is not a doubt of it; our writers, if accused, would make explicit confession that morality is their only fault — morality in the strict and specific sense. Far be it from me to disparage and belittle this decent tendency to ignore the largest side of human nature, and liveliest element of literary interest. It has an eminence of its own; if it is not great art, it is at least great folly — a superior sort of folly to which none of the masters of letters has ever attained. Not Shakspeare, nor Cervantes, nor Goethe, nor Molière, nor — no, not even Rabelais — ever achieved that shining pinnacle of propriety to which the latter-day American has aspired, by turning his back upon nature's broad and fruitful levels and his eyes upon the passionate altitudes where, throned upon congenial ice, Miss Nancy sits to censure letters, putting the Muses into petticoats and affixing a fig-leaf upon Truth. Ours are an age and country of expurgated editions, emasculated art, and social customs that look over the top of a fan.

Lo! prude-eyed Primdimity, mother of Gush,
Sex-conscious, invoking the difficult blush;
At vices that plague us and sins that beset
Sternly directing her private lorgnette,
Whose lenses, self-searching instinctive for sin,
Make image without of the fancies within.
Itself, if examined, would show us, alas!
A tiny transparency (French) on each glass.

Now, prudery in letters, if it would but have the goodness not to coexist with prudery in life, might be suffered with easy fortitude, inasmuch as one needs not read what one does not like; and between the license of the dear old bucks above mentioned, and the severities of Miss Nancy Howells, and Miss Nancy James, Jr., of t'other school, there is latitude for gratification of individual taste. But it occurs that a literature rather accurately reflects all the virtues and other vices of its period and country, and its tendencies are but the matchings of thought with action. Hence, we may reasonably expect to find — and indubitably shall find — certain well-marked correspondences between the literary faults which it pleases our writers to commit and the social crimes which it pleases the Adversary to see their readers commit. Within the current lustrum the prudery which had already, for some seasons, been achieving a vinegar-visaged and corkscrew-curled certain age in letters, has invaded the ball-room, and is infesting it in quantity. Supportable, because evitable, in letters, it is here, for the contrary reason, insufferable; for one must dance and enjoy one's self whether one like it or not. Pleasure, I take it, is a duty not to be shirked at the command of disinclination. Youth, following the bent of inherited instinct, and loyally conforming himself to the centuries, must shake a leg in the dance, and Age, from emulation and habit, and for denial of rheumatic incapacity, must occasionally twist his heel though he twist it off in the performance. Dance we must, and dance we shall; that is settled; the question of magnitude is, Shall we caper jocundly with the good grace of an easy conscience, or submit to shuffle half-heartedly with a sense of shame, wincing under the slow stroke of our own rebuking eye? To this momentous question let us now intelligently address our minds, sacredly pledged, as becomes lovers of truth, to its determination in the manner most agreeable to our desires; and if, in pursuance of this laudable design, we have the unhappiness to bother the bunions decorating the all-pervading feet of the good people whose deprecations are voiced in *The Dance of Death* and the clamatory literature of which that blessed volume was the honored parent, upon their own corns be it; they should not have obtruded these eminences

when youth and pleasure meet
To chase the glowing hours with flying feet.

What, therefore, whence, and likewise why, is dancing? From what flower of nature, fertilized by what pollen of circumstance or necessity, is it the fruit? Let us go to the root of the matter.

The Beating of the Blood

Nature takes a childish delight in tireless repetition. The days repeat themselves, the tides ebb and flow, the tree sways forth and back. This world is intent upon recurrences. Not the pendulum of a clock is more persistent of iteration than are all existing things; periodicity is the ultimate law and largest explanation of the universe — to do it over again the one insatiable ambition of all that is. Everything vibrates; through vibration alone do the senses discern it. We are not provided with means of cognizance of what is absolutely at rest; impressions come in waves. Recurrence, recurrence, and again recurrence — that is the sole phenomenon. With what fealty we submit us to the law which compels the rhythm and regularity to our movement — that makes us divide up passing time into brief equal intervals, marking them off by some method of physical notation, so that our senses may apprehend them! In all we do we unconsciously mark time like a clock, the leader of an orchestra with his *bâton* only more perfectly than the smith with his hammer, or the woman with her needle, because his hand is better assisted by his ear, less embarrassed with *impedimenta*. The pedestrian impelling his legs and the idler twiddling his thumbs are endeavoring, each in his unconscious way, to beat time to some inaudible music; and the graceless lout, sitting cross-legged in a horse-car, manages the affair with his toe.

The more intently we labor, the more intensely do we become absorbed in labor’s dumb song, until with body and mind engaged in the ecstacy of repetition, we resent an interruption of our work as we do a false note in music, and are mightily enamored of ourselves afterward for the power of application which was simply inability to desist. In this rhythm of toil is to be found the charm of industry. Toil has in itself no spell to conjure with, but its recurrences of molecular action, cerebral and muscular, are as delightful as rhyme.

Such of our pleasures as require movements equally rhythmic with those entailed by labor are almost equally agreeable, with the added advantage of being useless. Dancing, which is not only rhythmic movement, pure and simple, undebased with any element of utility, but is capable of performance under conditions positively baneful, is for these reasons the most engaging of them all; and if it were but one-half as wicked as the prudes have endeavored by method of naughty suggestion to make it would lack of absolute bliss nothing but the other half.

This ever active and unabatable something within us which compels us always to be marking time we may call, for want of a better name, the instinct of rhythm. It is the æsthetic principle of our nature. Translated into words it has given us poetry; into sound, music; into motion, dancing. Perhaps even painting may be referred to it, space being the correlative of time, and color the correlative of tone. We are fond of arranging our minute intervals of time into groups. We find certain of these groups highly agreeable, while others are no end unpleasant. In the former there is a singular regularity to be observed, which led hard-headed old Leibnitz to the theory that our delight in music arises from an inherent affection for mathematics. Yet musicians have hitherto obtained but indifferent recognition for feats of calculation, nor have the singing and playing of renowned mathematicians been unanimously commended by good judges.

Music so intensifies and excites the instinct of rhythm that a strong volition is required to repress its physical expression. The universality of this is well illustrated by the legend, found in some shape in many countries and languages, of the boy with the fiddle who compels king, cook, peasant, clown, and all that kind of people, to follow him through the land; and in the myth of the Pied Piper of Hamelin we discern abundant reason to think the instinct of rhythm an attribute of rats. Soldiers march so much livelier with music than without that it has been found a tolerably good substitute for the hope of plunder. When the foot-falls are audible, as on the deck of a steamer, walking has an added pleasure, and even the pirate, with gentle consideration for the universal instinct, suffers his vanquished foeman to walk the plank.

Dancing is simply marking time with the body, as an accompaniment to music, though the same — without the music — is done with only the head and forefinger in a New England meeting-house at psalm time. (The peculiar dance named in honor of St. Vitus is executed with or without music, at the option of the musician.) But the body is a clumsy piece of machinery, requiring some attention and observation to keep it accurately in time to the fiddling. The smallest diversion of the thought, the briefest relaxing of the mind, is fatal to the performance. ‘Tis as easy to fix attention on a sonnet of Shakspeare while working at whist as gloat upon your partner while waltzing. It can not be intelligently, appreciatively, and adequately accomplished — *crede expertum*.

On the subject of poetry, Emerson says: “Metre begins with pulse-beat, and the length of lines in songs and poems is determined by the inhalation and exhalation of the lungs,” and this really goes near to the root of the matter; albeit we might derive therefrom the unsupported inference that a poet “fat and scant of breath” would write in lines of a foot each, while the more able-bodied bard, with the capacious lungs of a pearl-diver, would deliver himself all across his page, with “the spacious volubility of a drumming decasyllabon.”

While the heart, working with alternate contraction and dilatation, sends the blood intermittently through the brain, and the outer world apprises us of its existence only by successive impulses, it must result that our sense of things will be rhythmic. The brain being alternately stimulated and relaxed we must think — as we feel — in waves, apprehending nothing continuously, and incapable of a consciousness that is not divisible into units of perception of which we make mental record and physical sign. That is why we dance. That is why we can, may, must, will, and shall dance, and the gates of Philistia shall not prevail against us.

La valse légère, la valse légère,
The free, the bright, the debonair,
That stirs the strong, and fires the fair
With joy like wine of vintage rare —
That lends the swiftly circling pair
A short surcease of killing care,
With music in the dreaming air,
With elegance and grace to spare.
Vive! vive la valse, la valse légère!

George Jessop.

There are Corns in Egypt

Our civilization — wise child! — knows its father in the superior civilization whose colossal vestiges are found along the Nile. To those, then, who see in the dance a civilizing art, it can not be wholly unprofitable to glance at this polite accomplishment as it existed among the ancient Egyptians, and was by them transmitted — with various modifications, but preserving its essentials of identity — to other nations and other times. And here we have first to note that, as in all the nations of antiquity, the dance in Egypt was principally a religious ceremony; the pious old boys that builded the pyramids executed their jigs as an act of worship. Diodorus Siculus informs us that Osiris, in his proselyting travels among the peoples surrounding Egypt — for Osiris was what we would call a circuit preacher — was accompanied by dancers male and dancers female. From the sculptures on some of the oldest tombs of Thebes it is seen that the dances there depicted did not greatly differ from those in present favor in the same region; although it seems a fair inference from the higher culture and refinement of the elder period that they were distinguished by graces correspondingly superior. That dances having the character of religious rites were not always free from an element that we would term indelicacy, but which their performers and witnesses probably considered the commendable exuberance of zeal and devotion, is manifest from the following passage of Herodotus, in which reference is made to the festival of Bubastis:

Men and women come sailing all together, vast numbers in each boat, many of the women with castanets, which they strike, while some of the men pipe during the whole period of the voyage; the remainder of the voyagers, male and female, sing the while, and make a clapping with their hands. When they arrive opposite to any town on the banks of the stream they approach the shore, and while some of the women continue to play and sing, others call aloud to the females of the place and load them with abuse, a certain number dancing and others standing up, uncovering themselves. Proceeding in this way all along the river course they reach Bubastis, where they celebrate the feast with abundant sacrifice.

Of the mysteries of Isis and Osiris, in which dancing played an important part, the character of the ceremonies is matter of dim conjecture; but from the hints that have come down to us like significant shrugs and whispers from a discreet past, which could say a good deal more if it had a mind to, I hasten to infer that they were no better than they should have been.

Naturally the dances for amusement of others were regulated in movement and gesture to suit the taste of patrons: for the refined, decency and moderation; for the wicked, *a soupçon* of the other kind of excellence. In the latter case the buffoon, an invariable adjunct, committed a thousand extravagances, and was a dear, delightful, naughty ancient Egyptian buffoon. These dances were performed by both men and women; sometimes together, more frequently in separate parties. The men seem to have confined themselves mostly to exercises requiring strength of leg and arm. The figures on the tombs represent men in lively and vigorous postures, some in attitude preliminary to leaping, others in the air. This feature of agility would be a novelty in the oriental dances of to-day; the indolent male spectator being satisfied with a slow, voluptuous movement congenial to his disposition. When, on the contrary, the performance of our prehistoric friends was governed and determined by ideas of grace, there were not infrequently from six to eight musical instruments, the harp, guitar, double-pipe, lyre, and tambourine of the period being most popular, and these commonly accompanied by a clapping of hands to mark the time.

As with the Greeks, dancers were had in at dinner to make merry; for although the upper-class Egyptian was forbidden to practice the art, either as an accomplishment or for the satisfaction of his emotional nature, it was not considered indecorous to hire professionals to perform before him and his female and young. The she dancer usually habited herself in a loose, flowing robe, falling to the ankles and bound at the waist, while about the hips was fastened a narrow, ornate girdle. This costume — in point of opacity imperfectly superior to a gentle breeze — is not always discernible in the sculptures; but it is charitably believed that the pellucid garment, being merely painted over the figures, has been ravished away by the hand of Time — the wretch!

One of the dances was a succession of pleasing attitudes, the hands and arms rendering important assistance — the body bending backward and forward and swaying laterally, the *figurante* sometimes half-kneeling, and in that position gracefully posturing, and again balanced on one foot, the arms and hands waving slowly in time to the music. In another dance, the *pirouette* and other figures dear to the bald-headed beaux of the modern play-house, were practiced in the familiar way. Four thousand years ago, the senses of the young ancient Egyptian — wild, heady lad! — were kicked into confusion by the dark-skinned belle of the ballet, while senility, with dimmed eyes, rubbed its dry hands in feverish approval at the self-same feat. Dear, dear, but it was a bad world four thousand years ago!

Sometimes they danced in pairs, men with men and women with women, indifferently, the latter arrangement seeming to us preferable by reason of the women’s conspicuously superior grace and almost equal agility; for it is in evidence on the tombs that tumblers and acrobats were commonly of the softer sex. Some of the attitudes were similar to those which drew from Socrates the ungallant remark that women were capable of learning anything which you will that they should know. The figures in this *pas de deux* appear frequently to have terminated in what children, with their customary coarseness of speech, are pleased to call “wringing the dish-clout” — clasping the hands, throwing the arms above the head and turning rapidly, each as on a pivot, without loosing the hands of the other, and resting again in position.

Sometimes, with no other music than the percussion of hands, a man would execute a *pas seul*, which it is to be presumed he enjoyed. Again, with a riper and better sense of musical methods, the performer accompanied himself, or, as in this case it usually was, herself, on the double-pipes, the guitar or the tambourine, while the familiar hand-clapping was done by attendants. A step not unlike that of the abominable clog dance of the “variety” stage and “music hall” of the present day consisted in striking the heel of first one foot and then the other, the hands and arms being employed to diminish the monotony of the movement. For amusement and instruction of the vulgar, buffoons in herds of ten or more in fested the streets, hopping and posing to the sound of a drum.

As illustrating the versatility of the dance, its wide capacities of adaptation to human emotional needs, I may mention here the procession of women to the tomb of a friend or relative Punishing the tambourine or *dara booka* drum, and bearing branches of palm or other symbolic vegetables, these sprightly mourners passed through the streets with songs and dances which, under the circumstances, can hardly have failed eminently to gratify the person so fortunate as to have his memory honored by so delicate and appropriate observance.

A Reef in the Gabardine

The early Jew danced ritually and socially. Some of his dances and the customs connected therewith were of his own devising; others he picked up in Egypt, the latter, no doubt, being more firmly fixed in his memory by the necessity of practicing them — albeit behind the back of Moses — while he had them still fresh in his mind; for he would naturally resort to every human and inhuman device to wile away the dragging decades consumed in tracing the labyrinthine sinuosities of his course in the wilderness. When a man has assurance that he will not be permitted to arrive at the point for which he set out, perceiving that every step forward is a step wasted, he will pretty certainly use his feet to a better purpose than walking. Clearly, at a time when all the chosen people were Wandering Jews they would dance all they knew how. We know that they danced in worship of the Golden Calf, and that previously "Miriam the prophetess, sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances." And ever so many generations before, Laban complained to Jacob that Jacob had stolen away instead of letting him send him off with songs and mirth and music on the tabret and harp, a method of speeding the parting guest which would naturally include dancing, although the same is not of explicit record.

The religious ceremonies of the Jews had not at all times the restraint and delicacy which it is to be wished the Lord had exacted, for we read of King David himself dancing before the Ark in a condition so nearly nude as greatly to scandalize the daughter of Saul. By the way, this incident has been always a stock argument for the extinction and decent interment of the unhappy anti dancer. Conceding the necessity of his extinction, I am yet indisposed to attach much weight to the Davidian precedent, for it does not appear that he was acting under divine command, directly or indirectly imparted, and whenever he followed the hest of his own sweet will David had a notable knack at going wrong. Perhaps the best value of the incident consists in the evidence it supplies that dancing was not forbidden — save possibly by divine injunction — to the higher classes of Jews, for unless we are to suppose the dancing of David to have been the mere clumsy capering of a loutish mood (a theory which our respect for royalty, even when divested of its imposing externals, forbids us to entertain) we are bound to assume previous instruction and practice in the art. We have, moreover, the Roman example of the daughter of Herodias, whose dancing before Herod was so admirably performed that she was suitably rewarded with a testimonial of her step father’s esteem. To these examples many more might be added, showing by cumulative evidence that among the ancient people whose religion was good enough for us to adopt and improve, dancing was a polite and proper accomplishment, although not always decorously executed on seasonable occasion.

Enter a Troupe of Ancients, Dancing

The nearly oldest authentic human records now decipherable are the cuneiform inscriptions from the archives of Assurbanipal, translated by the late George Smith, of the British Museum, and in them we find abundant reference to the dance, but must content ourselves with a single one.

The kings of Arabia who against my agreement,
sinned, whom in the midst of battle alive I had captured
in hand, to make that Bitrichiti   Heavy burdens I
caused them to carry and I caused them to take
building its brick work   with dancing and
music   with joy and shouting from the found
ation to its roof I built

A Mesopotamian king, who had the genius to conceive the dazzling idea of communicating with the readers of this distant generation by taking impressions of carpet tacks on cubes of unbaked clay is surely entitled to a certain veneration, and when he associates dancing with such commendable actions as making porters of his royal captives it is not becoming in us meaner mortals to set up a contrary opinion. Indeed nothing can be more certain than that the art of dancing was not regarded by the ancients generally in the light of a frivolous accomplishment, nor its practice a thing wherewith to shoo away a tedious hour. In their minds it evidently had a certain dignity and elevation, so much so that they associated it with their ideas (tolerably correct ones, on the whole) of art, harmony, beauty, truth and religion With them, dancing bore a relation to walking and the ordinary movements of the limbs similar to that which poetry bears to prose, and as our own Emerson — himself something of an ancient — defines poetry as the piety of the intellect, so Homer would doubtless have defined dancing as the devotion of the body if he had had the unspeakable advantage of a training in the Emerson school of epigram. Such a view of it is natural to the unsophisticated pagan mind, and to all minds of clean, wholesome, and simple understanding. It is only the intellect that has been subjected to the strain of overwrought religious enthusiasm of the more sombre sort that can discern a lurking devil in the dance, or anything but an exhilarating and altogether delightful outward manifestation of an inner sense of harmony, joy and well being. Under the stress of morbid feeling, or the overstrain of religious excitement, coarsely organized natures see or create something gross and prurient in things intrinsically sweet and pure, and it happens that when the dance has fallen to their shaping and direction, as in religious rites, then it has received its most objectionable development and perversion. But the grossness of dances devised by the secular mind for purposes of æsthetic pleasure is all in the censorious critic, who deserves the same kind of rebuke administered by Dr. Johnson to Boswell, who asked the Doctor if he considered a certain nude statue immodest. “No, sir, but your question is.”

It would be an unfortunate thing, indeed, if the “prurient prudes” of the meeting houses were permitted to make the laws by which society should be governed. The same unhappy psychological condition which makes the dance an unclean thing in their jaundiced eyes renders it impossible for them to enjoy art or literature when the subject is natural, the treatment free and joyous. The ingenuity that can discover an indelicate provocative in the waltz will have no difficulty in snouting out all manner of uncleanlmess in Shakspeare, Chaucer, Boccacio — nay, even in the New Testament. It would detect an unpleasant suggestiveness in the Medicean Venus, and two in the Dancing Faun. To all such the ordinary functions of life are impure, the natural man and woman things to blush at, all the economies of nature full of shocking improprieties.

In the Primitive Church dancing was a religious rite, no less than it was under the older dispensation among the Jews. On the eve of sacred festivals, the young people were accustomed to assemble, sometimes before the church door, sometimes in the choir or nave of the church, and dance and sing hymns in honor of the saint whose festival it was. Easter Sunday, especially, was so celebrated; and rituals of a comparatively modern date contain the order in which it is appointed that the dances are to be performed, and the words of the hymns to the music of which the youthful devotees flung up their pious heels But I digress.

In Plato’s time the Greeks held that dancing awakened and preserved in the soul — as I do not doubt that it does — the sentiment of harmony and proportion; and in accordance with this idea Simonides, with a happy knack at epigram, defined dances as “poems in dumb show.”

In his *Republic* Plato classifies the Grecian dances as domestic, designed for relaxation and amusement, military, to promote strength and activity in battle; and religious, to accompany the sacred songs at pious festivals. To the last class belongs the dance which Theseus is said to have instituted on his return from Crete, after having abated the Minotaur nuisance. At the head of a noble band of youth, this public spirited reformer of abuses himself executed his dance. Theseus as a dancing-master does not much fire the imagination, it is true, but the incident has its value and purpose in this dissertation. Theseus called his dance *Geranos*, or the “Crane,” because its figures resembled those described by that fowl aflight; and Plutarch fancied he discovered in it a meaning which one does not so readily discover in Plutarch’s explanation.

It is certain that, in the time of Anacreon,[1] the Greeks loved the dance. That poet, with frequent repetition, felicitates himself that age has not deprived him of his skill in it. In Ode LIII, he declares that in the dance he renews his youth

When I behold the festive train
Of dancing youth, I’m young again
And let me, while the wild and young
Trip the mazy dance along
Fling my heap of years away
And be as wild, as young as they
— *Moore*

And so in Ode LIX, which seems to be a vintage hymn.

When he whose verging years decline
As deep into the vale as mine
When he inhales the vintage cup
His feet new winged from earth spring up
And as he dances the fresh air
Plays whispering through his silvery hair
— *Id*

In Ode XLVII, he boasts that age has not impaired his relish for, nor his power of indulgence in, the feast and dance.

Tis true my fading years decline
Yet I can quaff the brimming wine
As deep as any stripling fair
Whose cheeks the flush of morning wear,
And if amidst the wanton crew
I’m called to wind the dance’s clew
Then shalt thou see this vigorous hand
Not faltering on the Bacchant’s wand
For though my fading years decay —
Though manhood’s prime hath passed away,
Like old Silenus sire divine
With blushes borrowed from the wine
I’ll wanton mid the dancing tram
And live my follies o’er again

— *Id*

Cornelius Nepos, I think, mentions among the admirable qualities of the great Epaminondas that he had an extraordinary talent for music and dancing. Epaminondas accomplishing his jig must be accepted as a pleasing and instructive figure in the history of the dance.

Lucian says that a dancer must have some skill as an actor, and some acquaintance with mythology — the reason being that the dances at the festivals of the gods partook of the character of pantomime, and represented the most picturesque events and passages in the popular religion. Religious knowledge is happily no longer regarded as a necessary qualification for the dance, and, in point of fact no thing is commonly more foreign to the minds of those who excel in it.

It is related of Aristides the Just that he danced at an entertainment given by Dionysius the Tyrant, and Plato, who was also a guest, probably confronted him in the set.

The “dance of the wine press,” described by Longinus, was originally modest and proper, but seems to have become in the process of time — and probably by the stealthy participation of disguised prudes — a kind of *can can*.

In the high noon of human civilization — in the time of Pericles at Athens — dancing seems to have been regarded as a civilizing and refining amusement in which the gravest dignitaries and most renowned worthies joined with indubitable alacrity, if problematic advantage. Socrates himself — at an advanced age, too — was persuaded by the virtuous Aspasia to cut his caper with the rest of them.

Horace (Ode IX, Book I,) exhorts the youth not to despise the dance:

Nec dulcis amores
Sperne puer, neque tu choreas.
Which may be freely translated thus:
Boy, in Love’s game don’t miss a trick,
Nor be in the dance a walking stick.
In Ode IV, Book I, he says:
Jam Cytherea choros ducit, inminente Luna
Junctæque Nymphis Gratiæ decentes
Alterno terram quatiunt pede, etc
At moonrise, Venus and her joyous band
Of Nymphs and Graces leg it o’er the land

In Ode XXXVI, Book I (supposed to have been written when Numida returned from the war in Spain, with Augustus, and referring to which an old commentator says "We may judge with how much tenderness Horace loved his friends, when he celebrates their return with sacrifices, songs, and dances") Horace writes

Cressa ne careat pulchra dies nota
Neu promtæ modus amphoræ
Neu morem in Salium sit requies pedum *etc.*
Let not the day forego its mark
Nor lack the wine jug's honest bark
Like Salian priests we'll toss our toes —
Choose partners for the dance — here goes!

It has been hastily inferred that, in the time of Cicero, dancing was not held in good repute among the Romans, but I prefer to consider his ungracious dictum (in *De Ami citia,* I think,) "*Nemo sobrius saltat*" — no sober man dances — as merely the spiteful and envious fling of a man who could not himself dance, and am disposed to congratulate the golden youth of the Eternal City on the absence of the solemn consequential and egotistic orator from their festivals and merry makings whence his shining talents would have been so many several justifications for his forcible extrusion. No doubt his eminence procured him many invitations to balls of the period, and some of these he probably felt constrained to accept, but it is highly unlikely that he was often solicited to dance, he probably wiled away the tedious hours of inaction by instructing the fibrous virgins and gouty bucks in the principles of juris prudence. Cicero as a wall flower is an interesting object, and, turning to another branch of our subject, in this picturesque attitude we leave him. Left talking.

[1] It may be noted here that the popular conception of this poet as a frivolous sensualist is unsustained by evidence and repudiated by all having knowledge of the matter. Although love and wine were his constant themes, there is good ground for the belief that he wrote of them with greater *abandon* than he indulged in them — a not uncommon practice of the poet-folk, by the way, and one to which those who sing of deeds of arms are perhaps especially addicted. The great age which Anacreon attained points to a temperate life; and he more than once denounces intoxication with as great zeal as a modern reformer who has eschewed the flagon for the trencher. According to Anacreon, drunkenness is "the vice of barbarians;" though, for the matter of that, it is difficult to say what achievable vice is not. In Ode LXII, he sings:

Fill me, boy, as deep a draught
As e’er was filled, as e’er was quaffed;
But let the water amply flow
To cool the grape’s intemperate glow.
. . . .
For though the bowl’s the grave of sadness
Ne’er let it be the birth of madness
No! banish from our board to night
The revelries of rude delight
To Scythians leave these wild excesses
Ours be the joy that soothes and blesses!
And while the temperate bowl we wreathe
In concert let our voices breathe
Beguiling every hour along
With harmony of soul and song

Maximus of Tyre speaking of Polycrates the Tyrant (tyrant, be it remembered, meant only usurper, not oppressor) considered the happiness of that potentate, secure because he had a powerful navy and such a friend as Anacreon — the word navy naturally suggesting cold water, and cold water, Anacreon.

Cairo Revisited

Having glanced, briefly, and as through a glass darkly, at the dance as it existed in the earliest times of which we have knowledge in the country whence, through devious and partly obliterated channels, we derived much of our civilization, let us hastily survey some of its modern methods in the same region — supplying thereby some small means of comparison to the reader who may care to note the changes undergone and the features preserved.

We find the most notable, if not the only, purely Egyptian dancer of our time in the *Alme* or *Ghowazee*. The former name is derived from the original calling of this class — that of reciting poetry to the inmates of the harem, the latter they acquired by dancing at the festivals of the Ghors, or Memlooks. Reasonably modest at first, the dancing of the Alme became, in the course of time, so conspicuously indelicate that great numbers of the softer sex persuaded themselves to its acquirement and practice, and a certain viceregal Prude once contracted the powers of the whole Cairo contingent of Awalim into the pent up Utica of the town of Esuch, some five hundred miles removed from the viceregal dissenting eye. For a brief season the order was enforced, then the sprightly sinners danced out of bounds, and their successors can now be found by the foreign student of Egyptian morals without the fatigue and expense of a long journey up the Nile.

The professional dress of the Alme consists of a short embroidered jacket, fitting closely to the arms and back, but frankly unreserved in front, long loose trousers of silk sufficiently opaque somewhat to soften the severity of the lower limbs, a Cashmere shawl bound about the waist and a light turban of muslin embroidered with gold. The long black hair, starred with small coins, falls abundantly over the shoulders. The eyelids are sabled with kohl, and such other paints, oils, varnishes and dyestuffs are used as the fair one — who is a trifle dark, by the way — may have proved for herself, or accepted on the superior judgment of her European sisters. Altogether, the girl’s outer and visible aspect is not unattractive to the eye of the traveler, however faulty to the eye of the traveler’s wife. When about to dance, the Alme puts on a lighter and more diaphanous dress, eschews her slippers, and with a slow and measured step advances to the centre of the room — her lithe figure undulating with a grace peculiarly serpentile. The music is that of a reed pipe or a tambourine — a number of attendants assisting with castanets. Perhaps the “argument” of her dance will be a love-passage with an imaginary young Arab. The coyness of a first meeting by chance her gradual warming into passion their separation, followed by her tears and dejection the hope of meeting soon again and, finally, the intoxication of being held once more in his arms — all are delineated with a fidelity and detail surprising to whatever of judgment the masculine spectator may have the good fortune to retain.

One of the prime favorites is the “wasp dance,” allied to the Tarantella. Although less pleasing in motive than that described, the wasp dance gives opportunity for movements of even superior significance — or, as one may say, suggestures. The girl stands in a pensive posture, her hands demurely clasped in front, her head poised a little on one side. Suddenly a wasp is heard to approach, and by her gestures is seen to have stung her on the breast. She then darts hither and thither in pursuit of that audacious insect, assuming all manner of provoking attitudes, until, finally, the wasp having been caught and miserably exterminated, the girl resumes her innocent smile and modest pose.

Japan Wear and Bombay Ducks

Throughout Asia, dancing is marked by certain characteristics which do not greatly differ, save in degree, among the various peoples who practice it. With few exceptions, it is confined to the superior sex, and these ladies, I am sorry to confess, have not derived as great moral advantage from the monopoly as an advocate of dancing would prefer to record.

Dancing — the rhythmical movement of the limbs and body to music — is, as I have endeavored to point out, instinctive, hardly a people, savage or refined, but has certain forms of it. When, from any cause, the men abstain from its execution it has commonly not the character of grace and agility as its dominant feature, but is distinguished by soft, voluptuous movements, suggestive posturing, and all the wiles by which the performer knows she can best please the other sex, the most forthright and effective means to that commendable end being evocation of man's baser nature. The Japanese men are anti-dancers from necessity of costume, if nothing else, and the effect is much the same as elsewhere under the same conditions the women dance, the men gloat and the gods grieve.

There are two kinds of dances in Japan, the one not only lewd, but — to speak with accurate adjustment of word to fact — beastly, in the other grace is the dominating element, and decency as cold as a snow storm. Of the former class, the "Chon Nookee" is the most popular. It is, however, less a dance than an exhibition, and its patrons are the wicked, the dissolute and the European. It is commonly given at some entertainment to which respectable women have not the condescension to be invited — such as a dinner party of some wealthy gentleman's gentlemen friends. The dinner-served on the floor — having been impatiently tucked away, and the candies, cakes, hot saki and other necessary addenda of a Japanese dinner brought in, the "Chon Nookee" is demanded, and with a modest demeanor, worn as becomingly as if it were their every day habit, the performers glide in, seating themselves coyly on the floor, in two rows. Each dancing girl is appareled in such captivating bravery as her purse can buy or her charms exact. The folds of her varicolored gowns crossing her bosom makes combinations of rich, warm hues, which it were folly not to admire and peril to admire too much. The faces of these girls are in many instances exceedingly pretty, but with that natural — and, be it humbly submitted, not very creditable — tendency of the sex to revision and correction of nature's handiwork, they plaster them with pigments dear to the sign painter and temper the red glory of their lips with a bronze preparation which the flattered brass founder would no doubt deem kissable utterly. The music is made by beating a drum and twanging a kind of guitar, the musician chanting the while to an exceedingly simple air words which, in deference to the possible prejudices of those readers who may be on terms of familarity with the Japanese language, I have deemed it proper to omit — with an apology to the Prudes for the absence of an appendix in which they might be given without offense. (I had it in mind to insert the music here, but am told by credible authority that in Japan music is moral or immoral without reference to the words that may be sung with it. So I omit — with reluctance — the score, as well as the words.)

The chanting having proceeded for a few minutes the girls take up the song and enter spiritedly into the dance. One challenges another and at a certain stage of the lively song with the sharp cry *"Hoi!"* makes a motion with her hand. Failure on the part of the other instantaneously and exactly to copy this gesture entails the forfeiture of a garment, which is at once frankly removed. Cold and mechanical at the outset, the music grows spirited as the girls grow nude, and the dancers themselves become strangely excited as they warm to the work, taking, the while, generous potations of saki to assist their enthusiasm.

Let it not be supposed that in all this there is anything of passion, it is with these women nothing more that the mere mental exaltation produced by music, exercise and drink. With the spectators (I have heard) it fares somewhat otherwise.

When modesty's last rag has been discarded, the girls as if suddenly abashed at their own audacity, fly like startled fawns from the room, leaving their patrons to make a settlement with conscience and arrange the terms upon which that monitor will consent to the performance of the rest of the dance. For the dance proper — or improper — is now about to begin. If the first part seemed somewhat tropical, comparison with what follows will acquit it of that demerit. The combinations of the dance are infinitely varied, and so long as willing witnesses remain — which, in simple justice to manly fortitude it should be added, is a good while — so long will the "Chon Nookee" present a new and unexpected phase, but it is thought expedient that no more of them be presented here, and if the reader has done me the honor to have enough of it, we will pass to the consideration of another class of dances.

Of this class those most in favor are the Fan and Umbrella dances, performed, usually, by young girls trained almost from infancy. The Japanese are passionately fond of these beautiful exhibitions of grace, and no manner of festivity is satisfactorily celebrated without them. The musicians, all girls, commonly six or eight in number, play on the guitar, a small ivory wand being used, instead of the fingers, to strike the strings. The dancer, a girl of some thirteen years, is elaborately habited as a page. Confined by the closely folded robe as by fetters, the feet and legs are not much used, the feet, indeed, never leaving the floor. Time is marked by undulations of the body, waving the arms, and deft manipulation of the fan. The supple figure bends and sways like a reed in the wind, advances and recedes, one movement succeeding another by transitions singularly graceful, the arms describing innumerable curves, and the fan so skilfully handled as to seem instinct with a life and liberty of its own. Nothing more pure, more devoid of evil suggestion, can be imagined. It is a sad fact that the poor children trained to the execution of this harmless and pleasing dance are destined, in their riper years, to give their charms and graces to the service of the devil in the ‘Chon Nookee’. The umbrella dance is similar to the one just described, the main difference being the use of a small, gaily colored umbrella in place of the fan.

Crossing from Japan to China, the Prude will find a condition of things which, for iron severity of morals, is perhaps unparalleled — no dancing whatever, by either profligate or virtuous women. To whatever original cause we may attribute this peculiarity, it seems eternal, for the women of the upper classes have an ineradicable habit of so mutilating their feet that even the polite and comparatively harmless accomplishment of walking is beyond their power, those of the lower orders have not sense enough to dance, and that men should dance alone is a proposition of such free and forthright idiocy as to be but obscurely conceivable to any understanding not having the gift of maniacal inspiration, or the normal advantage of original incapacity. Altogether, we may rightly consider China the heaven appointed *habitat* of people who dislike the dance.

In Siam, what little is known of dancing is confined to the people of Laos. The women are meek eyed, spiritless creatures, crushed under the heavy domination of the stronger sex. Naturally, their music and dancing are of a plaintive, almost doleful character, not without a certain cloying sweetness, however. The dancing is as graceful as the pudgy little bodies of the women are capable of achieving — a little more pleasing than the capering of a butcher’s block, but not quite so much so as that of a wash tub. Its greatest merit is the steely rigor of its decorum. The dancers, however, like ourselves, are a shade less appallingly proper off the floor than on it.

In no part of the world, probably, is the condition of women more consummately deplorable than in India, and, in consequence, nowhere than in the dances of that country is manifested a more simple unconsciousness or frank disregard of decency. As by nature, and according to the light that is in him, the

Hindu is indolent and licentious, so, in accurately matching degree, are the dancing girls innocent of morality, and uninfected with shame. It would be difficult, more keenly to insult a respectable Hindu woman than to accuse her of having danced, while the man who should affect the society of the females justly so charged would incur the lasting detestation of his race. The dancing girls are of two orders of infamy — those who serve in the temples, and are hence called Devo Dasi, slaves of the gods, and the Nautch girls, who dance in a secular sort for hire. Frequently a mother will make a vow to dedicate her unborn babe, if it have the obedience to be a girl, to the service of some particular god, in this way, and by the daughters born to themselves, are the ranks of the Devo Dasi recruited. The sons of these miserable creatures are taught to play upon musical instruments for their mothers and sisters to dance by. As the ordinary Hindu woman is careless about the exposure of her charms, so these dancers take intelligent and mischievous advantage of the social situation by immodestly concealing their own. The Devo Dasi actually go to the length of wearing clothes! Each temple has a band of eight or ten of these girls, who celebrate their saltatory rites morning and evening. Advancing at the head of the religious procession, they move themselves in an easy and graceful manner, with gradual transition to a more sensuous and voluptuous motion, suiting their action to the religious frame of mind of the devout until their well-rounded limbs and lithe figures express a degree of piety consonant with the purpose of the particular occasion. They attend all public ceremonies and festivals, executing their audacious dances impartially for gods and men.

The Nautch girls are purchased in infancy, and as carefully trained in their wordly way as the Devo Dasi for the diviner function, being about equally depraved. All the large cities contain full sets of these girls, with attendant musicians, ready for hire at festivals of any kind, and by leaving orders parties are served at their residences with fidelity and dispatch. Commonly they dance two at a time, but frequently some wealthy gentleman will secure the services of a hundred or more to assist him through the day without resorting to questionable expedients of time-killing. Their dances require strict attention, from the circumstance that their feet — like those of the immortal equestrienne of Banbury Cross — are hung with small bells, which must be made to sound in concert with the notes of the musicians. In attitude and gesture they are almost as bad as their pious sisters of the temples. The endeavor is to express the passions of love, hope, jealousy, despair, etc, and they eke out this mimicry with chanted songs in every way worthy of the movements of which they are the explanatory notes. These are the only women in Hindustan whom it is thought worth while to teach to read and write. If they would but make as noble use of their intellectual as they do of their physical education, they might perhaps produce books as moral as *The Dance of Death*.

In Persia and Asia Minor, the dances and dancers are nearly alike. In both countries the Georgian and Circassian slaves who have been taught the art of pleasing, are bought by the wealthy for their amusement and that of their wives and concubines. Some of the performances are pure in motive and modest in execution, but most of them are interesting otherwise. The beautiful young Circassian slave, clad in loose robes of diaphanous texture, takes position, castanets in hand, on a square rug, and to the music of a kind of violin goes through the figures of her dance, her whiteness giving her an added indelicacy which the European spectator misses in the capering of her berry brown sisters in sin of other climes.

The dance of the Georgian is more spirited. Her dress is a brief skirt reaching barely to the knees and a low cut chemise. In her night black hair is wreathed a bright red scarf or string of pearls. The music, at first low and slow increases by degrees in rapidity and volume, then falls away almost to silence, again swells and quickens and so alternates, the motions of the dancer’s willowy and obedient figure accurately according now seeming to swim languidly, and anon her little feet having their will of her, and fluttering in midair like a couple of birds. She is an engaging creature, her ways are ways of pleasantness, but whether all her paths are peace depends somewhat, it is reasonable to conjecture, upon the circumspection of her daily walk and conversation when relegated to the custody of her master’s wives.

In some parts of Persia the dancing of boys appareled as women is held in high favor, but exactly what wholesome human sentiment it addresses I am not prepared to say.

In the Bottom of the Crucible

From the rapid and imperfect review of certain characteristic oriental dances in the chapters immediately preceding — or rather from the studies some of whose minor results those chapters embody — I make deduction of a few significant facts, to which facts of contrary significance seem exceptional. In the first place, it is to be noted that in countries where woman is conspicuously degraded the dance is correspondingly depraved. By "the dance," I mean, of course, those characteristic and typical performances which have permanent place in the social life of the people. Amongst all nations the dance exists in certain loose and unrecognized forms, which are the outgrowth of the moment — creatures of caprice, posing and pranking their brief and inglorious season, to be superseded by some newer favorite, born of some newer accident or fancy. A fair type of these ephemeral dances — the comets of the saltatory system — in so far as they can have a type, is the now familiar *Can-Can* of the Jardin Mabille — a dance the captivating naughtiness of which has given it wide currency in our generation, the successors to whose aged rakes and broken bawds it will fail to please and would probably make unhappy. Dances of this character, neither national, universal, nor enduring, have little value to the student of anything but anatomy and lingerie. By study of a thousand, the product of as many years, it might be possible to trace the thread upon which such beads are strung — indeed, it is pretty obvious without research; but considered singly they have nothing of profit to the investigator, who will do well to contemplate without reflection or perform without question, as the bent of his mind may be observant or experimental.

Dancing, then, is indelicate where the women are depraved, and to this it must be added that the women are depraved where the men are indolent. We need not trouble ourselves to consider too curiously as to cause and effect. Whether in countries where man is too lazy to be manly, woman practices deferential adjustment of her virtues to the loose exactions of his tolerance, or whether for ladies of indifferent modesty their lords will not make exertion — these are questions for the ethnologer. It concerns our purpose only to note that the male who sits cross-legged on a rug and permits his female to do the dancing for both gets a quality distinctly inferior to that enjoyed by his more energetic brother, willing himself to take a leg at the game. Doubtless the lazy fellow prefers the loose gamboling of nude girls to the decent grace and moderation of a better art, but this, I submit, is an error of taste resulting from imperfect instruction.

And here we are confronted with the ever recurrent question. Is dancing immoral? The reader who has done me the honor attentively to consider the brief descriptions of certain dances, hereinbefore presented will, it is believed, be now prepared to answer that some sorts of dancing indubitably are — a bright and shining example of the type being the exploit wherein women alone perform and men alone admire. But one of the arguments by which it is sought to prove dancing immoral in itself — namely that it provokes evil passions — we are now able to analyze with the necessary discrimination, assigning to it its just weight, and tracing its real bearing on the question. Dances like those described (with, I hope a certain delicacy and reticence) are undoubtedly disturbing to the spectator. They have in that circumstance their *raison d'être*. As to that, then, there can be no two opinions. But observe the male oriental voluptuary does not himself dance. Why? Partly no doubt, because of his immortal indolence, but mainly, I venture to think, because he wishes to enjoy his reprehensible emotion, and this can not coexist with muscular activity If the reader — through either immunity from improper emotion or unfamiliarity with muscular activity — entertains a doubt of this, his family physician will be happy to remove it. Nothing is more certain than that the dancing girls of oriental countries themselves feel nothing of what they have the skill to simulate, and the ballet dancer of our own stage is icily unconcerned while kicking together the smouldering embers in the heart of the wigged and corseted old beau below her, and playing the duse's delight with the disobedient imagination of the he Prude posted in the nooks and shadows thoughtfully provided for him. Stendahl frankly informs us, "I have had much experience with the *danseuses* of the —— Theatre at Valence. I am convinced that they are, for the most part, very chaste. It is because their occupation is too fatiguing."

The same author, by the way, says elsewhere

I would wish if I were legislator that they should adopt in France as in Germany the custom of *soirées dansantes*. Four times a month the young girls go with their mothers to a ball beginning at seven o'clock, ending at midnight and requiring for all expense, a violin and some glasses of water. In an adjacent room, the mothers perhaps a little jealous of the happy education of their daughters play at cards, in a third the fathers find the newspapers and talk politics. Between midnight and one o'clock all the family are reunited and have regained the paternal roof. The young girls learn to know the young men, the fatuity, and the indiscretion that follows it, become quickly odious, in a word they learn how to choose a husband. Some young girls have unfortunate love affairs, but the number of deceived husbands and unhappy households (*mauvaises ménages*) diminishes in immense proportion.

For an iron education in cold virtue there is no school like the position of sitting master to the wall flowers at a church sociable, but it is humbly conjectured that even the austere morality of a bald headed Prude might receive an added iciness if he would but attend one of these simple dancing bouts disguised as a sweet young girl.

Counsel for the Defense

Nearly all the great writers of antiquity and of the medieval period who have mentioned dancing at all have done so in terms of unmistakable favor; of modern famous authors, they only have condemned it from whose work, or from what is known of their personal character, we may justly infer an equal aversion to pretty much everything in the way of pleasure that a Christian needs not die in order to enjoy English literature — I use the word in its noble sense, to exclude all manner of preaching, whether clerical or lay — is full of the dance; the sound of merry makers footing it featly to the music runs like an undertone through all the variations of its theme and fills all its pauses.

In the “Miller’s Tale,” Chaucer mentions dancing among the accomplishments of the parish clerk, along with blood letting and the drawing of legal documents:

A merry child he was so God me save,
Wel coud he leten blood and clippe and shave,
And make a chartre of land, and a quitance,
In twenty maners could he trip and dance,
After the scole of Oxenforde tho
And with his legges casten to and fro[2]

Milton, the greatest of the Puritans — intellectual ancestry of the modern degenerate Prudes — had a wholesome love of the dance, and nowhere is his pen so joyous as in its description in the well known passage from “Comus” which, should it occur to my memory while delivering a funeral oration, I am sure I could not forbear to quote, albeit this, our present argument, is but little furthered by its context

Meanwhile welcome joy and feast
Midnight shout and revelry
Tipsy dance and jollity
Braid your locks with rosy twine
Dropping odors dropping wine
Rigor now is gone to bed
And advice with scrupulous head
Strict age and sour severity
With their grave saws in slumber lie
We that are of purer fire
Imitate the starry quire

Who in their nightly watching spheres
Lead in swift round the months and years
The sounds and seas with all their finny drove
And on the tawny sands and shelves
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves

If Milton was not himself a good dancer — and as to that point my memory is unstored with instance or authority — it will at least be conceded that he was an admirable reporter, with his heart in the business. Somewhat to lessen the force of the objection that he puts the foregoing lines into a not very respectable mouth, on a not altogether reputable occasion, I append the following passage from the same poem, supposed to be spoken by the good spirit who had brought a lady and her two brothers through many perils, restoring them to their parents:

Noble lord and lady bright
I have brought ye new delight
Here behold so goodly grown
Three fair branches of your own
Heaven hath timely tried their youth
Their faith their patience and their truth
And sent them here through hard assays
With a crown of deathless praise
To triumph in victorious dance
O’er sensual folly and intemperance

The lines on dancing — lines which themselves dance — in “L’Allegro,” are too familiar, I dare not permit myself the enjoyment of quotation.

Lord Herbert of Cherbury, one of the most finished gentlemen of his time, otherwise laments in his autobiography that he had never learned to dance because that accomplishment “doth fashion the body, and gives one a good presence and address in all companies since it disposeth the limbs to a kind of *souplesse* (as the French call it) and agility insomuch as they seem to have the use of their legs, arms, and bodies more than many others who, standing stiff and stark in their postures, seem as if they were taken in their joints, or had not the perfect use of their members.” Altogether, a very grave objection to dancing in the opinion of those who discountenance it, and I take great credit for candor in presenting his lordship’s indictment.

In the following pertinent passage from Lemontey I do not remember the opinion he quotes from Locke, but his own is sufficiently to the point:

The dance is for young women what the chase is for young men: a protecting school of wisdom — a preservative of the growing passions. The celebrated Locke who made virtue the sole end of education, expressly recommends teaching children to dance as early as they are able to learn. Dancing carries within itself an eminently cooling quality and all over the world the tempests of the heart await to break forth the repose of the limbs.

In “The Traveller,” Goldsmith says:

Alike all ages dames of ancient days
Have led their children through the mirthful maze
And the gay grandsire skilled in gestic lore
Has frisked beneath the burden of three score.

To the Prudes, in all soberness — Is it likely, considering the stubborn conservatism of age, that these dames, well seasoned in the habit, will leave it off directly, or the impenitent old grandsire abate one jot or tittle of his friskiness in the near future? Is it a reasonable hope? Is the outlook from the watch towers of Philistia an encouraging one?

They All Dance

Fountains dance down to the river,
Rivers to the ocean
Summer leaflets dance and quiver
To the breeze's motion
Nothing in the world is single —
All things by a simple rule
Nods and steps and graces mingle
As at dancing school
See the shadows on the mountain
Pirouette with one another
See the leaf upon the fountain
Dances with its leaflet brother
See the moonlight on the earth
Flecking forest gleam and glance!
What are all these dancings worth
If I may not dance?
— *After Shelley*

Dance? Why not? The dance is natural, it is innocent, wholesome, enjoyable. It has the sanction of religion, philosophy, science. It is approved by the sacred writings of all ages and nations — of Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, of Zoroaster and Confucius. Not an altar, from Jupiter to Jesus, around which the votaries have not danced with religious zeal and indubitable profit to mind and body. Fire worshipers of Persia and Peru danced about the visible sign and manifestation to their deity. Dervishes dance in frenzy, and the Shakers jump up and come down hard through excess of the Spirit. All the gods have danced with all the goddesses — round dances, too. The lively divinities created by the Greeks in their own image danced divinely, as became them. Old Thor stormed and thundered down the icy halls of the Scandinavian mythology to the music of runic rhymes, and the souls of slain heroes in Valhalla take to their toes in celebration of their valorous deeds done in the body upon the bodies of their enemies. Angels dance before the Great White Throne to harps attuned by angel hands, and the Master of the Revels — who arranges the music of the spheres — looks approvingly on. Dancing is of divine institution.

The elves and fairies "dance delicate measures" in the light of the moon and stars. The troll dances his gruesome jig on lonely hills the gnome executes his little pigeon wing in the obscure subterrene by the glimmer of a diamond. Nature’s untaught children dance in wood and glade, stimulated of leg by the sunshine with which they are soaken top full — the same quickening emanation that inspires the growing tree and upheaves the hill. And, if I err not, there is sound Scripture for the belief that these self same eminences have capacity to skip for joy. The peasant dances — a trifle clumsily — at harvest feast when the grain is garnered. The stars in heaven dance visibly, the firefly dances in emulation of the stars. The sunshine dances on the waters. The humming bird and the bee dance about the flowers which dance to the breeze. The innocent lamb, type of the White Christ, dances on the green, and the matronly cow perpetrates an occasional stiff enormity when she fancies herself unobserved. All the sportive rollickings of all the animals, from the agile fawn to the unwieldly behemoth are dances taught them by nature.

I am not here making an argument for dancing, I only assert its goodness, confessing its abuse. We do not argue the wholesomeness of sunshine and cold water, we assert it, admitting that sunstroke is mischievous and that copious potations of freezing water will founder a superheated horse, and urge the hot blood to the head of an imprudent man similarly prepared, killing him, as is right. We do not build syllogisms to prove that grains and fruits of the earth are of God’s best bounty to man; we allow that bad whisky may — with difficulty — be distilled from rye to spoil the toper’s nose, and that hydrocyanic acid can be got out of the bloomy peach. It were folly to prove that Science and Invention are our very good friends, yet the sapper who has had the misfortune to be blown to rags by the mine he was preparing for his enemy will not deny that gunpowder has aptitudes of mischief; and from the point of view of a nigger ordered upon the safety-valve of a racing steamboat, the vapor of water is a thing accurst. Shall we condemn music because the lute makes “lascivious pleasing?” Or poetry because some amorous bard tells in warm rhyme the story of the passions, and Swinburne has had the goodness to make vice offensive with his hymns in its praise? Or sculpture because from the guiltless marble may be wrought a drunken Silenus or a lechering satyr? — painting because the untamed fancies of a painter sometimes break tether and run riot on his canvas? Because the orator may provoke the wild passions of the mob, shall there be no more public speaking? — no further acting because the actor may be pleased to saw the air, or the actress display her ultimate inch of leg? Shall we upset the pulpit because poor dear Mr. Tilton had a prettier wife than poor, dear Mr. Beecher? The bench had its Jeffrey, yet it is necessary that we have the deliveries of judgment between ourselves and the litigious. The medical profession has nursed poisoners enough to have baned all the rats of christendom; but the resolute patient must still have his prescription — if he die for it. Shall we disband our armies because in the hand of an ambitious madman a field-marshal’s baton may brain a helpless State? — our navies because in ships pirates have “sailed the seas over?” Let us not commit the vulgarity of condemning the dance because of its possibilities of perversion by the vicious and the profligate. Let us not utter us in hot bosh and baking nonsense, but cleave to reason and the sweet sense of things.

Dancing never made a good girl bad, nor turned a wholesome young man to evil ways. “Opportunity!” simpers the tedious virgin past the wall-flower of her youth. “Opportunity!” cackles the *blasé* beau who has outlasted his legs and gone deaconing in a church.

Opportunity, indeed! There is opportunity in church and school-room, in social intercourse. There is opportunity in libraries, art-galleries, picnics, street-cars, Bible-classes and at fairs and matinées. Opportunity — rare, delicious opportunity, not innocently to be ignored — in moonlight rambles by still streams. Opportunity, such as it is, behind the old gentleman’s turned back, and beneath the good mother’s spectacled nose. You shall sooner draw out leviathan with a hook, or bind Arcturus and his sons, than baffle the upthrust of Opportunity’s many heads. Opportunity is a veritable Hydra, Argus and Briareus rolled into one. He has a hundred heads to plan his poachings, a hundred eyes to spy the land, a hundred hands to set his snares and springes. In the country where young girls are habitually unattended in the street; where the function of chaperon is commonly, and, it should be added, intelligently performed by some capable young male; where the young women receive evening calls from young men concerning whose presence in the parlor mamma in the nursery and papa at the “office” — poor, overworked papa! — give themselves precious little trouble — this prate of ball-room opportunity is singularly and engagingly idiotic. The worthy people who hold such language may justly boast themselves superior to reason and impregnable to light. The only effective reply to these creatures would be a cuffing, the well meant objections of another class merit the refutation of distinct characterization. It is the old talk of devotees about sin, of topers concerning water, temperance men of gin, and albeit it is neither wise nor witty, it is becoming in us at whom they rail to deal mercifully with them. In some otherwise estimable souls one of these harmless brain cracks may be a right lovable trait of character.

Issues of a social import as great as a raid against dancing have been raised ere now. Will the coming man smoke? Will the coming man drink wine? These tremendous and imperative problems only recently agitated some of the “thoughtful minds” in our midst. By degrees they lost their preeminence, they were seen to be in process of solution without social cataclysm, they have, in a manner been referred for disposal to the coming man himself, that is to say, they have been dropped, and are to-day as dead as Julius Cæsar. The present hour has, in its turn, produced its own awful problem: Will the coming woman waltz?

As a question of mere fact the answer is patent: She will. Dancing will be good for her; she will like it; so she is going to waltz. But the question may rather be put — to borrow phraseology current among her critics: Had she oughter? — from a moral point of view, now. From a moral point, then, let us seek from analogy some light on the question of what, from its actual, practical bearings, may be dignified by the name Conundrum.

Ought a man not to smoke? — from a moral point of view. The economical view-point, the view-point of convenience, and all the rest of them, are not now in question; the simple question is: Is it immoral to smoke? And again — still from the moral point of view: Is it immoral to drink wine? Is it immoral to play at cards? — to visit theaters? (In Boston you go to some

harmless “Museum,”
Where folks who like plays may religiously see ‘em.)

Finally, then — and always from the same elevated view-point: Is it immoral to waltz?

The suggestions here started will not be further pursued in this place. It is quite pertinent now to note that we do smoke because we like it; and do drink wine because we like it; and do waltz because we like it, and have the added consciousness that it is a duty. I am sorry for a fellow-creature — male — who knows not the comfort of a cigar; sorry and concerned for him who is innocent of the knowledge of good and evil that lurk respectively in Chambertin and cheap “claret.” Nor is my compassion altogether free from a sense of superiority to the object of it — superiority untainted, howbeit, by truculence. I perceive that life has been bestowed upon him for purposes inscrutable to me, though dimly hinting its own justification as a warning or awful example. So, too, of the men and women—”beings erect, and walking upon two [uneducated] legs” — whose unsophisticated toes have never, inspired by the rosy, threaded the labyrinth of the mazy ere courting the kindly offices of the balmy. It is only human to grieve for them, poor things!

But if their throbbing bunions, encased in clumsy high-lows, be obtruded to trip us in our dance, shall we not stamp on them? Yea, verily, while we have a heel to crunch with and a leg to grind it home.

Lust, Quoth'a!

You have danced? Ah, good. You have waltzed? Better. You have felt the hot blood hound through your veins, as your beautiful partner, compliant to the lightest pressure of your finger-tips, her breath responsive, matched her every motion with yours? Best of all — for you have served in the temple — you are of the priesthood of manhood. You cannot misunderstand, you will not deliver false oracle.

Do you remember your first waltz with the lovely woman whom you had longed like a man but feared like a boy to touch — even so much as the hem of her garment? Can you recall the time, place and circumstance? Has not the very first bar of the music that whirled you away been singing itself in your memory ever since? Do you recall the face you then looked into, the eyes that seemed deeper than a mountain tarn, the figure that you clasped, the beating of the heart, the warm breath that mingled with your own? Can you faintly, as in a dream — *blasé* old dancer that you are — invoke a reminiscence of the delirium that stormed your soul, expelling the dull demon in possession? Was it lust, as the Prudes aver — the poor dear Prudes, with the feel of the cold wall familiar to the leathery backs of them?

It was the gratification — the decent, honorable, legal gratification — of the passion for rhythm; the unconditional surrender to the supreme law of periodicity, under conditions of exact observance by all external things. The notes of the music repeat and supplement each other; the lights burn with answering flame at sequent distances; the walls, the windows, doors, mouldings, frescoes, iterate their lines, their levels, and panels, interminable of combination and similarity; the inlaid floor matches its angles, multiplies its figures, does over again at this point what it did at that; the groups of dancers deploy in couples, aggregate in groups, and again deploy, evoking endless resemblances. And all this rhythm and recurrence, borne in upon the brain — itself rhythmic — through intermittent senses, is converted into motion, and the mind, yielding utterly to its environment, knows the happiness of faith, the ecstasy of compliance, the rapture of congruity. And this the dull dunces — the eyeless, earless, brainless and bloodless callosites of cavil — are pleased to call lust!

O ye, who teach the ingenuous youth of nations
  The Boston Dip, the German and the Glide,

I pray you guard them upon all occasions
   From contact of the palpitating side;
Requiring that their virtuous gyrations
   Shall interpose a space a furlong wide
Between the partners, lest their thoughts grow lewd —
So shall we satisfy the exacting Prude.
 — *Israfel Brown*.

Our Grandmothers’ Legs

It is depressing to realize how little most of us know of the dancing of our ancestors. I would give value to behold the execution of a coranto and inspect the steps of a cinque-pace, having assurance that the performances assuming these names were veritably identical with their memorable originals. We possess the means of verifying somewhat as to the nature of the minuet; but after what fashion did our revered grandfather do his rigadoon and his gavot? What manner of thing was that pirouet in the deft execution of which he felt an honest exultation? And what were the steps of his contra (or country) and Cossack dances? What tune was that—”The Devil amongst the Fiddlers” — for which he clamored, to inspire his feats of leg?

In our fathers’ time we read:

I wore my blue coat and brass buttons, very high in the neck, short in the waist and sleeves, nankeen trousers and white silk stockings, and a white waistcoat. I performed all the steps accurately and with great agility.

Which, it appears, gained the attention of the company. And it well might, for the year was 1830, and the mode of performing the cotillion of the period was undergoing the metamorphosis of which the perfect development has been familiar to ourselves. In its next stage the male celebrant is represented to us as “hopping about with a face expressive of intense solemnity, dancing as if a quadrille” — mark the newer word—”were not a thing to be laughed at, but a severe trial to the feelings.” There is a smack of ancient history about this, too; it lurks in the word “hopping.” In the perfected development of this dance as known to ourselves, no stress of caricature would describe the movement as a hopping. But our grandfather not only hopped, he did more. He sprang from the floor and quivered. In midair he crossed his feet twice and even three times, before alighting. And our budding grandmother beheld, and experienced flutterings of the bosom at his manly achievements. Some memory of these feats survived in the performances of the male ballet-dancers — a breed now happily extinct. A fine old lady — she lives, aged eighty-two — showed me once the exercise of “setting to your partner,” performed in her youth; and truly it was right marvelous. She literally bounced hither and thither, effecting a twisting in and out of the feet, a patting and a flickering of the toes incredibly intricate. For the celebration of these rites her partner would array himself in morocco pumps with cunningly contrived buckles of silver, silk stockings, salmon-colored silk breeches tied with abundance of riband, exuberant frills, or “chitterlings,” which puffed out at the neck and bosom not unlike the wattles of a he-turkey; and under his arms — as the fowl roasted might have carried its gizzard — our grandfather pressed the flattened simulacrum of a cocked hat. At this interval of time charity requires us to drop over the lady’s own costume a veil that, tried by our canons of propriety, it sadly needed. She was young and thoughtless, the good grandmother; she was conscious of the possession of charms and concealed them not.

To the setting of these costumes, manners and practices, there was imported from Germany a dance called Waltz, which as I conceive, was the first of our “round” dances. It was welcomed by most persons who could dance, and by some superior souls who could not. Among the latter, the late Lord Byron — whose participation in the dance was barred by an unhappy physical disability — addressed the new-comer in characteristic verse. Some of the lines in this ingenious nobleman’s apostrophe are not altogether intelligible, when applied to any dance that we know by the name of waltz. For example:

Pleased round the chalky floor, how well they trip,
One hand[*] reposing on the royal hip,
The other to the shoulder no less royal
Ascending with affection truly loyal.

[*] *I.e.* one of the lady’s hands.

These lines imply an attitude unknown to contemporary waltzers, but the description involves no poetic license. Our dear grandmothers (giddy, giddy girls!) did their waltz that way. Let me quote:

The lady takes the gentleman round the neck with one arm, resting against his shoulder. During the motion, the dancers are continually changing their relative situations: now the gentleman brings his arm about the lady’s neck, and the lady takes him round the waist.

At another point, the lady may “lean gently on his shoulder,” their arms (as it appears) “entwining.” This description is by an eyewitness, whose observation is taken, not at the rather debauched court of the Prince Regent, but at the simple republican assemblies of New York. The observer is the gentle Irving, writing in 1807. Occasional noteworthy experiences they must have had — those modest, blooming grandmothers — for, it is to be borne in mind, tipsiness was rather usual with dancing gentlemen in the fine old days of Port and Madeira; and the blithe, white-armed grandmothers themselves did sip their punch, to a man. However, we may forbear criticism. We, at least, owe nothing but reverent gratitude to a generation from which we derive life, waltzing and the memory of

Madeira. Even when read, as it needs should be read, in the light of that prose description of the dance to which it was addressed, Lord Byron's welcome to the waltz will be recognized as one more illustration of a set of hoary and moss-grown truths.

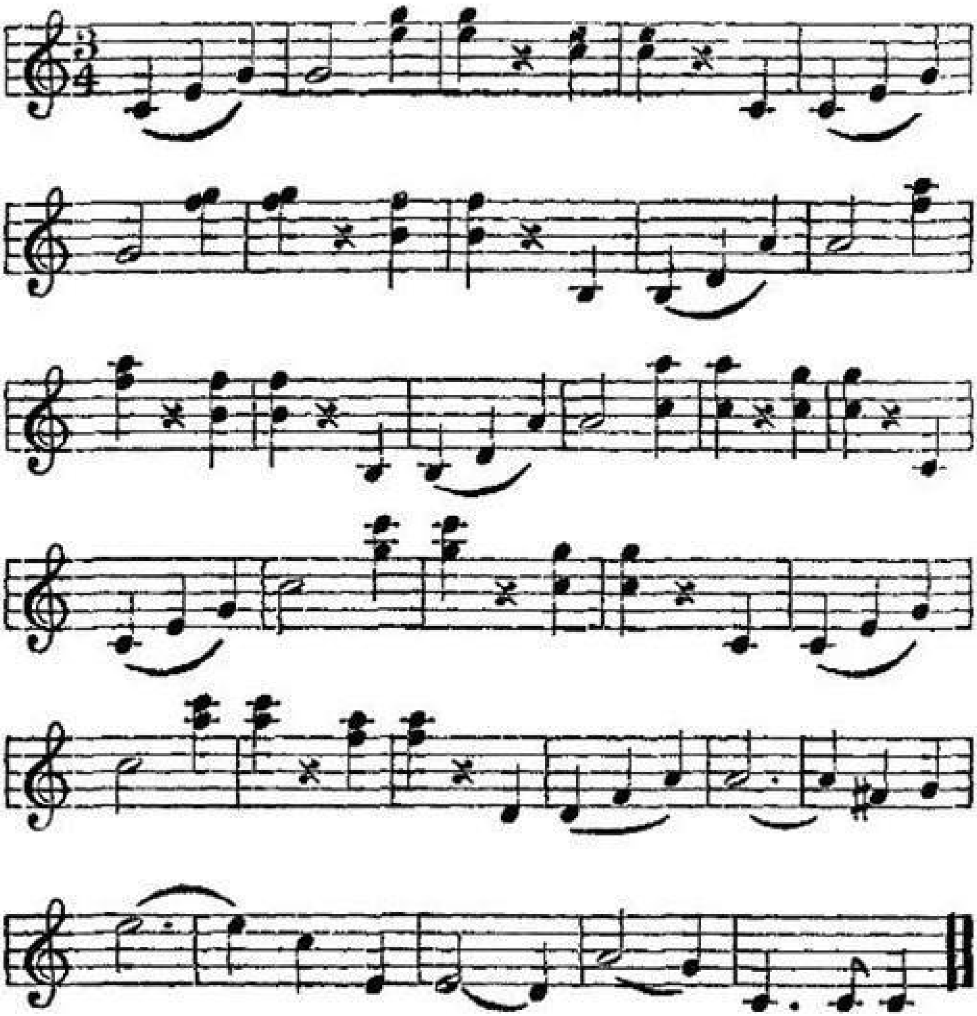
As parlor-soldiers, graced with fancy-scars,
Rehearse their bravery in imagined wars;
As paupers, gathered in congenial flocks,
Babble of banks, insurances, and stocks;
As each if oft'nest eloquent of what
He hates or covets, but possesses not;
As cowards talk of pluck; misers of waste;
Scoundrels of honor; country clowns of taste;
Ladies of logic; devotees of sin;
Topers of water; temperance men of gin —

my lord Byron sang of waltzing. Let us forgive and — remembering his poor foot — pity him. Yet the opinions of famous persons possess an interest that is akin, in the minds of many plain folk, to weight. Let us, then, incline an ear to another: “Laura was fond of waltzing, as every brisk and innocent young girl should be,” wrote he than who none has written more nobly in our time — he who “could appreciate good women and describe them; and draw them more truly than any novelist in the language, except Miss Austen.” The same sentiment with reference to dancing appears in many places in his immortal pages. In his younger days as *attaché* of legation in Germany, Mr. Thackeray became a practiced waltzer. As a censor he thus possesses over Lord Byron whatever advantage may accrue from knowledge of the subject whereof he wrote.

We are happily not called upon to institute a comparison of character between the two distinguished moralists, though the same, drawn masterly, might not be devoid of entertainment and instruction. But two or three other points of distinction should be kept in mind as having sensible relation to the question of competency to bear witness. Byron wrote of the women of a corrupted court; Thackeray of the women of that society indicated by the phrase “Persons whom one meets” — and meets *now*. Byron wrote of an obsolete dance, described by Irving in terms of decided strength; Thackeray wrote of our own waltz. In turning off his brilliant and witty verses it is unlikely that any care as to their truthfulness disturbed the glassy copiousness of the Byronic utterance; this child of nature did never consider too curiously of justice, moderation and such inventions of the schools. The key-note of all the other wrote is given by his faithful pen when it avers that it never “signed the page that registered a lie.” Byron was a “gentleman of wit and pleasure about town”; Thackeray the father of daughters. However, all this is perhaps little to the purpose. We owe no trifling debt to Lord Byron for his sparkling and spirited lines, and by no good dancer would they be “willingly let die.” Poetry, music, dancing — they are one art. The muses are sisters, yet they do not quarrel. Of a truth, even as was Laura, so every brisk and innocent young girl should be. And it is safe to predict that she will be. If she would enjoy the advantage of belonging to Our Set she must be.

As a rule, the ideas of the folk who cherish a prejudice against dancing are crude rather than unclean — the outcome much more of ignorance than salacity. Of course there are exceptions. In my great work on The Prude all will be attended to with due discrimination in apportionment of censure. At present the spirit of the dance makes merry with my pen, for from yonder “stately pleasure-dome” (decreed by one Kubla Khan, formerly of The Big Bonanza Mining Company) the strains of the *Blue Danube* float out upon the night. Avaunt, miscreants! lest we chase ye with flying feet and do our little dance upon your unwholesome carcasses. Already the toes of our partners begin to twiddle beneath their petticoats. Come, then, Stoopid — can’t you move? No! — they change it to a galop — and eke the good old Sturm. Firm and steady, now, fair partner mine, whiles we run that *gobemouche* down and trample him miserably. There: light and softly again — the servants will remove the remains.

And hark! that witching strain once more:



A CYNIC LOOKS AT LIFE

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CIVILIZATION

I

The question “Does civilization civilize?” is a fine example of *petitio principii*, and decides itself in the affirmative; for civilization must needs do that from the doing of which it has its name. But it is not necessary to suppose that he who propounds is either unconscious of his lapse in logic or desirous of digging a pitfall for the feet of those who discuss; I take it he simply wishes to put the matter in an impressive way, and relies upon a certain degree of intelligence in the interpretation.

Concerning uncivilized peoples we know but little except what we are told by travelers — who, speaking generally, can know very little but the fact of uncivilization, as shown in externals and irrelevances, and are moreover, greatly given to lying. From the savages we hear very little. Judging them in all things by our own standards in default of a knowledge of theirs, we necessarily condemn, disparage and belittle. One thing that civilization certainly has not done is to make us intelligent enough to understand that the contrary of a virtue is not necessarily a vice. Because, as a rule, we have but one wife and several mistresses each it is not certain that polygamy is everywhere — nor, for that matter, anywhere — either wrong or inexpedient. Because the brutality of the civilized slave owners and dealers created a conquering sentiment against slavery it is not intelligent to assume that slavery is a maleficent thing amongst Oriental peoples (for example) where the slave is not oppressed. Some of these same Orientals whom we are pleased to term half-civilized have no regard for truth. “Takest thou me for a Christian dog,” said one of them, “that I should be the slave of my word?” So far as I can perceive, the “Christian dog” is no more the slave of his word than the True Believer, and I think the savage — allowing for the fact that his inveracity has dominion over fewer things — as great a liar as either of them. For my part, I do not know what, in all circumstances, is right or wrong; but I know that, if right, it is at least stupid, to judge an uncivilized people by the standards of morality and intelligence set up by civilized ones. Life in civilized countries is so complex that men there have more ways to be good than savages have, and more to be bad; more to be happy, and more to be miserable. And in each way to be good or bad, their generally superior knowledge — their knowledge of more things — enables them to commit greater excesses than the savage can. The civilized philanthropist wreaks upon his fellows a ranker philanthropy, the civilized rascal a sturdier rascality. And — splendid triumph of enlightenment! — the two characters are, in civilization, frequently combined in one person.

I know of no savage custom or habit of thought which has not its mate in civilized countries. For every mischievous or absurd practice of the natural man I can name you one of ours that is essentially the same. And nearly every custom of our barbarian ancestors in historic times persists in some form today. We make ourselves look formidable in battle — for that matter, we fight. Our women paint their faces. We feel it obligatory to dress more or less alike, inventing the most ingenious reasons for doing so and actually despising and persecuting those who do not care to conform. Almost within the memory of living persons bearded men were stoned in the streets; and a clergyman in New York who wore his beard as Christ wore his, was put into jail and variously persecuted till he died.

Civilization does not, I think, make the race any better. It makes men know more: and if knowledge makes them happy it is useful and desirable. The one purpose of every sane human being is to be happy. No one can have any other motive than that. There is no such thing as unselfishness. We perform the most “generous” and “self-sacrificing” acts because we should be unhappy if we did not. We move on lines of least reluctance. Whatever tends to increase the beggarly sum of human happiness is worth having; nothing else has any value.

The cant of civilization fatigues. Civilization, is a fine and beautiful structure. It is as picturesque as a Gothic cathedral, but it is built upon the bones and cemented with the blood of those whose part in all its pomp is that and nothing more. It cannot be reared in the ungenerous tropics, for there the people will not contribute their blood and bones. The proposition that the average American workingman or European peasant is “better off” than the South Sea islander, lolling under a palm and drunk with over-eating, will not bear a moment’s examination. It is we scholars and gentlemen that are better off.

It is admitted that the South Sea islander in a state of nature is overmuch addicted to the practice of eating human flesh; but concerning that I submit: first, that he likes it; second, that those who supply it are mostly dead. It is upon his enemies that he feeds, and these he would kill anyhow, as we do ours. In civilized, enlightened and Christian countries, where cannibalism has not yet established itself, wars are as frequent and destructive as among the maneaters. The untitled savage knows at least why he goes killing, whereas our private soldier is commonly in black ignorance of the apparent cause of quarrel — of the actual cause, always. Their shares in the fruits of victory are about equal, for the chief takes all the dead, the general all the glory.

II

Transplanted institutions grow slowly; civilization can not be put into a ship and carried across an ocean. The history of this country is a sequence of illustrations of these truths. It was settled by civilized men and women from civilized countries, yet after two and a half centuries, with unbroken communication with the mother systems, it is still imperfectly civilized. In learning and letters, in art and the science of government, America is but a faint and stammering echo of Europe.

For nearly all that is good in our American civilization we are indebted to the Old World; the errors and mischiefs are of our own creation. We have originated little, because there is little to originate, but we have unconsciously reproduced many of the discredited systems of former ages and other countries — receiving them at second hand, but making them ours by the sheer strength and immobility of the national belief in their novelty. Novelty! Why, it is not possible to make an experiment in government, in art, in literature, in sociology, or in morals, that has not been made over, and over, and over again.

The glories of England are our glories. She can achieve nothing that our fathers did not help to make possible to her. The learning, the power, the refinement of a great nation, are not the growth of a century, but of many centuries; each generation builds upon the work of the preceding. For untold ages our ancestors wrought to rear that “reverend pile,” the civilization of England. And shall we now try to belittle the mighty structure because other though kindred hands are laying the top courses while we have elected to found a new tower in another land? The American eulogist of civilization who is not proud of his heritage in England’s glory is unworthy to enjoy his lesser heritage in the lesser glory of his own country.

The English, are undoubtedly our intellectual superiors; and as the virtues are solely the product of intelligence and cultivation — a rogue being only a dunce considered from another point of view — they are our moral superiors likewise. Why should they not be? Theirs is a land, not of ugly schoolhouses grudgingly erected, containing schools supported by such niggardly tax levies as a sparse and hard-handed population will consent to pay, but of ancient institutions splendidly endowed by the state and by centuries of private benefaction. As a means of dispensing formulated ignorance our boasted public school system is not without merit; it spreads out education sufficiently thin to give everyone enough to make him a more competent fool than he would have been without it; but to compare it with that which is not the creature of legislation acting with malice aforethought, but the unnoted out-growth of ages, is to be ridiculous. It is like comparing the laid-out town of a western prairie, its right-angled streets, prim cottages, and wooden a-b-c shops, with the grand old town of Oxford, topped with the clustered domes and towers of its twenty-odd great colleges, the very names of many of whose founders have perished from human record, as have the chronicles of the times in which they lived.

It is not only that we have had to “subdue the wilderness”; our educational conditions are adverse otherwise. Our political system is unfavorable. Our fortunes, accumulated in one generation, are dispersed in the next. If it takes three generations to make a gentleman one will not make a thinker. Instruction is acquired, but capacity for instruction is transmitted. The brain that is to contain a trained intellect is not the result of a haphazard marriage between a clown and a wench, nor does it get its tractable tissues from a hard-headed farmer and a soft-headed milliner. If you confess the importance of race and pedigree in a horse and a dog how dare you deny it in a man?

I do not hold that the political and social system that creates an aristocracy of leisure is the best possible kind of human organization; I perceive its disadvantages clearly enough. But I do hold that a system under which most important public trusts, political and professional, civil and military ecclesiastical and secular, are held by educated men — that is, men of trained faculties and disciplined judgment — is not an altogether faulty system.

It is a universal human weakness to disparage the knowledge that we do not ourselves possess, but it is only my own beloved country that can justly boast herself the last refuge and asylum of the impotents and incapables who deny the advantage of all knowledge whatsoever. It was an American senator who declared that he had devoted a couple of weeks to the study of finance, and found the accepted authorities all wrong. It was another American senator who, confronted with certain hostile facts in the history of another country, proposed “to brush away all facts, and argue the question on consideration of plain common sense.”

Republican institutions have this disadvantage: by incessant changes in the *personnel* of government — to say nothing of the manner of men that ignorant constituencies elect; and all constituencies are ignorant — we attain to no fixed principles and standards. There is no such thing here as a science of politics, because it is not to any one’s interest to make politics the study of his life.

Nothing is settled; no truth finds general acceptance. What we do one year we undo the next, and do over again the year following. Our energy is wasted in, and our prosperity suffers from, experiments endlessly repeated.

Every patriot believes his country better than any other country. Now, they cannot all be the best; indeed, only one can be the best, and it follows that the patriots of all the others have suffered themselves to be misled by a mere sentiment into blind unreason. In its active manifestation — it is fond of killing — patriotism would be well if it were simply defensive; but it is also aggressive, and the same feeling that prompts us to strike for our altars and our fires impels us over the border to quench the fires and overturn the altars of our neighbors. It is all very pretty and spirited, what the poets tell us about Thermopylæ, but there was as much patriotism at one end of that pass as there was at the other.

Patriotism deliberately and with folly aforethought subordinates the interests of a whole to the interests of a part. Worse still, the fraction so favored is determined by an accident of birth or residence. The Western hoodlum who cuts the tail from a Chinaman’s nowl, and would cut the nowl from the body, if he dared, is simply a patriot with a logical mind, having the courage of his opinions. Patriotism is fierce as a fever, pitiless as the grave and blind as a stone.

III

There are two ways of clarifying liquids — ebullition and precipitation; one forces the impurities to the surface as scum, the other sends them to the bottom as dregs. The former is the more offensive, and that seems to be our way; but neither is useful if the impurities are merely separated but not removed. We are told with tiresome iteration that our social and political systems are clarifying; but when is the skimmer to appear? If the purpose of free institutions is good government where is the good government? — when may it be expected to begin? — how is it to come about? Systems of government have no sanctity; they are practical means to a simple end — the public welfare; worthy of no respect if they fail of its accomplishment. The tree is known by its fruit. Ours is bearing crab-apples. If the body politic is constitutionally diseased, as I verily believe; if the disorder inheres in the system; there is no remedy. The fever must burn itself out, and then Nature will do the rest. One does not prescribe what time alone can administer. We have put our criminals and dunces into power; do we suppose they will efface themselves? Will they restore to *us* the power of governing *them*? They must have their way and go their length. The natural and immemorial sequence is: tyranny, insurrection, combat. In combat everything that wears a sword has a chance — even the right. History does not forbid us to hope. But it forbids us to rely upon numbers; they will be against us. If history teaches anything worth learning it teaches that the majority of mankind is neither good nor wise. When government is founded upon the public conscience and the public intelligence the stability of states is a dream.

In that moment of time that is covered by historical records we have abundant evidence that each generation has believed itself wiser and better than any of its predecessors; that each people has believed itself to have the secret of national perpetuity. In support of this universal delusion there is nothing to be said; the desolate places of the earth cry out against it. Vestiges of obliterated civilizations cover the earth; no savage but has camped upon the sites of proud and populous cities; no desert but has heard the statesman’s boast of national stability. Our nation, our laws, our history — all shall go down to everlasting oblivion with the others, and by the same road. But I submit that we are traveling it with needless haste.

It can be spared — this Jonah’s gourd civilization of ours. We have hardly the rudiments of a true one; compared with the splendors of which we catch dim glimpses in the fading past, ours are as an illumination of tallow candles. We know no more than the ancients; we only know other things, but nothing in which is an assurance of perpetuity, and little that is truly wisdom. Our vaunted *elixir vitae* is the art of printing. What good will that do when posterity, struck by the inevitable intellectual blight, shall have ceased to read what is printed? Our libraries will become its stables, our books its fuel.

Ours is a civilization that might be heard from afar in space as a scolding and a riot; a civilization in which the race has so differentiated as to have no longer a community of interest and feeling; which shows as a ripe result of the principles underlying it a reasonless and rascally feud between rich and poor; in which one is offered a choice (if one have the means to take it) between American plutocracy and European militocracy, with an imminent chance of renouncing either for a stultocratic republic with a headsman in the presidential chair and every laundress in exile.

I have not a “solution” to the “labor problem.” I have only a story. Many and many years ago lived a man who was so good and wise that none in all the world was so good and wise as he. He was one of those few whose goodness and wisdom are such that after some time has passed their foolish fellowmen begin to think them gods and treasure their words as divine law; and by millions they are worshiped through centuries of time. Amongst the utterances of this man was one command — not a new nor perfect one — which has seemed to his adorers so preeminently wise that they have given it a name by which it is known over half the world. One of the sovereign virtues of this famous law is its simplicity, which is such that all hearing must understand; and obedience is so easy that any nation refusing is unfit to exist except in the turbulence and adversity that will surely come to it. When a people would avert want and strife, or, having them, would restore plenty and peace, this noble commandment offers the only means — all other plans for safety or relief are as vain as dreams, as empty as the crooning of hags. And behold, here is it: “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

What! you unappeasable rich, coining the sweat and blood of your workmen into drachmas, understanding the law of supply and demand as mandatory and justifying your cruel greed by the senseless dictum that “business is business”; you lazy workmen, railing at the capitalist by whose desertion, when you have frightened away his capital, you starve — rioting and shedding blood and torturing and poisoning by way of answer to exaction and by way of exaction; you foul anarchists, applauding with untidy palms when one of your coward kind hurls a bomb amongst powerless and helpless women and children; you imbecile politicians with a plague of remedial legislation for the irremediable; you writers and thinkers unread in history, with as many “solutions to the labor problem” as there are among you those who can not coherently define it — do you really think yourselves wiser than Jesus of Nazareth? Do you seriously suppose yourselves competent to amend his plan for dealing with evils besetting nations and souls? Have you the effrontery to believe that those who spurn his Golden Rule you can bind to obedience of an act entitled an act to amend an act? Bah! you fatigue the spirit. Go get ye to your scoundrel lockouts, your villain strikes, your blacklisting, your boycotting, your speeching, marching and maundering; but if ye do not to others as ye would that they do to you it shall occur, and that right soon, that ye be drowned in your own blood and your pick-pocket civilization quenched as a star that falls into the sea.

THE GIFT O’ GAB

A book entitled *Forensic Eloquence,* by Mr. John Goss, appears to have for purpose to teach the young idea how to spout, and that purpose, I dare say, it will accomplish if something is not done to prevent. I know nothing of the matter myself, a strong distaste for forensic eloquence, or eloquence of any kind implying a man mounted on his legs and doing all the talking, having averted me from its study. The training of the youth of this country to utterance of themselves after that fashion I should regard as a disaster of magnitude. So far as I know it, forensic eloquence is the art of saying things in such a way as to make them pass for more than they are worth. Employed in matters of importance (and for other employment it were hardly worth acquiring) it is mischievous because dishonest and misleading. In the public service Truth toils best when not clad in cloth-of-gold and bedaubed with fine lace. If eloquence does not beget action it is valueless; but action which results from the passions, sentiments and emotions is less likely to be wise than that which comes of a persuaded judgment. For that reason I cannot help thinking that the influence of Bismarck in German politics was more wholesome than is that of Mr. John Temple Graves.

For eloquence *per se* — considered merely as an art of pleasing — I entertain something of the respect evoked by success; for it always pleases at least the speaker. It is to speech what an ornate style is to writing — good and pleasant enough in its time and place and, like pie-crust and the evening girl, destitute of any basis in common sense. Forensic eloquence, on the contrary, has an all too sufficient foundation in reason and the order of things: it promotes the ambition of tricksters and advances the fortunes of rogues. For I take it that the Ciceros, the Mirabeaus, the Burkes, the O’Connells, the Patrick Henrys and the rest of them — pets of the text-bookers and scourges of youth — belong in either the one category or the other, or in both. Anyhow I find it impossible to think of them as highminded men and right-forth statesmen — with their actors’ tricks, their devices of the countenance, inventions of gesture and other cunning expedients having nothing to do with the matter in hand. Extinction of the orator I hold to be the most beneficent possibility of evolution. If Mr. Goss has done anything to retard that blessed time when the Bourke Cockrans shall cease from troubling and the eary be at rest he is an enemy of his race.

“What!” exclaims the thoughtless reader — I have but one—”are not the great forensic speeches by the world’s famous orators good reading? Considering them merely as literature do you not derive a high and refining pleasure from them?” I do not: I find them turgid and tumid no end. They are bad reading, though they may have been good hearing. In order to enjoy them one must have in memory what, indeed, one is seldom permitted to forget: that they were addressed to the ear; and in imagination one must hold some shadowy simulacrum of the orator himself, uttering his work. These conditions being fulfilled there remains for application to the matter of the discourse too little attention to get much good of it, and the total effect is confusion. Literature by which the reader is compelled to bear in mind the producer and the circumstances under which it was produced can be spared.

NATURA BENIGNA

It is not always on remote islands peopled with pagans that great disasters occur, as memory witnesseth. Nor are the forces of nature inadequate to production of a fiercer throe than any that we have known. The situation is this: we are tied by the feet to a fragile shell imperfectly confining a force powerful enough under favoring conditions, to burst it asunder and set the fragments wallowing and grinding together in liquid flame, in the blind fury of a readjustment. Nay, it needs no such stupendous cataclysm to depeople this uneasy orb. Let but a square mile be blown out of the bottom of the sea, or a great rift open there. Is it to be supposed that we would be unaffected in the altered conditions generated by a contest between the ocean and the earth's molten core? These fatalities are not only possible but in the highest degree probable. It is probable, indeed, that they have occurred over and over again, effacing all the more highly organized forms of life, and compelling the slow march of evolution to begin anew. Slow? On the stage of Eternity the passing of races — the entrances and exits of Life — are incidents in a brisk and lively drama, following one another with confusing rapidity.

Mankind has not found it practicable to abandon and avoid those places where the forces of nature have been most malign. The track, of the Western tornado is speedily repeopled. San Francisco is still populous, despite its earthquake, Galveston despite its storm, and even the courts of Lisbon are not kept by the lion and the lizard. In the Peruvian village straight downward into whose streets the crew of a United States warship once looked from the crest of a wave that stranded her a half mile inland are heard the tinkle of the guitar and the voices of children at play. There are people living at Herculaneum and Pompeii. On the slopes about Catania the goatherd endures with what courage he may the trembling of the ground beneath his feet as old Enceladus again turns over on his other side. As the Hoang-Ho goes back inside its banks after fertilizing its contiguity with hydrate of China-man the living agriculturist follows the receding wave, sets up his habitation beneath the broken embankment, and again the Valley of the Gone Away blossoms as the rose, its people diving with Death.

This matter can not be amended: the race exposes itself to peril because it can do no otherwise. In all the world there is no city of refuge — no temple in which to take sanctuary, clinging to the horns of the altar — no "place apart" where, like hunted deer, we can hope to elude the baying pack of Nature's malevolences. The dead-line is drawn at the gate of life: Man crosses it at birth. His advent is a challenge to the entire pack — earthquake, storm, fire, flood, drought, heat, cold, wild beasts, venomous reptiles, noxious insects, bacilli, spectacular plague and velvet-footed household disease — all are fierce and tireless in pursuit. Dodge, turn and double how he can, there’s no eluding them; soon or late some of them have him by the throat and his spirit returns to the God who gave it — and gave them.

We are told that this earth was made for our inhabiting. Our dearly beloved brethren in the faith, our spiritual guides, philosophers and friends of the pulpit, never tire of pointing out the goodness of God in giving us so excellent a place to live in and commending the admirable adaptation of all things to our needs.

What a fine world it is, to be sure — a darling little world, “so suited to the needs of man.” A globe of liquid fire, straining within a shell relatively no thicker than that of an egg — a shell constantly cracking and in momentary danger of going all to pieces! Three-fourths of this delectable field of human activity are covered with an element in which we can not breathe, and which swallows us by myriads:

With moldering bones the deep is white
From the frozen zones to the tropic bright.

Of the other one-fourth more than one-half is uninhabitable by reason of climate. On the remaining one-eighth we pass a comfortless and precarious existence in disputed occupancy with countless ministers of death and pain — pass it in fighting for it, tooth and nail, a hopeless battle in which we are foredoomed to defeat. Everywhere death, terror, lamentation and the laughter that is more terrible than tears — the fury and despair of a race hanging on to life by the tips of its fingers. And the prize for which we strive, “to have and to hold” — what is it? A thing that is neither enjoyed while had, or missed when lost. So worthless it is, so unsatisfying, so inadequate to purpose, so false to hope and at its best so brief, that for consolation and compensation we set up fantastic faiths of an aftertime in a better world from which no confirming whisper has ever reached us across the void. Heaven is a prophecy uttered by the lips of despair, but Hell is an inference from analogy.

THE DEATH PENALTY

I

“Down with the gallows!” is a cry not unfamiliar in America. There is always a movement afoot to make odious the just principle; of “a life for a life” — to represent it as “a relic of barbarism,” “a usurpation of the divine authority,” and the rest of it. The law making murder punishable by death is as purely a measure of self-defense as is the display of a pistol to one diligently endeavoring to kill without provocation. It is in precisely the same sense an admonition, a warning to abstain from crime. Society says by that law: “If you kill one of us you die,” just as by display of the pistol the individual whose life is attacked says: “Desist or be shot.” To be effective the warning in either case must be more than an idle threat. Even the most unearthly reasoner among the anti-hanging unfortunates would hardly expect to frighten away an assassin who knew the pistol to be unloaded. Of course these queer illogicians can not be made to understand that their position commits them to absolute non-resistance to any kind of aggression; and that is fortunate for the rest of us, for if as Christians they frankly and consistently took that ground we should be under the miserable necessity of respecting them.

We have good reason to hold that the horrible prevalence of murder in this country is due to the fact that we do not execute our laws — that the death penalty is threatened but not inflicted — that the pistol is not loaded. In civilized countries where there is enough respect for the laws to administer them, there is enough to obey them. While man still has as much of the ancestral brute as his skin can hold without cracking we shall have thieves and demagogues and anarchists and assassins and persons with a private system of lexicography who define murder as disease and hanging as murder, but in all this welter of crime and stupidity are areas where human life is comparatively secure against the human hand. It is at least a significant coincidence that in these the death penalty for murder is fairly well enforced by judges who do not derive any part of their authority from those for whose restraint and punishment they hold it. Against the life of one guiltless person the lives of ten thousand murderers count for nothing; their hanging is a public good, without reference to the crimes that disclose their deserts. If we could discover them by other signs than their bloody deeds they should be hanged anyhow. Unfortunately we must have a death as evidence. The scientist who will tell us how to recognize the potential assassin, and persuade us to kill him, will be the greatest benefactor of his century.

What would these enemies of the gibbet have — these lineal descendants of the drunken mobs that hooted the hangman at Tyburn Tree; this progeny of criminals, which has so defiled with the mud of its animosity the noble office of public, executioner that even "in this enlightened age" he shirks his high duty, entrusting it to a hidden or unnamed subordinate? If murder is unjust of what importance is it whether its punishment by death be just or not? — nobody needs to incur it. Men are not drafted for the death penalty; they volunteer. "Then it is not deterrent," mutters the gentleman whose rude forefather hooted the hangman. Well, as to that, the law which is to accomplish more than a part of its purpose must be awaited with great patience. Every murder proves that hanging is not altogether deterrent; every hanging, that it is somewhat deterrent — it deters the person hanged. A man's first murder is his crime, his second is ours.

The socialists, it seems, believe with Alphonse Karr, in the expediency of abolishing the death penalty; but apparently they do not hold, with him, that the assassins should begin. They want the state to begin, believing that the magnanimous example will effect a change of heart in those about to murder. This, I take it, is the meaning of their assertion that death penalties have not the deterring influence that imprisonment for life carries. In this they obviously err: death deters at least the person who suffers it — he commits no more murder; whereas the assassin who is imprisoned for life and immune from further punishment may with impunity kill his keeper or whomsoever he may be able to get at. Even as matters now are, incessant vigilance is required to prevent convicts in prison from murdering their attendants and one another. How would it be if the "life-termer" were assured against any additional inconvenience for braining a guard occasionally, or strangling a chaplain now and then? A penitentiary may be described as a place of punishment and reward; and under the system proposed, the difference in desirableness between a sentence and an appointment would be virtually effaced. To overcome this objection a life sentence would have to mean solitary confinement, and that means insanity. Is that what these gentlemen propose to substitute for death?

The death penalty, say these amiables and futilitarians, creates blood-thirstiness in the unthinking masses and defeats its own ends — is itself a cause of murder, not a check. These gentlemen are themselves of "the unthinking masses" — they do not know how to think. Let them try to trace and lucidly expound the chain of motives lying between the knowledge that a murderer has been hanged and the wish to commit a murder. How, precisely, does the one beget the other? By what unearthly process of reasoning does a man turning away from the gallows persuade himself that it is expedient to incur the danger of hanging? Let us have pointed out to us the several steps in that remarkable mental progress. Obviously, the thing is absurd; one might as reasonably say that contemplation of a pitted face will make a man wish to go and catch smallpox, or the spectacle of an amputated limb on the scrap-heap of a hospital tempt him to cut off his arm or renounce his leg.

"An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," say the opponents of the death penalty, "is not justice; it is revenge and unworthy of a Christian civilization." It is exact justice: nobody can think of anything more accurately just than such punishments would be, whatever the motive in awarding them. Unfortunately such a system is not practicable, but he who denies its justice must deny also the justice of a bushel of corn for a bushel of corn, a dollar for a dollar, service for service. We can not undertake by such clumsy means as laws and courts to do to the criminal exactly what he has done to his victim, but to demand a life for a life is simple, practicable, expedient and (therefore) right.

"Taking the life of a murderer does not restore the life he took, therefore it is a most illogical punishment. Two wrongs do not make a right."

Here's richness! Hanging an assassin is illogical because it does not restore the life of his victim; incarceration is logical; therefore, incarceration does — *quod, erat demonstrandum.*

Two wrongs certainly do not make a right, but the veritable thing in dispute is whether taking the life of a life-taker is a wrong. So naked and unashamed an example of *petitio principii* would disgrace a debater in a pinafore. And these wonder-mongers have the effrontery to babble of "logic"! Why, if one of them were to meet a syllogism in a lonely road he would run away in a hundred and fifty directions as hard as ever he could hoof it. One is almost ashamed to dispute with such intellectual cloutlings.

Whatever an individual may rightly do to protect himself society may rightly do to protect him, for he is a part of itself. If he may rightly take life in defending himself society may rightly take life in defending him. If society may rightly take life in defending him it may rightly threaten to take it. Having rightly and mercifully threatened to take it, it not only rightly may take it, but expediently must.

II

The law of a life for a life does not altogether prevent murder. No law can altogether prevent any form of crime, nor is it desirable that it should. Doubtless

God could so have created us that our sense of right and justice could have existed without contemplation of injustice and wrong; as doubtless he could so have created us that we could have felt compassion without a knowledge of suffering; but he did not. Constituted as we are, we can know good only by contrast with evil. Our sense of sin is what our virtues feed upon; in the thin air of universal morality the altar-fires of honor and the beacons of conscience could not be kept alight. A community without crime would be a community without warm and elevated sentiments — without the sense of justice, without generosity, without courage, without mercy, without magnanimity — a community of small, smug souls, uninteresting to God and uncoveted by the Devil. We can have, and do have, too much crime, no doubt; what the wholesome proportion is none can tell. Just now we are running a good deal to murder, but he who can gravely attribute that phenomenon, or any part of it, to infliction of the death penalty, instead of to virtual immunity from any penalty at all, is justly entitled to the innocent satisfaction that comes of being a simpleton.

III

The New Woman is against the death penalty, naturally, for she is hot and hardy in the conviction that whatever is is wrong. She has visited this world in order to straighten things about a bit, and is in distress lest the number of things be insufficient to her need. The matter is important variously; not least so in its relation to the new heaven and the new earth that are to be the outcome of woman suffrage. There can be no doubt that the vast majority of women have sentimental objections to the death penalty that quite outweigh such practical considerations in its favor as they can be persuaded to comprehend. Aided by the minority of men afflicted by the same mental malady, they will indubitably effect its abolition in the first lustrum of their political “equality.” The New Woman will scarcely feel the seat of power warm beneath her before giving to the assassin’s “unhand me, villain!” the authority of law. So we shall make again the old experiment, discredited by a thousand failures, of preventing crime by tenderness to caught criminals. And the criminal uncaught will treat us to a quantity and quality of crime notably augmented by the Christian spirit of the new *regime*.

IV

As to painless execution, the simple and practical way to make them both just and expedient is the adoption by murderers of a system of painless assassinations. Until this is done there seems to be no call to renounce the wholesome discomfort of the style of executions endeared to us by memories and associations of the tenderest character. There is, I fancy, a shaping notion in the observant mind that the penologists and their allies have gone about as far as they can safely be permitted to go in the direction of a softer suasion of the criminal nature toward good behavior. The modern prison has become a rather more comfortable habitation than the dangerous classes are accustomed to at home. Modern prison life has in their eyes something of the charm and glamor of an ideal existence, like that in the Happy Valley from which Rasselas had the folly to escape. Whatever advantages to the public may be secured by abating the rigors of imprisonment and inconveniences incident to execution, there is this objection: it makes them less deterrent. Let the penologers and philanthropers have their way and even hanging might be made so pleasant and withal so interesting a social distinction that it would deter nobody but the person hanged. Adopt the euthanasian method of electricity, asphyxia by smothering in rose-leaves, or slow poisoning with rich food, and the death penalty may come to be regarded as the object of a noble ambition to the *bon vivant*, and the rising young suicide may go and kill somebody else instead of himself, in order to receive from the public executioner a happier dispatch than his own ‘prentice hand can assure him.

But the advocates of agreeable pains and penalties tell us that in the darker ages, when cruel and degrading punishment was the rule, and was freely inflicted for every light infraction of the law, crime was more common than it is now; and in this they appear to be right. But one and all, they overlook a fact equally obvious and vastly significant, that the intellectual, moral and social condition of the masses was very low. Crime was more common because ignorance was more common, poverty was more common, sins of authority, and therefore hatred of authority, were more common. The world of even a century ago was a different world from the world of today, and a vastly more uncomfortable one. The popular adage to the contrary notwithstanding, human nature was not by a long cut the same then that it is now. In the very ancient time of that early English king, George III, when women were burned at the stake in public for various offenses and men were hanged for “coining” and children for theft, and in the still remoter period (*circa* 1530), when prisoners were boiled in several waters, divers sorts of criminals were disemboweled and some are thought to have undergone the *peine forte et dure* of cold-pressing (an infliction which the pen of Hugo has since made popular — in literature) — in these wicked old days crime flourished, not because of the law’s severity, but in spite of it. It is possible that our law-making ancestors understood the situation as it then was a trifle better than we can understand it on the hither side of this gulf of years, and that they were not the reasonless barbarians that we think them to have been. And if they were, what must have been the unreason and barbarity of the criminal element with which they had to deal?

I am far from thinking that severity of punishment can have the same restraining effect as probability of some punishment being inflicted; but if mildness of penalty is to be superadded to difficulty of conviction, and both are to be mounted upon laxity in detection, the pile will be complete indeed. There is a peculiar fitness, perhaps, in the fact that all these pleas for comfortable punishment should be urged at a time when there appears to be a general disposition to inflict no punishment at all. There are, however, still a few old-fashioned persons who hold it obvious that one who is ambitious to break the laws of his country will not with so light a heart and so airy an indifference incur the peril of a harsh penalty as he will the chance of one more nearly resembling that which he would himself select.

V

After lying for more than a century dead I was revived, dowered with a new body, and restored to society. The first thing of interest that I observed was an enormous building, covering a square mile of ground. It was surrounded on all sides by a high, strong wall of hewn stone upon which armed sentinels paced to and fro. In one face of the wall was a single gate of massive iron, strongly guarded. While admiring the Cyclopean architecture of the “reverend pile” I was accosted by a man in uniform, evidently the warden, with a cheerful salutation.

“Colonel,” I said, “pray tell me what is this building.”

“This,” said he, “is the new state penitentiary. It is one of twelve, all alike.”

“You surprise me,” I replied. “Surely the criminal element must have increased enormously.”

“Yes, indeed,” he assented; “under the Reform *régime*, which began in your day, crime became so powerful, bold and fierce that arrests were no longer possible and the prisons then in existence were soon overcrowded. The state was compelled to erect others of greater capacity.”

“But, Colonel,” I protested, “if the criminals were too bold and powerful to be taken into custody, of what use are the prisons? And how are they crowded?”

He fixed upon me a look that I could not fail to interpret as expressing a doubt of my sanity. “What!” he said, “is it possible that the modern penology is unknown to you? Do you suppose we practice the antiquated and ineffective method of shutting up the rascals? Sir, the growth of the criminal element has, as I said, compelled the erection of more and larger prisons. We have enough to hold comfortably all the honest men and women of the state. Within these protecting walls they carry on all the necessary vocations of life excepting commerce. That is necessarily in the hands of the rogues, as before.”

“Venerated representative of Reform,” I exclaimed, wringing his hand with effusion, “you are Knowledge, you are History, you are the Higher Education! We must talk further. Come, let us enter this benign edifice; you shall show me your dominion and instruct me in the rules. You shall propose me as an inmate.”

I walked rapidly to the gate. When challenged by the sentinel, I turned to summon my instructor. He was nowhere visible. I turned again to look at the prison. Nothing was there: desolate and forbidding, as about the broken statue of Ozymandias,

The lone and level sands stretched far away.

IMMORTALITY

The desire for life everlasting has commonly been affirmed to be universal — at least that is the view taken by those unacquainted with Oriental faiths and with Oriental character. Those of us whose knowledge is a trifle wider are not prepared to say that the desire is universal nor even general.

If the devout Buddhist, for example, wishes to “live always,” he has not succeeded in very clearly formulating the desire. The sort of thing that he is pleased to hope for is not what we should call life, and not what many of us would care for.

When a man says that everybody has “a horror of annihilation,” we may be very sure that he has not many opportunities for observation, or that he has not availed himself of all that he has. Most persons go to sleep rather gladly, yet sleep is virtual annihilation while it lasts; and if it should last forever the sleeper would be no worse off after a million years of it than after an hour of it. There are minds sufficiently logical to think of it that way, and to them annihilation is not a disagreeable thing to contemplate and expect.

In this matter of immortality, people’s beliefs appear to go along with their wishes. The man who is content with annihilation thinks he will get it; those that want immortality are pretty sure they are immortal; and that is a very comfortable allotment of faiths. The few of us that are left unprovided for are those who do not bother themselves much about the matter, one way or another.

The question of human immortality is the most momentous that the mind is capable of conceiving. If it is a fact that the dead live all other facts are in comparison trivial and without interest. The prospect of obtaining certain knowledge with regard to this stupendous matter is not encouraging. In all countries but those in barbarism the powers of the profoundest and most penetrating intelligences have been ceaselessly addressed to the task of glimpsing a life beyond this life; yet today no one can truly say that he knows. It is as much a matter of faith as ever it was.

Our modern Christian nations profess a passionate hope and belief in another world, yet the most popular writer and speaker of his time, the man whose lectures drew the largest audiences, the work of whose pen brought him the highest rewards, was he who most strenuously strove to destroy the ground of that hope and unsettle the foundations of that belief.

The famous and popular Frenchman, Professor of Spectacular Astronomy, Camille Flammarion, affirms immortality because he has talked with departed souls who said that it was true. Yes, monsieur, but surely you know the rule about hearsay evidence. We Anglo-Saxons are very particular about that.

M. Flammarion says:

"I don't repudiate the presumptive arguments of schoolmen. I merely supplement them with something positive. For instance, if you assumed the existence of God this argument of the scholastics is a good one. God has implanted in all men the desire of perfect happiness. This desire cannot be satisfied in our lives here. If there were not another life wherein to satisfy it then God would be a deceiver. *Voila tout*."

There is more: the desire of perfect happiness does not imply immortality, even if there is a God, for

(1) God may not have implanted it, but merely suffers it to exist, as he suffers sin to exist, the desire of wealth, the desire to live longer than we do in this world. It is not held that God implanted all the desires of the human heart. Then why hold that he implanted that of perfect happiness?

(2) Even if he did — even if a divinely implanted desire entail its own gratification — even if it cannot be gratified in this life — that does not imply immortality. It implies *only* another life long enough for its gratification just once. An eternity of gratification is not a logical inference from it.

(3) Perhaps God *is* "a deceiver;" who knows that he is not? Assumption of the existence of a God is one thing; assumption of the existence of a God who is honorable and candid according to our conception of honor and candor is another.

(4) There may be an honorable and candid God. He may have implanted in us the desire of perfect happiness. It may be — it is — impossible to gratify that desire in this life. Still, another life is not implied, for God may not have intended us to draw the inference that he is going to gratify it. If omniscient and omnipotent, God must be held to have intended whatever occurs, but no such God is assumed in M. Flammarion's illustration, and it may be that God's knowledge and power are limited, or that one of them is limited.

M. Flammarion is a learned, if somewhat theatrical, astronomer. He has a tremendous imagination, which naturally is more at home in the marvelous and catastrophic than in the orderly regions of familiar phenomena. To him the heavens are an immense pyrotechnicon and he is the master of the show and sets off the fireworks. But he knows nothing of logic, which is the science of straight thinking, and his views of things have therefore no value; they are nebulous.

Nothing is clearer than that our pre-existence is a dream, having absolutely no basis in anything that we know or can hope to know. Of after-existence there is said to be evidence, or rather testimony, in assurances of those who are in present enjoyment of it — if it is enjoyable. Whether this testimony has actually been given — and it is the only testimony worth a moment's consideration — is a disputed point. Many persons living this life profess to have received it. But nobody professes, or ever has professed, to have received a communication of any kind from one in actual experience of the fore-life. "The souls as yet ungarmented." if such there are, are dumb to question. The Land beyond the Grave has been, if not observed, yet often and variously described: if not explored and surveyed, yet carefully charted. From among so many accounts of it that we have, he must be fastidious indeed who cannot be suited. But of the Fatherland that spreads before the cradle — the great Heretofore, wherein we all dwelt if we are to dwell in the Hereafter, we have no account. Nobody professes knowledge of that. No testimony reaches our ears of flesh concerning its topographical or other features; no one has been so enterprising as to wrest from its actual inhabitants any particulars of their character and appearance. And among educated experts and professional proponents of worlds to be there is a general denial of its existence.

I am of their way of thinking about that. The fact that we have no recollection of a former life is entirely conclusive of the matter. To have lived an unrecollected life is impossible and unthinkable, for there would be nothing to connect the new life with the old — no thread of continuity — nothing that persisted from the one life to the other. The later birth would be that of another person, an altogether different being, unrelated to the first — a new John Smith succeeding to the late Tom Jones.

Let us not be misled here by a false analogy. Today I may get a thwack o' the mazzard which will give me an intervening season of unconsciousness between yesterday and to-morrow. Thereafter I may live to a green old age with no recollection of anything that I knew, or did, or was before the accident; yet I shall be the same person, for between the old life and the new there will be a *nexus*, a thread of continuity, something spanning the gulf from the one state to the other, and the same in both — namely, my body with its habits, capacities and powers. That is I; that identifies me to others as my former self — authenticates and credentials me as the person that incurred the cranial mischance, dislodging memory.

But when death occurs *all* is dislodged if memory is; for between two merely mental or spiritual existences memory is the only *nexus* conceivable; consciousness of identity is the only identity. To live again without memory of having lived before is to live another. Re-existence without recollection is absurd. There is nothing to re-exist.

EMANCIPATED WOMAN

What I should like to know is, how “the enlargement of woman’s sphere” by her entrance into various activities of commercial, professional and industrial life benefits the sex. It may please Helen Gougar and satisfy her sense of logical accuracy to say, as she does: “We women must work in order to fill the places left vacant by liquor-drinking men.” But who filled these places before? Did they remain vacant, or were there then disappointed applicants, as now? If my memory serves, there has been no time in the period that it covers when the supply of workers — abstemious male workers — was not in excess of the demand. That it has always been so is sufficiently attested by the universally inadequate wage rate.

Employers seldom fail, and never for long, to get all the workmen they need. The field into which women have put their sickles was already overcrowded with reapers. Whatever employment women have obtained has been got by displacing men — who would otherwise be supporting women. Where is the general advantage? We may shout “high tariff,” “combination of capital,” “demonetization of silver,” and what not, but if searching for the cause of augmented poverty and crime, “industrial discontent” and the tramp evil, instead of dogmatically expounding it, we should take some account of this enormous, sudden addition to the number of workers seeking work. If any one thinks that within the brief period of a generation the visible supply of labor can be enormously augmented without profoundly affecting the stability of things and disastrously touching the interests of wage-workers let no rude voice dispel his dream of such maleficent agencies as his slumbrous understanding may joy to affirm. And let our Widows of Ashur unlung themselves in advocacy of quack remedies for evils of which themselves are cause; it remains true that when the contention of two lions for one bone is exacerbated by the accession of a lioness the squabble is not composable by stirring up some bears in the cage adjacent.

Indubitably a woman is under no obligation to sacrifice herself to the good of her sex by foregoing needed employment in the hope that it may fall to a man gifted with dependent women. Nevertheless our congratulations are more intelligent when bestowed upon her individual head than when sifted into the hair of all Eve’s daughters. This is a world of complexities, in which the lines of interest are so intertangled as frequently to transgress that of sex; and one ambitious to help but half the race may profitably know that every effort to that end provokes a counterbalancing mischief. The “enlargement of woman’s opportunities” has benefited individual women. It has not benefited the sex as a whole, and has distinctly damaged the race. The mind that can not discern a score of great and irreparable general evils distinctly traceable to “emancipation of woman” is as impregnable to the light as a toad in a rock.

A marked demerit of the new order of things — the *régime* of female commercial service — is that its main advantage accrues, not to the race, not to the sex, not to the class, not to the individual woman, but to the person of least need and worth — the male employer. (Female employers in any considerable number there will not be, but those that we have could give the male ones profitable instruction in grinding the faces of their employees.) This constant increase of the army of labor — always and everywhere too large for the work in sight — by accession of a new contingent of natural oppressibles makes the very teeth of old Munniglut thrill with a poignant delight. It brings in that situation known as two laborers seeking one job — and one of them a person whose bones he can easily grind to make his bread; and Munniglut is a miller of skill and experience, dusted all over with the evidence of his useful craft. When Heaven has assisted the Daughters of Hope to open to women a new “avenue of opportunities” the first to enter and walk therein, like God in the Garden of Eden, is the good Mr. Munniglut, contentedly smoothing the folds out of the superior slope of his paunch, exuding the peculiar aroma of his oleaginous personality and larding the new roadway with the overflow of a righteousness stimulated to action by relish of his own identity. And ever thereafter the subtle suggestion of a fat philistinism lingers along that path of progress like an assertion of a possessory right.

It is God’s own crystal truth that in dealing with women unfortunate enough to be compelled to earn their own living and fortunate enough to have wrested from Fate an opportunity to do so, men of business and affairs treat them with about the same delicate consideration that they show to dogs and horses of the inferior breeds. It does not commonly occur to the wealthy “professional man,” or “prominent merchant,” to be ashamed to add to his yearly thousands a part of the salary justly due to his female bookkeeper or typewriter, who sits before him all day with an empty belly in order to have an habilimented back. He has a vague, hazy notion that the law of supply and demand is mandatory, and that in submitting himself to it by paying her a half of what he would have to pay a man of inferior efficiency he is supplying the world with a noble example of obedience. I must take the liberty to remind him that the law of supply and demand is not imperative; it is not a statute but a phenomenon. He may reply: “It is imperative; the penalty for disobedience is failure. If I pay more in salaries and wages than I need to, my competitor will not; and with that advantage he will drive me from the field." If his margin of profit is so small that he must eke it out by coining the sweat of his workwomen into nickels I've nothing to say to him. Let him adopt in peace the motto, "I cheat to eat." I do not know why he should eat, but Nature, who has provided sustenance for the worming sparrow, the sparrowing owl and the owling eagle, approves the needy man of prey and makes a place for him at table.

Human nature is pretty well balanced; for every lacking virtue there is a rough substitute that will serve at a pinch — as cunning is the wisdom of the unwise, and ferocity the courage of the coward. Nobody is altogether bad; the scoundrel who has grown rich by underpaying workmen in his factory will sometimes endow an asylum for indigent seamen. To oppress one's own workmen, and provide for the workmen of a neighbor — to skin those in charge of one's own interests while cottoning and oiling the residuary product of another's skinnery — that is not very good benevolence, nor very good sense, but it serves in place of both. The man who eats *pâté de fois gras* in the sweat of his girl cashier's face, or wears purple and fine linen in order that his typewriter may have an eocene gown and a pliocene hat, seems a tolerably satisfactory specimen of the genus thief; but let us not forget that in his own home — a fairly good one — he may enjoy and merit that highest and most honorable title on the scroll of woman's favor, "a good provider." One having a claim to that glittering distinction should enjoy immunity from the coarse and troublesome question, "From whose backs and bellies do you provide?"

So much for the material results to the sex. What are the moral results? One does not like to speak of them, particularly to those who do not and can not know — to good women in whose innocent minds female immorality is inseparable from flashy gowning and the painted face; to foolish, book-taught men who honestly believe in some protective sanctity that hedges womanhood. If men of the world with years enough to have lived out of the old *régime* into the new would testify in this matter there would ensue a great rattling of dry bones in bodices of reform-ladies. Nay, if the young man about town, knowing nothing of how things were in the "dark backward and absym of time," but something of the moral distance between even so free-running a creature as the society girl and the average working girl of the factory, the shop and the office, would speak out (under assurance of immunity from prosecution) his testimony would be a surprise to the cartilaginous virgins, blowsy matrons, acrid relicts and hairy males of Emancipation. It would pain, too, some very worthy but unobservant persons not in sympathy with "the cause."

Certain significant facts are within the purview of all but the very young and the comfortably blind. To the woman of to-day the man of to-day is imperfectly polite. In place of reverence he gives her “deference”; to the language of compliment has succeeded the language of raillery. Men have almost forgotten how to bow. Doubtless the advanced female prefers the new manner, as may some of her less forward sisters, thinking it more sincere. It is not; our giddy grandfather talked high-flown nonsense because his heart had tangled his tongue. He treated his woman more civilly than we ours because he loved her better. He never had seen her on the “rostrum” and in the lobby, never had heard her in advocacy of herself, never had read her confessions of his sins, never had felt the stress of her competition, nor himself assisted by daily personal contact in rubbing the bloom off her. He did not know that her virtues were due to her secluded life, but thought, dear old boy, that they were a gift of God.

A MAD WORLD

Let us suppose that in tracing its cycloidal curves through the unthinkable reaches of space traversed by the solar system our planet should pass through a “belt” of attenuated matter having the property of dementing us! It is a conception easily enough entertained. That space is full of malign conditions incontinuously distributed; that we are at one time traversing a zone comparatively innocuous and at another spinning through a region of infection; that away behind us in the wake of our swirling flight are fields of plague and pain still agitated by our passage through them, — all this is as good as known. It is almost as certain as it is that in our little annual circle round the sun are points at which we are stoned and brick-batted like a pig in a potato-patch — pelted with little nodules of meteoric metal flung like gravel, and bombarded with gigantic masses hurled by God knows what? What strange adventures await us in those yet untraveled regions toward which we speed? — into what malign conditions may we not at any time plunge? — to the strength and stress of what frightful environment may we not at last succumb? The subject lends itself readily enough to a jest, but I am not jesting: it is really altogether probable that our solar system, racing through space with inconceivable velocity, will one day enter a region charged with something deleterious to the human brain, minding us all mad-wise.

By the way, dear reader, did you ever happen to consider the possibility that you are a lunatic, and perhaps confined in an asylum? It seems to you that you are not — that you go with freedom where you will, and use a sweet reasonableness in all your works and ways; but to many a lunatic it seems that he is Rameses II, or the Holkar of Indore. Many a plunging maniac, ironed to the floor of a cell, believes himself the Goddess of Liberty careering gaily through the Ten Commandments in a chariot of gold. Of your own sanity and identity you have no evidence that is any better than he has of his. More accurately, I have none of mine; for anything I know, you do not exist, nor any one of all the things with which I think myself familiarly conscious. All may be fictions of my disordered imagination. I really know of but one reason for doubting that I am an inmate of an asylum for the insane — namely, the probability that there is nowhere any such thing as an asylum for the insane.

This kind of speculation has charms that get a good neck-hold upon attention. For example, if I am really a lunatic, and the persons and things that I seem to see about me have no objective existence, what an ingenious though disordered imagination I must have! What a clever *coup* it was to invent Mr. Rockefeller and clothe him with the attribute of permanence! With what amusing qualities I have endowed my laird of Skibo, philanthropist. What a masterpiece of creative humor is my Fatty Taft, statesman, taking himself seriously, even solemnly, and persuading others to do the same! And this city of Washington, with its motley population of silurians, parvenoodles and scamps pranking unashamed in the light of day, and its saving contingent of the forsaken righteous, their seed begging bread, — did Rabelais' exuberant fancy ever conceive so — but Rabelais is, perhaps, himself a conception.

Surely he is no common maniac who has wrought out of nothing the history, the philosophies, sciences, arts, laws, religions, politics and morals of this imaginary world. Nay, the world itself, tumbling uneasily through space like a beetle's ball, is no mean achievement, and I am proud of it. But the mental feat in which I take most satisfaction, and which I doubt not is most diverting to my keepers, is that of creating Mr. W.R. Hearst, pointing his eyes toward the White House and endowing him with a perilous Jacksonian ambition to defile it. The Hearst is distinctly a treasure.

On the whole, I have done, I think, tolerably well, and when I contemplate the fertility and originality of my inventions, the queer unearthliness and grotesque actions of the characters whom I have evolved, isolated and am cultivating, I cannot help thinking that if Heaven had not made me a lunatic my peculiar talent might have made me an entertaining writer.

EPIGRAMS OF A CYNIC

If every hypocrite in the United States were to break his leg to-day the country could be successfully invaded to-morrow by the warlike hypocrites of Canada.

To Dogmatism the Spirit of Inquiry is the same as the Spirit of Evil, and to pictures of the latter it appends a tail to represent the note of interrogation.

“Immoral” is the judgment of the stalled ox on the gamboling lamb.

In forgiving an injury be somewhat ceremonious, lest your magnanimity be construed as indifference.

True, man does not know woman. But neither does woman.

Age is provident because the less future we have the more we fear it.

Reason is fallible and virtue invincible; the winds vary and the needle forsakes the pole, but stupidity never errs and never intermits. Since it has been found that the axis of the earth wabbles, stupidity is indispensable as a standard of constancy.

In order that the list of able women may be memorized for use at meetings of the oppressed sex, Heaven has considerately made it brief.

Firmness is my persistency; obstinacy is yours.

A little heap of dust, A little streak of rust, A stone without a name — Lo! hero, sword and fame.

Our vocabulary is defective; we give the same name to woman’s lack of temptation and man’s lack of opportunity.

“You scoundrel, you have wronged me,” hissed the philosopher. “May you live forever!”

The man who thinks that a garnet can be made a ruby by setting it in brass is writing “dialect” for publication.

“Who art thou, stranger, and what dost thou seek?” “I am Generosity, and I seek a person named Gratitude.” “Then thou dost not deserve to find her.” “True. I will go about my business and think of her no more. But who art thou, to be so wise?” “I am Gratitude — farewell forever.”

There was never a genius who was not thought a fool until he disclosed himself; whereas he is a fool then only.

The boundaries that Napoleon drew have been effaced; the kingdoms that he set up have disappeared. But all the armies and statecraft of Europe cannot unsay what you have said.

Strive not for singularity in dress; Fools have the more and men of sense the less. To look original is not worth while, But be in mind a little out of style.

A conqueror arose from the dead. “Yesterday,” he said, “I ruled half the world.” “Please show me the half that you ruled,” said an angel, pointing out a wisp of glowing vapor floating in space. “That is the world.”

“Who art thou, shivering in thy furs?” “My name is Avarice. What is thine?” “Unselfishness.” “Where is thy clothing, placid one?” “Thou art wearing it.”

To be comic is merely to be playful, but wit is a serious matter. To laugh at it is to confess that you do not understand.

If you would be accounted great by your contemporaries, be not too much greater than they.

To have something that he will not desire, nor know that he has — such is the hope of him who seeks the admiration of posterity. The character of his work does not matter; he is a humorist.

Women, and foxes, being weak, are distinguished by superior tact.

To fatten pigs, confine and feed them; to fatten rogues, cultivate a generous disposition.

Every heart is the lair of a ferocious animal. The greatest wrong that you can put upon a man is to provoke him to let out his beast.

When two irreconcilable propositions are presented for assent the safest way is to thank Heaven that we are not as the unreasoning brutes, and believe both.

Truth is more deceptive than falsehood, for it is more frequently presented by those from whom we do not expect it, and so has against it a numerical presumption.

A bad marriage is like an electrical thrilling machine: it makes you dance, but you can’t let go.

Meeting Merit on a street-crossing, Success stood still. Merit stepped off into the mud and went around him, bowing his apologies, which Success had the grace to accept.

“I think,” says the philosopher divine, “Therefore I am.” Sir, here’s a surer sign: We know we live, for with our every breath we feel the fear and imminence of death.

The first man you meet is a fool. If you do not think so ask him and he will prove it.

He who would rather inflict injustice than suffer it will always have his choice, for no injustice can be done to him.

There are as many conceptions of a perfect happiness hereafter as there are minds that have marred their happiness here.

We yearn to be, not what we are, but what we are not. If we were immortal we should not crave immortality.

A rabbit’s foot may bring good luck to you, but it brought none to the rabbit.

Before praising the wisdom of the man who knows how to hold his tongue ascertain if he knows how to hold his pen.

The most charming view in the world is obtained by introspection.

Love is unlike chess, in that the pieces are moved secretly and the player sees most of the game. But the looker-on has one incomparable advantage: he is not the stake.

It is not for nothing that tigers choose to hide in the jungle, for commerce and trade are carried on, mostly, in the open.

We say that we love, not whom we will, but whom we must. Our judgment need not, therefore, go to confession.

Of two kinds of temporary insanity, one ends in suicide, the other in marriage.

If you give alms from compassion, why require the beneficiary to be “a deserving object?” No other adversity is so sharp as destitution of merit.

Bereavement is the name that selfishness gives to a particular privation.

O proud philanthropist, your hope is vain To get by giving what you lost by gain. With every gift you do but swell the cloud Of witnesses against you, swift and loud — Accomplices who turn and swear you split Your life: half robber and half hypocrite. You’re least unsafe when most intact you hold Your curst allotment of dishonest gold.

The highest and rarest form of contentment is approval of the success of another.

If Inclination challenge, stand and fight — From Opportunity the wise take flight.

What a woman most admires in a man is distinction among men. What a man most admires in a woman is devotion to himself.

Those who most loudly invite God’s attention to themselves when in peril of death are those who should most fervently wish to escape his observation.

When you have made a catalogue of your friend’s faults it is only fair to supply him with a duplicate, so that he may know yours.

How fascinating is Antiquity! — in what a golden haze the ancients lived their lives! We, too, are ancients. Of our enchanting time Posterity’s great poets will sing immortal songs, and its archaeologists will reverently uncover the foundations of our palaces and temples. Meantime we swap jack-knives.

Observe, my son, with how austere a virtue the man without a cent puts aside the temptation to manipulate the market or acquire a monopoly.

For study of the good and the bad in woman two women are a needless expense.

“There’s no free will,” says the philosopher; “To hang is most unjust.” “There is no free will," assents the officer; "We hang because we must."

Hope is an explorer who surveys the country ahead. That is why we know so much about the Hereafter and so little about the Heretofore.

Remembering that it was a woman who lost the world, we should accept the act of cackling geese in saving Rome as partial reparation.

There are two classes of women who may do as they please; those who are rich and those who are poor. The former can count on assent, the latter on inattention.

When into the house of the heart Curiosity is admitted as the guest of Love she turns her host out of doors.

Happiness has not to all the same name: to Youth she is known as the Future; Age knows her as the Dream.

"Who art thou, there in the mire?" "Intuition. I leaped all the way from where thou standest in fear on the brink of the bog." "A great feat, madam; accept the admiration of Reason, sometimes known as Dryfoot."

In eradicating an evil, it makes a difference whether it is uprooted or rooted up. The difference is in the reformer.

The Audible Sisterhood rightly affirms the equality of the sexes: no man is so base but some woman is base enough to love him.

Having no eyes in the back of the head, we see ourselves on the verge of the outlook. Only he who has accomplished the notable feat of turning about knows himself the central figure in the universe.

Truth is so good a thing that falsehood can not afford to be without it.

If women did the writing of the world, instead of the talking, men would be regarded as the superior sex in beauty, grace and goodness.

Love is a delightful day's journey. At the farther end kiss your companion and say farewell.

Let him who would wish to duplicate his every experience prate of the value of life.

The game of discontent has its rules, and he who disregards them cheats. It is not permitted to you to wish to add another's advantages or possessions to your own; you are permitted only to wish to be another.

The creator and arbiter of beauty is the heart; to the male rattlesnake the female rattlesnake is the loveliest thing in nature.

Thought and emotion dwell apart. When the heart goes into the head there is no dissension; only an eviction.

If you want to read a perfect book there is only one way: write it.

"Where goest thou, Ignorance?" "To fortify the mind of a maiden against a peril." "I am going thy way. My name is Knowledge." "Scoundrel! Thou art the peril.”

A prude is one who blushes modestly at the indelicacy of her thoughts and virtuously flies from the temptation of her desires.

The man who is always taking you by the hand is the same who if you were hungry would take you by the cafe.

When a certain sovereign wanted war he threw out a diplomatic intimation; when ready, a diplomat.

If public opinion were determined by a throw of the dice, it would in the long run be half the time right.

The gambling known as business looks with austere disfavor upon the business known as gambling.

A virtuous widow is the most loyal of mortals; she is faithful to that which is neither pleased nor profited by her fidelity.

Of one who was “foolish” the creators of our language said that he was “fond.” That we have not definitely reversed the meanings of the words should be set down to the credit of our courtesy.

Rioting gains its end by the power of numbers. To a believer in the wisdom and goodness of majorities it is not permitted to denounce a successful mob.

Artistically set to grace The wall of a dissecting-place, A human pericardium Was fastened with a bit of gum, While, simply underrunning it, The one word, “Charity,” was writ To show the student band that hovered About it what it once had covered.

Virtue is not necessary to a good reputation, but a good reputation is helpful to virtue.

When lost in a forest go always down hill. When lost in a philosophy or doctrine go up-ward.

We submit to the majority because we have to. But we are not compelled to call our attitude of subjection a posture of respect.

Pascal says that an inch added to the length of Cleopatra’s nose would have changed the fortunes of the world. But having said this, he has said nothing, for all the forces of nature and all the power of dynasties could not have added an inch to the length of Cleopatra’s nose.

Our luxuries are always masquerading as necessaries. Woman is the only necessary having the boldness and address to compel recognition as a luxury.

“I am the seat of the affections,” said the heart. “Thank you,” said the judgment, “you save my face.”

“Who art thou that weepest?” “Man.” “Nay, thou art Egotism. I am the Scheme of the Universe. Study me and learn that nothing matters.” “Then how does it happen that I weep?”

A slight is less easily forgiven than an injury, because it implies something of contempt, indifference, an overlooking of our importance; whereas an injury presupposes some degree of consideration. “The blackguards!” said a traveler whom Sicilian brigands had released without ransom; “did they think me a person of no consequence?”

The people’s plaudits are unheard in hell.

Generosity to a fallen foe is a virtue that takes no chances.

If there was a world before this we must all have died impenitent.

We are what we laugh at. The stupid person is a poor joke, the clever, a good one.

If every man who resents being called a rogue resented being one this would be a world of wrath.

Force and charm are important elements of character, but it counts for little to be stronger than honey and sweeter than a lion.

Grief and discomfiture are coals that cool: Why keep them glowing with thy sighs, poor fool?

A popular author is one who writes what the people think. Genius invites them to think something else.

Asked to describe the Deity, a donkey would represent him with long ears and a tail. Man’s conception is higher and truer: he thinks of him as somewhat resembling a man.

Christians and camels receive their burdens kneeling.

The sky is a concave mirror in which Man sees his own distorted image and seeks to propitiate it.

Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land, but do not hope that the life insurance companies will offer thee special rates.

Persons who are horrified by what they believe to be Darwin’s theory of the descent of Man from the Ape may find comfort in the hope of his return.

A strong mind is more easily impressed than a weak; you shall not so readily convince a fool that you are a philosopher as a philosopher that you are a fool.

A cheap and easy cynicism rails at everything. The master of the art accomplishes the formidable task of discrimination.

When publicly censured our first instinct is to make everybody a codefendant.

O lady fine, fear not to lead To Hymen’s shrine a clown: Love cannot level up, indeed, But he can level down.

Men are polygamous by nature and monogamous for opportunity. It is a faithful man who is willing to be watched by a half-dozen wives.

The virtues chose Modesty to be their queen. “I did not know that I was a virtue,” she said. “Why did you not choose Innocence?” “Because of her ignorance," they replied. "She knows nothing but that she is a virtue."

It is a wise "man's man" who knows what it is that he despises in a "ladies' man."

If the vices of women worshiped their creators men would boast of the adoration they inspire.

The only distinction that democracies reward is a high degree of conformity.

Slang is the speech of him who robs the literary garbage carts on their way to the dumps.

A woman died who had passed her life in affirming the superiority of her sex. "At last," she said, "I shall have rest and honors." "Enter," said Saint Peter; "thou shalt wash the faces of the dear little cherubim."

To woman a general truth has neither value nor interest unless she can make a particular application of it. And we say that women are not practical!

The ignorant know not the depth of their ignorance, but the learned know the shallowness of their learning.

He who relates his success in charming woman's heart may be assured of his failure to charm man's ear.

What poignant memories the shadows bring What songs of triumph in the dawning ring! By night a coward and by day a king.

When among the graves of thy fellows, walk with circumspection; thine own is open at thy feet.

As the physiognomist takes his own face as the highest type and standard, so the critic's theories are imposed by his own limitations.

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy," and our neighbors take up the tale as we mature.

"My laws," she said, "are of myself a part: I read them by examining my heart." "True," he replied; "like those to Moses known, Thine also are engraven upon stone."

Love is a distracted attention: from contemplation of one's self one turns to consider one's dream.

"Halt! — who goes there?" "Death." "Advance, Death, and give the countersign." "How needless! I care not to enter thy camp tonight. Thou shalt enter mine." "What! I a deserter?" "Nay, a great soldier. Thou shalt overcome all the enemies of mankind." "Who are they?" "Life and the Fear of Death."

The palmist looks at the wrinkles made by closing the hand and says they signify character. The philosopher reads character by what the hand most loves to close upon.

Ah, woe is his, with length of living cursed, Who, nearing second childhood, had no first. Behind, no glimmer, and before no ray — A night at either end of his dark day.

A noble enthusiasm in praise of Woman is not incompatible with a spirited zeal in defamation of women.

The money-getter who pleads his love of work has a lame defense, for love of work at money-getting is a lower taste than love of money.

He who thinks that praise of mediocrity atones for disparagement of genius is like one who should plead robbery in excuse of theft.

The most disagreeable form of masculine hypocrisy is that which finds expression in pretended remorse for impossible gallantries.

Any one can say that which is new; any one that which is true. For that which is both new and true we must go duly accredited to the gods and await their pleasure.

The test of truth is Reason, not Faith; for to the court of Reason must be submitted even the claims of Faith.

“Whither goest thou?” said the angel. “I know not.” “And whence hast thou come?” “I know not.” “But who art thou?” “I know not.” “Then thou art Man. See that thou turn not back, but pass on to the place whence thou hast come.”

If Expediency and Righteousness are not father and son they are the most harmonious brothers that ever were seen.

Train the head, and the heart will take care of itself; a rascal is one who knows not how to think.

Do you to others as you would That others do to you; But see that you no service good Would have from others that they could Not rightly do.

Taunts are allowable in the case of an obstinate husband: balky horses may best be made to go by having their ears bitten.

Adam probably regarded Eve as the woman of his choice, and exacted a certain gratitude for the distinction of his preference.

A man is the sum of his ancestors; to reform him you must begin with a dead ape and work downward through a million graves. He is like the lower end of a suspended chain; you can sway him slightly to the right or the left, but remove your hand and he falls into line with the other links.

He who thinks with difficulty believes with alacrity. A fool is a natural proselyte, but he must be caught young, for his convictions, unlike those of the wise, harden with age.

These are the prerogatives of genius: To know without having learned; to draw just conclusions from unknown premises; to discern the soul of things.

Although one love a dozen times, yet will the latest love seem the first. He who says he has loved twice has not loved once.

Men who expect universal peace through invention of destructive weapons of war are no wiser than one who, noting the improvement of agricultural implements, should prophesy an end to the tilling of the soil.

To parents only, death brings an inconsolable sorrow. When the young die and the old live, nature's machinery is working with the friction that we name grief.

Empty wine bottles have a bad opinion of women.

Civilization is the child of human ignorance and conceit. If Man knew his insignificance in the scheme of things he would not think it worth while to rise from barbarity to enlightenment. But it is only through enlightenment that he can know.

Along the road of life are many pleasure resorts, but think not that by tarrying in them you will take more days to the journey. The day of your arrival is already recorded.

The most offensive egotist is he that fears to say "I" and "me." "It will probably rain" — that is dogmatic. "I think it will rain" — that is natural and modest. Montaigne is the most delightful of essayists because so great is his humility that he does not think it important that we see not Montaigne. He so forgets himself that he employs no artifice to make us forget him.

On fair foundations Theocrats unwise Rear superstructures that offend the skies. "Behold," they cry, "this pile so fair and tall! Come dwell within it and be happy all." But they alone inhabit it, and find, Poor fools, 'tis but a prison for the mind.

If thou wilt not laugh at a rich man's wit thou art an anarchist, and if thou take not his word thou shalt take nothing that he hath. Make haste, therefore, to be civil to thy betters, and so prosper, for prosperity is the foundation of the state.

Death is not the end; there remains the litigation over the estate.

When God makes a beautiful woman, the devil opens a new register.

When Eve first saw her reflection in a pool, she sought Adam and accused him of infidelity.

"Why dost thou weep?" "For the death of my wife. Alas! I shall never again see her!" "Thy wife will never again see thee, yet she does not weep."

What theology is to religion and jurisprudence to justice, etiquette is to civility.

"Who art thou that despite the piercing cold and thy robe's raggedness seemest to enjoy thyself?" "Naught else is enjoyable — I am Contentment." "Ha! thine must be a magic shirt. Off with it! I shiver in my fine attire." "I have no shirt. Pass on, Success."

Ignorance when inevitable is excusable. It may be harmless, even beneficial; but it is charming only to the unwise. To affect a spurious ignorance is to disclose a genuine.

Because you will not take by theft what you can have by cheating, think not yours is the only conscience in the world. Even he who permits you to cheat his neighbor will shrink from permitting you to cheat himself.

“God keep thee, stranger; what is thy name?” “Wisdom. And thine?” “Knowledge. How does it happen that we meet?” “This is an intersection of our paths.” “Will it ever be decreed that we travel always the same road?” “We were well named if we knew.”

Nothing is more logical than persecution. Religious tolerance is a kind of infidelity.

Convictions are variable; to be always consistent is to be sometimes dishonest.

The philosopher’s profoundest conviction is that which he is most reluctant to express, lest he mislead.

When exchange of identities is possible, be careful; you may choose a person who is willing.

The most intolerant advocate is he who is trying to convince himself.

In the Parliament of Otumwee the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed a tax on fools. “The right honorable and generous gentleman,” said a member, “forgets that we already have it in the poll tax.”

“Whose dead body is that?” “Credulity’s.” “By whom was he slain?” “Credulity.” “Ah, suicide.” “No, surfeit. He dined at the table of Science, and swallowed all that was set before him.”

Don’t board with the devil if you wish to be fat.

Pray do not despise your delinquent debtor; his default is no proof of poverty.

Courage is the acceptance of the gambler’s chance: a brave man bets against the game of the gods.

“Who art thou?” “A philanthropist. And thou?” “A pauper.” “Away! you have nothing to relieve my needs.”

Youth looks forward, for nothing is behind! Age backward, for nothing is before.

TANGENTIAL VIEWS

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SOME PRIVATIONS OF THE COMING MAN

A GERMAN physician of some note once gave it out as his solemn conviction that civilized man is gradually but surely losing the sense of smell through disuse. It is a fact that we have noses less keen than the savages; which is well for us, for we have a dozen “well-defined and several” bad odors to their one. It is possible, indeed, that it is to the alarming prevalence of bad odors that our olfactory inferiority is in some degree due: civilized man’s habit of holding his nose has begotten in that organ an obedient habit of holding itself. This by the way, leaves both his hands free to hold his tongue, though as a rule he prefers to make another and less pleasing use of them. With a nose dowered with primitive activity civilized man would find it difficult to retain his supremacy over the forces of Nature; her assassinating odors would engage him in a new struggle for existence, incomparably more arduous than any of which he has present experience. And herein we get an intimation of a hitherto unsuspected cause of the rapid decadence of savage peoples when brought into contact with civilization. Various causes doubtless are concerned, but the slaughterhouse, the glue factory, the gas main, the sewer and the other sources of exhalations that “rise like the steam of rich-distilled perfumes” (which in no other quality they resemble) are the actual culprits. Unprepared with a means of defense at the point where he is most accessible to assault, the reclaimed savage falls into a decline and accepting the Christian religion for what he conceives it to be worth, turns his nose to the wall and dies in the secret hope of an inodorous eternity.

With effacement of the sense of smell we shall doubtless lose the feature which serves as intake to what it feeds upon; and that will in many ways be an advantage. It will, for example, put a new difficulty in the way of that disagreeable person, the caricaturist — rather, it will shear him of much of his present power. The fellow never tires of furnishing forth the rest of us incredibly snouted in an infinite variety of wicked ways. When noses are no more, caricature will have stilled some of its thunder and we can all venture to be eminent.

Meantime, history is full of noses, as is the literature of imagination — some of them figuratively, some literally, shining beacons that splendor “the dark backward and abysm of time.” Of the world’s great, it may almost be said that by their noses we know them. Where would have been Cyrano de Bergerac in modern story without his nose? By the unlearned it is thought that the immortal

Bardolph is a creation of Shakspeare's genius. Not so; an ingenious scholar long ago identified him as an historical character who but for the poet's fine appreciation of noses might have blushed eternally unseen. It is nothing that his true name is no longer in evidence in the annals of men; as Bardolph his fame is secure from the ravening tooth of time.

Even when a nasal peculiarity is due to an accident of its environment it confers no inconsiderable distinction, apart from its possessor's other and perhaps superior claims to renown, as in the instances of Michael Angelo, Tycho Brahe and the beloved Thackeray, in whose altered frontispiece we are all the more interested because of his habit of dipping it in the Gascon wine.

The spreading nose of Socrates was no doubt a source of great regret to him, whether its faults and failings were of Xanthippe's making or, as Zopyrus had the incivility to inform him, inherited from drunken, thieving and lascivious ancestors; yet who would willingly forego the emotions and sentiments inspired by that unusual nose? It seems a precious part of his philosophy.

The connection between the poetic eminence of Ovid and the noses from which his family, the Nasones, derived its name is doubtless more than accidental, and to our knowledge of his hereditary nasal equipment, albeit we know not the precise nature of the endowment, must be ascribed a part of our interest in his work. He to whom the secret of metamorphosis was an open book is not affirmed to have made any attempt to alter the family feature, as he doubtless would have done had he not recognized its essential relation to his genius.

Plutarch declares that Cicero owed his surname to the fact that his nose had the shape of a vetch — *cicer*. Anyhow, his nose was as remarkable as his eloquence, in its different way. Gibbon and the late Prince Gortschakoff had noses uncommonly minute for men of commanding ability, which may have been a good thing for them, compelling them to rely upon their own endeavors to make their mark in the world. He who cannot climb to eminence upon his own nose will naturally seek another footing. Addison had a smooth Grecian nose, significantly suggestive of his literary style. Tennyson's nose was long; so are some of his sermons in verse. Julius Cæsar, too, was gifted with a long nose, which a writer in a recent review has aptly called "enterprising." That Cæsar was an enterprising man some of his contemporaries could feelingly have attested.

The nose of Dante — ah, there was a nose! What words could do it justice? It is one of history's most priceless possessions. One hesitates to say what powers and potencies lay latent in that superb organ; one can only regret that he did not give more time to the cultivation of its magnificent possibilities and less to evening up matters between himself and his enemies when peopling Hell as he had the happiness to conceive it.

Considering how many of the world’s great and good men have been distinguished from their inferiors by noses of note and consequence, it is difficult to understand that such “gifts of grace divine” as these uncommon protuberances should be so sensitive to the blaze and blare of publicity. One would expect that in the fierce light that beats about an uncommon nose its fortunate owner would bask as contentedly as a python in the noonday sun, happy in the benign beam and proud of every inch of his revealed identity.

To art, effacement of the nose will be of inestimable benefit. In statuary, for example, we shall be able to hurl a qualified defiance at Time the iconoclast, who now hastens to assail our cherished carven images in that most vulnerable part, the nose, tweaking it off and throwing it away almost before the sculptor’s own nose is blue and cold beneath the daisies. In the statue of the future there will be no nose, consequently no damage to it; and although the statue may when new and perfect differ but little from the mutilated antiques that we now have, there will be a certain satisfaction in knowing that it has not been “retouched.” In the case of portrait-statues and busts the advantage is obvious. When the nose goes the likeness goes with it; all men will look pretty nearly alike, and a bust or statue will serve about as well for one man as for another, Perhaps the best effect of all will be felt in literature. To that capital bore of letters, the scribbling physiognomist, the nose is almost as necessary as to the caricaturist. He is never done finding strength of mind and spirit in large noses, though the small ones of Gibbon and Gortschakoff shrieked against his creed, and intellectual feebleness in “pugs,” though Kosciusko’s was the puggest of its time. When there are no noses the physiognomist can base no theories on them. It would be worth something to live long enough to be rid of even a part of his gabble.

The conditions under which we live may so alter that the sense of smell may be again advantageous in the struggle for existence, and by the survival of those in whom it is keenest regain its pristine place in our meager equipment of powers and capacities. But philosophers to whom millstones are transparent will deem it significant that the sense in question and the facial feature devoted to its service have fallen into something of the disrepute that foretokens déposai. It is now hardly polite to speak of smells and smelling, without the use of softened language; and the nose is frequently subjected to contumelious and jocose remark unwarranted by anything in its personal appearance or the nature of its pursuits. It is as if man had withdrawn his lip-service from the nasal setting sun.

It is, then, well understood, even outside of “scientific circles,” that the incompossibility of civilization and the human nose is more than a golden dream of the optimist. Indubitably that once indispensable organ is falling into the sere and yellow leaf of disuse, and in the course of a few thousand generations will have been wiped off the face of the earth. Its utility as an organ of sense decreases year by year — except as a support for the kind of eyeglasses bearing its name in French; not a sufficiently important service to warrant nature in preserving it. The final effacement has been foreseen from the earliest dawn of art. The ancient Grecian sculptors, for example, who were great trimmers and were ever eager to know which way the physiognomical cat would jump, tried to represent the human face of the future rather than that of their period; and it is noticeable that most of their statues and busts are distinguished by a striking lack of nose, as above intimated. That is justly regarded as a most significant circumstance — a prophecy of the conclusion now reached by modern science working along other lines. The Coming Man is to be noseless — that is settled; and there are not wanting those who support with enthusiasm the doctrine that he is to be hairless as well.

It is to be observed that these two effects, planing down of the human nose and uprooting of the human hair, are to be brought about differently — at least the main agency in the one case is different from that in the other. The nose is departing from among us because of its high sense of duty. Most of the odors of civilization being distinctly disagreeable, and in the selection of our food chemical analysis having taken the place of olfactory investigation, there is little for the modern nose to do that the modem nose-owner is willing to have done.

One of the most useful of all our natural endowments is what I may venture to call the conscience of the organs. None of the bodily; organs is willing to be maintained in a state of idleness and dependence — to eat the bread of charity, so to speak. Whenever for any cause one of them is put upon the retired list and deprived of its functions and just influence in the physical economy it begins to withdraw from the scheme of things by atrophy.

It withers away, and the place that knew it knows it no more forever. That is what is occurring in the instance of the human nose. We make very little use of it in testing our food — it has, in truth, lost its cunning in that way — in tracking our game, or in taking note of a windward enemy; albeit to most of the enemies of the race the nose is almost as good an annunciator as the organs which they more consciously address. So the idle nose is leaving us — more in sorrow than in anger, let us hope.

With the hair the case is different. It goes, not merely because its mandate is exhausted, but because it is really detrimental to us in the struggle for existence. Its departure is an instance, pure and simple of the survival of the fittest. Little reflection is required to show the superior fitness of the man that is bald. Baldness is respectability, baldness is piety, rectitude and general worth. Persons holding responsible and well-salaried positions are commonly bald — bank presidents especially. The prosperous merchant is usually of shining pate; the heads of most of the great corporations are thinly thatched. Of two otherwise equal applicants for a position of trust and profit, who would not instinctively choose the bald one, or, both being bald, the balder? Having, therefore, a considerable advantage, the bald person naturally lives longer than his less gifted competitor (any one can observe that he is usually the older) and leaves a more numerous progeny, inheriting the paternal endowment of precarious hair. In a few generations more those varieties of our species known as the Mophead and the Curled Darling will doubtless have become extinct, and the barber *(Homo loquax)* will have followed them into oblivion.

Another German physician (named Müller — the German physician who is not named Müller has had a narrow escape) points out the increasing prevalence of baldness and declares it hereditary. That many human beings are born partly bald is not, I take it, what he means, but that the tendency to lose the hair early in life is transmitted from father to son. It is understood that the ladies have nothing to do with the matter; they are never bald, but the hair of none of them, I understand, is so long and thick as it once was.

It is difficult to offset such facts as these with facts of a contrary sort. Cowboys and artists — sometimes poets — are found with long hair, but long hair is not thought to be an advantage to them, if, indeed, any hair at all is. For wiping the bowie-knife, the paint brush or the pen, hair, no doubt, is useful, but hardly more so than the coat-sleeve. Even in these instances, then, where at first thought there might seem to be a relation of cause and effect between length of hair and length of life, the appearance is fallacious. A bald-headed cowboy would, however, be less liable to scalping by the Red Man. It appears, then, that Dr. Müller’s cheerful prediction regarding the heads of Posterity rests upon a foundation of truth.

Some of the doctor’s arguments, however, seem erroneous. For example, he thinks the masculine fashion of cutting off the hair an evidence that men instinctively know hair to be injurious — that is to say, a disadvantage in the struggle for existence. This I can not admit; it does not follow, for testators have a fashion of cutting off legatees-expectant, yet legatees-expectant are not injurious — until known to be cut off; and then the testator’s struggle for existence is commonly finished. Capitalists have a fashion of cutting off coupons; it hardly needs to be pointed out that coupons are not amongst the malign influences tending to the shortening of life.

I have tried (with some success, I hope) to show that hair is a disadvantage, but this view derives no support from the scissors. If the hair of men were obviously, conspicuously beneficial; if it made them healthy, wealthy and as wise as they care to be; if they needed it in their business; if they could not at all get on without it — they would doubtless cut it a little oftener and a little closer than they do now. Men are that way.

The truth of the matter is plain enough. Men become bald because they keep cutting their hair. Every man has a certain amount of capillary energy, so to say. He can produce such a length of hair and no more, as the spider can spin only so much web and then must cease to be a spinster. By cutting the hair we keep it exhausting its allowance of energy by growth; when all is gone growth stops, and the roots, having no longer a use, decay. By letting their hair grow as long as it will women retain it. The difference is the same as that between two coils of rope, equal in length, one of which is constantly payed out, the other not. If this explanation do not compose the immemorial controversy about the cause of men's baldness the prospect of its composure by that phenomenon's universality will be hailed with delight by all who love a quiet life. The first generation to forget that men ever had hair will be the first to know the happiness of peace; the succeeding one will begin a dispute about the cause of hair in woman.

An important discovery made and stated with confidence is that to the human tooth, also, civilization is hateful and insupportable. Dr. Denison Pedley, whose name carries great weight (and would to whomsoever it might belong) examined the teeth of no fewer than 3,114 children, and only 707 had full sets of sound ones. That was in England; what would be shown by a look-in at the mouths of the young of a more highly civilized race — say the Missourians — one shudders to conjecture. That nearly all the savages whom one meets have good enough teeth is a matter of common observation; and missionaries in some of the remoter parts of Starkest Africa attest this fact with much feeling. Yet in all enlightened countries the prosperous dentist abounds in quantity.

But perhaps the most significant testimony is that of another English gentleman, with another honored name — J. K. Mummery, who examined every skull that He could lay his eyes on during twenty years. He affirms an almost total absence of *caries* among the oldest specimens, those belonging to the Stone Age. Among the Celts, who succeeded these, and who knew enough to make metal weapons, but not enough to refrain from using them, the decayed tooth was an incident of more frequent occurrence; and the Roman conquest introduced it in great profusion. When the Romans were driven out they took their back teeth along with them, but the flawless incisor, the hale bicuspid are afterward rarely encountered. Craniologists affirm a similar state of things wherever there have been successive or overlapping civilizations: the skulls all tell the same story — their vote is unanimous. If the alarming progress of enlightenment be not stayed the hairless and noseless man of the future will undoubtedly subsist, not as we, upon his neighbor, but upon spoon-victuals and memories of the past.

CIVILIZATION OF THE MONKEY

PROFESSOR GARNER, who has penetrated the mystery of the sibilants and gutturals with which monkeys prefer to converse, is said to entertain the glittering hope that by means of his discoveries these contemporary ancestors of ours may be elevated to civilization. The prospect is fascinating exceedingly. It opens to conjecture an almost limitless domain of human interest. It illuminates, with a light as of revelation, numberless paths of endeavor leading to glorious goals of achievement.

The crying need of our time is more civilization. We have made a rather lamentable failure in the attempt to elevate certain of the lower races, such as the Chinese, the Sabbatarians and the Protectionists; and to still others we have imparted only dim and transient gleams of our great light. Some, indeed, we have civilized so imperfectly that they might almost as well have been left in outer darkness; for example, the Negroes of the South. Our utmost efforts — aided, in many instances, by the shotgun, the bloodhound and the fagot-and-stake — have given a faulty result, and many of these obdurate persons remain, as the late Parson Brownlow would have said, "steeped to the nose and chin in political profligacy," voting the Republican ticket whenever permitted. For four centuries we have hunted the Red Indian from cover to cover, and he is not a very nice Red Indian yet, some of his vices and superstitions differing widely from our own. The motorcarman, shutting his eyes to the glory and advantage of enlightenment, still urges his indocile apparatus along the line of least insistence; and the organist from the overseas practices his black art at the street corner, inaccessible to reclamation. A hundred urban tribes might be named among civilization's irreclaimables, without mentioning any of the religious sects. At every turn the gentleman who is desirous of making-over his faulty fellow-men encounters a baffling apathy or a spirited hostility to change.

Possibly the higher quadrumana may prove more pregnable to light and reason — more willing to become as we. Perhaps when we can all talk Monkey we shall be able to set forth the advantages of our happier state more graphically than we have succeeded in doing in any of the tongues — including our own — known to the wicked and stiff-necked generations mentioned. In that sparkling speech we may, for example, make it clear that a condition in which nine-tenths of the reformed monkeys will live a life of toil and discomfort, holding their subsistence by the most precarious tenure, is conspicuously subserviceable to that chastened and humble frame of mind which is so joyously different from the empty intellectual pride that comes of pelting one another with cocoanuts and depending from branches by prehensile tails. Perhaps in the pithecan vocabulary is such copiousness that we can easily set forth the unspeakable profit of living a long way from where we want to go at a considerable peril to life and limb — which is what steam and electricity enable us to do. We may reasonably hope to be able to convince the gorilla of the futility of his habit of beating his breast and roaring when in the presence of the enemy; the history of a few of our great battles, carefully translated into his noble tongue, will make him first endure, then pity, then embrace our more effective military methods, to the unspeakable benefit of his heart and mind. Adequately civilized, the gorilla will beat his enemy's breast and let that creature do the roaring.

Certain advantages of urban life — an invention of civilization — ought to be comparatively easy of exposition in an attractive way. The practice of abolishing the hours of rest by means of lights and rattling vehicles; of generating sewer-gas and conducting it into dwellings; of loading the atmosphere with beautiful brown smoke and assorted exhalations before taking it into the lungs; of drinking whisky, or water from cow pastures; of eating animals that have been a long time dead, — of all these and many other blessings of civilization the monkeys can acquire knowledge, desire and, eventually, possession. Doubtless we shall have some small difficulty in explaining the advantages of the incaudate state (for civilization implies renunciation of the tail), the comfortableness of the stiff hat and shirt collar (for civilization entails clothing), the grace of the steel-pen coat, the beauty of the skin-tight sleeve and the sanitary effect of the corset; but if the monkey language, unlike that of the Houyhnhnms, supplies facilities for "saying the thing that is not" we shall eventually convince our arboreal pupüs that black is not only white but a beautiful écru green.

The next step will naturally be the investing them with citizenship and the right to vote according to the dictates of the bosses. When by that investiture they have been duly instated in "the seats of power," the monkeys will form one of the most precious of our political elements, though hardly distinguishable from some of the political elements with which we are now blest. Their enfranchising will be no radical innovation; it will merely make the political pile complete — though the possible defection of the philosopher element in the near future may somewhat mar the symmetry of the edifice until the gap can be stopped by enfranchisement of dogs and horses.

Even if all this is but the gorgeous dream of a too hopeful optimism, it is nevertheless good to know that Professor Garner can understand Monkey. If we fail to persuade the monkeys forward along the line of progress to our advanced position it will be pleasant to have from them an occasional word of cheer and welcome as we are led back to theirs.

THE SOCIALIST — WHAT HE IS, AND WHY

AMERICAN socialism is not a political doctrine; it is a state of mind. A man is an active socialist because he is afflicted with congenital insurgency: he was born a rebel. He rebels, not only against “the established order” in government, but against pretty nearly everything that takes his attention and enlists his thought, though not many things do. He is hospitable to only one idea at a time, in the service of which he foregoes the advantage of knowing much of anything else. He commonly, however, has an observing eye and a deep disesteem for the decent customs and conventionalities of his time and place. The man in jail for publication of immoralities is always a socialist, and the socialist “organ” has usually a profitable “line” of indecent advertisements.

As the socialist erroneously regards the criminal, so he is himself rightly to be regarded. He is no heretic to be reclaimed, but a patient to be restrained. He is sick. You cannot cure him; it is useless to say to him: “Thou ailest here and there”; it is useless to say anything to him but “Thou shalt not.” His unreason is what he is a socialist with. That, too, is the cause of his inefficiency in the competitions of life, for which, naturally, he would substitute something “more nearly to the heart’s desire”* — an order of things in which all would share the rewards of efficiency. Always it is the incapable who most loudly preaches the gospel of Equality and Fraternity — which, being interpreted, means stand and deliver and look pleasant about it. In the Cave of Adullam the credentialing shibboleth is “Love me, damn you, as I love myself.”

A distinguishing feature of socialism as we have the happiness to know it in this country is its servitude to anarchism. In theory the two are directly antithetical. They are the North and the South Pole of political thought, leagues and leagues removed from zones of intellectual fertility. Anarchism says: “Ye shall have no law”; socialism: “Law is all that ye shall have.” They “pool their issues” and make common cause, but let them succeed in their work of destruction and their warfare would not be accomplished: there would remain the congenial task of destroying each other. The present alliance is no figure of speech. It is a fact, unknown to the follow-my-leader socialist, but not to his leader; not to observers having acquaintance with the proselyting methods of the time; not at the headquarters of anarchism in Paterson, New Jersey, where a great body of socialist “literature” is written, printed and set going. He who is not sufficiently “advanced” for anarchism is persuaded to socialism. The babe is fed with malted milk until strong enough for the double-distilled thunder-and-lightning of a more candid purveyance. Whatever makes for discontent brings nearer the reign of reprisal.

Our good friends who think with their tongues and pens are ever clamant about the national perils alurk in luxury: it causes decay in men and states, blights patriotism, invites invasion, impoverishes the paupers and bites a dog. Luxury will make a boy strike his father (feebly) and persuade the old man to a life of shame. It is well known that it so enervated the Romans that they fell off the map. One does not need to believe all that, nor any of it. The wealthy, living under sanitary conditions, well housed, well fed, clean, free from fatigue (which is a poison) are, as a class, distinctly superior to the poor, physically, mentally and morally. It is among the well-to-do that gymnasia flourish and athletic clubs abound. Your all-around athlete is commonly in possession of a comfortable income; the hardy out-of-door sports are practiced almost exclusively by those who do not have to do manual labor. The top-hatted clubman can manhandle the hulking day-laborer with ease and accuracy. His female is larger and fitter than the other gentleman’s underfed and overworked mate, and brings forth a better quality of young. All this is obvious to any but the most delinquent observation; yet wealth and its attendant luxury are prophecies and forerunners of the decay of nations.

Hard are the steps, slow-hewn in flintiest rock, States climb to power by; slippery those with gold Down which they stumble to eternal mock.

To one having knowledge of the prevalence and power of some of the primal brute passions of the human mind the reason is clear enough: riches and luxurious living provoke envy in the vast multitude to whom they are inaccessible through lack of efficiency; and from envy to revenge and revolution the transition is natural and easy.

In the youth of a nation there is virtual equality of fortunes — all are poor. Sixty years ago there were probably not a half dozen millionaires in America; the number now is not definitely known, but it runs into thousands; that of persons of less but considerable wealth — enough to take attention — into the hundreds of thousands. Poverty used to be rather proud of our millionaires; they were so few that the poor man seldom or never saw them, to mark the contrast between their abundance and his privation. Now the two are everywhere neighbors. The poor man sees “the idle rich” (who mostly work like beavers) in their carriages, while himself walks and, if it please him so to do, “takes their dust.” He looks into the windows of ballrooms and erroneously believes that the gorgeous creatures within are happier than he. If he happen to be so intellectual as to be distinguished in letters, art or some other profitless pursuit as to be sought by them, all the keener is his sense of the difference; all the more humiliating his inability to suffer their particular kind of disillusion. Partly because of that and partly because he is not a thinker but a feeler, the poet, the artist or the musician is almost invariably an audible socialist. True, some of these "intellectuals" (they might better be called emotionals) are themselves fairly thrifty and prosperous, and in the redistribution of wealth which many of them impudently propose would be first to experience the mischance of "restitution." But doubtless they do not expect their blessed "new order of things" to come in their day. Meantime there are profit and a certain picturesqueness in "hailing the dawn" of a better one, just as if it had already struck "the Sultan's tower with a shaft of light."

The socialist notion appears to be that the world's wealth is a fixed quantity, and A can acquire only by depriving B. He is fond of figuring the rich as living upon the poor — riding on their backs, as Tolstoi (staggering under the weight of his wife, to whom he had given his vast estate) was pleased to signify the situation. The plain truth of the matter is that the poor live mostly on the rich — entirely unless with their own hands they dig a bare subsistence out of their own farms or gravel claims; if they do better than that they are not poor. A man may remain in poverty all his life and be not only of no advantage to his fellow poor men, but by his competition in the labor market a harm to them; for in the abundance of labor lies the cause of low wages, as even a socialist knows. As a consumer the man counts for little, for he consumes only the bare necessaries of life. But, if he pass from poverty to wealth he not only ceases to be a competing laborer; he becomes a consumer of everything that he used to want — all the luxuries by production of which nine-tenths of the labor class live he now buys. He has added his voice to the chorus of demand. All the industries of the world are so interrelated and interdependent that none is unaffected in some infinitesimal degree by the new stimulation. The good that he has done by passing from one class into another is not so obvious as it would be if his wants were all supplied by one versatile producer, purveying to him alone, but the sum of it is the same. Yet the socialist finds a pleasure in directing attention to the brass hoofs of the millionaire executing his joyous jig upon an empty stomach — that of the prostrate pauper, — poets, muckrakers, demagogues and other audibles fitly celebrating the performance with howls of sensibility.

A socialist was damning the wicked extravagance of the rich. A thoughtful person said: "In New York City was a wealthy family, the Bradley Martins. They were driven out of the country by public indignation because they spent their money with a free hand. In the same city was a wealthy man named Russell Sage. He was no less reviled and calumniated, because he spent as little as he could and lent the rest. In which instance was our ‘fierce democracie’ wise and righteous?”

The answer was prompt and, O, so copious! Before it ceased to flow that philosopher was a mile away from the subject, lost in an impenetrable forest of words.

Of course Russell Sage was no less valuable an asset to the “wage slave” than the Bradley Martins, for there is no way by which one can get profit or pleasure out of money except by paying it out, either by his own hand directly, or indirectly by the hand of another, for wages to labor. Eventually, sooner or later, it all reaches the pocket of the producer, the workingman.

We have so good a country here that more than a million a year of Europe’s poor come over to share its advantages. In the patent fact that it is a land of opportunity and prosperity we feel a justifiable pride; yet the crowning proof and natural result of this—’ the great number that do prosper—” the multitude of millionaires” — has come to be resented as an intolerable wrong, and he who is most clamorous for opportunity (which he has never for a moment been without) most austerely condemns those who have made the best use of it. An instinctive antipathy to all in prosperity is the common ground upon which anarchists and socialists stand to debate their several interpretations of anarchism and socialism. On that rock they build their church, and the gates of — the quotation is imperfectly applicable: the gates are friendly and hospitable to denominationaries of their faith.

Another thing that these worthies have in common — and in common with many unassorted sentimentaliters and effemininnies in this age of unreason — is sympathy with crime. No avowed socialist but advocates a rosewater penology that coddles the felon who has broken into prison to enjoy a life of peace and plenty; none but would expel the warden and flog the turnkey. All are proponents of the holy homily; all deny that punishment deters from crime, although the discharged convict never renews his offense until driven by hunger or again persuaded by his poor brute brain that he can escape detection; he does not enter and rob the first house that he comes to, nor murder the first enemy that he meets.

That there are honest, clean-minded patriotic socialists goes without saying. They are theorists and dreamers with a knowledge of life and affairs a little profounder than that of a horse but not quite so profound as that of a cow. But the “movement” as a social and political force is, in this country, born of envy, the true purpose of its activities, revenge. In the shadow of our national prosperity it whets its knife for the throats of the prosperous. It unleashes the hounds of hate upon the track of success — the only kind of success that it covets and derides.

How bit and bridle this wild ass of civilization? How make the socialist behave himself, as in Germany, or unmask himself, as in France? It looks as if this cannot be done. It looks as if we may eventually have to prevent the multiplication of millionaires by setting a legal limit to private fortunes. By some such cowardly and statesmanlike concession we may perhaps anticipate and forestall the more drastic action of our political Apaches, incited by Envy, wrecker of empires and assassin of civilization. Meantime, let us put poppies in our hair and be Democrats and Republicans.

1910.

GEORGE THE MADE-OVER

THE English have a distinctly higher and better opinion of Washington than is held in this country. Washington, if he could have a choice in the matter, would indubitably prefer his position in the minds of educated Englishmen to the one that he holds “in the hearts of his countrymen” — not the one that he is said to hold. The superior validity of the English view is due to the better view-point. It is remote, as the American will be when several more generations shall have passed and Americans are devoid (as Englishmen are devoid now) of passions and prejudices engendered in the heat of our “Revolution.” We should remember that it was not to the English a revolution, but a small and distant squabble, which cut no great figure in the larger affairs in which they were engaged; and the very memory of it was nearly effaced in that of the next generation by the stupendous events of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. To ears filled with the thunders of Waterloo, the crepitating echoes of the spat at Bunker Hill were inaudible.

No benign personage in the calendar of secular saints is really less loved than Washington. The romancing historians and biographers have adorned him with a thousand impossible virtues, naturally, and in so dehumanizing him have set him beyond and above the longest reach of human sympathies. His character, as it pleased them to create it, is like nothing that we know about and care for. He is a monster of goodness and wisdom, with about as much of light and fire as the snow Adam of the small boy playing at creation on the campus of a public school. The Washington-making Frankensteins have done their work so badly that their creature is an insupportable bore, diffusing an infectious dejection. Try to fancy an historical novel or drama with him for hero — a poem with him for subject! Possibly such have been written; I do not recall any at the moment, and the proposition is hardly thinkable. The ideal Washington is a soulless conception, absolutely without power on the imagination. Within the area of his gelid efflation the flowers of fancy open only to wither, and any sentiment endeavoring to transgress the boundary of that desolate domain falls frosted in its flight.

Some one — Colonel Ingersoll, I fancy — has said that Washington is a steel engraving. That is hardly an adequate conception, being derived from the sense of sight only; the ear has something to say in the matter, and there is much in a name. Before my studies of his character had effaced my childish impression I used always to picture him in the act of bending over a tub.

There are two George Washingtons — the natural and the artificial. They are now equally “great,” but the former was choke-full of the old Adam. He swore like “our army in Flanders,” loved a bottle like a brother and had an inter-colonial reputation as a lady-killer. He was, indeed, a singularly interesting and magnetic old boy — one whom any sane and honest lover of the picturesque in life and character would deem it an honor and an education to have known in the flesh. He is now known to but few; you must dig pretty deeply into the tumulus of rubbishy panegyric — scan pretty closely the inedited annals of his time, in order to see him as he was. Criss-crossed upon these failing parchments of the past are the lines of the sleek Philistine, the smug patriot and the lessoning moraler, making a palimpsest whereof all that is legible is false and all that is honest is blotted out. The detestable anthropolater of the biographical gift has pushed his glowing pen across the page, to the unspeakable darkening of counsel. In short, Washington’s countrymen see him through a glass dirtily. The image is unlovely and unloved. You can no more love and revere the memory of the biographical George Washington than you can an isosceles triangle or a cubic foot of interstellar space.

The portrait-painters began it — Gilbert Stuart and the rest of them. They idealized all the humanity out of the poor patriot’s face and passed him down to the engravers as a rather sleepy-looking butcher’s block. There is not a portrait of Washington extant which a man of taste and knowledge would suffer to hang on the wall of his stable. Then the historians jumped in, raping all the laurels from the brows of the man’s great contemporaries and piling them in confusion upon his pate. They made him a god in wisdom, and a giant in arms; whereas, in point of ability and service, he was but little, if at all, superior to any one of a half-dozen of his now over-shadowed but once illustrious co-workers in council and camp, and in no way comparable with Hamilton. He towers above his fellows because he stands upon a pile of books. — #

The supreme indignity to the memory of this really worthy man has been performed by the Sunday-scholiasts, the pietaries, the truly good, the example-to-American-youth folk. These canting creatures have managed to make him of his last remaining rag of flesh and drain out his ultimate red corpuscle of human blood. In order that he may be acceptable to themselves they have made him a bore to everyone else. To give him value as an “example” to the unripe intelligences of their following they have whitewashed him an inch thick, draped him, fig-leafed him and gilded him out of all semblance to man. To prepare his character for the juvenile moral tooth they have boned it, and to make it digestible to the juvenile moral paunch, unsalted it by maceration in the milk-

and-water of their own minds. And so we have him today. In a single century the great-hearted gentleman of history has become the good boy of literature — the public prig. Washington is the capon of our barnyard Pantheon — revised and edited for the table.

JOHN SMITH'S ANCESTORS

READER mine, wisest of mortals that you are, do you feel sure that you know how to deal with a proposition, which is at the same time unquestionable and impossible — which must be true, yet can not be true? Do you know just what degree of intellectual hospitality to give to such a proposition — whether to receive and entertain it (and if so how) or cast it from you, and how to do that? Possibly you were never consciously at bay before a proposition of that kind, and therefore lack the advantage of skill in its disposal. Attend, then, O child of mortality — consider and be wise:

You have, or have had, two parents — whom God prosper if they live and rest if dead. Each of them had two parents; in other words, you had at some time and somewhere four grandparents, and right worthy persons they were, I'll be sworn, albeit you may not be able to name them without stopping to take thought. Of great-grandparents you surely had no fewer than eight — that is to say, no further away than three generations your ancestors numbered eight persons, now in heaven. In countries which are pleased to call themselves civilized and enlightened "a generation" means about thirty-four years. Not long ago it meant thirty-three, but improved methods of distribution, sanitation and so forth have added a year to the average duration of human life, though they have not pointed out any profitable use to make of the addition. All this amounts to saying (acceptably, I trust) that at each remove of thirty-four years back toward Adam and his time you double the number of your ancestors. Among so many some, naturally, were truly modest persons, and I don't know that you would care to have so much said about them as I shall have to say; so, if you please, we will speak of Mr. John Smith's instead.

John Smith, then, whom I know very well, and greatly esteem, and who is approaching middle age, had, about 34 years ago, two ancestors. About 102 years ago, say in the year of grace 1792, he had eight — though he did not have himself. You can do the rest of the figuring yourself if you care to go on and are unwilling to take my word for what follows. — the astonishing state of things which I am about to thrust upon your attention. Just keep doubling the number of John Smith's ancestors until you get the number 1,073,741,824. Now when do you suppose it was that Mr. Smith had that number of living ancestors? Make your calculation, allowing 34 years for each time that you have multiplied by two, and you will find that it was about the year 879. It seems a rather modern date and a goodish number of persons to be concerning themselves, however unconsciously, in the begetting of Neighbor John, but that is not “where it hurts.” The point is that the number of his ancestors, so far as we have gone, is about the number of the earth’s inhabitants at that date — little and big; white, black, brown, yellow and blue; males, females and girls. I do not care to point out Mr. Smith’s presumption in professing himself an Anglo-Saxon — with all that mixed blood in the veins of him; perhaps he has never made this calculation and does not know from just what stock he has the honor to have descended, though truly this distinguished scion of*an illustrious race might seem to be justified in calling himself a Son of Earth.

But is he not more than that? In the generation immediately preceding the one under consideration the number of the gentleman’s ancestors must have been twice as great, namely, 2,147,483,648 — more than two thousand millions, or some five hundred millions more than Earth is infested with even now. Where did all those people live? — in Mars? And to what political or other causes was due the migration to Earth, *en masse,* of their sons and daughters in the next generation?

Does the reader care to follow up Mr. Smith’s long illustrious line any further — back to the wee, sma’ years of the Christian era, for example? Well and good, but I warn him that geometrical progression, as he has already observed, “counts up.” Long before his calculations have reached back to the first merry Christmas he will find Mr. Smith’s ancestors — if they were really all terrestrial in their habits — piled many-deep over the entire surface of all the continents, islands and ice-floes of this distracted globe. A decent respect for the religious convictions of my countrymen forbids me even to hint at what the calculation would show if carried back to the time of Adam and Eve.

It will perhaps be observed that I have left out of consideration the circumstance that John Smith (my particular John) is not the sole living inhabitant of Earth to-day: there are others, though mostly of the same name, whose ancestors would somewhat swell the totals. In mercy to the reader I have ignored them, one man being sufficient for my purpose.

Must not John Smith have had all those ancestors? Certainly. Could all those ancestors of John Smith have existed? Certainly not. Have I not, therefore, as I promised to do, conducted the reader against “a proposition which is at the same time unquestionable and impossible” — a statement “which must be true, yet can not be true”? According to the best of my belief he is there. And there I leave him. Any gentleman not content to remain there with his face to the wall is at liberty to go over it or through it if he can. Doubtless the world will be delighted to hear him expose the fallacy of my reasoning and the falsehood of my figures. And I shall be pleased myself.

1894.

THE MOON IN LETTERS

FOR some months my friends had been benumbing the membranes of my two ears with praises of the then newest literary pet, who exulted in a name disagreeably suggestive of Death on a Pale Horse, Mr. H. Rider Haggard, and I meekly assented to his greatness. They had insisted that I read him, but this monstrous demand I had hitherto had the strength to resist. But we all have our moments of weakness, so I squandered twenty-five cents on the “Seaside” edition of the great man’s greatest work, *King Solomon’s Mines*. On page 84 I found something that interested me, something astronomical, showing how keenly the famous author observes the commonest phenomena of nature. Turning down a leaf and bearing the matter in mind, I read on. At page 97 I turned down another leaf, and at page 112 a third. On these three pages are related astronomical events occurring in Africa on the evening of June 2, the evening of June 3, and at about midday June 4, respectively. Let us summarize them by quotation: June 2 (p. 84): “The sun sunk and the world was wreathed in shadows. But not for long, for see, in the east there is a glow, then a bent edge of silver light, and at last the full bow of the crescent moon peeps above the plain.”

June 3 (p. 97): “About 10 the full moon came up in splendor.”

June 4 (p. 112): “I glanced up at the sun and to my intense joy saw that we had made no mistake. On the edge of its brilliant surface was a faint rim of shadow.” Which grows to a total eclipse.

What else ensues I am unable to say. A writer who believes that the new moon can rise in the east soon after sunset and the full moon at 10 o’clock; who thinks the second of these remarkable phenomena can occur twenty-four hours after the first, and itself be followed some fourteen hours later by an eclipse of the sun — such a man may be a gifted writer, but I am not a gifted reader. I wash my mind of him, and sentence him to the good opinion of his admirers.

Another sinner on my list of authors ignorant in respect of the moon’s movements and phases is William Black. In the third chapter of his *Princess of Thule* is the following sentence: “Was Sheila about to sing in this clear strange twilight while they sat there and watched the yellow moon come up behind the Southern hills?” The spectacle of the moon rising in the south is one which Heaven has denied to all except the characters in Black’s novels. It is not surprising that Sheila “was about to sing”: she must have felt something of the exultation which swells the bosom of that favored child of Destiny, the small boy who has crept in under the canvas when the menagerie people are painting the tiger.

It may be borne in mind that Black's south-rising moon came up during the twilight — that is to say, shortly after sunset. It would be, therefore, nearly "half-full" to the eye of the terrestrial observer; but referring to a later hour of the same evening Black says: "There into the beautiful dome rose the golden *crescent* of the moon, warm in color as though it still retained the last rays of the sunset." Concerning the last clause of this astonishing sentence it may be asked from what source Black supposed the moon's light to be derived, or if he regarded her as self-luminous. The truth probably is that he had no definite ideas about the matter at all. He was in the same comfortable mental state as the worthy countryman who, being asked what he thought of total depravity, promptly replied that if it was in the Bible he was in favor of it.

In dismissing Black I can not forbear to add that even if the moon could rise in the south; even if rising in the south it should continue rising into the dome when it should be setting; even if rising in the south soon after sunset a half-moon, as it would necessarily be, and continuing to rise into the dome when it should be setting, it could dwindle to a crescent, it could not be of a warm color. The crescent moon is as cold in color as a new dime — almost as cold as a quarter-dollar. In a bench-show of astronomers I doubt if Black would have been awarded a blue ribbon.

I have been reading a story by Mr. Edgar Saltus: "A Maid of Athens" — a story which, like a forgotten candle, burns on well enough to the end and then dies in its own grease. But that is not the point; I find this passage:

"Beneath descending night, the sky was gold-barred and green. In the east the moon glittered like a sickle of tin."

I shall have to add Mr. Saltus to my company of authors with private systems of astronomy. The imagination robust enough to conceive a crescent moon in the east at nightfall might even claim a place in a dime museum.

Spielhagan has his full moon on the horizon at midnight by the castle clock.

But the novelists are not alone in their ignorance of what is before their eyes all their blessed lives: the poets know no more than they. In her *Songs of the Night-Watches* Jean Ingelow compels "a slender moon" to "float up from behind" a person looking at the sunset sky, and afterward makes the full moon "behind some ruined roof swim up" at daybreak. To rout out the moon so early and make it get up, when it must have been up all night attending to its duty as a full moon of orderly habits, is a trifle heartless. In "Daylight and Moonlight," Longfellow, who seems imperfectly to have known how the latter was produced, tells of a time when at midday he saw the moon

Sailing high, but faint and white
As a schoolboy's paper kite.

Now if it was sailing high at noon it must have been, as seen from earth, nearly on a line with the sun — that is to say, but little more than "new" — that is to say, invisible in the daytime. But that is not the worst of this business. A new moon is not only invisible at noon, but sets soon after sunset, and would give but little light if it did not. Yet this unearthly observer after relating how night came on adds:

Then the moon, in all her pride,
Like a spirit glorified,
Filled and overflowed the night
With revelations of her light.

It is mournful to think that this popular poet lived out his long serene life without anybody suspecting his condition, nor offering him the comforts of an asylum.

I have found similar blunders in the poems of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Schiller, Moore, Shelley, Tennyson and Bayard Taylor. Of course a poet is entitled to any kind of universe that may best suit his purpose, and if he could give us better poetry by making the moon rise "full-orbed" in the northwest and set like a "tin sickle" in the zenith I should go in for letting him have his fling. But I do not discern any gain in "sweetness and light" from these despotic readjustments of the relations among sun, earth and moon, and must set it all down to the account of ignorance, which, in any degree and however excusable, is not a thing to be admired. Concerning nothing is it more general, more deep, more dark, more invincible, nor withal, more needless, than it is with regard to movements and visible aspects of our satellite. How one can have eyes and not know the pranks of the several heavenly bodies is possibly obvious to Omniscience, but a finite mind cannot rightly understand it.

We will suppose that our planet is without a satellite. The nights are brilliant or starless, as the clouds may determine, but in all the measureless reaches of space is no world having a visible disk, with vicissitudes of light and shadow. One day a famous man of science announces in the public prints a startling discovery. He has found an orb, smaller than the earth but of considerable magnitude, moving in such a direction and at such a rate of speed that at a stated time the next year it will have approached our sphere so closely as to be caught by its attractive power and held, a prisoner, wheeling round and round in a vain endeavor to escape. He goes on to explain that the invisible tether will be, astronomically speaking, but a stone's throw in length: the captive world will have in fact the astonishing propinquity of only a quarter of a million miles! We shall be able to see, even with unassisted eyes, the very mountains and valleys upon its surface, while a glass of moderate power will show, not only these mountains (many times higher than those of our own orb) with perfect definition, their long black shadows projected upon the plains, but will reveal the details of extinct craters wide enough to engulf a terrestrial province, and how deep Heaven knows. Upon this strange new world, the great man goes on to say, we shall be able to observe the mutations of its day and night, tracing the lines of its dawn and sunset exactly as, if we were there, we could observe the more rapid changes upon the body of our own planet; and surely it would be worth something to stand away from our spinning orb and take in all its visible vicissitudes in one comprehensive view.

It is easy to see the effect of such an announcement, verified by the apparition of the orb at the calculated place and time. All the civilized nations would be in a ferment. The newspapers would be full of the subject. Journalism would be conducted by the astronomers and nothing but the coming orb would be talked of; many would go mad from excitement. And when the celestial monster, moving aimless through space, should swim into the earth's attraction and go whirling in its new orbit how we should study it, attentive to its every visible aspect, alertly sensible to its changes and profoundly moved by the desolate sublimity of its stupendous scenery. For a half of every lunar month the churches, lyceums, theaters — all the places of instruction or amusement where people now assemble by artificial light would close at sunset and the whole population would take to the hills. Colleges, societies and clubs would be founded for the new knowledge; every human being, with opportunity and capacity, would become a specialist in selenography and selenology — a lunar expert, devoted to his science. Not to know all about the moon would be considered as discreditable as illiteracy is considered now. Well, the moon we have always with us, and not one man in a thousand nor one author in a hundred knows any more about it than that it is frequently invisible and commonly not round. On other subjects there is less ignorance: at least three in a thousand know that the stars are not the same as the planets, though two of the three are unable to say what is a planet and what is a star.

That immortal ass, "the average man," sees with nothing but his eyes. To him a planet or a star is only a point of light — a bright dot, a golden fly-speck on "the sky." He does not see it as a prodigious globe swimming through the unthinkable depths of space. With only the heavens for company the poor devil is bored. When out alone on a clear night he wants to get himself home to his female and young and — unfailing expedient of intellectual vacuity — go to bed. The glories and splendors of the firmament are no more to him than a primrose was to Peter Bell. Let us leave him snoring pigly in his blankets and turn to other themes, not forgetting that he is our lawful ruler, nor permitted to forget the insupportable effects of his ferocious rule.

1903.

COLUMBUS

THE human mind is affected with a singular disability to get a sense of an historical event without a gigantic figure in the foreground overtopping all his fellows. As surely as God liveth, if one hundred congenital idiots were set adrift in a scow to get rid of them, and, borne by favoring currents into eyeshot of an unknown continent, should simultaneously shout, “Land ho!” instantly drowning in their own drool, we should have one of them figuring in history ever thereafter with a growing glory as an illustrious discoverer of his time. I do not say that Columbus was a navigator and discoverer of that kind, nor that he did anything of that kind in that way; the parallel is perfect only in what history has done to Columbus; and some seventy millions of Americans are authenticating the imposture all they know how. In this whole black business hardly one element of falsehood is lacking.

Columbus was not a learned man, but an ignorant. He was not an honorable man, but a professional pirate. He was, in the most hateful sense of the word, an adventurer. His voyage was undertaken with a view solely to his own advantage, the gratification of an incredible avarice. In the lust of gold he committed deeds of cruelty, treachery and oppression for which no fitting names are found in the vocabulary of any modern tongue. To the harmless and hospitable peoples among whom he came he was a terror and a curse. He tortured them, he murdered them, he sent them over the sea as slaves. So monstrous were his crimes, so conscienceless his ambition, so insatiable his greed, so black his treachery to his sovereign, that in his mere imprisonment and disgrace we have a notable instance of “the miscarriage of justice.” In the black abysm of this man’s character we may pile falsehood upon falsehood, but we shall never build the monument high enough to top the shadow of his shame. Upon the culm and crown of that reverend pile every angel will still look down and weep.

We are told that Columbus was no worse than the men of his race and generation — that his vices were “those of his time.” No vices are peculiar to any time; this world has been vicious from the dawn of history, and every race has reeked with sin. To say of a man that he is like his contemporaries is to say that he is a scoundrel without excuse. The virtues are accessible to all. Athens was vicious, yet Socrates was virtuous. Rome was corrupt, but Marcus Aurelius was not corrupt. To offset Nero the gods gave Seneca. When literary France groveled at the feet of the third Napoleon Hugo stood erect It will be a dark day for the world when infractions of the moral law by A and B are accepted as justification of the sins of C. But even in the days of Columbus men were not all pirates; God inspired enough of them to be merchants to serve as prey for the others; and while turning his honest penny by plundering them, the great Christopher was worsted by a Venetian trading galley and had to pickle his pelt in a six-mile swim to the Portuguese coast, a wiser and a wetter thief. If he had had the hard luck to drown we might none of us have been Americans, but the gods would have missed the revolting spectacle of an entire people prostrate before the blood-beslubbered image of a moral idiot, performing solemn rites of adoration with a litany of lies.

In comparison with the crimes of Columbus his follies cut a sorry figure. Yet the foolhardy enterprise to whose failure he owes his fame is entitled to distinction. With sense enough to understand the earth's spheroid form (he thought it pear-shaped) but without knowledge of its size, he believed that he could reach India by sailing westward and died in the delusion that he had done so — a trifling miscalculation — a matter of eight or ten thousands of miles. If this continent had not happened to lie right across his way he and his merry men would all have gone fishing, with themselves for bait and the devil a hook among them. Firmness is persistence in the right; obstinacy is persistence in the wrong. With the light that he had, Columbus was so wildly, dismally and fantastically wrong that his refusal to turn back was nothing less than pig-headed unreason, and his crews would have been abundantly justified in deposing him. The wisdom of an act is not to be determined by the outcome, but by the performer's reasonable expectation of success. And after all, the expedition failed lamentably. It accomplished no part of its purpose, but by a happy chance it accomplished something better — for us. As to the red Indians, such of them as have been good enough to assist in apotheosis of the man whom their ancestors had the deep misfortune to discover may justly boast themselves the most magnanimous of mammals.

And when all is conceded there remains the affronting falsehood that Columbus discovered America. Surely in all these drunken orgies of beatification — in all this carnival of lies there should be found some small place for Lief Ericsson and his wholesome Northmen, who discovered, colonized and abandoned this continent five hundred years before, and of whom we are forbidden to think as corsairs and slave-catchers. The eulogist is always a calumniator. The crown that he sets upon the unworthy head he first tears from the head that is worthy. So the honest fame of Lief Ericsson is cast as rubbish to the void, and the Genoese pirate is pedestaled in his place.

But falsehood and ingratitude are sins against Nature, and Nature is not to be trifled with. Already we feel, or ought to feel, the smart of her lash. Our follies are finding us out. Our Columbian Exhibition has for its chief exhibit our national stupidity, and displays our shame. Our Congress “improves the occasion” to make a disgraceful surrender to the Chadbands and Stigginses of churches by a bitter observance of the Sabbath. Managers of the show steal the first one thousand dollars that come into their hands by bestowing them upon a schoolgirl related to one of themselves, for a “Commemoration Ode” as long as the language and as foolish as its grammar — the ragged, tagless and bobtailed yellow dog of commemoration odes. And *this* while Whittier lived to suffer the insult, and Holmes to resent it. What further exhibits of our national stupidity and lack of moral sense space has been engaged for in the world’s contempt one can only conjecture. In the meantime state appropriations are being looted, art is in process of caricature, literature is debauched, and we have a Columbian Bureau of Investigation and Suppression with a daily mail as voluminous as that of a commercial city. If at the finish of this revealing revelry self-respecting Americans shall not have lost through excessive use the power to blush, and all Europe the ability to laugh, another Darwin should write another book on the expression* of the emotions in men and animals.

That nothing might be lacking to the absurdity of the scheme, the falsehood marking all the methods of its execution, we must needs avail ourselves of an alteration in the calendar and have two anniversary celebrations of one event. And in culmination of this comedy of falsehood, the later date must formally open, with dedicatory rites, an exhibition which will not be open for six months. One falsehood begets another and another in the line of succession, until the father of them all shall have colonized his whole progeny upon the congenial soil of this new Dark Continent.

Why should not the four-hundredth anniversary of the rediscovery of America have been made memorable by fitly celebrating it with a becoming sense of the stupendous importance of the event, without thrusting into the forefront of the rites the dismal personality of the very small man who made the find? Could not the most prosperous and vain people of the earth see anything to celebrate in the four centuries between San Salvador and Chicago but it must sophisticate history by picking that offensive creature out of his shame to make him a central, dominating figure of the festival? Thank Heaven, there is one thing that all the genius of the anthropolaters can not do. Quarrel as we may about the relative claims to authenticity; of portraits painted from description, we can not perpetuate the rogue’s visible appearance “in his habit as he lived.” Audible to the ear of the understanding fall with unceasing iteration from the lips of his every statue in every; land the words, “lama lie I”

1892.

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THE RELIGION OF THE TABLE

WHEN the starving peasantry of France were bearing with inimitable fortitude their great bereavement in the death of Louis le Grand, how cheerfully they must have bowed their necks to the easy yoke of Philip of Orleans, who set them an example in eating which he had not the slightest objection to their following. A monarch skilled in the mysteries of the cuisine must wield the scepter all the more gently for his schooling in handling the ladle. In royalty, the delicate manipulation of an omelette soufflé is at once an evidence of genius, and an assurance of a tender forbearance in state policy. All good rulers have been good livers, and if most bad ones have been the same this merely proves that even the worst of men have still something divine in them.

There is more in a good dinner than is disclosed by removal of the covers. Where the eye of hunger perceives only a juicy roast that of faith detects a smoking god. A well cooked joint is redolent of religion, and a delicate pasty crisp with charity. The man who can light his after-dinner Havana without feeling full to the neck with all the cardinal virtues is either steeped in iniquity or has dined badly. In either case he is no true man. It is here held that it is morally impossible for a man to dine daily upon the fat of the land in courses and yet deny a future state of existence beatific with beef and ecstatic with all edibles. A falsity of history is that of Heliogabalus dining on nightingales’ tongues. No true gourmet would ever send a nightingale to the shambles so long as scarcer, and therefore, better songsters might be obtained.

It is a fine natural instinct that teaches the hungry and cadaverous to avoid the temples of religion, and a shortsighted and misdirected zeal that would gather them into it. Religion is for the oleaginous, the fat-bellied, chyle-saturated devotees of the table. Unless the stomach be lined with good things, the parson may say as many as he can and his truths shall not be swallowed nor his wisdom inly digested. Probably the highest, ripest, and most acceptable form of worship is performed with a knife and fork; and whosoever on the resurrection morning can produce from amongst the lumber of his cast-off flesh a thin-coated and elastic stomach showing evidences of daily stretchings done in the body will find it his readiest passport and best credential. Surely God will not hold him guiltless who eats with his knife, but if the deadly steel be always well laden with toothsome morsels divine justice will be tempered with mercy to that man’s soul. When the author of *The Lost Tales of Miletus* represented Sisyphus as capturing his guest, the King of Terrors, and stuffing the old glutton with meat and drink until he became “a jolly, rubicund, tun-bellied Death,” he gave us a tale that needs no *“hœc fabula docet”* to point out the moral.

I verily believe that Shakspeare writ down Fat Jack at his last gasp, as babbling, not o’ green fields, but o’ green turtle, and that starveling, Colley Cibber, altered the text from sheer envy of a good man’s death. To die well we must live well, is a familiar platitude. Morality is, of course, best promoted by the good quality of our fare, but quantitative excellence is by no means to be despised. *Cateris paribus*, the man who eats much is a better Christian than the man who eats little; and he who eats little will live more godly than he who eats nothing.

REVISION DOWNWARD

THE big man’s belief in himself is not surprising, and in respect of a trial of muscular strength it is well founded, but the preference of all nations, their parliaments and people, for tall soldiers is a “survival,” an inherited faith held without examination. Men in battle no longer come into actual personal contact with their enemies in such a way that superior weight and strength are advantageous; and superior size is a disadvantage, for it means a larger mark for bullets.

In our civil war the big men were soonest invalided and sent home. They soonest gave in to the fatigues of campaign and charge. The little fellows, more “wiry” and enduring were the better material. I am compelled to affirm this from personal observation, knowing no other authority, though for so obvious a fact other authority must exist. Incidentally, I may explain that I am nearly six feet long.

What is true of men is true of horses. Strength, which implies size, is necessary in the horse militant, particularly in the artillery; but it is got at the expense of agility and endurance. The “toughest” American horse is the little Western “cayuse,” the “Indian pony” of our early literature.

This matter of so-called “degeneration” in the stature of men and animals has a more than military interest. It is not without meaning that all peoples have traditions of giants, and that all literatures are full of references to a remote ancestry of superior size and strength. Even Homer tells of his heroes before the walls of Troy hurling at one another such stones as ten strong men of his degenerate day could not have lifted from the earth.

The kernel of truth in all this is that the human race is actually decreasing in size. But this is not “degeneration.” It is improvement. Where are the megatherium, the dinosaurus, the mammoth and the mastodon? Where is the pterodactyl? What has happened to the moa and the other gigantic bird whose name I do not at this moment recall — maybe the epiornis? Condemned and executed by Nature for unfitness in the struggle for existence. The elephant, the hippopotamus and the rhinoceros are traveling the same road to extinction, and the late American bison could show them the way.

What is the disadvantage of bulk in animals? Feebleness. For an animal twice as heavy as another of the same species to have the same activity it would have to be not twice as strong, but four times as strong; and for some reason to this deponent unknown, Nature does not make it so. If four times as large, it would need to be sixteen times as strong.

Observe the large birds; the little ones, the swallows and “hummers,” can fly circles around them. The biggest of them can not fly at all and their wings, from disuse, are vestigial. Many insects can fly, not only proportionately faster and farther than even the humming-bird, but actually. Is there, possibly, a lesson in this for the ingenious gentlemen who expect the freight and passenger business of the future to be done in the air?

We are all familiar with the fact that if a man were as strong and agile in proportion as a flea he could leap several miles; one can figure out the exact number for oneself. If as strong as an ant he could shoulder and lug away a six-inch rifle and its carriage. Doubtless in the course of evolution (if evolution is permanent) man (if man is spared) will have the ant’s strength — and the ant’s size.

Considering the advantages that the smaller insects and animalculæ have in the struggle for existence and the wonderful powers and capacities it must have developed in them — which we know, indeed, from such observers as Sir John Lubbock it actually has developed in the ant — I can see no reason to doubt that some of them have attained a high degree of civilization and enlightenment.

To this view it may be said in objection that we, not they, are masters of the world. That has nothing to do with it; to insect civilization dominion may not be at all desirable. But are we masters? Wait till we have subdued the red flea and the house-fly; then, as we lay off our armor, we may more becomingly boast.

1903.

THE ART OF CONTROVERSY

I

ONE who has not lived a life of controversy, yet has some knowledge of its laws and methods, would, I think, find a difficulty in conceiving the infantile ignorance of the race in general as to what constitutes argument, evidence and proof. Even lawyers and judges, whose profession it is to consider evidence, to sift it and pass upon it, are but little wiser in that way than others when the matter in hand is philosophy, or religion, or something outside the written law. Concerning these high themes, I have heard from the lips of hoary benchers so idiotic argument based on so meaningless evidence as made me shudder at the thought of being tried before them on an indictment charging me with having swallowed a neighbor’s step-ladder. Yet doubtless in a matter of mere law these venerable babes would deliver judgment that would be roughly reasonable and approximately right. The theologian, on the contrary, is never so irrational as in his own trade; for, whatever religion may be, theology is a thing of unreason altogether, an edifice of assumptions and dreams, a superstructure without a substructure, an invention of the devil. It is to religion what law is to justice, what etiquette is to courtesy, astrology to astronomy, alchemy to chemistry and medicine to hygiene. The theologian can not reason, for persons who can reason do not go in for theology. Its name refutes it: theology means discourse of God, concerning whom some of its expounders say that he has no existence and all the others that he can not be known.

I — set out to show the folly of men who think they think — to give a few typical examples of what they are pleased to call “evidence” supporting their views. I shall take them from the work of a man of far more than the average intelligence dealing with the doctrine of immortality. He is a believer and thinks it possible that immortal human souls are on an endless journey from star to star, inhabiting them in turn. And he “proves” it thus:

“No one thinks of space without knowing that it can be traversed; consequently the conception of space implies the ability to traverse it.”

But how far? He could as cogently say: “No one thinks of the ocean without knowing that it can be swum in; consequently the conception of ocean implies the ability to swim from New York to Liverpool.” Here is another precious bit of testimony:

"The fact that man can conceive the idea of space without beginning or end implies that man is on a journey without beginning or end. In fact, it is strong evidence of the immortality of man."

Good — now observe the possibilities in that kind of "reasoning": The fact that a pig can conceive the idea of a turnip implies that the pig is climbing a tree bearing turnips — which is strong evidence that the pig is a fish. In each of the gentleman's *dicta* the first part no more "implies" what follows than it implies a weeping baboon on a crimson iceberg.

Of the same unearthly sort are two more of this innocent's deliveries:

"The fact that we do not remember our former lives is no proof of our never having existed. We would remember them if we had accomplished something worth remembering."

Note the unconscious *petitio principii* involved in the first "our" and the pure assumption in the second sentence.

"We all know that character, traits and habits are as distinct in young children as in adults. This shows that if we had no preexistence all men would have the same character and traits and appearance, and would be turned out on the same model."

As apples are, for example, or pebbles, or cats. Unfortunately we do not " all" know, nor does any of us know, nor is it true, that young children have as much individuality as adults. And if we did all know it, or if any of us knew it, or if it were true, neither the fact itself nor the knowledge of it would "show" any such thing as that the differences could be produced by preexistence only. They might be due to the will of God, or to some agency that no man has ever thought about, or has thought about but has not known to have that effect. In point of fact, we know that such peculiarities of character and disposition as a young child has are not brought from a former life across a gulf whose brinks are death and birth, but are endowments from the lives of others here. They are not individual, but hereditary — not vestigial, but ancestral.

The kind of "argument" here illustrated by horrible example is not peculiar to religious nor doctrinal themes, but characterizes men's reasoning in general. It is the rule everywhere — in oral discussion, in books, in newspapers. Assertions that mean nothing, testimony that is not evidence, facts having no relation to the matter in hand, and (everywhere and always) the sickening *non sequitur*: the conclusion that has nothing to do with the premises. I know not if there is another life, but if there is I do hope that to obtain it all will have to pass a rigid examination in logic and the art of not being a fool.

II

In an unfriendly controversy it is important to remember that the public, in most cases, neither cares for the outcome of the fray, nor will remember its incidents. The controversialist should therefore confine his efforts and powers to accomplishment of two main purposes: 1 — entertainment of the reader: 2 — personal gratification. For the first of these objects no rules can be given; the good writer will entertain and the bad one will not, no matter what is the subject. The second is accomplishable (a) by guarding your self-respect; (b) by destroying your adversary’s self-respect; (c) by making him respect you, against his will, as much as you respect yourself; (d) by provoking him into the blunder of permitting you to despise him. It follows that any falsification, prevarication, dodging, misrepresentation or other cheating on the part of one antagonist is a distinct advantage to the other, and by him devoutly to be wished. The public cares nothing for it, and if deceived will forget the deception; but *he* never forgets. I would no more willingly let my opponent find a flaw in my truth, honesty and frankness than in fencing I would let him beat down my guard. Of that part of victory which consists in respecting yourself and making your adversary respect you you can be always sure if you are worthy of respect; of that part which consists in despising him and making him despise himself you are not sure; that depends on his skill lie may be a very despicable person yet so cunning of fence — that is to say, so frank and honest in writing — that you will not find out his unworth. Remember that what you want is not so much to disclose his meanness to the reader (who cares nothing about it) as to make him disclose it to your private discernment. That is the whole gospel of controversial strategy.

You are one of two gladiators in the arena: your first duty is to amuse the multitude. But as the multitude is not going to remember very long after leaving the show who was victorious, it is not worth while to take any hurts for a merely visible advantage. So fight as to prove to yourself and to your adversary that you are the abler swordsman — that is, the more honorable man. Victory in that is important, for it is lasting, and is enjoyed ever afterward when you see or think of the vanquished. If in the battle I get a foul stroke, that is a distinct gain, for I never by any possibility forget that the man who delivered it is a foul man. That is what I wanted to think him, and the very thing which he should most strenuously have striven to prevent my knowing. I may meet him in the street, at the club, any place where I can not help it; under whatever circumstances he becomes present to my consciousness I find a fresh delight in recalling my moral superiority and in despising him anew. Is it not strange, then> that ninety-nine disputants in a hundred deliberately and in cold blood concede to their antagonists this supreme and decisive advantage in pursuit of one which is merely illusory? Their faults are, first, of course, lack of character; second, lack of sense. They are like an enraged mob engaged in hostilities without having taken the trouble to-know something of the art of war. Happily for them, if they are defeated they do not know it: they have not even the sense to ascribe their sufferings to their wounds.

1899.

IN THE INFANCY OF "TRUSTS"

THE battle against the "trusts" is conspicuously "on." I venture to predict that it will fail, and to think that it ought to fail. That it ought to fail is, in this bad world, no good reason for thinking that it will; there is a strong numerical presumption the other way. For doubting the success of this "movement" there are reasons having nothing to do with the righteousness or unrighteousness of the cause. One is that the entire trend of our modern civilization is toward combination and aggregation. In the "concert of the great powers" of Europe we see its most significant, most beneficent and grandest manifestation. Denounce it how we will, fight it as we may, we are powerless to stay its advance in any department of human activity, social, industrial, commercial, military, political. It is the dominant phenomenon of our time. Labor combines into "unions," capital into "trusts," and each aggregation is powerful in everything except in combating its own methods in the other. The newspaper denounces the one or the other — and joins a syndicate of newspapers. "Department stores" spring up all over the land, draw the fire of the demagogue and are impotently condemned in the platform of the political trust that he adorns. Our great hotels are examples of the same centripetal law, and offices move to the center into buildings overlooking the church spires. Small farms are disappearing; railways absorb other railways and by pooling interests with those unabsorbed, evoke impotent legislation and vain "decisions." Cities swallow and digest their suburbs. There are such things as guilds of authors; tramps devastate in organized bodies, and there has been even a congress of religions.

In the larger politics we observe the same tendency to aggregation; everywhere the unit of control is enlarging. In the Western Hemisphere we have had Pan-American congresses and seen the genesis of the Dominion of Canada. The United States have set up, and must henceforth maintain, what is virtually a protectorate of American Republics — a policy which commits us to their defense in every dispute with a European power, gives us a living interest in all their affairs and makes every square foot of South America in some sense United States territory.

Beyond the Atlantic it is the same. The entire continent of Africa is being parted among a few European nations already swollen to enormous growth by vast accretions of colonial dominion. And all over the world colonial federation is in the air. In Europe itself states are drawn together into kingdoms, kingdoms into empires. United Italy and United Germany are conspicuous and significant examples. Whether in the Other World a movement is afoot to establish Greater Heaven by annexing Hell neither the celestial ambassadors have informed us from the pulpit, nor the infernal from the tribune.

Multiplication of international “convenventions” and “treaties” is one of the most striking of contemporary political phenomena. They are a minor species of international federation, attesting and perpetuating a community of interest which statesmen no longer venture to ignore. By some hopeful spirits they are regarded as preliminary committee-work of Tennyson’s “Parliament of Man.” International arbitration is a blind step in the same direction, profitable chiefly as evidence of the general trend. The set of the currents of human interests is from all points of the compass toward fewer and fewer nuclei of control. We may dislike the direction — may clamor against the current that seems to be affecting a particular interest, but we can neither stay nor turn it. We may utter (from the pocket) our disrelish of the “trust,” the “combine,” the “monopoly”; they are phases of the movement and we shall shriek in vain.

A few of the public advantages of combinations in production may be mentioned. Economy is the most obvious. A syndicate or trust requires just as many miners to dig a million tons of coal, for example, as a dozen independent companies did; but it does not require nearly so many salaried officers, nor nearly so many expensive offices. The man who is in danger of “losing his place” is not the laborer, yet it is the laborers who are loudest in their wail. A little reflection will suggest many other ways in which economy of production is served by combination; but deeper reflection, with some knowledge of commercial phenomena, is required to make it clear that economy of production benefits anybody but the producer. It is of some potential advantage, at least, to the consumer that the producer is able, without bankruptcy, to lower the price of the product if Heaven should put it into his heart to do so.

Stability of employment is promoted by combination of capital. A single concern employing ten thousand workmen will not hold them subject to the whims and caprices of a single mind conscious of its ability to replace them, as is the case with a man employing only a dozen. To a rich corporation carrying on a large business a strike means a great loss; to a score of small concerns it means a comparatively small loss each, and is incurred with a light heart. Labor may be very sure of having its demands attentively considered by those who cannot afford to be a day without it.

A great part of the clamor against trusts is the honest expression of a belief (promoted by many writers on political economy) that in commercial matters the only influence concerned in reduction of price is competition. Nearly all workingmen are more or less discontented with the “competitive system” in industrial affairs, but few have learned to challenge its benignity in trade. Competition is, in fact, only one of the several forces concerned in cheapening commodities and, generally speaking, not by any means the most considerable. It requires only a brief experience in producing and selling to convince an intelligent man that his prosperity is to be found in the large sales of his product that come of low prices. Having control of his market and a free hand in the management of his business such a man studies to reduce his selling price to the lowest possible point. An enlightened selfishness moves him to undersell himself whenever he can, as if he were his own competitor.

Not all men managing large commercial affairs are intelligent. Some of the trusts are organized and conducted with a view to enhancing rather than reducing prices; but these are bound to fail. By tempting the small concerns to remain in or re-enter the field, the trust cuts its own throat. Its primary purpose is to “crush out” the independent “small dealer,” and this it can do in only one way — lure away his customers by underselling him. If consumers really think that is so wicked a thing to do they have the remedy in their own hands. Let them refuse to leave the small dealer, and continue to pay him the higher price. This course would entail a bit of sacrifice, maybe, but it would have the merit of freedom from cant and hypocrisy. I know of nothing more ludicrous than the spectacle of these solemn consumers appealing to the law and public opinion to avenge upon the trusts the injuries of themselves and the small dealer — they having no injuries to avenge and the small dealer only such as themselves have inflicted by assisting the trusts to pluck him. The trust is condemned when it puts up prices, for that harms the consumer; it is condemned when it puts them down, for that harms the small dealer. In either case, both consumer and small dealer make common cause against the enemy that can harm neither without helping the other. If the history of human folly shows anything more absurd surely the historian must have been Rabelais, “laughing sardonically in his easy chair.”

The trusts, it is feared, will become too rich and powerful to be controlled. I do not think so. The reason that some of them already defy the power of the states is that, being so few, they have not until now attracted the serious attention of legislatures. And even now our anti-trust legislation is more concerned with the impossible task of abolition and prevention than with the practicable one of regulation. When we have learned by blundering what we can not do we shall easily enough learn what we can do, and find it quite sufficient. Governmental ownership and governmental control are what we are coming to by leaps and bounds; and with the industries and trade of the country in fewer hands the task of regulating them will be greatly simplified, for it is easier to manage one defendant in a single jurisdiction than many in a hundred.

But, it will be asked, is this to become a nation of employees working for a few hundreds of taskmasters? Not at all. The spirited and provident employee can become his own employer and the employer of others by investing his savings in the stock of a trust. The greater its gains, the greater will be his share of them. The “crushed out” small dealer, too, can recoup himself by becoming a part of what crushed him out. Naturally the tendency of the trusts will be to “work the stock market,” to “put up jobs” on the small investors, and so forth. Prevention of that sort of thing is a legitimate purpose for legislation, and promises better results than “drastic” measures to destroy the trusts themselves. To do the latter the laws would have to be drawn so as to forbid any commercial enterprise requiring more capital than its manager could himself supply. That would be a strange law which should undertake to fix the amount of capital to be combined under one management, or limit the number of persons permitted to supply it; yet nothing less “drastic” will “down the trusts.” And that would not, for it would be unconstitutional in every state of the Union. As a contribution to the literature of humor it would be slightly better than an apothegm by Josh Billings, but distinctly inferior to that Northwestern statute making it a felony to conduct a “department store” — every country store being of that felonious character.

It is not, perhaps, too late to explain that in these remarks the word “trust” is used in the popular sense, meaning a large aggregation of capital by combination of several concerns under one management. It is my high privilege to know a better word for it, but in deference to those who do most of the talking on this engaging theme I assent to their kind of English.

1899.

POVERTY, CRIME AND VICE

I

ANDREW CARNEGIE once said in an address to a young men's Bible class:

"The cry goes up to abolish poverty, but it will indeed be a sad day when poverty is no longer with us. Where will your inventor, your artist, your philanthropist, your reformer, in fact, anybody of note, come from then? They all come from the ranks of the poor. God does not call his great men from the ranks of the rich."

That is not altogether true. The notable men do not all come from the ranks of the poor, though Mr. Carnegie does, and that gives him the right to point out the sweet "uses of adversity," as did Shakspeare and many others. The rich supply their quota of men naturally great, but through lack of a sufficiently sharp incentive many of these give us less than the best that is in them. When God is giving out genius he does not study the assessment rolls.

As to the rest, Mr. Carnegie is quite right. A world without poverty would be a world of incapables. Poverty may be due to one or more of many causes, but in a large, general way it is Nature's punishment for incapacity and improvidence. Paraphrasing the poet, we may say that some are born poor, some achieve poverty, and some have poverty thrust upon them—" by the wicked rich," quoth the demagogue. Dear, delicious, old demagogue! — whatever should we do if all were too rich to support him, and his voice were heard no more in the land?

Frequently a curse to the individual, poverty is a blessing to the race, not only because by effacing the unfit (Heaven rest them!) it aids in the survival of the fit; not only because it is a school of fortitude, industry, perseverance, ingenuity, and many another virtue; but because it directly begets such warm and elevating sentiments as compassion, generosity, self-denial, thoughtfulness for others — in a word, altruism. It does not beget enough of all this, but think what we should be with none of it! If there were no helplessness there would be no helpfulness. That pity is akin to love is sufficiently familiar to the ear, but how profound a truth it is no one seems to suspect. Why, pity is the sole origin of love. We love our children, not because they are ours, but because they are helpless: they need our tenderness and care, as do our domestic animals and our pets. Man loves woman because she is weak; woman loves man, not because he is strong, but because, for all his strength, he is needy; he needs *her*. Minor affections and good will have a similar origin. Friendship came of mutual protection and assistance. Hospitality is vestigial; primarily it was compassion for the wayfarer, the homeless, the hungry. If among our “rude forefathers” none had needed food and shelter, we should have to-day no “entertaining,” no social pleasures of any kind.

Poverty is one kind of helplessness. It is an appeal to “what we have the likest God within the soul.” In its relief we are made acquainted with ingratitude. Ingratitude, like spanking, or ridicule, or disappointment in love, hurts without harming. It is a bitter tonic, but wholesome and by habit may, doubtless, become agreeable. This, therefore, is how we demonstrate one of the advantages of poverty: Without poverty there could be no benevolence; without benevolence, no ingratitude — whereby human nature would lack its supreme credential.

I go further than Mr. Carnegie; not only do I think poverty necessary to progress and civilization, but I am persuaded that crime, too, is indispensable to the moral and material welfare of the race. In the ever needful effort to limit and suppress it; in the immemorial and incessant war between the good and the evil forces of this world; in the constant vigilance necessary to the security of life and property; in the strenuous task of safe-guarding the young, the weak and the unfortunate against the cruelty and rapacity ever alurk and alert to prey upon them — in all these forms of the struggle for our racial existence are generated and developed such higher virtues and capabilities as we have. A country without crime would breed a population without sense. In a few generations of security its people would suffer a great annual mortality by falling over their feet. They would be devoured by their dogs and enslaved by * their cows.

Poverty and crime are teachers in Nature’s great training school. Does it follow that we should cease to resist them — should encourage and promote them? Not at all; their best beneficence is found in our struggle to suppress, overcome or evade them. The hope of eventual success is itself a spiritual good of no mean magnitude. Let all the chaplains of our forces encourage and hope and pray for that success; but for my part, if I thought victory imminent or possible, I should run away.

Some Chicago millionaires once set afoot a giant scheme for settling the slum population of our great cities on farms. This was a project foredoomed to failure: one might as well attempt to colonize on the hills the fishes of the sea. The experiment of taking the slumfolk from the slums and making them agriculturists has been tried again and again, always with the best intention, always with the worst result: in a few years all are back again in the congenial slums. Of course it ought not to be that way; these unfortunate persons ought not to have inherited from countless generations of urban ancestors the tastes, feelings and capacities binding them to their mode of life as strongly as the children of prosperity are bound to theirs. The mysterious suasion of their environment ought not to exert its incessant, irresistible pull. The call of the slum should sound through their very dreams with a less iron authority. If with our superior wisdom we had made this world — you and I — men and women of all degrees would turn their faces ever to the light, and the line of least resistance would lead always upward. Their tastes and their instincts would never war with their interests, and the longer one had remained in bondage to the taskmasters of Egypt the more eagerly one would seek the Promised Land, the more contentedly dwell in it. In the world as we have it matters are differently ordered. The way to help the slumfolk is to improve the slums; not enough to drive them out — there should be no worse places for them to go to; just enough to give them a not altogether intolerable prosperity where they are. Earth has no more hopeless being than a renovated slum-dweller, uncongenially prosperous and inappropriately clean.

II

That there is in this country a deep-seated and growing distrust of the rich by the poor is a truth which every right-headed and right-hearted man is compelled to perceive and deplore. That many of the rich have thoughtlessly and selfishly done much to provoke it is equally obvious and equally deplorable; but largely, I think, it is due to the pernicious teachings of those of both classes who find a profit in promoting it. For neither the rich nor the poor constitute a brotherhood bound by the ties of a common interest; and on the whole, it is well that they do not, for loyalty in defense is usually associated with loyalty in aggression, and those accustomed to stand together for their rights too frequently think that the best foothold is found upon the rights of those opposing them. Not all the rich are men of prey, but to those who are, no quarry is more alluring than the other rich, not only in the way of direct spoliation in business, but by catching the pennies of the applauding poor through that kind of apostasy that poses as superior virtue.

A great part of the sullen animosity of poverty to wealth is undoubtedly the product of mere envy, one of the black elements of human nature whose strength and activity are commonly underestimated, even by the most discerning observers, which of all modern pessimists, Schopenhauer seems most clearly to have perceived. Hatred of the wealthy by the poor, of the great by the obscure, of the gifted by the dull, is so admirably disguised by the servility with which it is not inconsistent, so generally concealed through consciousness of its disgraceful character, as to have escaped right appraisement by all but the most penetrating understandings.

In producing this antipathy of class to class many other factors are concerned, among them the notion, carefully fostered by demagogues, that, naturally and without reference to personal worth, the rich man despises the poor man. The fact that most of our rich men were once poor is permitted to cut no figure in the matter; as is the fact that annually in this country more than one hundred million dollars are given away by the rich in merely those benefactions large enough to attract public attention. “Not so very much,” says the demagogue, “considering how many of them there are.” But when engaged in showing how large a proportion of the country’s wealth is owned by how few persons, he sings another song.

The hatred is not mutual; the wealthy do not dislike and despise their less fortunate, less capable, less thrifty, lucky, enterprising or ambitious fellow-men. The element of envy is not present to feed the rancor. Nor is there any profit in the business of kindling and keeping alight the fires of hostility to the poor; the demagogue has among the rich no professional antagonist practising *his* methods.

True, the wealthy do, as a rule, hold themselves aloof from the poor; even usually from those with whom they associated before their days of prosperity; sometimes from their own less prosperous relatives. There are several reasons; the inexperienced “capitalist” who suspects that none of them is valid can try his luck at making no change in his associations. He will be wiser after a while, but will have fewer friends and less ready money. It will be more economical to learn from some one who has prospered before him — even from a person known to have merely a fair salary and not known to have any dependents.

Doubtless “colossal” fortunes have their disadvantages, chiefly, I think, to those in possession; but as a general proposition, moneymaking may safely be permitted, for there is no way under the sun to get any good out of money except by parting with it One may pay it to a tradesman for goods; the tradesman pays it to another, but eventually it goes to the man that makes the goods, the workman. Or one may lend it on interest, the borrower lending it again at a higher interest, or investing it; it may pass through a dozen hands, but the ultimate man pays it out for labor — the sole purpose and meaning of the entire series of transactions. All the money in the world, except the small part hoarded by misers or lost, is paid out for labor, flows back in converging streams as capital, and is again distributed in wages. Does the socialist know this? He knows nothing; he learned it from Karl Marx and Upton Sinclair. The man who, making money in his own country, spends it in another, may or may not be mischievous to his countrymen;

that depends on what he buys. To his race he is harmless and beneficial.

On the whole, the unfortunate rich man, cowering as a prisoner in the dock before the austere tribunal of public opinion, has a pretty good defense if he only knew it. As he seems imperfectly provided with counsel and is not saying much himself, it would be only just for the court to enter a plea of not guilty for him, and to hear a little more testimony than that so abundantly proffered by swift and willing witnesses for the prosecution.

III

Abolition of poverty is not all that our reformers propose — they would abolish all that is disagreeable. Let us suppose them to have accomplished their amiable purposes. We have, then, a country in which are no poverty, no contention, no tyranny or oppression, no peril to life or limb, no disease — and so forth. How delightful! What a good and happy people! Alas, no! With poverty have vanished benevolence, providence, and the foresight which, born of the fear of individual want, stands guard at a thousand gates to defend the general good. The charitable impulse is dead in every breast, and gratitude, atrophied by disuse, has no longer a place among human sentiments and emotions. With no more fighting among ourselves we have lost the power of resentment and resistance: a car-load of Mexicans or a shipful of Japanese can invade our fool's paradise and enslave us, as the Spaniards overran Peru and the British subdued India. (Hailers of "the dawn of the new era" will, I trust, provide that it dawn everywhere at once or here last of all.) Having no oppression to resist and no suffering to experience, we no longer need the courage to defy, nor the fortitude to endure. Heroism is a failing memory and magnanimity a dream of the past; for not only are the virtues known by contrast with the vices, they spring from the same seed, grow in the same soil, ripen in the same sunshine, and perish in the same frost. A fine race of mollycoddles we should be without our sins and sufferings! In a world without evils there would be one supreme evil — existence.

We need not fear any such condition. Progress is infected with the germs of reversion; on the grave of the civilization of to-day will squat the barbarian of to-morrow, "with a glory in his bosom" that will transfigure him the day after. The alternation is one that we can neither hasten nor retard, for our success baffles us. If, for example, we could abolish war, disease and famine, the race would multiply to the point of "standing room only" — a condition prophesying war, disease and famine. Wherefore the wisest prayer is this: "O Lord, make thy servant strong to fight and impotent to prevail."

1900.

DECADENCE OF THE AMERICAN FOOT

THE ultimate destiny of the American foot is a subject which, through an enlightened selfishness, must more and more engage the interest of the American head and the sympathies of the American heart. Even apart from the question of its final fate and place in the scheme of things, the human foot, American and foreign, has many features of peculiar interest. In the singular complexity of its structure, closely (and as the scientists affirm, significantly) resembling that of the hand, lurk possibilities of controversy sufficient in themselves to tempt attention and invite research. In truth this honorable member's framework may be said to consist mainly of bones of contention. Religion affirms of its arched instep, its flexible toes, its padded sole, and the other peculiarities of its intricate construction an obvious adaptability of means to an end: proof positive of intelligent design, and therefore of an intelligent Designer — *vide* Whateley, *passim*. Science coldly replies by pointing to the serviceable foot of the bear, which lacks the arched instep, and of the horse, which is without the flexible toes, or toes of any kind, and in which no use is made of the padded sole. To the simple purposes to which the human foot is applied, says the scientist, its complexity is in no sense nor degree contributory; it would perform all its offices equally well if it were a hoof. All the distinguishing features of the human foot, as contrasted with that, for example, of the horse or sheep, he avers to be such, variously modified by long and regrettable disuse, as fit animals for climbing trees and dwelling in the branches. The human foot is, in short, according to this view of the matter, nothing but an expurgated edition of that of the monkey, and a standing evidence of our descent from that tree-dwelling philosopher.

Into this controversy I do not purpose to enter; I prefer to stand afar off and suggest a compromise, whereby each contentionary may retain, with the other's assent, all that essential part of his belief which is precious to his mind and heart. Let the scientist surrender so much of his theory as is incompatible with the assumption of creative design, the religionist so much of his faith as traverses the assertion of arboreal activity. The new theory, taking broad enough ground for all to stand upon, may be formulated somewhat as follows: The human foot as we have it was designed by an intelligent Power in order to fit mankind for an arboreal future.

Than this nothing could be fairer. It seems acceptable, and I hope it will be accepted by persons of every shade of religious faith and scientific conviction. It leaves the Christian his Adam, the Darwinian his Ape. Revealed in it, as in a magic crystal, we discern the engaging truth that the hope of Heaven and the belief in a more advanced stage of evolution are virtually the same thing — each in its way a prophecy of another and higher life. That we shall enjoy that superior existence in the flesh is a happiness that is but slightly impaired by the circumstance that it will be in the flesh of Posterity. This is a consideration indeed, that does not at all affect the interest of the evolutionist, for he never has had any expectations; and to the religious person there is a peculiar joy inhering in renunciation of his individual hope for the assurance of a racial advantage. In contemplation of Posterity frolicking blithely in its leafy and breezy environment, in shoeless nimbleness arboreally gay, every good soul will accept mortality without a pang.

But I have strayed a long way from the question of the ultimate destiny of the American foot. Be it now confessed in all candor that the compromise theory above propounded has a most dubious relevancy to that subject; for in the sylvan high-jinks of the Coming Man the Coming American will probably have no part. While the human foot in general shows no evidence of ever having been employed in its legitimate duty and future function; while Science is not justified in affirming its degeneracy from long disuse in climbing; nothing is more certain than that the American variety of it is doomed to a fatal atrophy from disuse in walking. In cities the multiplication of street-car lines points unmistakably to a time in the near future when there will be one or more in every street, with possibly a moving sidewalk, supplied with upholstered seats, on each side of the way. The universal use of the “elevator” in public and private buildings, including dwellings, will indubitably be followed by that of tubes for shooting the inmates out of the house and sucking the outmates in. With the general adoption of the traveling carpet, carrying chairs among the several rooms, the last vestigial excuse for the American urban foot will have been effaced, and that member will not lag superfluous on the stage, but in obedience to Nature’s mandate step down and out forthwith.

In the rural districts it will doubtless have a longer lease of life, owing partly to the conservative character of the people, the difficulty of hoeing corn while sitting, the saving badness of the roads — inhibiting vehicular “traffic” by all but the hardiest adventurers « — and the intricacy of the trails, which forbids the general use of the steam bicycle in driving home the cows.

Eventually these disabilities will be overcome by American ingenuity, and the rural foot having no longer a function in the physical economy, will be absorbed into the character. Its relegation, with that of its urban congenitor, to Nature’s waste-dump in the tenebrous realm of things that are no more will mark the dawn of a new era in our life and be followed by radical and profound changes, particularly in the tactical movements of infantry.

THE CLOTHING OF GHOSTS

BELIEF in ghosts and apparitions is general, almost universal; possibly it is shared by the ghosts themselves. We are told that this wide distribution of the faith and its persistence through the ages are powerful evidences of its truth. As to that, I do not remember to have heard the basis of the argument frankly stated; it can be nothing else than that whatever is generally and long believed is true, for of course there can be nothing in the particular belief under consideration making it peculiarly demonstrable by counting noses. The world has more Buddhists than Christians. Is Buddhism therefore the truer religion? Before the day of Galileo there was a general though not quite universal conviction that the earth was a motionless body, the sun passing around it daily. That was a matter in which "the united testimony of mankind" ought to have counted for more than it should in the matter of ghosts, for all can observe the earth and sun, but not many profess to see ghosts, and no one holds that the circumstances in which they are seen are favorable to calm and critical observation. Ghosts are notoriously addicted to the habit of evasion; Heine says that it is because they are afraid of us. "The united testimony of mankind" has a notable knack at establishing only one thing — the incredibility of the witnesses.

If the ghosts care to prove their existence as objective phenomena they are unfortunate in always discovering themselves to inaccurate observers, to say nothing of the bad luck of frightening them into fits. That the seers of ghosts are inaccurate observers, and therefore incredible witnesses, is clear from their own stories. Who ever heard of a naked ghost? The apparition is always said to present himself (as he certainly should) properly clothed, either "in his habit as he lived" or in the apparel of the grave. Herein the witness must be at fault: whatever power of apparition after dissolution may inhere in mortal flesh and blood, we can hardly be expected to believe that cotton, silk, wool and linen have the same mysterious gift If textile fabrics had that property they would sometimes manifest it independently, one would think — would "materialize" visibly without a ghost inside, a greatly simpler apparition than "the grin without the cat."

Ask any proponent of ghosts if he think that the products of the loom can "revisit the glimpses of the moon" after they have duly decayed, or, while still with us, can show themselves in a place where they are not. If he have no suspicion, poor man, of the trap set for him, he will pronounce the thing impossible and absurd, thereby condemning himself out of his own mouth; for assuredly such powers in these material things are necessary to the garmenting of spooks.

Now, by the law *falsus in uno falsus in omnibus* we are compelled to reject all the ghost stories that have ever been seriously told. If the observer (let him be credited with the best intentions) has observed so badly as to think he saw what he did not see, and could not have seen, in one particular, to what credence is he entitled with regard to another? His error in the matter of the “long white robe” or other garment where no long white robe or other garment could be puts him out of court altogether. Resurrection of woolen, linen, silk, fur, lace, feathers, hooks and eyes, buttons, hatpins and the like > — well, really, that is going far.

No, we draw the line at clothing. The materialized spook appealing to our senses for recognition of his ghostly character must authenticate himself otherwise than by familiar and remembered habiliments. He must be credentialed by nudity — and that regardless of temperature or who may happen to be present. Nay, it is to be feared that he must eschew his hair, as well as his habiliments, and “swim into our ken” utterly bald; for the scientists tell us with becoming solemnity that hair is a purely vegetable growth and no essential part of us. If he deem these to be hard conditions he is at liberty to remain on his reservation and try to endow us with a terrifying sense of himself by other means.

In brief, the conditions under which the ghost must appear in order to command the faith of an enlightened world are so onerous that he may prefer to remain away — to the unspeakable impoverishment of letters and art.

1902.

SOME ASPECTS OF EDUCATION

WHEN Richard Olney was Secretary of State, “Ouida” (who had nothing to do with the matter) addressed to him a remonstrance against exclusion of illiterate immigrants, explaining that the analphabets in her employ were better servants than those who could read. “I have had for twenty years,” she said, “an old man (what is called ‘the odd man’ in England), and he can be sent with fifty commissions to purchase objects. Detail him orally and he will execute these commissions with no single error.” Illiteracy may be a valuable quality in a servant, but we are not taking in immigrants with a view to the betterment of our domestic service; it may qualify a man to do errands, but as a help to him in reading a ballot it does not amount to much. As a claim to high political preferment it is distinctly less valid than a bald head and a knack at gabble.

Nevertheless, “Ouida” was not altogether wrong. A man is not made intelligent by mere ability to read and write: his little learning is a dangerous thing to himself and to his country. The only reading that such men do is of the most degrading kind: it debases them, mind and heart, gives them a false estimate of their worth, magnifies their woes, and fills them with a sense of their numbers and their power. Eventually they *a* rise” and have to be shot. Or they succeed, and having first put to death the gifted rascals who incited and led them, they set up a Government of Unreason which they lack the sense to maintain, and their last state is no better than their first. That is the dull, dreary old sequence of events, so familiar to the student of history, That is the beaten path leading back to its beginning, which must be traveled again and again without a break in the monotony of the march. That is Progress — the brute revolt of the ignorant mass, their resubjection by the intelligent few; nowhere justice, nowhere righteousness, everywhere and always force, greed, selfishness and sin. That is the universal struggle — sometimes sluggish, sometimes turbulent, always without an outcome and with no hope of one. Along that hideous path our American free feet are merrily keeping time to the beating of hearts which, swelling to-day with the pride of progress, will shrink to-morrow with the dread of doom.

What then? — is popular education mischievous? Popular education is good for many things; it is not good for the stability of states. Whatever its advantages, it has this disadvantage: it produces “industrial discontent”; and industrial discontent is the first visible symptom of national wreck. Prate as we will of the “dignity of labor,” we convince no one that labor is anything other than a hard, imperious necessity, to be avoided if possible.. Education promises avoidance — a promise which to the mass of workers is not, and can not be, kept. It brings to Labor a bitter disappointment which in time is transmuted into political mischief. The only man that labors with a song in his heart is he that knows nothing but to labor. Give him education — enlarge by ever so little the scope of his thought — make him permeable to a sense of the pleasures of life and his own privations, and you set up a quarrel between him and his condition. He may remain in his lowly station, but that will be because he cannot get out of it. He may continue to perform his hard and hateful work, but he will no longer perform it cheerfully and well.

What is the remedy? — educate him still more? Then he will no longer perform it at all — he will die first! Those of us who have tried both may assure him that head-work is harder than hand-work, that it takes more out of one, that its rewards give no greater happiness; he observes that none of us renounces it for the other kind. He does not believe us, and it would not affect him if he did.

What, as a matter of fact, is the public advantage of even that higher education which we tax ourselves more and more to make general? Look at our overcrowded professions, whose “ethics” and practices grow worse and worse from increasing competition. Not one of them is any longer a really “honorable” profession. Look at the monstrous overgrowth of our cities, those congested brains of the nation. They draw to themselves all the output of the colleges and the universities, and as much of that of the country schools as can get a precarious foothold and live — God knows how — in hope to “better its condition.” A pretty picture, truly: a population roughly divisible into a conscienceless crowd of brain-workers who have so “bettered their condition” as to live by prey; a sullen multitude of manual laborers blowing the coals of discontent and plotting a universal overthrow. Above the one perch the primping monkeys of “society,” chattering in meaningless glee; below the other the brute tramp welters in his grime. And with it all a national wealth that amazes the world and profits nobody — the country’s wonder, pride and curse. Still we go on with a maniacal hope, adding school to school, college to college, university to university, and — unconscious provision for their product — almshouses, asylums and prisons in prodigal abundance.

I am far from affirming that the industrial discontent which for more than a half century has been an augmenting menace to our national life, has its sole origin in popular education conjoined with the higher education of too many. For any social phenomenon there is no lack of causes. For this there are, among others, two of special importance. First, the duplication of the labor force by that female competition which, beginning its displacements pretty well up in the scale, drives the unlucky male to lower and lower levels, until forced out of the lowest by invasion by his own sex from higher ones, he finds no rest for the sole of his foot and takes to the road, an irreclaimable tramp. Second, the amazing multiplication of "labor-saving" machinery, whose disadvantages are swift, and advantages slow — which throws men out of work, who starve while awaiting restitution in the lower price of its products, many of which, even when cheap, are imperfectly edible. So I do not say that the schoolmaster is the only pestilence that walketh at noonday. But I do say — and one with half an eye can observe it for himself and in his own person — that learning in any degree indisposes to manual toil in some degree; that the scholar will not labor musclewise if he can help it, nor with a contented spirit when he can not help it.

In his Founders' Day address at Stanford University, the President of another university said:

> Usually an education will pay, but even when the professions are crowded and he [the college man] can find no place he is still the better for it if he will but accept some lower occupation in life.

But "usually" he will not; he will wedge himself into some "profession," whether he can make an honest living in it or not. And failing to make an honest living, he will make a living that is not honest. In the service of his belly and his back, he will resort to all manner of shady and unprofessional conduct. His competition forces other weak members of his profession into the same crooked courses, to which the public becomes accustomed and indifferent. What was once unprofessional becomes professional and respectable; with every accession of new men, the standard of allowable conduct falls lower, and to-day the learned professions are little more than organized conspiracies to plunder.

The distinguished author of the address is not without dreams of educational expansion. He says:

> Let the common people flock by hundreds of thousands to the higher institutions of learning; then the whole community will be lifted to a happier level.

As in Germany, where men of university education are as thick as flies and the fields are tilled by women. Then educate the women and the field must be tilled by monkeys. Treading that "happier level" of German civilization are hundreds of thousands of scholars, becomingly stoop-shouldered and fitly be-spectacled, whom a day's wage of an American farm hand would support in unaccustomed luxury for a week. But not a mother's son of them will perform manual labor if he can help it. Nor will any of the corresponding class here or elsewhere. To educate “the man with a hoe” is to divorce him from his hoe — a prompt and irrevocable separation. A good deal of hoeing is needful in this world, and not so much lawing and physicking and preaching and writing and painting and the rest of it.

If I were dictator I would abolish every “institution of learning” above the grammar schools, excepting one or two universities. I would make a university in fact, as well as in name. It should not only turn out the finest scholars in the world, but it should be a place of original research in a sense that none of our universities now is. From the grammar school to its portal the student should make his upward way unaided — enough would accomplish the feat and thereby prove their fitness; and those who failed would not be greatly harmed by the effort. I am not quite sure if I should limit the number of students by law; probably that could best be done by the rigor of examinations. Under my dictatorship we would not be a community of “college graduates,” mostly men of prey, but neither should we be so top-heavy that in some social convulsion the country would “turn turtle” and stand on its head.

THE REIGN OF THE RING

THE statement is made on what seems as good authority as in such a matter can be cited that in Europe the custom of wearing finger-rings is “going out” — to “come in” again, doubtless, with renewed vitality. It is hardly to be expected that it will suffer a permanent extinction while human character remains what it is; and the acutest observer can discern no symptoms of change in that. The original impulse moving the gentlemen and ladies of the Stone Age to circumclude their untidy digits with annular sections of the shinbones of their vanquished foemen while awaiting a knowledge of the metals is apparently not nearly exhausted, and we are far less likely to see the end of it than it is to see the end of us. It is more probable, indeed, that the nosering will return to bless us than that the finger-ring will add itself to the melancholy list of good things gone before.

Amongst the several tribes of our species the habit of encircling the human finger with something not contemplated in the original design of that variously useful member is almost universal, and it so far antedates history and tradition that by another sort of lying than either it has been outfitted with a divine origin. In ancient Egypt it was ascribed to Osiris, whose priests were distinguished from meaner mortals by finger-rings of a peculiar and mystical design, having a profound significance all the more impressive by reason of its impenetrability to conjecture. Perchol, however, has an ingenious theory that it was intended to puzzle the Egyptologist of the time-to-be; an instance of foresight which one can commend while deploring the unworthy motive at the back of it.

Amongst the ancient Jews rings were symbols of authority, as we see in the case of Joseph, to whom the Pharaoh gave one when he made him Governor; and this was a common use of rings in all antiquity. They were credentials of ambassadors and messengers, and served in place of written commissions, which, frequently it was impossible to give, for the commissioning power could not write, and which would have been ineffective, for most other persons could not read. In matters of business the ring was a power-of-attorney. Its usefulness in this way was suggested, doubtless, by the difficulty of imposture: written authorization may easily be forged, but a ring can not well be obtained from the finger of its owner without his consent.

The attribution of magical and medicinal virtues to rings pervades all ancient and mediaeval story. Gyges, King of Lydia, had a ring by which the wearer could become invisible — a result accomplishable, though sometimes too tardily, by our modern plan of going away. One of the Kings of Lombardy had a ring which told him in what direction to travel. It may have contained a compass, though to that theory is opposed the objection that he antedated the invention of that instrument. But (I make the suggestion with humility) may not his have been the compass afterward invented? Medicated rings were in popular use in ancient Rome. An efficacious design for these, according to Trallian, a physician of the fourth century, was Hercules strangling the Nemæan lion. This, he assures us, is, if well engraved, a specific for stomach-ache. Throughout mediaeval Europe belief in the healing power of certain rings was widely diffused; but then, as now, persons free from gross superstitions preferred to treat their disorders by touching the relics of saints.

Rings engraved with the names of the Magi were once in great medical repute, but in 1674 a learned prelate threw discredit upon them by showing that the true names were not known, being variously given as Melchior, Balthasar and Jasper; Apellius, Amerus and Damascus; Ator, Sator and Petratoras. As the author of *Ben-Hur* has given the weight of his authority to the first three names, the healing-ring may with some confidence be engraved with them and pushed back into its old place in public esteem. But before risking any money in the manufacture it would be prudent to test upon a few patients the accuracy of General Wallace's historical knowledge by administering the names of his choice internally.

A ring presented to Edward the Confessor cured epilepsy, and after the death of the royal owner by another and hardier disease it was preserved as a relic in Westminster Abbey. Rings which had been blessed, or even touched, by the sovereign were for some centuries considered worthy of a place in the British *materia medica;* and such would doubtless command a high price to-day in the American market — not to keep the purchaser in good health, but to make his neighbors sick with envy.

Of all rings possessing magical or medicinal virtues the toadstone ring of our fathers was the most interesting. It was well known to those ingenious naturalists that

the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head,

as Shakspeare was at the trouble to point out. It was customary to set this in a ring and wear it, for it had the useful property of changing color and sweating when poison was about. As poison was one of the commonest means by which our easy-going ancestors accomplished the end of one another's sojourn in this vale of tears a monitor of that kind was extremely useful to have literally "on hand at meal-time."

Certain stones were once regarded as having maleficent properties and were never set in rings. A chronicler relates that a certain knight in one of the crusades possessed himself of a costly scimitar belonging to a Saracen whom he had slain, and became so expert in its use that he discarded his own weapon and used the other. But from that time forth he met with nothing but disaster and shame. It was discovered that in fitting the scimitar with a cross-hilt, as Christian piety demanded, the malicious armorer had substituted for one of the gems an emerald, which by some secret process he had disguised. The malign stone and the armorer's head having been removed the prowess of the knight was again effective and he rose to great distinction and honor. In the folk-lore of some of the riparian peoples along the Danube the topaz was listed as a peculiar possession of the Adversary of Souls. It was held that if one could by force or fraud get a topaz ring upon an enemy's finger it would be impossible to remove it, and the victim would go, body and soul, to the devil. Advancing enlightenment has effaced these silly superstitions; we now know that the opal only is really malign.

We have it on the authority of Shakspeare that at least Aldermen wore thumb rings, for Falstaff avers that before he was blown up like a bladder by sighing and grief he could have crept through one, being "not an eagle's talon in the waist." If the custom had lived till our time Aldermen would have been at considerable expense for thumb-rings, for their fingers are all thumbs everywhere but in the public pocket. As engagements and weddings subtend a pretty wide angle in the circle of human life in modern times the ring is perhaps a more important factor in the happiness of at least one-half the race than ever before; and that half is the more conservative half; it and its customs are not soon parted. Not that engagement rings and wedding rings are a new thing under the sun: amongst several ancient peoples the wedding ring was an institution of prime importance. The bride's investiture with that sign and symbol of wifehood was not merely in attestation of the wedding; it was the wedding. Divorce consisted in pulling it off, and that simple act — commonly performed by the husband — was not complicated with any questions of counsel fees, alimony and custody of the children.

The finger-ring will probably maintain its "ancient, solitary reign" for some time yet. The custom of wearing it is too deeply rooted in the nature of things, and the root has too many ramifications to be lightly renounced by virtue of any royal rescript of the "queens of fashion" in Paris, London or New York.

It is not a mere garden plant growing loosely in the artificial top-soil of human vanity, but a hardy perennial, having a firm hold in many substrata of character and tradition, and eliciting nourishment from all. The finger-ring is on to stay.

FIN DE SIECLE

AN end-of-the-century horse is doubtless pretty much the same as a horse of another period, but is there not in literature, art, politics and in intellectual and moral matters generally, an element, a spirit peculiar to the time and not altogether discernible to observation — a something which, not hitherto noted, or at least not so noticeable, now “pervades and animates the whole?” It seems to me that there is. Precisely what is its nature? That is not easy to answer; the thing is felt rather than observed. It is subtle, elusive, addressing, perhaps, only those sensibilities for whose needs of expression our English vocabulary makes little provision. I should with some misgiving call it the note of despair, or, more accurately, desperation. It sounds through the tumult of our lives as the boatswain’s whistle penetrates with a vibrant power the uproar of the storm — the singing and shouting of the wind in the cordage, the hissing of the waves, the shock and thunder of their monstrous buffets as they burst against the ship. O there’s a meaning in the phrase — a significance born of iteration. As certain predictions by their power upon the imagination assist in their own fulfilment, so this haunting phrase has made itself a meaning and shaped the facts to fit it. In the twilight of the century we have prophecies of the coming night, and see ghosts.

We are all dominated by our imaginations and our views are creatures of our viewpoints. To the ordinary mind the end of a century seems the end of one of a series of stages of progress, arranged in straight-away order, and impossible of prolongation. To turn the end of one line is to go back and begin it all *de novo* on a parallel line — an end of progress, a long leap to the rear, a slow and painful resumption. Of course there is nothing in the facts to correspond to this fanciful and fantastic notion, but it is none the less powerful for that. To the person of that order of mind it undoubtedly seems that with the final year of the century the race will have lost a century of some advantage which he is not likely to see regained. He does not think that — he thinks nothing at all about it — he merely feels so, and can not even formulate the feeling. Quite the same it colors his moods, his character, his very manner of life and action. He has something of the ghastly gaiety of the plague-smitten soldiers in the song, who drank to those already dead and hurrahed for those about to die. The *fi7i de siécle* spirit is fairly expressible by an intention to make the most of a vanishing opportunity by doing something out of the common.

Nearly everywhere we observe this spirit translating itself into acts and phenomena. In religion it finds manifestation in repair of “creeds outworn,” in acceptance of modern miracles, in pilgrimages, in strange and futile attempts at unification — even in toleration. In politics it has overspread the earth with anarchism, socialism, communism, woman suffrage and actual antagonism between the sexes. Industrial affairs show it in unnatural animosities and destructive struggles between employers and employees, in wild aspirations for impossible advantages, in resurrection of crude convictions and methods of antiquity. In literature it has given us realism, in art impressionism, and in both as much else that is false and extravagant as it is possible to name. In morals it has gone to the length of denying the expedience of morality. In all civilized countries crime is so augmenting, the sociologists tell us, that national earnings will not much longer be sufficient to support the machinery for its repression. Madness and suicide are advancing “by leaps and bounds,” and wars were never so needless and reasonless as now. Everywhere are a wild welter of action and thought, a cutting loose from all that is conservative and restraining, a “carnival of crime,” a reign of unreason.

Not everywhere: superior to all this madness, tranquil in the midst of it, and to some degree controlling it, stands Science, inaccessible to its malign influence and unaffectable by the tumult. Why? — how? God knows; I only perceive that the scientific mind has an imagination of its own kind. To him who has been trained to accurate observation and definite thought a century of years does not seem to have an end — it is simply one hundred times round the sun; and at the last moment of our *siecle* we shall be just where we have been a million times before, under no different cosmic conditions. He is not impressed with “the sadness of it,” feels no desperation — sees nothing in it. He keeps his head — which, by the way, is worth keeping.

1898.

TIMOTHY H. REARDEN

IN the death of Judge Rearden the world experienced a loss that is more likely adequately to be estimated in another generation than in this. A lawyer dies and his practice passes to others. A judge falls in harness, another is appointed or elected, and the business of the court goes on as before, frequently better. But for the vacant place of a scholar and man of letters there are no applicants. To him there is no successor: neither the President has the appointing power nor the people the power to elect. The vacancy is permanent, the loss irreparable; something has gone out of the better and higher life of the community which can not be replaced, and the void is the dead man's best monument, invisible but eternal. Other scholars and men of letters will come forward in the new generation, but of none can it be said that he carries forward on the same lines the work of the "vanished hand," nor declares exactly those truths of nature and art that would have been formulated by the "voice that is still."

In that elder education which was once esteemed the only needful intellectual equipment of a gentleman, those attainments still commonly, and perhaps preferably, denoted by the word "scholarship," Judge Rearden was probably without an equal on his side of the continent. Except by his habit of historical and literary allusion — to which he was perhaps somewhat over-addicted — and by that significant something, so difficult to name, yet to the discerning few so obvious, in the thought and speech of learned men, which is not altogether breadth and reach of reason nor altogether subtlety of taste and sentiment — in truth, is compatible with their opposites — except for these indirect disclosures he seldom and to few indeed gave even a hint of the enormous acquired wealth in the treasury of his mind. Graduated from a second-rate college in Ohio with little but a knowledge of Latin and Greek, a studious habit and a disposition so unworldly that it might almost be called unearthly, he pursued his amassment of knowledge with the unfailing diligence of an unfailing love, to the end. He knew not only the classical languages and many of the tongues of modern Europe, but their several dialects as well. To know a language is nothing, but to know its literature from the beginning, and to have incorporated its veritable essence and spirit into mind and character — that is much; and that is what Rearden had done with regard to all these tongues. Doubtless this is not the meat upon which intellectual Cæsars feed; doubtless, too, he did not make that full use of his attainments which the world approves as "practical," and at which he smiled in his odd, tolerant way, as one may smile at the earnest work of a child making mud pies; yet his was not altogether a barren pen. Of Bret Harte's bright band of literary coadjutors on the old *Overland Monthly* he was among the first and best, and at several times, though irregularly and all too infrequently, he enriched *The Californian* and other periodicals with noble contributions in prose and verse. Among the former were essays on Petrarch and Tennyson; the latter included a poem of no mean merit on the Charleston earthquake, and another which he had intended to read before the George H. Thomas Post of the Grand Army of the Republic, but was prevented by his last illness. Read now in the solemn light that lies along his path through the Valley of the Shadow, the initial stanza seems to have a significance almost prophetic:

Life's fevered day declines; its purple twilight falling, Draws lengthening shadows from the broken flanks; And from the column's head a viewless chief is calling: "Guide right — close up the ranks."

Some of his papers for the Chitchat Club could not easily be matched by selections from the magazines and reviews, and if a collection were made of the pieces that he loved to put out in that wasteful way we should have a volume of notable reading, distinguished for a sharply accented individuality of thought and style.

For a number of years before his death Rearden was engaged in constructing (the word writing here is inadequate) a work on Sappho, which, as I understand the matter, was to be a kind of compendium of all the little that is known and pretty nearly all the much that has been conjectured and said of her. It was to be profusely illustrated by master-hands, copiously annotated and enriched with variorum readings — a book for bookworms. Of its fate I am not advised, but trust that none of this labor of love may be lost. A work which for many years engaged the hand and the heart of such a man can not, of whatever else it may be devoid, lack that distinction which is to literature what it is to character — its life, its glory and its crown.

1892.

THE PASSING OF THE HORSE

CERTAIN admirers of the useful, beautiful, dangerous and senseless beast known to many of them as the “hoss” are promising the creature a life of elegant leisure, with opportunities for mental culture which he has not heretofore enjoyed. Universal use of the automobile in all its actual and possible forms and for all practical purposes in the world’s work and pleasure is to relieve the horse from his onerous service and give him a life of ease “and a perpetual feast of nectared sweets.” The horse of the future is to do no work, have no cares, be immune to the whip, the saddle, the harness and the unwelcome attentions of the farrier. He is to toil not, neither spin, yet Nebuchadnezzar in all his glory was not stabled and pastured as he is to be. In brief, the automobile is going to make of this bad world a horse elysium, where the tired brute can repose on beds of amaranth and moly, to the eminent satisfaction of his body and his mind.

There is reason to fear that all these hopes will not come to fruitage. It is not seen just why a generation of selfish and somewhat preoccupied human beings who know not the horse as an animal of utility should cherish him as a creature of merit. We have already one pensioner on our bounty who does little that is useful in return for his keep and an incalculable multitude of things which we would prefer that he should not do if he could be persuaded to forego them — the domestic dog, to wit. We are not likely to augment our burden by addition of the obsolete horse. Those of us who, through stress of necessity or the promptings of Paris, have tested our teeth upon him know that he is not very good to eat; he will hardly be cultivated for the table, like the otherwise inutile and altogether unhandsome pig. The present vogue of the horse as a comestible, a viand, is without the knowledge and assent of the consumer, but an abattoir having its outlying corrals gorged with waiting horses would be an object of public suspicion and constabular inquiry. As a provision against human hunger the horse may be considered out of the running. Hard, indeed, were the heart of the father who would regale the returning prodigal with a fatted colt.

There will be no Horses in our “leisure class,” for there will be no horses. The species will be as effectually effaced by the automobile as if it had run over them. If the new machine fulfills all the hopes that now begin to cluster about it the man of the future will find a deal of our literature and art unintelligible. To him the equestrian statue, for example, will be an even more astonishing phenomenon than it commonly is to us.

There is a suggestion in all this to our good and great friends, the vegetarians. They do not easily tire of pointing out the brutality of slaughtering animals to get their meat, although it is not obvious that we could eat them alive. We should breed some of these edible creatures anyhow, for they serve other needs than those of appetite; but others, like the late Belgian hare, who virtually passed away as soon as the breeders and dealers failed to convince us that we were eating him, would become extinct. Many millions of meat-bearing animals owe whatever of life we grant (hem to the fact that we mean eventually to deprive them of it. Seeing that they are so soon to be "done for," they may not understand what they were "begun for"; but if life is a blessing, as most of us believe and themselves seem to believe, for they manifest a certain reluctance to give it up, why, even a short life is a thing to be thankful for. If we had not intended to kill them they would not have lived at all.

From this superior point of view even the royal sport of slaughtering such preserved game as the English pheasant seems a trifle less brutal than it is commonly affirmed to be by those of us who are not invited to the killing. This argument, too, has an obvious application in the instance of that worthy Russian sect that denies the right of man to enslave horses, oxen, *etc.* But for man's fell purpose of enslaving them there would be none.

And what about the American negro? Had it not been for the cruel greed of certain Southern planters and Yankee skippers where would he be? Would he be anywhere? So we see how all things work together for the general good, and evil itself is a blessing in disguise. No African slavery, no American negro; no American negro, no Senator Hanna's picturesque bill to pension his surviving ancestors. And without that we should indubitably be denied the glittering hope of a similar bill pensioning the entire negro race!

1903.

NEWSPAPERS

I

THE influence of some newspapers on republican government is discernibly good; that of the enormous majority conspicuously bad. Conducted by rogues and dunces for dunces and rogues, these are faithful to nothing but the follies and vices of our system, strenuously opposing every intelligent attempt at their elimination. They fetter the feet of wisdom and stiffen the prejudices of the ignorant. They are sycophants to the mob, tyrants to the individual. They constitute a menace to organized society — a peril to government of any kind; and if ever in America Anarchy shall beg to introduce his dear friend Despotism we shall have to thank our vaunted “freedom of the press” as the controlling spirit of the turbulent time, and Lord of Misrule. We may then be grateful too that, like a meteor consumed by friction of the denser atmosphere which its speed compressed, its brightest blaze will be its last. The despot whose path to power it illumined will extinguish it with a dash of ink.

II

An elective judiciary is slow to enforce the law against men before whom its members come every few years in the character of suppliants for favor; and how abjectly these learned candidates can sue, how basely bid for a newspaper’s support, one must have been an editor to know. The press has grown into a tyranny to which the courts themselves are servile. To rule all classes and conditions of men with an iron authority the newspapers have only to learn a single trick, against the terrible power of which, when practised by others, they “continually do cry,” with apparently never a thought of the advantage it might be to themselves — the trick of combination. This lesson once learned, Liberty may bury her own remains, for assuredly none will perform that pious office for her with impunity. It has not come to that yet, but when by virtue of controlling a newspaper a man is permitted to print and circulate thousands of copies of a slander which neither he nor any man would dare to speak before his victim’s friends a long step has been taken toward the goal of entire irresponsibility. George Augustus Sala said that from sea to sea America was woman's kingdom, which she ruled with absolute sway. Yet in America the father does not protect his daughter, the son his mother, the brother his sister nor the husband his wife, except in the theatrical profession, by way of advertisement. The noblest and most virtuous lady in the land may be coarsely derided, her reputation stabbed, her face, figure or toilet made the subject of a scurrile jest, and no killing ensue, provided the offense be committed with such circumstances of dissemination and publicity as types alone can give it.

III

If the editor of a newspaper has any regard for his judgment; that is, if he has any judgment he will not indulge in prophecy. The most conspicuous instances of the folly of predictions are those that occur in a political "campaign." There is a venerable and hoary tradition among those ignorant persons who conduct party organs that the best and most effective way to make their party win is to assert and re-assert that it *will.* This infantile notion they act upon *ad nauseam,* and doubtless lose by it a good many votes for their party that it would otherwise receive, by making the more credulous among their readers so sure of success that they do not think it worth while to vote. If you could convince an unborn babe that it was going to be born with a silver spoon in its mouth it would not exert itself to procure that spoon.

But making all due allowance for what the babes first above mentioned do from "policy," it remains true that partisan editors — whose bump of common sense is countersunk till it would hold a hen's egg — actually believe in the inevitable success of their ticket every time and once more. The election comes and a half of them are shown to their readers in the true character of persons whose judgment is not worth a pin on any matter under the sun. The mantle of the prophet having been raped away from the partisan editor's shoulders, it is seen that motley is his only wear, and his readers — themselves of equal incapacity — feel for him ever thereafter the contempt which he made such sacrifices to deserve. Does it teach him anything? Something Solomon hath said on this point — something about a fool and a mortar.

The editor-person's defense is somewhat as follows: "The income of my paper depends not alone upon the favor of its readers, but upon that of the party managers, and these latter certainly, if not the former, would withhold their patronage (keeping it in the campaign fund) if I did not ‘whoop her up.’ They believe in literary brass-banding and fireworking. They wish to hear ‘Hail to the Chief’ in every editorial line and in all the dispatches. If I exclude from my columns news that is not news, but the outgivings of partisan enthusiasm or the calculated falsehoods of partisan chicanery; if, in short, I refuse to sell dishonest goods, I lose my chance at the loaves and fishes and my paper is deposed from its proud position as an organ.”

As to all that I have nothing to say. If a man choose to defend the picking of others’ pockets by the plea that it fills his own, and that if he stop his pal will no longer divide with him, the only cogent reply that I know of is to call the police.

As to the “general reader,” who is not entirely a scoundrel nor altogether a fool, he requires no assurances of success to keep his courage up. In order to retain his favor it is unnecessary to seem no wiser than himself and to share with him the dirty last ditch of his broken hope every few years. The notion that an editor must “identify” himself with all the wild and fallacious hopes of his readers, with all their blind, brute prejudices and with the punishment of them, is a discreditable tradition of the newspaper business, having nothing in it. The traditions of every business are the creation of little, timid men whose half-success is achieved, not by their methods, but in spite of them, and because of the scarcity of men of brains. If these were plentiful there would be nothing left for the traditionaries to accomplish. The man of brains makes his success by the clarity of his understanding: by discerning beneath the traditions the principles, and, ignoring the former, applying the latter in his own way — which his competitors and successors fondly believe they can imitate by following his methods. In nothing has a great success, or rather a succession of great successes, been made except by cutting loose from the traditions and doing what the veteran experts gasp to observe.

IV

Some years ago — as lately as the presidential contest between Cleveland and Blaine — it was a cast-iron tradition of journalism that personal defamation was a necessary and effective aid to success. True, every newspaper deprecated it in a general way, and rose at it, shrieking when it hurt; but nearly all practised it and always had done so. Every political campaign was a disgraceful welter of detraction and calumniation. To snout out a candidate’s “personal record,” and if it was found clean befoul it — that was what the partisan editor regarded as his first and highest duty to his party. The besmirching of candidates was a tradition sacred and inviolable; it is now a dead practice, and we have probably seen the last campaign of mud-slinging. The thing might advantageously have been stopped at any time. The people did not demand it; they were as decent then as now. The case was that newspaper men did not know their business; and in respect of many other disreputable survivals they do not know it now. I could name a full dozen newspaper traditions now in full and strenuous vitality that are as needless and mischievous as the vilification of candidates. They will all die hard, but die they must, for the world will finally fall into the sun, which will consume them.

V

That the newspapers might with advantage to the community be made a deal cleaner is a proposition hardly open to question. In my judgment this could be done without loss to their owners, but that is an irrelevant consideration. It is not permitted to them to urge that a decenter course would ruin them, for the community is under no obligation to make publication of newspapers profitable. To the editorial argument, “I have to live,” the answer is, “Yes, but not in that way.” That plea is precisely as valid when made by the burglar. Every one who has not committed a capital crime has a right to live, but no one has a right to live by mischief.

Clean newspapers if enterprising, honest and clever do thrive; so what is really meant by “the right to live” is the right to live in luxury — the right to a great income, instead of a smaller one. There is no such right. If there were it would spare from condemnation the grocer who sells poisonous goods because there is a demand for them, the noctivagant Dago crying his rotten tamales, the quack doctor in pursuit of his patient’s health. There is no such right.

Charles Dudley Warner said, and it is repeated after him with tireless iteration, that nearly every publisher of a newspaper is making a better paper than he can afford to make. That is true, provided (1) that good newspapers are not so well supported as bad, and (2) that publishers cannot “afford” to be poor, or only moderately wealthy. Some of the best and greatest men in the world, including Jesus Christ, have thought they could afford to be poor. Poverty is not dear at the price that one pays for it; it is dirt-cheap. Any one can afford it, and many can not afford to be without it.

The right to publish news *because* it is news has no basis in law nor in morals;

nor dare its most intrepid protagonist assert his claim in consistent practice. Every newspaper man learns almost daily of occurrences so lurid, of sins so “sensational,” of crimes so awful that they have immunity from print. The world is not only a good deal better but a good deal worse than it looks through any newspaper. An editor has constantly to “draw the line”; he can draw it where he pleases — nobody is compelling him to “go far” in publication of immorality. To assert a right to do so; to affirm other compulsion than curiosity — that is dishonest. It is dishonest to unload his responsibility upon the shoulders of even the sinners whose sins he relates. They break the laws of decency, but they do not compel him to. They do not force him to expose for sale narratives of their offenses; they prefer that he do not. He has no mandate to make the way of the transgressor hard: we have laws for that. He has only the mandate of his pocket; if in obeying it he damage or disgust or distress the best persons among whom he lives he can not plead the profit that he makes in gratification of the others. It is no way desirable that they be gratified.

A BENIGN INVENTION

I

THE phonograph has not accomplished all that was expected of it, yet it has proved a most interesting and valuable invention. One of its achievements is of the nature of a revelation: it has proved that even the most loquacious person is unacquainted with the sound of his own voice. As reproduced by the machine, one's voice seems to be that of a stranger: his ear does not recognize it, and he is with difficulty convinced that he hears himself as others hear him. Commonly, it is said, the effect is deeply disappointing; the tones are not so rich and mellow as he had a right to expect, and he leaves the instrument with a chastened spirit and a broken pride.

The instrument has herein a broad field of usefulness. As a teacher of humility it takes rank with the parson, the flirt, the mirror and the banana peel on the sidewalk. It humbles the orator and strews repentant ashes on the head of the ardent young woman who has taken lessons in elocution but none in forbearance. The amateur who has always a cold when pressed to sing takes on an added reluctance having in it an element of sincerity. In the meek taciturnity of the "good conversationalist" society finds a new edification and delight.

For these and similar benefactions let us be truly thankful; but we should not hope for too much. The blessing is bright, but it may not be lasting. It is not in human nature to wear sackcloth and ashes as a permanent apparel. In the valley of humility are no old residents. As much as is herein affirmed of the phonograph might with equal reason have been expected from its elder brother, the photograph. "Who," it might once have been asked, "will have the hardihood to go unveiled and unblushing after experiencing the awful revelations of the camera?" Alas! man was created upright, but he has sought out many improvements. No sooner had the merciless sun-picture begun to take the conceit out of us than some ingenious malefactor rushed to the rescue with a process called "retouching," whereby the once honest camera was made to lie like a lover; men and women resumed their vanity, revised and enlarged it, and made it a means of afflicting their friends with portraits that shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

The ingenuity that invented the phonograph can adapt it to our need and our hope by taking the sting out of it. Mr. Edison will doubtless discern a commercial advantage in devising a method of “retouching” the little waxen cylinder — so smoothing its asperities that it will give off tones and cadences radically different from, and infinitely superior to, those that it received. The most rasping nasal twang will be transmuted “into something rich and strange.” The catarrhal accent of the Boston maiden will reappear as that “vocal velvet” wherewith the British blondes of the “Black Crook” period enravished the soul of Richard Grant White. The irritating stammerer will ejaculate into the machine his impedimentary utterances and get them back in a smooth rill of speech — a fluent, flute-like warble. We shall easily learn to accept these pleasing vocal fictions, deriving from the falsified record a rich and high delight. Enamored of what we conceive to be the music of our own voices, and persuaded of their happy effect upon others, we shall cultivate loquacity as an art and practice prolixity as a virtue. In the retouched phonogram lurk the promise and potency of a pleasure incomparably more mischievous than the confusion of tongues on the plain of Shinar.

II

There appears to be no reason to doubt that Mr. Edison’s most remarkable invention, the theoscope, has a great future before it. An instrument that enables us to see another as he sees himself must accomplish great good by promoting clear understandings between man and man, and subjecting estimates of personal character to the chance of revision. As matters now stand, and have stood from time immemorial, our opinion of even a man whom we have known from infancy is formed by a series of what are known to journalism as “Star Chamber proceedings,” in which the man himself is not heard with that fulness and frankness that are desirable. It is hardly fair either to convict or to acquit him — nay, even to honor or reward him — upon indirect testimony, introduced by him for another purpose. True justice obviously requires that A in making up his mind about B should in some way, if possible, avail himself of the advantage of looking into a mind already made up — a mind enriched and instructed by longer and nearer observation of the subject upon which light is sought: in short, B’s mind. If Mr. Edison’s invention make this as practicable as (if practicable) it is imperative, he has indeed brought “joy to the afflicted” in a way to make the proprietor of a patent medicine grow green with envy.

That he should call his marvelous and delicate appliance a theoscope appears at first thought a reasonless and wanton exercise of the right of nomenclature; but on reflection the name seems singularly appropriate. “Theoscope,” I venture to inform the reader unacquainted with Greek, is from the words *theo*, god, and *skopein*, to view. The theoscope is therefore an instrument with which to look at gods. When one man sees another as the other sees himself, the image, naturally, is one of supernatural dignity and importance — one worthy of divine honors, even if ‘tis not in mortals to command them. One hardly knows which to admire the more, the ingenuity that invented the theoscope or the inspiration that named it.

Most readers are more or less disposed to agree with Burns that the gift to see ourselves as others see us would from many a blunder free us, and foolish notion; but few, probably, have reflected on the considerable advantage of seeing others as they see themselves. It seems certain, for example, that it would notably minish the acerbities of debate if each of two disputants could behold in the other, not an obstinate, pig-headed malefactor endeavoring by unfair means to establish an idiotic proposition, but a high-hearted philanthropist, benevolent and infallible, tenderly concerned for an erring opponent’s reclamation and intellectual prosperity. The general use of the theoscope in newspaper offices can hardly fail profoundly to modify and mollify discussion, in range and heat. When the editor of the *Cow County Opinionator* has written down the editor of the *Hog’s-Back Allegationist* as “a loathsome contemporary whose moral depravity is only exceeded by his social degradation, and whose skill in horse-stealing has been thought worthy of record in the books of a court which his ill-gotten gold was unable to corrupt,” it may occur to him to ring up his enemy and inveigle him to the other end of the apparatus. The god-like image of a blameless man and generous rival which will then confront him he may know in his soul to be an incredibly counterfeit presentment, but the moral effect of looking at a noble work of the imagination is to soften the heart and elevate the sentiments: he will probably find something in his written censure which he would willingly let die save for the precious example of its incomparable style.

If the theoscope may be expected to work so desirable moral changes in the man at the receiving instrument, what may we not hope as to its influence on the person before the transmitter? To be seen at last as one really is (according to one’s own belief) must necessarily be supremely gratifying to all who have known and bewailed the opacity of the glass through which they have hitherto been seen darkly. No longer doomed to chafe under the disability that forbids expression, our natures must expand to something nearly as great and good as that other self which we can send over the wire by merely touching a button.

When a famous cartoonist had the justice to offset his weekly caricatures by representing his favorite victims once as they would have represented themselves he doubtless did something toward discrediting his own conceptions and justifying theirs. There are persons whom nothing will reform, but it would be possible to make a long list of “prominent citizens” who would be lifted to the breezy altitudes of a higher and better life by the consciousness, however erroneous, of the power so to present their true personalities that he who runs may read, instead of so that he who reads runs, as now.

ACTORS AND ACTING

I

WAS Sir Henry Irving a great actor? Possibly; there is abundant testimony, little evidence. The testimony of Englishmen is to be received with caution, for Irving was an Englishman; that of Americans with greater caution, for the same reason. The narrowest provincialism in the world is that of great cities, and London is the greatest city. What London says all England repeats; and America affirms it on oath. It is understood, as a matter of course, that in the judgment of England the best English actor, writer or artist is the best in the world. If one has conquered his way to the foremost place in the approval of a small London clique, not, in the case of an actor, exceeding a half-dozen men promoted to power by a process of selection with which ability has had nothing to do, one has conquered half the world. It would be easy to name the half-dozen who made Henry:

Irving's fame and set it sailing o'er the seas with bellying canvas and flag apeak. On this side no one ever demanded the ship's papers. This is Echoland, home of the dittomaniac. We are freemen, but not bigoted ones.

For aught I know Irving may have been as good an actor as his countrymen who saw him thought him. Nay, he may have been half as good as my countrymen who did not see him think him. I myself saw him play only two or three times. He was not then a good actor, but that was a long time before his death; judgment from the fading memory of a performance decades ago would hardly do. Wherein, then, lies excuse of this present infervency — this cry *qui vive* at the outpost of the camp? Herein. Not only were Irving's credentials defective; there is a strong presumption that the defect was irreparable — that they "certificate a sham." This defect was racial. The English are, if not an unemotional, an undemonstrative people. When sad the Englishman does not weep, when pleased he does not laugh. Anger him and he will neither stamp nor tear his hair; startle him and he jumps not an inch. His conversation is destitute of vivacity and unaided by gesticulation. His face does not light up when he deems it his duty to smile. His transports of affection are moderated to the seemly ceremony of shaking hands; though he is said sometimes to kiss his grandmother if she is past seventy and will let him. Removed from his brumous environment, the English human being becomes in time accessible to light and heat — penetrable by the truth that all manifestation of emotion and sentiment is not necessarily vulgar; but in the tight little isle Stolidity holds her immemorial sway without other change in the administrative function than occasional substitution of the stare of deprecation for the stare of com* placency.

To suppose that great actors can come of a race like that is to trifle with the laws of nature. Acting is preeminently the art of expression — expression of the sentiments and emotions by speech, look, gesture, movement — in every way that one person can address the eye and ear of another. It requires the acutest and alertest sensibilities, faculties all responsive to subtle stirs of feeling. Are these English characteristics? Clearly not; they are those of the peoples that (in England) are despised as "volatile,"

"garrulous,"

"excitable" — the French and Italians, for examples, who have produced the only really good actors of modern times. Our own actors are better than the English, but not good; one sees better acting about a dining-table in Paris than has ever been seen on the stage of London or New York — excepting when it is held by players in whose veins is the fire of Southern suns, whose nerves dance to the rhythmic beat of Mediterranean ripples and

keep, with Capri's sunny fountains,
Perpetual holiday.

One pale globule of our cold Teutonic blood queers the whole performance. For German, English and American actors society should provide "homes," with light employment, good plain food and, when they keep their mouths shut and their limbs quiet, thunders of artificial applause.

II

Few respectable shams are to me more distasteful than the affectation of delight in the performance of an actor who speaks his lines in a tongue unknown to the audience, as did sometimes the late Signor Rossi in the role of "Otello." It is of the essence and validity of acting that it address the understanding through the ear as well as the eye. The tones of an actor's voice, however pleasing, do not address the understanding at all without intelligible words; they are no more than the notes of a violin — the pleasure they give is purely sensual, and the speaker might as well articulate no words at all. A play, or a part in a play, performed in unfamiliar speech is hardly better than a pantomime, and those who profess to find in it an intellectual gratification — well, they may be very estimable persons, for aught I know.

It is not enough, in order to enjoy “Othello” or “Hamlet,” that the audience have a general familiarity with the part; their knowledge of it must be minute and precise. They must know of what particular sentiment a facial expression is the visible exponent; of what particular word a gesture is the accompaniment. Else how can they know that the look is natural, the motion impressive? If one had memorized the part *verbatim,* and the meaning of every word, the accidental omission of a sentence would break the chain, and all that the eye should afterward report of the passage would be meaningless. How shall you know that the actor “suits the action to the word” if you know not the word? To a mind ignorant of Italian the “Otello” of Signor Rossi may have been a noble exercise in guessing; as acting it can have had no value.

III

We are all familiar with the hoary old dictum that the public has no concern with the private lives of the show folk. I must ask leave to differ. I must insist that the public has a most serious interest in the chastity of girls and the fidelity of wives. It is not good for the public that its women be taught by conspicuous example that to her who possesses a single talent, or any number of talents, a life of shame is no bar to public adulation. Every young and inexperienced woman believes herself to have some commanding quality which properly fostered will bring her fame. If she knows that she can do nothing else she thinks that she can write poetry. Is not the father mad who shows his ambitious daughter how little men really care for virtue — how tolerant they are of vice if it be gilded with genius? Worse and most shameful of all, women who clutch away their skirts from contact with some poor devil of a girl who having soiled herself is unable to sing herself out of the mire, will take their pure young girls to see the world worshiping at the feet of a wanton and her paramour because, forsooth, both are gifted and one is beautiful. Let these tender younglings lay well to heart the lesson in charity. Let them not forget that in their parents’ judgment an uncommon physical formation, joined with an exceptional talent, excuses an immoral life.

Talent? Beauty alone is all-sufficient. Was not” the whole eastern half of this continent, at one time, overhung with clouds of incense burned at the shrine of Beauty unadorned with virtue? Did not the western half give it hospitable welcome and set the wreath upon a brow still reeking of a foreign lecher's royal kisses and the later salutes of an impossible gambler? She was not even an actress — she could play nothing but the devil. The foundation of her fame and fortune was scandal — scandal lacking even the excuse of love. She had the sagacity to boast of a distinction that she enjoyed in common with a hundred less thrifty dames. She knew the shortest cut to the American heart and pocket.

She knew that American fathers, husbands, brothers, sons and lovers would be so base as to come and bring her gold, and that American mothers, wives, sisters, daughters and sweethearts would be bad enough to accompany them, to gaze without a blush at the posings of a simpleton recommended by a prince. She gathered her sheaves and went away. She came back to the re-ripening harvest, hoping that God would postpone the destruction of a corrupt land until she could get out of it.

Heaven forbid that I should set myself up as a censor of any offenders save those who have the hardihood to continue infamous; I only beg to point out that when Christ shielded the woman taken in adultery he did not tell her that if she were a good singer she might go her way and sin more. That is how I answer the ever-ready sneer about "casting the first stone." That is how I cast it. If the fallen woman, finding herself possessed of a single talent, had gone into business as a show without reforming her private morals Christ would not have been found standing all night in line to buy tickets for himself and the Blessed Virgin.

I am for preserving the ancient, primitive distinction between right and wrong. The virtues of Socrates, the wisdom of Aristotle, the examples of Marcus Aurelius and Jesus Christ are good enough to engage my admiration and rebuke my life. From my fog-scourged and plague-smitten morass I lift reverent eyes to the shining summits of eternal truth, where they stand; I strain my senses to catch the law that they deliver. In every age and clime vice and folly have shared the throne of a double dominance, dictating customs and fashions. At no time has the devil been idle, but his freshest work few eyes are gifted with the faculty to discover. We trace him where the centuries have hardened his tracks into history, but round about us his noiseless footfalls awaken no sense of his near activity.

The subject is too serious to be humorously discussed. This glorification of the world's higher harlotage is one of the great continental facts that no ingenuity, no sophistry, no sublimity of lying can circumnavigate. It marks a civilization that is ripe and rotten. It characterizes an age that has lost the landmarks of right reason. These actors and actresses of untidy lives — they reek audibly. We should not speak of going to see them; “I am going to smell Miss Molocha Montflummery in ‘Juliet’” — that would adequately describe the moral situation. Brains and hearts these persons have none; they are destitute of manners, modesty and sense. The sight of their painted faces, the memory of their horrible slang, their simian cleverness, their vulgar *“aliases”* their dissolute lives, half emotion and half wine — these are a sickness to any cleanly soul.

Moreover, I advance the belief that any woman who publicly, for gain or glory, charity or caprice, makes public exhibition of any talent or grace that she may happen to have, maculates the chastity of her womanhood, and is thenceforth unworthy of a manly love. No man of sensibility but feels a twinge on reading his wife’s, or his sister’s, or his daughter’s name in print; none but trembles to hear it upon the lips of strangers. You might easily prove the absurdity of this feeling; but she is the wisest, and cleanest, and sweetest, and best beloved who is not at the pains to disregard it. Gentlemen, charge your glasses — here’s a health to the woman that is not a show.

THE VALUE OF TRUTH

THE Texas Legislature once considered a bill that was of some importance to liars. It provided that if a man called another a liar and the latter disclosed his sense of the situation by “putting a head on” the former, the State would hold him guiltless of offense. Texan public opinion naturally viewed it with alarm as an attempt to introduce alien and doubtful customs by substitution of the fist for the bowie-knife. It appears, though, that several States of the Union have laws against calling one a liar. In Virginia, Kentucky and Arkansas, it is a misdemeanor punishable by fine. In Mississippi, South Carolina and West Virginia it is ground for civil action for damages. Georgia makes it a felony if it is untrue. In none of these states, apparently, and nowhere else, is it either a misdemeanor or a felony to *be* a liar. That seems rather queer, does it not? I wonder why it is so.

Now that I think of it, I seem always to have observed (and possibly the phenomenon has not been overlooked by all others) that the man whom the word “liar” maddens to crime is commonly not maddened to anything in particular by the consciousness of being one.

The philosophy of the matter is that truthfulness, like all the other virtues, takes rank as such because in the long run, and in the greater number of instances, it is expedient. Whatever is, generally speaking, expedient, that is to say, conducive to the welfare of the race, comes to be considered a virtue; whatever, with only the same limitations, does not promote, but obstructs, the welfare of the race is held to be a sin. Morality has, and can have, no other basis than expediency. A virtue is not an end; it is a means; the end is that only conceivable welfare, happiness. To increase the sum of happiness — that is the only worthy ambition, the only creditable motive. Whatever does that is right; whatever does the contrary is wrong. An act that does neither the one nor the other has no moral character at all. That an act can be right or wrong without regard to its consequences is to a sane understanding an unthinkable proposition. It is difficult to imagine a world in which happiness would commonly be promoted by falsehood, but in such a world falsehood would indubitably be considered, and rightly considered, a virtue, and to be called1 a truth-teller would be resented as an insult, especially by those most irreclaimably addicted to the habit.

During a recent trial of a postal-service “grafter” a witness confessed with candor that one of his commercial habits was that of saying “the thing that is not.”

“You can’t help telling lies in business,” he explained. But you can; you can tell the truth for the good of your soul and make an assignment foe the benefit of your creditors.

To be serious, no man of sense really believes that falsehood is necessary to success in business. The practices and customs of every; trade and profession are those which commend theirselves to approval of small men, men with an impediment in their thought. It is they who virtually conduct the affairs of (the world, for there are too few of the other sort to count for much. These little fellows, therefore, “set the fashion,” determine the ethics and traditions in business, in law, in medicine, in politics, in religion, in journalism. The most conspicuous characteristic of this pigmy band is a predisposition to small deceits. The first word that rises to their lips is a lie; the last word that leaves them is a lie. Go into the first shop you find and ask for something not kept there, but which you know all about. Observe the salesman’s, or, alas, saleswoman’s, alacrity in telling you a lie to induce you to abandon your preference in favor of something that is kept there. Do you fancy it is different in dealing with those higher in the scale of commercial being? A wealthy and most respectable business man once told me that among the two or three scores of similar men with whom he daily dealt there was not one that he could believe; he had to try to discern their secret wishes and intentions through the fog of falsehood in which they sought to conceal them. He had himself a method quite as misleading; he deceived them by telling the truth. They couldn’t imagine a man doing a thing like that, so they disbelieved him and he got the better of them.

That is his account of the matter. Perhaps it is true — he may have wanted me to think him a liar. Anyhow, the method of deceit that he professed has sometimes been successfully followed in large affairs, notably by the late Prince Bismarck. When he entered the field of diplomacy he found it such a nest of liars that for centuries no man in it had believed another. He could deceive only by being truthful, and for many years he fooled all the diplomats by his amazing and confusing candor in disclosing his desires and intentions. If he had lived a thousand years he would have revolutionized diplomacy and would then have reverted, with a special advantage to himself, to the senior practices of the trade. But he died and his method died with him.

If truth is so valuable why do not all truthful men succeed? Because not all truthful men have brains. Not all men of truth and brains have energy. Not all men of truth and brains and energy have opportunity. Not all men of truth and brains and energy and opportunity are lucky. And finally, not all men of truth and brains and energy and opportunity and luck particularly care to succeed; some of us like to ignore the gifts of nature and dawdle through life in something of the peace that we expect after death. Moreover, there is a difference of opinion as to what is success. I know an abandoned wretch who considers himself prosperous when happy; do you know any one who considers himself happy when prosperous?

In the sweat of their consciences most men eat bread. I doubt if they find it particularly sweet, even when, having a whole loaf, they see a neighbor with none. They are tormented with a craving for pillicum. (There is no such dish as pillicum — that is why they crave it.) Go to, all ye that pursue shadows, or fly from them. Learn to be content with what you have. True, if all were that way there would be an end to civilization, which is the daughter of discontent and worthy of its mother; but that is not your affair. You are custodians of your own happiness and have a right to peace, health and sweet sleep o' nights. You are not bound to take account of hypothetical perils; it will be time to consider the extinction of civilization when you observe that all are becoming content. Contentment is a virtue which at present seems to be confined mainly to the wise and the infamous.

1903.

SYMBOLS AND FETISHES

I

HERALDRY dies hard, it is of purely savage origin, having its roots in the ancient necessity of tribal classification. Before our ancestors had a written language their tribes and families found it convenient to distinguish themselves from one another by rude pictures of such objects as they knew about, with improvements by the artist of the period — the six-legged lion, the two-headed eagle, the spear-point lily and die thistle-with-a-difference. The modifications were infinite; accessories developed into essentials and the science of heraldry was evolved, to explain what the pictures were and expound their meaning. Like the priests and the medicine men of all times, and the lawyers and all other professionals of our time, heralds were swift to discern a profit in complicating their fad with an unthinkable multitude of invented additions and technical shibboleths intelligible to nobody but themselves; and to-day, when the entire scheme has long ceased to have any practical relation to the lives of men and the polity of nations, there are in Europe high officers of government charged with the duty of its exposition and conservation, and with the custody of its ludicrous muniments and paraphernalia. And men and women accounted intelligent and modest are proud of devices owing their origin to barbarism, their signification to the thrifty ingenuity of drones and leeches and their perpetuation to the same naked and unashamed vanity as that of men who decorate their breasts with “orders” and “crosses” certifying their personal merit.

Where these things exist as “survivals” their use is at least a supportable stupidity; but in America, where they come by coldblooded adoption essentially simian, they are offensive. Many of the devices upon the seals of our states are no less ridiculous than those used (or the use of any) by some of our “genteel” families to hint at an illustrious descent. Our national coat-of-arms itself is almost enough to make a self-respecting American forswear his allegiance. From a shield with an eagle on it we have developed an eagle with a shield on it. We may call it the American eagle, but it is the same old bird that tore the heart out of Gaul and the gall out of Carthage; the same that has whetted his bloody beak upon the bones of a thousand tribes now extinct; the same that was fearfully and wonderfully drawn in berry-juice upon rocks to glad the vanity of the shockheaded cave-dweller when the browsing mammoth was flushed with rose in the dawning of time.

II

Says one writing of the “Stars and Stripes “The American flag is an emblem not only of freedom but of civilization; and as such, it ought to be beloved and worshiped by all who live under it or who in any wise receive the benefit which it confers on mankind.”

That is a pretty fair sample of what one can be brought to feel by inability to think without confusion. Human nature presents no more striking characteristic than the tendency to neglect the substance and consider the shadow; to forget the end, in contemplation and approval of the means; to substitute principle for action and ceremony for principle; to attribute to the symbol the virtues of the thing symbolized. It evidently did not occur to the patriotic gentleman who wrote the quoted sentence, and much else in the same spirit, that the flag being only an “emblem” of freedom and civilization (our kind of freedom and civilization, by the way) is not at all entitled to the love and worship that he solicits for it; these should go, not to the flag, but to the things of which it is an emblem — to freedom and civilization. His idolatrous tendency and his truly heathenish confusion of mind are still further shown in his reference of “the benefit which it” (the flag, observe) “confers on mankind.” His is a typical utterance: the vestigial idolatry of the cave-dweller and the sylvan nomad is still strong in the race, and flag-worship is one of its most reasonless manifestations. Everywhere and always in these days of war we hear and read words about the flag which a thinking human being would be ashamed to utter of an actual beneficent deity. There is no room whatever for doubt that what the average patriot acclaims and honors is the actual colored silk or bunting, not what it represents. To the conception of abstractions he comes unfitly equipped, but he can see a tinted rag. I do not know that any harm comes of his fetishism; it is noted merely as an interesting and significant phenomenon — one of a thousand proving the brevity of our advance along the line of progress toward enlightenment. It is of a piece of the average human being’s more or less sincere respect for truth, justice, chastity and so forth, not as practicable means to the end of human happiness, but as things creditable and desirable in themselves, even when subversive of their actual purpose by promoting misery.

Let the flag flap, and let “our ill-starred fellow citizens” who are unable to get a firm mental grasp on what it stands for knuckle down upon their knees before it and lift the voice. But, God bless them! how they would be shocked to observe the indifference with which it is regarded by soldiers in battle! One of the sharpest and most righteous rebukes I ever got from high authority was for permitting my color-sergeant to flaunt his gaudy symbol in the face of a battery. To civilian orators and poets the flag is sacred; to the intelligent soldier it is merely useful: it marks the battle line, preserves the unity of the regiment and “inspires” the soldier that is unintelligent.

A singularly disagreeable instance of fetishism is related of the Hon. William Jennings Bryan. While in Tokio, the story goes — among his admirers — he purchased a stool upon which Admiral Togo had sat at a Shinto ceremony. The story has it that the sale was reluctantly made, for the stool had been long a sacred object before it was newly consecrated by contact with the person of the renowned sailor; but the custodians did not feel at liberty to disappoint so illustrious an American as Mr. Bryan. On learning this, the great man magnanimously returned it and contented himself, as well as he could, with a common chair upon which Togo had sat in a restaurant.

It is disagreeable to think of Mr. Bryan in the character of a sycophantic souvenir hunter. It is disagreeable to think that even the humblest and obscurest American citizen can have so little self-respect. Anthropolatry is but a shade less base and barbarous than that other primitive religion, fetishism; and the two, as in this instance, are often in coexistence. No superstition seems ever wholly to die. Both these are rife and rampant in the civilization of to-day, and one can name, offhand, a dozen of their customary manifestations by persons who would be shocked by the revelation of their close relationship to the shagpate cave-dweller, the remoter *pithecanthropes erectus*, and, at the back of them both, the quadrumanal arborean with a vestigial swim-bladder.

DID WE EAT ONE ANOTHER?

THERE is no doubt of it. The unwelcome truth has been long suppressed by interested parties who find their account in playing sycophant to that self-satisfied tyrant Modern Man; but to the impartial philosopher it is as plain as the nose upon the elephant's face that our ancestors ate one another. The custom of the Fiji Islanders, which is their only stock-in-trade, their only claim to notoriety, is a relic of barbarism; but it is a relic of our barbarism.

Man is naturally a carnivorous animal. That none but green-grocers will dispute. That he was formerly less vegetarian in his diet than at present, is clear from the fact that market gardening increases in the ratio of civilization. So we may safely assume that at some remote period Man subsisted on an exclusively flesh diet. Our uniform vanity has given us the human mind as the acme of intelligence, the human face and figure as the standard of beauty. Of course we cannot deny to human fat and lean an equal superiority over beef, mutton and pork. It is plain that our meat-eating ancestors would think in this way, and being unrestrained by the mawkish sentiment attendant on high civilization, would act habitually on the obvious suggestion. *A priori,* therefore, it is clear that we ate ourselves.

Philology is about the only thread that connects us with the prehistoric past. By picking up and piecing together the scattered remnants of language, we form a patchwork of wondrous design and significance. Consider the derivation of the word "sarcophagus," and see if it be not suggestive of potted meats. Observe the significance of the phrase "sweet sixteen." What a world of meaning lurks in the expression "she is as sweet as a peach," and how suggestive of luncheon are the words "tender youth." A kiss is but a modified bite, and a fond mother, when she says her babe is "almost good enough to eat," merely shows that she is herself only a trifle too good to eat it.

These evidences might be multiplied *ad infinitum;* but if enough has been said to induce one human being to revert to the diet of his forefathers the object of this essay is accomplished.

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THE BACILLUS OF CRIME

FOR a number of years it has been known to all but a few ancient physicians — survivals from an exhausted régime — that all disease is caused by *bacilli,* which worm themselves into the organs that secrete health and enjoin them from the performance of that rite. The medical conservatives mentioned attempt to whittle away the value and significance of this theory by affirming its inadequacy to account for such disorders as broken heads, sunstroke, superfluous toes, Home-sickness, burns and strangulation on the gallows; but against the testimony of so eminent bacteriologers as Drs. Koch and Pasteur their carping is as that of the impatient angler. The *bacillus* is not to be denied; he has brought his blankets and is here to stay until evicted. Doubtless we may confidently expect his eventual supersession by a fresher and more ingenious disturber of the physiological peace, but he is now chief among ten thousand evils and the one altogether lovely, and it is futile to attempt to read him out of the party.

. It follows that in order to deal intelligently with the criminal impulse in our afflicted fellow-citizens we must discover the *bacillus* of crime, which we now know is merely disease with another name. To that end we think that the bodies of hanged assassins and such patients of low degree as have been gathered to their fathers by the cares of public office or consumed by the rust of inactivity in prison should be handed over to a microscopical society for examination. The bore, too, offers a fine field for research, and might justly enough be examined alive. Whether there is one general — or as the ancient and honorable orders prefer to say, “grand” — *bacillus,* producing a general (or grand) criminal impulse generating a multitude of sins, or an infinite number of well defined and several *bacilli,* each inciting to a particular crime, is a question to the determination of which the most distinguished microscopist might be proud to devote the powers of his eye. If the latter is the case it will somewhat complicate the treatment, for clearly the patient afflicted with chronic assassination will require different-medicines from those which might be efficacious in a gentleman suffering from constitutional theft or the desire to represent his district in Congress. But it is permitted to us to hope that all the crimes, like all the arts, are essentially one; that murder, commerce and respectability are but different symptoms of the same physical disorder, at the back of which is a microbe vincible to a single medicament, albeit the same awaits discovery.

In the fascinating theory of the unity of crime we may not unreasonably hope to find another evidence of the brotherhood of man, another spiritual bond tending to draw the several classes of society more closely together. If such should be the practical effect of the great truth something will have been gained, even if the discovery of a suitable medicine to restore our enemies to health be delayed until all too late to save them from rude and primitive treatment by the sheriff.

1893.

THE GAME OF BUTTON

AMONG the countless evils besetting us in our passage through this vale of tears “to where beyond these voices there is peace,” the button holds a conspicuous place, and is apparently inaccessible to the spirit of reform. Less shocking than war, pestilence or famine, less destructive than the Dingley tariff and less irritating than the Indiana novel, it is thought by many observers to be, in the sum of its effects in reducing the gayety of nations, superior to any of these maleficent agencies, and by some to excel them all together. In the persistent currency of the story of the man who killed himself because of his weariness in buttoning and unbuttoning his clothes we have strong confirmatory testimony to the button’s “natural magic and dire property on wholesome life.” The story itself appears to be destitute of authentication, and but for its naturalness, its inherent credibility and the way that these bring it home to men’s business and bosoms it would probably have had as evanescent a vogue as the immortal works discovered weekly by the literary critics of the newspapers. As it is, this simple and touching tale will probably live as long as any language, possibly as long as the button itself. For the button is apparently immortal. It has struck root deeply into human conservatism — more deeply, 1 am constrained to admit, than it has, generally speaking, into the textile fabrics with which it is commonly but somewhat precariously connected.

That the button is in some sense a benefaction is not lightly to be denied. In its unostentatious way, and when it stays on, it does a good deal for the comfort of mankind, as, the police permitting, one may readily convince himself by walking a few blocks without its artful aid. Its splendid opportunities of usefulness, however, are the creations, not so much of our ingenuity, as of our limitations. If the human race had been born omniscient (in the tops of trees, as is thought to be held by the Darwinians) instead of achieving omniscience too lately to overcome the button habit, we should not have had the primitive appliance thrust upon us, for we should never have thrust ourselves into the tubular clothing which seems to require its ministrations.

Even in the endurance of that capital affliction we are not intelligently aided by the button. It badly serves a needless need and the common sense of the race cries out against it as clumsy, ugly, inefficient and frequently absent from duty at a critical moment which it has malevolently foreseen. It is better than nothing, doubtless, but when considered along with the hook-and-eye, for example, it breaks down at every point of the comparison. The tailor who, disregarding the mandates of conservatism and tradition, and filled with a divine compassion for his race, should rise to the great occasion and with one foot upon the sea and the other upon the land declare that buttons should be no more would accomplish an enduring fame and dispute with Washington and draw-poker the first place in the hearts of his countrymen. He would have only to replace the button, where it serves as a fastener, with some simple adaptation of the hook-and-eye, and where it exists as a mere survival (as for example at the back of a frock-coat, where it once assisted in supporting the sword-belt) put nothing at all, and the millions yet to be would rise up and call him blest.

I have preferred to consider this matter with reference mainly to the woes and wants of the coarser sex, but the button is known to woman. With the charming superiority to reason which her detractors term perversity she prefers it on the left-hand side of her garments, but it dominates her life and poisons her peace none die less for that; albeit she offers herself the solace of turning it into an ornament more or less fearfully and wonderfully made.

In modern religious history Avomen and buttons have a connection which is as singular as interesting. To the great movement which resulted in establishing Protestantism the name “Reformation” is not universally deemed appropriate, but there is one of his many aspects in which Martin Luther may be contemplated by all as a true reformer. Before his day women invariably used the hook-and-eye exclusively, which was well enough. Unfortunately, however, they had conceived the remarkable notion that this simple and useful appliance for joining together what man is not permitted to put asunder, would abate something of its efficacy if placed where reason would naturally suggest. All women’s dresses were made to hook behind, and in being fastened required the services of another person than the wearer. For this reason, and because God had made him so, Luther assailed the custom with all the fire and fierceness of his polemical nature. So long as women could not dress themselves without assistance, he argued, they must be slaves, and their spiritual natures must remain undeveloped until they should fasten their frocks in front. Calvin, on the contrary, found nothing in the Scriptures authorizing women to enter their clothing backward and set his face like a flint against the impious innovation. The contest between the disciples of these two mighty minds was waged with great bitterness, notwithstanding the efforts of the gentle Melancthon, who stood for peace and tried to part them in the middle, enacting, indeed, the role of Mr. Facing-both-ways. In the end Luther conquered. All good Protestant dames and maidens save those of his antagonist’s immediate following adopted his views and eventually the Catholic ladies swung into line, too. But in some of the dark corners of Europe and America a vestige of the Calvinist influence survives, and ladies’ gowns open behind like the chrysalis of a locust.

The one change entailed another; for many years — until, indeed, the button habit had become invincible — it did not occur to any of the hair sex that the hook-and-eye could be used in front as well as surreptitiously behind the back. That truth has now penetrated the female mind and sometimes warms it into action: but for the most part lovely woman is infested with the parasitic button as badly as the male of her species, and of neither does it manifest a disposition to let go. It has usually its buttonhole to bear it company, and doubtless looks forward to a long season of domestic felicity and profound repose while engaged in the business of breaking up families and promoting breaches of the peace by sapping the foundation of temper, leveling the outworks of patience and desolating the whole domain of the Christian virtues.

SLEEP

IT is hardly a “burning question”; it is not even a “problem that presses for solution.” Nevertheless, to minds not incurious as to the future it has a mild, pleasing interest, like that of the faintly heard beating of the bells of distant cows that will come in and demand attention later.

It by no means appears that sleep is a natural function, the necessity of which inheres in animal life and the constitution of things; there is reason to regard it as a phenomenon due rather to stress of circumstances — a kind of intermittent disorder incurred by exposure to conditions that are being slowly but surely removed. Precisely as sanitary and medical science and improved methods of living are gradually extending the length of human life in every civilized country and threatening the king of shadows himself with death ere, in the poet’s sense, “Time shall throw a dart” at him, so we may observe already the initial stages of a successful campaign against his brother “Sleep.” Civilized peoples sleep fewer hours than savage ones, and, among the civilized, dwellers in cities fewer than country folk. The reason is not far to seek: it is a matter of light.

Primitive Man, like the savage of to-day, had at night no other light than that of the moon and that of wood fires. For countless ages our ancestors lived without candles, and when they had learned the trick of burning rushes soaked in the fat of neighboring tribesmen their state was not greatly better. Beyond Primitive Man we may dimly discern *his* ancestors — unmentionable to ears un-Darwinized — who had no artificial light at all. In the darkness of the night and the forest what could these ancient worthies do? They had little enough to do at any time, but even their rudest pursuit — that of one another — could not be carried on in darkness. They did nothing, naturally assuming the most comfortable posture in which to do it, the earlier sort suspending themselves by their tails, the later, having no tails, lying down as we do to-day, or rather to-night. It is a law of nature that when the body, or any organ of it, is inactive a kind of torpor ensues; the blood circulates in it with a more feeble flow; molecular changes take place with a lessened energy — in short, the creature begins to die, and can be restored to full life only by renewal of bodily activity. In the instance of the brain this torpor means unconsciousness — that is to say, sleep. To put the matter briefly, darkness compels inaction, inaction begets sleep.

Another law of nature — a rather comical one — is that acts which we do regularly, from choice or necessity, set up a tendency in us to do them involuntarily when we don't care to; and when the original impulse has been replaced by this new and more imperative one we give it the name of habit and flatter ourselves that we have explained it. Because our pithecanthropoid and autocthonic forefathers, unable by reason of darkness to indulge during the whole twenty-four hours in the one-sided pleasures of the chase and the mutual joy of braining one another, had to sleep, *we* have to sleep; although we have (by paying sorely for it) plenty of light for many kinds of malign activity.

But little by little we are overcoming the sleep habit without loss of health, if not with positive sanitary advantage. As before pointed out, the people of our lighted cities sleep less than the rural population; and this sleeps less than it did before the improvement in lamps. Nothing is more certain, despite popular opinion to the contrary, than that the men of cities are superior in strength and endurance to those of the country, as is abundantly attested in army life, in camp and field. That this is wholly or even greatly due to their nocturnal activity is not affirmed; only that their addiction to the joys of insomnia has not appreciably counteracted the sanitary advantages of city life — amongst which an honorable prominence should be given to defective drainage and drinking-water that is largely solution of dog and hydrate of husband from the city reservoir.

The electric light has apparently "come to stay," but more likely it will in good time be replaced by something that as far exceeds it as itself beats the hallowed tallow candle of our grandmothers. Not only will the streets and shops and dwellings of our cities be illuminated all night with a splendor of which we can have hardly a conception, but the country districts as well; for it is now known that plants (which apparently are not creatures of habit) do not need sleep, and that by continuous light the profits of agriculture could be enormously increased. The farmers will no longer retire with the lark, but will work night shifts, as is already done in factories and mines, and eventually work all the time, in order to support the rest of us in the style to which we have been accustomed.

On the whole, I think it not unreasonable to look forward with pleasant anticipation to a time, some millions of years hence, when the literature of sleep will be no longer intelligible, and the people of even this country be sufficiently wide awake to prevent the ten *per centum* of their number devoted to patriotic pursuits from plundering the other ninety *per centum*, and to make our judges and legislators obey the laws.

CONCERNING PICTURES

I

I HOLD with Story and others whose talents and accomplishments so brilliantly illustrate their faith, that the great artist is almost necessarily a man of high attainments in general knowledge and in more than one branch of art. He who knows but one art knows none. The Muses do not singly disclose themselves; for the favor of one you must sue to all. Consider the great Italian painters, from Angelo and Rafael down the line of merit to the modern masters. As a rule they were men of wisdom, accomplished in all the learning of their time. They were statesmen, scientists, engineers — men of affairs. They knew literature, architecture, sculpture and music, as well as painting. With here and there a notable exception — more notable as an exception than as a painter — the same is true in many a country besides Italy, and many an age besides that in which the genius of her sons kindled the imperishable splendor that burns about her name.

Perception is not the same as discernment, and he who sees with his eyes only will paint with nothing but his hand. Ruskin says the artist is the man who knows "what is going on." To him the primrose is a primrose and something more — a primrose plus what it is doing, saying, thinking, and what is being done, said, thought by its whole environment. The great artist makes everything live; he gives to death itself and desolation a personality and a breathing soul. The rooted rock could move if it wished; trees understand one another; the river is prescient of the sea. Not a pebble, not a grass-blade but is alert with a significant life to further the general conspiracy.

Understand me. This activity is entirely distinct from muscular action, locomotion, motion of any kind or any of the coarser sorts of energy flagrantly depicted. The portrait of a corpse may be full of it, the picture of a bounding horse altogether destitute.

Everything in nature — every single object, every group, every landscape, has a visible expression, as a face has. This can generally be denoted in terms of human emotion. We all know what is meant by an "angry" sky or a "threatening" billow, for we have observed what follows. But we are not all equally sensitive to the joyous aspect of a tree, the sulking of a rock, the menace or the benediction that may speak from a hillside, the reticence of one building and the garrulity of another, the pathos of a blank window, the tendernesses and the terrors that smile and glower everywhere about us. These are no fancies. True, they are but the outward and visible signs of an inner mood; but the objects that bear them beget the mood. No true artist but feels it, and all feel it nearly alike. To discern, to feel, to seize upon this dominant expression and make it predominant in his picture — this, as Taine rightly says, is the painter's function.

I stood once upon the slope of a deep gulch; with me a friend, the quick certainty of whose artistic insight was always to me a source of surprise and delight. Across the gulch, a quarter-mile away, stood two trees, a giant oak, whose great roots corded the rocks like the tentacles of a devil-fish, and a slender pine, springing from clear ground nearby. The oak reached out a long, muscular arm toward the other tree, which, leaning sharply away from the contact, had all its branches on the opposite side. I studied the group for some minutes while my friend had her eyes and thoughts elsewhere. I was endeavoring to interpret the sentiment, which finally I succeeded in doing to my satisfaction; it remained only to test the validity of my conclusion. I said to myself: “Menace and terror”; to my companion: “What is the matter over yonder?” She glanced at the group and replied, without an instant's hesitation, in the first words that came to call: “The little tree is trying to get away from the old scoundrel among the rocks.”

II

The terrible story is told of how the late W. H. Vanderbilt came near being cheated out of three hundred thousand dollars by purchasing a painting that was no better than it looked! From that imminent peril he was rescued by death. The painting, it seems, was discovered (where it had not been lost) by a person — nay, a parson — named Nicole, who gave his personal assurance that it was a Rafael. It must have looked a good deal like a Rafael, for although it was for a long time an object of adoration for artist pilgrims from all over Europe, none detected its spurious character. That is clear from the facts that it was later that Mr. Vanderbilt agreed to take it, and that while negotiations were going on Herr Nicole borrowed twelve thousand dollars on it from a banker who has it yet. That could hardly have been true if the pilgrims to its shrine at Lausanne had had their transports moderated by a suspicion that it was not so good as it looked.

The reader will kindly repress his hilarity. This is no joke. If a picture can not be better than it looks how does it happen that this one is not so valuable after the exposure as it was before? The notion that a picture *can* be better or worse than it looks does seem absurd when one stops to think about it. It is not original with me; the late Bill Nye once set the country smiling by solemnly explaining that he had been told that Wagner's music was better than it sounded.

But why did we laugh? We do not laugh when a wealthy "patron of art," or a paternal government pays an enormous price for a painting *because* it is pronounced by experts to be a genuine work of a famous "old master." And we do not laugh — not all of us — when, as in the present instance, the value drops to nearly nothing because the painting proves to be a copy only, or the work of an unknown hand.

I am no artist — Heaven forbid! — nor even a connoisseur. If I were I should doubtless understand why a copy that is as beautiful as an original is not so desirable a possession — why it does not give so great pleasure to the eye and the mind and the heart. I should understand why the work of an obscure or unknown artist is not so valuable as the work of a famous artist if it happens to be as good.

One would suppose — that is, one unacquainted with art might be conceived as supposing — that the value of a painting would be appraised without reference to the question: Who made it? It seems (to the unenlightened) as if it would make no difference what name was borne by the person that painted it — just as the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* would be equally pleasing whether written by Homer or by "another man of the same name," or another name. I have the hardihood to declare that it is — and here I am on my own ground. I affirm — nay, "swear tiptoed with lifted hand" — that the pleasure of any reasonable man in reading "Ossian" is not abated by knowledge that the author was Macpherson; that to a sane judgment the "Rowley" poems are altogether as delightful as if the secret of their composition had been carried into the next world by little Chatterton when "he perished in his pride." What is it to me, or to you, if the Shakspeare plays were written by Bacon? We have the plays; let us read and be thankful. Shakspeare and Bacon may fight it out in Elysium, with Ignatius Donnelly as umpire; of the decision, "it boots not to inquire."

If that is the mental attitude of the true lover of letters, and it is, why is the true lover of art differently constituted, if he is? Why are "the still vexed Bermoothes" of his soul still vexed? Why can not he make up his mind that a work of art is good, or is bad, and let it go at that, serenely unconcerned about the “irrelevant, incompetent and immaterial” babble of the experts in authenticity?

Being ignorant, I thank Heaven for the existence of artists obscure by fortune or by choice, skilful enough to imitate in line or style the work of the great and famous painters. For gratification of my own eye I would as lief see and possess their work as the work that they imitate. So would anybody — for gratification of his own eye. For pigly satisfaction of owning something denied to one’s neighbor; something rare because death has stopped the supply; something to be triumphantly shown to one’s visitors in the hope of exciting some of the baser passions of the human heart, such as covetousness, envy and the like — for such “satisfaction and refined delight” one would of course prefer an original “old master” and be willing to pay a pretty penny for gratification of the preference.

Some wicked man has said that an artist has sensibility, but no sense. I fancy that is not so, but finding artists pretty generally concerned with questions of the “genuineness” of “canvases” — that is to say, pretty generally assenting to the proposition that a picture can be better or worse than it looks — I am sometimes tormented by doubt.

MODERN WARFARE

I

THE dream of a time when the nations shall war no more is a pleasant dream, and an ancient. Countless generations have indulged it, and to countless others, doubtless, it will prove a solace and a benefaction. Yet one may be permitted to doubt if its ultimate realization is to be accomplished by diligent and general application to the task of learning war, as so many worthy folk believe. That every notable advance in the art of destroying human life should be “hailed” by these good people as a step in the direction of universal peace must be accounted a phenomenon entirely creditable to the hearts, if not to the heads, of those in whom it is manifest. It shows in them a constitution of mind opposed to bloodshed, for their belief having nothing to do with the facts — being, indeed, inconsistent with them — is obviously an inspiration of the will.

“War,” these excellent persons reason, “will at last become so dreadful that men will no longer engage in it” — happily unconscious of the fact that men’s sense of their power to make it dreadful is precisely the thing which most encourages them to wage it. Another popular promise of peace is seen in the enormous cost of modern armaments and military methods. The shot and cartridge of a heavy gun of to-day cost hundreds of dollars, the gun itself tens of thousands. It is at an expense of thousands that a torpedo is discharged, which may or may not wreck a ship worth millions. To secure its safety from the machinations of its wicked neighbors while itself engaged in the arts of peace, a nation of to-day must have an immense sum of money invested in military plant alone. It is not of the nature of man to impoverish himself by investments from which he hopes for no return except security in the condition entailed by the outlay. Men do not construct expensive machinery, taxing themselves poor to keep it in working order, without ultimately setting it going. The more of its income a nation has to spend in preparation for war, the more certainly it will go to war. Its means of defense are means of aggression, and the stronger it feels itself to strike for its altars and its fires, the more spirited becomes its desire to go across the border to upset the altars and extinguish the fires of its neighbors.

But the notion that improved weapons give modern armies and navies an increased killing ability — that the warfare of the future will be a bloodier business than that which we have the happiness to know — is an error which the observant lover of peace is denied the satisfaction of entertaining. Compare, for example, a naval engagement of to-day with Salamis, Lepanto or Trafalgar. Compare the famous duel between the *Monitor* and the *Merrimac* with almost any encounter between the old wooden line-of-battle ships, continued, as was the reprehensible custom, until one or both, with hundreds of dead and wounded, incarnadined the seas by going to the bottom.

As long ago as 1861 a terrific engagement occurred in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. It lasted forty hours, and was fought with hundreds of the biggest and best guns of the period. Not a man was killed nor wounded.

In the spring of 1862, below New Orleans, Porter's mortar boats bombarded Fort Jackson for nearly five days and nights, throwing about 16,800 shells, mostly thirteen inches in diameter. "Nearly every shell," says the commandant of the fort, "lodged inside the works." Even in those days, it will be observed, there were "arms of precision"; and an exploding 13-inch shell is still highly esteemed and respected. As nearly as I can learn, the slaughter amounted to two men.

A year later Admiral Dupont attacked Fort Sumter, then in the hands of the Confederates, with the *New Ironsides*, the doubleturret monitor *Keokuk*, and seven singleturret monitors. The big guns of the fort were too much for him. One of his vessels was struck 90 times, and afterward sank. Another was struck 53 times; another, 35 times; another, 14; another, 47; another, 20; another, 47; another, 95; another 36, and disabled. But they threw 151 shots from their own "destructive" weapons, and these, being "arms of precision," killed a whole man by cutting down a flag-staff, which fell upon him. The total number of shots fired by the enemy was 2,209, and if more than two men were killed by them I am unable to find any account of it. But it was a splendid battle, as every Quaker will allow! In the stubbornest land engagements of our great rebellion, and of the later and more scientific Franco-German and Turko-Russian wars, the proportionate mortality was not nearly so great as in those where "Greek met Greek" hand to hand, or where the Roman with his short sword, the most destructive weapon ever invented, played at give and take with the naked barbarian or the Roman of another political faith. True, we must make some allowance for exaggeration in the accounts of these ancient affairs, not forgetting Niebuhr's assurance that Roman history is nine parts lying. But as European and American history run it pretty hard in respect of that, something, too, may be allowed in accounts of modern battles — particularly where the historian foots up the losses of the side which had not the military advantage of his sympathies.

Improvements in guns, armor, fortification and shipbuilding have been pushed so near to perfection that naval and semi-naval engagements may justly be counted amongst the arts of peace, and must eventually obtain the medical recognition which is their due as means of sanitation. The most notable improvements arc those in small arms. Our young scapegrace grandfathers fought the Revolutionary War with so miserable firearms that they could not make themselves decently objectionable to the minions of monarchy at a greater distance than forty yards. They had to go up so close that many of them lost their tempers. With the modern rifle, incivilities can be carried on at a distance of a mile-and-a-half, with thin lines and a cheerful disposition. The dynamite shell has, unfortunately, done much to gloom this sunniness by suggesting a scattered formation, which makes conversation difficult and begets loneliness. Isolation leads to suicide, and suicide is “mortality.” So the dynamite shell is really not the life-saving device that it looks. But on the whole we seem to be making reasonably good progress toward that happy time, not when “war shall be no more,” but when, being healthful, it will be universal and perpetual. The soldier of the future will die of age; and may God have mercy on his cowardly soul!

It has been said that to kill a man in battle a man’s weight in lead is required. But if the battle happens to be fought by modern warships or forts, or both, about a hundred tons of iron would seem to be a reasonable allowance for the making of a military corpse. In fighting in the open the figures are more cheering. What it cost in our civil war to kill a Confederate soldier is not accurately computable; we don’t know exactly how many we had the good luck to kill. But the “best estimates” are easily accessible.

II

In the *Century* magazine several years ago was a paper on machine guns and dynamite guns. As might have been expected, it opened with a prediction by a distinguished general of the Union armies that, so murderous have warlike weapons become, “the next war will be marked by terrific and fearful slaughter.” This is naturally followed by the writer’s smug and comfortable assurance that “in the extreme mortality of modern war will be found the only hope that man can have of even a partial cessation of war.” If this were so, let us see how it would work. The chronological sequence of events would necessarily (obviously, one would think) be something like this:

1. — Murderous perfection of warlike weapons.

2. — War marked by “terrific and fearful slaughter.”

3. — Consequent cessation of war and disarmament of nations.

4. — Stoppage of the manufacture of military weapons, with resulting decay of dependent industries; that is to say, decay of the ability to produce the weapons. Diversion of intellectual activity to arts of peace.

5. — War no longer capable of being marked by “terrific and fearful slaughter.” *Ergo,* 6. — Revival of war.

All the armies and navies of the world are being equipped with more and more “destructive” weapons. But does this insure a “terrific and fearful slaughter” in battle? Assuredly not. It implies and necessitates profound modifications in tactical formations and movements — modifications similar in kind (though greater in degree) to those already brought about by the long range repeating rifle and the improved field artillery. Men are not going to march up in masses and be mown down by machinery. If the effective range of these guns is, for example, two miles, tactical maneuvers in the open will be made at a greater distance from them. The storming of fortifications and charges in the open ground will go out of fashion. They have, in fact, been growing more and more infrequent ever since the improvements in range and precision of firearms began. If a man who fought under John Sobieski, Marlborough or the first Napoleon could be haled out of his obliterated grave and shown a battle of to-day with all our murderous weapons in full thunder, he would probably knuckle the leaf-mould out of his eyes and say: “Yes, yes, it is most inspiring! — but where is the enemy?”

It is a fact that in the battle of to-day the soldier seldom gets more than a distant and transitory glimpse of the men whom he is fighting. He is still supplied with the sabre if he is “horse,” with the bayonet if he is “foot,” but the value of these weapons is a moral one. When commanded to draw the one or “fix” the other he knows he is expected to advance as far as he dares to go; but he knows, too, if he is not a very raw recruit, that he will not get within sabring or bayoneting distance of his antagonists — who will either break and run away or drop so many of his comrades that he will himself break and run away. In our civil war — and that is very ancient history to the long-range tactician of to-day — it was my fortune to assist at a sufficing number of assaults with bayonet and assaults with sabre, but I have never had the gratification to see a half-dozen men, friends or enemies, who had fallen by either the one weapon or the other. Whenever the opposing lines actually met it was the rifle, the carbine, or the revolver that did the work. In these days of “arms of precision” they do not meet. There is reason, too, to suspect that, therefore, they do not “get mad” and execute all the mischief that they are capable of. It is certain that the machine gun will keep its temper under the severest provocation.

Another great improvement in warfare is a mirror or screen which is placed at the rear of heavy guns, reflecting everything in front. By means of certain mechanism the gun can be trained upon anything so reflected. This enables the gunners to keep out of danger in the bottom of their well and so live to a green old age. The advantage to them is considerable and too obvious to require exposition to anyone but an agnostic; but whether in the long run their country will find any profit in preserving the lives of men who are afraid to die for it — that is another matter. It might be better to incur the expense entailed by having relays of men to be killed in battle than to try to win battles with men who know nothing of the spirit, enthusiasm and heroism that come of peril.

All mechanical devices tend to make cowards of those whom they protect. Men long accustomed to the security of even such slight earthworks as are thrown up by armies operating against each other in the open country lose something out of their general efficiency. The particular thing that they lose is courage. In long sieges the sallies and assaults are commonly feeble, spiritless affairs, easily repelled. So manifestly does a soldier’s comparative safety indispose him to incur even such perils as beset him in it that during the last years of our civil war, when it was customary for armies in the field to cover their fronts with breastworks, many intelligent officers, conceding the need of some protection, yet made their works much slighter than was easily possible. Except when the firing was heavy, close and continuous, “head-logs” (for example) for the men to fire under were distinctly demoralizing. The soldier who has least security is least reluctant to forego what security he has. That is to say, he is the bravest.

Right sensibly General Miles once tried to call a halt in the progress of military extravagance by condemning our enormous expenditures for “disappearing guns.” The delicate and complicated mechanism for pointing and lowering the gun will break down when it is in action and deteriorate like a fish on the beach when it is not. During the long decades of peace it will need expert attention, exercise enough to wear it out, and constant renewal of its parts. The only merit of these absurd Jack-in-the-box guns is their bankrupting cost. If we can fool less wealthy nations into adopting them we shall have whatever advantage accrues to the longest purse in a contest of purses. So far, all other nations, rich and poor alike, have shown a thrifty indisposition to engage in the peaceful strife.

We are told with, on the whole, sufficient reiteration, that this is an age and this a country of “marvelous invention,” of “scientific machinery,” and the rest of it. We accept the statement without question, as the people of every former age have without question believed it of themselves. God forbid that anyone should close his ears to the cackle of his generation when it has laid its daily egg! Nevertheless, there are things that mechanical ingenuity can not profitably produce. One of them is the disappearing gun, another the combination stop-watch and tack hammer.

Americans must learn, preferably in time of peace, that no people has a monopoly of ingenuity and military aptitude. Great wars of the future, like great wars of the past, will be conducted with an intelligence and knowledge common to both belligerents, and with such appliances as both possess. The art of attack and the art of defense will balance each other as now, any advance in the first being always promptly met with a corresponding advance in the second. Genius is of no country; it is not peculiar to the United States.

It is not to be doubted that if it should be discovered that silver is a better gun metal than any now in use, and some ingenious scoundrel should invent a diamond-pointed shell of superior penetrating power, these "weapons of precision and efficiency" would be adopted by all the military powers. Their use would at least produce a gratifying mortality among civilians who pay military appropriations; so something would be gained. The purpose of modern artillery appears to be slaughter of the taxpayer behind the gun.

If fifty years ago the leading nations of Europe and America had united in making invention of offensive and defensive devices a capital crime, they would during all this intervening time have been on relatively the same military footing that they now are, and would have been spared an expenditure of a mountain of money. In the mad competition for primacy in war power not one of them has gained any permanent advantage; the entire benefit of the "improvements" has gone to the clever persons who have thought them out and been permitted to patent them. Until these are forbidden by law to eat cake in the sweat of the taxpayer's face we must continue to clutch our purse and tremble at their power. We are willing to admire their ingenuity, cheer their patriotism and envy their lack of heart, but it would be better to take them from their arms of precision to those of the public hangman.

The military inventor is said now to have thought out a missile that will make a hole in any practicable armor plate as easily as you can put a hot knife through a pat of butter. From all that can be learned by way of the fan-light over the door of official secrecy it appears to be a pointed steel bolt greased with graphite. Its performances are said to be eminently satisfactory to the man behind the patent, who is confident that it will serve the purpose of its being by penetrating the United States Treasury. Well, here at least is "an improvement in weapons of destruction," to which the non-militant taxpayer can accord a hearty welcome. If it is really irresistible to armor, armor to resist it will go out of use and ships again “fight in their shirtsleeves.” It will sadden us to renounce the familiar 550-dollars-a-ton steel plating endeared to us by a thousand tender recollections of the assessment rate, but time heals all earthly sorrow, and eventually we shall renew our joy in the blue of the skies, the fragrance of the flowers, the dew-spangled meadows, the fluting and warbling and trilling of the politicians. In the meantime, while awaiting our perfect consolation, we may derive a minor comfort from the high price of graphite.

When in personal collision, or imminent expectation of it, with a gentleman cherishing the view that one is needless, one’s attention does not wander from the business in hand to dwell upon the lilies and languors of peace. One is interested in the proceedings, and if he survive them experiences in the retrospection a pleasure that was not discernible in the returning brave from the land where the Mauser and the Kraag-Jorgensen conversed amicably without visible human agency across a space of two statute miles. Crouching in the grass, under an afflicting Spanish fire from somewhere, our soldiers at San Juan Hill felt it a great hardship to be “decimated” in so inglorious a skirmish. They did not know, poor fellows, that they were fighting a typical modern battle. When, the situation having become intolerable, their two divisions had i ‘ charged and carried the trenches of the two or three hundred Spaniards opposed to them, they had leisure to amend their conception of war as a picturesque and glorious game.

In the elder day, before the invention of the Whitehead torpedo and the high-power gun, the wooden war vessels of the period used to ram each other, lie alongside, grapple, jam their guns into each other’s ports, and send swarms of half-naked boarders on each other’s deck, where they fought breast to breast and foot to foot like heroes. Dr. Johnson described a sea voyage as “close confinement with a chance of being drowned.” The sailor-militant has always experienced that double disadvantage with the added chance of being smashed and burned. But formerly the rigors of his lot were ameliorated by a sight of his enemy and by some small opportunity of distinction in the neighborhood of that gentleman’s throat. To-day he is denied the pleasure of meeting him — never even so much as sees him unless fortunate enough to make him take to his boats. As opportunity for personal adventure and distinction a modern sea-fight is considerably inferior to a day in the penitentiary. Like a land-fight, it has enough of danger to keep the men awake, but for variety and excitement it is inferior to a combat between an isosceles triangle and the fourth dimension.

When the patriot’s heart is duly fired by his newspaper and his politician he will probably enlist henceforth, as he has done heretofore, and be as ready to assist in covering the enemy’s half of the landscape with a rain of bullets, falling where it shall please Heaven, as his bellicose ancestor was to meet the foeman in the flesh and engage him in personal combat; but it will be a stupid business, despite all that the special correspondent can do for its celebration by verbal fireworks. Tales of the “firing line” emanating from the chimney corner of the future will urge the young male afield with a weaker suasion. By the way, I do not remember to have heard the term “firing line” during our civil war. We had the thing, of course, but it did not last long enough (except in siege operations, when it was called something else) to get a name. Troops on the “firing line” either held their fire until the enemy signified a desire for it by coming to get it, or they themselves advanced and served him with it where he stood.

I should not like to say that this is an age of human cowardice; I say only that the men of all civilized nations are taking a deal of pains to invent offensive weapons that will wield themselves and defenses that can take the place of the human breast. A modern battle is a quarrel of skulkers trying to have all the killing done a long way from their persons. They will attack at a distance; they will defend if inaccessible. As much of the fighting as possible is done by machinery, preferably automatic. When we shall so have perfected our arms of precision and other destructive weapons that they will need no human agency to start and keep them going, war will be foremost among the arts of peace.

Meantime it is still a trifle perilous, sometimes fatal; those who practice it must expect bloody noses and cracked crowns. It may be to the advantage of our countrymen to know that if they have no forethought but thrift they can have no safety but peace; that in the school of emergency nothing is taught but how to weep; that there are no effective substitutes for courage and devotion. America’s best defenses are the breasts of American soldiers and the brains of American commanders. Confidence in any *a* revolutionizing” device is a fatal faith.

CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR

IN our manner of observing Christmas there is much, no doubt, that is absurd. Christmas is to some extent a day of meaningless ceremonies, false sentiment and hollow compliments endlessly iterated and misapplied. The observances "appropriate to the day" had, many of them, their origin in an age with which our own has little in common and in countries whose social and religious characteristics were unlike those obtaining here. As in so many other matters, America has in this been content to take her heritage without inquiry and without alteration, sacredly preserving much that once had a meaning now lost, much that is now an anachronism, a mere "survival." Even to the Christmas vocabulary we have added little. St. Nicholas himself, the patron saint of deceived children, still masquerades under the Spanish feminine title of "Santa" and the German nickname of "Claus." The back of our American coal grate is still idealized as a "yule log," and the English "holly" is supposed in most cases fitly to be shadowed forth by a cedar bough, while a comparatively innocuous but equally inedible indigenous comestible figures as the fatal English "plum pudding." Nearly all our Christmas literature is, *longo intervallo,* European in spirit and Dickensish in form. In short, we have Christmas merely because we were in the line of succession. We have taken it as it was transmitted, and we try to make the worst of it The approach of the season is apparent in the manner of the friend or relative whose orbs furtively explore your own, seeking a sign of what you are going to give him; in the irrepressible solicitations of babes and cloudings; in wild cascades of such literature as *Greenleaf on Evidence, for Boys* ("Boot-Leg" series), *The Little Girls' Illustrated Differential Calculus* and *Aunt Hetty's Rabelais,* in words of one syllable. Most clearly is the advent of the blessed anniversary manifest in maddening iteration of the greeting wherein, with a precision that never by any chance mistakes its adjective, you are wished a "merry" Christmas by the same person who a week later will be making ninety-nine "happies" out of a possible hundred in New Year greetings similarly insincere and similarly insufferable. It is unknown to me why a Christmas should be always merry but never happy, and why the happiness appropriate to the New Year should not be expressed in merriment. These be mysteries in whose penetration abundance of human stupidity might be disclosed. By the time that one has been wished a "merry Christmas" or a "happy New Year" some scores of times in the course of a morning walk, by persons who he knows care nothing about either his merriment or his happiness, he is disposed, if he is a person of right feeling, to take a pessimist view of the “compliments of the season” and of the season of compliments. He cherishes, according to disposition, a bitter animosity or a tolerant contempt toward his race. He relinquishes for another year his hope of meeting some day a brilliant genius or inspired idiot who will have the intrepidity to vary the adjective and wish him a “happy Christmas” or a “merry New Year”; or with an even more captivating originality, keep his mouth shut.

As to the sum of sincerity and genuine good will that utters itself in making and accepting gifts (the other distinctive feature of holiday time) statistics, unhappily, are wanting and estimates untrustworthy. It may reasonably be assumed that the custom, though largely a survival — gifts having originally been given in a propitiatory way by the weak to the powerful — is something more; the present of a goggle-eyed doll from a man six feet high to a baby twenty-nine inches long not being lucidly explainable by assumption of an interested motive.

To the children the day is delightful and instructive. It enables them to see their elders in all the various stages of interesting idiocy, and teaches them by means of the Santa Claus deception that exceedingly hard liars may be good mothers and fathers and miscellaneous relatives — thus habituating the infant mind to charitable judgment and establishing an elastic standard of truth that will be useful in their later life.

The annual recurrence of the “carnival of crime” at Christmas has been variously accounted for by different authorities. By some it is supposed to be a providential dispensation intended to heighten the holiday joys of those who are fortunate enough to escape with their lives. Others attribute it to the lax morality consequent upon the demand for presents, and still others to the remorse inspired by consciousness of ruinous purchases. It is affirmed by some that persons deliberately and with malice aforethought put themselves in the way of being killed, in order to avert the tiresome iteration of Christmas greetings. If this is correct, the annual Christmas “holocaust” is not an evil demanding abatement, but a blessing to be received in a spirit of devout and pious gratitude.

When the earth in its eternal circumgression arrives at the point where it was at the same time the year before, the sentimentalist whom Christmas has not exhausted of his essence squeezes out his pitiful dreg of emotion to baptize the New Year withal. He dusts and polishes his aspirations, and reérects his resolve, extracting these well-worn properties from the cobwebby corners of his moral lumber-room, whither they were relegated three hundred and sixty-four days before. He “swears off.” In short, he sets the centuries at defiance, breaks the sequence of cause and effect, repeals the laws of nature and makes himself a new disposition from a bit of nothing left over at the creation of the universe. He can not add an inch to his stature, but thinks he can add a virtue to his character. He can not shed his nails, but believes he can renounce his vices. Unable to eradicate a freckle from his skin, he is confident he can decree a habit out of his conduct. An improvident friend of mine writes upon his mirror with a bit of soap the cabalistic word, AFAHMASP. This is the *fiat lux* to create the shining virtue of thrift, for it means, A Fool And His Money Are Soon Parted. What need have we of morality's countless ministries; the complicated machinery of the church; recurrent suasions of precept and unceasing counsel of example; pursuing din of homily; still, small voice of solicitude and inaudible argument of surroundings — if one may make of himself what he will with a mirror and a bit of soap? But (it may be urged) if one can not reform himself, how can he reform others? Dear reader, let us have a frank understanding. He can not.

The practice of inflating the midnight steam-shrieker and belaboring the nocturnal ding-dong to frighten the encroaching New Year is obviously ineffectual, and might profitably be discontinued. It is no whit more sensible and dignified than the custom of savages who beat their sounding dogs to scare away an eclipse. If one elect to live with barbarians, one must endure the barbarous noises of their barbarous superstitions, but the disagreeable simpleton who sits up till midnight to ring a bell or fire a gun because the earth has arrived at a given point in its orbit should nevertheless be deprecated as an enemy to his race. He is a sore trial to the feelings, an affliction almost too sharp for endurance. If he and his sentimental abettors might be melted and cast into a great bell, every right-minded man would derive an innocent delight from pounding it, not only on January first but all the year long.

ON PUTTING ONE’S HEAD INTO ONE’S BELLY

MR. HENRY HOLT, a publisher, has uttered his mind at no inconsiderable length in deprecation of what he calls “the commercialization of literature.” That literature, in this country and England at least, has somewhat fallen from its high estate and is regarded even by many of its purveyors as a mere trade is unfortunately true, as we see in the genesis and development of the “literary syndicates”; in the unholy alliance between the book reviewer and the head of the advertising department; in the systematic “booming” of certain books and authors by methods, both supertabular and submanual, not materially different from those used for the promotion of a patent medicine; in the reverent attitude of editors and publishers toward authors of “best sellers,” and in more things than can be here set down. In the last century when, surely by no fortuitous happening, American literature was made by such men as Irving, Cooper, Bryant, Poe, Emerson, Whittier, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Holmes and Lowell, these purely commercial phenomena were in less conspicuous evidence and some of them were altogether indiscernible.

That the period of literature’s commercialization should be that of its decay is obviously more than a coincidence. Mr. Holt observes both, and is sad, but *that* is a coincidence pure and simple: his melancholy is due to something else. The “commercialization” is confessedly compelling him to do a good deal more advertising than he likes to pay for; for commerce spells competition. The authors of to-day and their agents have acquired the disagreeable habit of taking their wares to the highest bidder — the publisher who will give the highest royalties and the broadest publicity. The immemorial relation whereby the publisher was said to drink wine out of the author’s skull has been rudely disturbed by the latter demanding some of the wine for himself and refusing to supply the skull — an irritating infraction of a good understanding sanctified by centuries of faithful observance. It is only natural that Mr. Holt, being a conservative man and a protagonist of established order, should experience some of the emotions appropriate to the defenders in a servile insurrection.

With a candor that is most becoming, Mr. Holt expressly bewails the passing of the old régime — the departed days when authors “had other resources” than authorship. This is the second time that it has been my melancholy privilege to hear the head of a prosperous American publishing house make this moan. Another one, a few years ago, in addressing a company of authors, solemnly advised them to have some means of support additional to writing. I was not then, and am not now, assured that publishers find it necessary to have any means of support additional to publishing.

THE AMERICAN CHAIR

A LONDON philosopher was once pleased to remark that the American habit of sitting on the middle of the back with the feet elevated might in time profoundly alter the American physical structure, producing a race having its type in the Bactrian camel. If “our cousins across the water” understood this matter they would not adopt the flippant tone toward us that they now do, but in place of ridicule would bestow compassion. Before endeavoring to clear away the misconceptions surrounding the subject, so as to let in upon ourselves the holy light of British sympathy I must explain that the practice of sitting in the manner which the British philosopher somewhat inaccurately describes is confined mostly to the males of our race; the American woman will not, I trust, partake of the structural modification foreseen by the scientific eye, but remain, as now, simply and sweetly, dromedarian. True, Nature may punish her for being found in bad company, but at the first stroke of the lash she will doubtless forsake us and seek sanctuary in the companionship of that bolt-upright vertebrate, the English nobleman.

The national peculiarity which, one is sorry to observe, provokes nothing but levity in the British mind — and British levity is no light affliction — is not our fault but our misfortune. Like every other people, we Americans are the slaves of those who serve us. Not one of us in a thousand (so busy are we in “subduing the wilderness” and guarding our homes against the Redskins) has leisure to plan and order his surroundings; and to the few whom Fortune has favored with leisure she has denied the means. We take everything readymade — our houses, grounds, carriages, furniture and all. In some of these things Providence has by special interposition introduced new designs and revived old ones, but in most of them there is neither change nor the shadow of turning. They are to-day what they were a century ago, and a century hence will be what they are to-day. The chairmaker, for example, is the obscure intelligence and indirigible energy that his grandfather was before him: the American chair maintains through the ages its bad eminence as an instrument of torture. Time can not wither nor custom stale its infinite malevolence. The type of the species is the familiar hard-pan chair of the kitchen; in the dining-room this has been deplaced by the “splint-bottom,” and in the parlor by an armed and upholstered abomination which tempts us to session only to turn to ashes, as it were, upon our bodies. They are essentially the same old chair — worthy descendants of the original Adam of

Chairs, created from a block in the image of its maker's head. The American chair is never made to measure; it is supposed to fit anybody and be universally applicable.

It is to the American chair that we must look for the genesis and rationale of the American practice of shelving the American feet on the most convenient dizzy eminence. We naturally desire as little contact with the chair as possible, so we touch it with the acutest angle that we are able to achieve. The feet must rest somewhere, and a place must be found for them. It is admitted that the mantel, the sideboard, the window-sill, the *escritoire* and the dining table (at least during meals) are not good places; but *que voulez vous*? — the chairmakers have not chosen to invent anything to mitigate the bitterness of the situation as by their genius for evil they have made it.

I humbly submit that in all this there is nothing deserving of ridicule. It is a situation with a pathos of its own, which ought to appeal strongly to a people suffering so many of the ills of conservitude, as do the English. It is all very well (to use their own pet locution) to ask why we do not abolish the American chair, but really the question ought not to come from a nation that endures *Mr. Punch*, pities the House of Lords and embraces that of Hanover. The American chair was probably divinely designed and sent upon us for the chastening of our national spirit, and we accept it with the same reverent submission that distinguishes our English critic in bowing his neck to the heavy yoke of his own humor.

ANOTHER “COLD SPELL”

THE late Professor Hayden, a distinguished official of the Coast Survey, held disquieting views regarding the significance of certain seismic and meteorological phenomena, or, as they say in English, earthquake and storms. It is the professor’s notion that stupendous changes are going on in the center of the earth. As the human race does not live in that locality, it may be thought that these changes are insufficiently important to engage the attention of the public press. Unfortunately, we are not permitted to entertain that pleasing illusion, for the learned scientist has traced an obscurely marked, but indubitable connection between them and the “blizzards” and cyclones of the Northwest. In a manner not clearly explained, the “central changes” of which the earthquake is the outward and visible sign, beget also “a nipping and an eager air” singularly distasteful to the Montana cattle-grower, and afflict Dakota with that kind of zephyr which, as a nameless humorist has averred, “just sits on its hind legs and howls.” Here, again, we are denied the double gratification of seeing the Northwestern States and Territories devastated and feeling ourselves secure from the same mischance. Professor Hayden — whose good will is unquestionable — had no hope of confining these frigorific activities to the region of their birth and overcoming them by some scientific *coup de main*, as the man beat the gout by herding it into his great toe, then cutting off the toe. No; the “blizzard,” both still and sparkling, will spread all over the globe with increasing intensity and vehemence, to the no small discomfort of the unacclimated, though greatly, no doubt, to the innocent glee of Esquimau, Innuit, Aleut and other natives of those “thrilling regions.”

Where the playful Polar bear
Nips the hunter unaware.

In short, as the professor puts it, “scientific men here and abroad concur in the opinion that we are approaching an extremely interesting period.”

We are not left in doubt as to the precise nature of the disasters which an “interesting period” may naturally be expected to entail; it is strongly intimated that the period is to be “another glacial age.” The one with which we were last favored, not longer ago, according to some authorities, than a matter of twenty thousand years, appears to have accomplished its purposes of erosion and extinction imperfectly. Its vast layers of ice, moving from the Pole toward the Equator, planed off the surface of the earth so badly that such asperities as the Rocky Mountains, the Alps and the Himalayas may be supposed to offend the mechanical eye of Nature and make her desirous to go over them again. The fact that the now temperate and torrid zones are still infested by men and other beasts is evidence that the cave-dwellers of the pre-glacial age were a tougher lot than the good old dame had supposed. In her next attempt she will probably pile on more ice and give it a superior momentum, at the same time heralding its southward encroachment with a temperature that will be such a terror as to turn the citrus belt white in a single night and drive it out altogether.

Having been encouraged by Professor Hayden to nourish anticipations of an interesting period pregnant with such pleasing possibilities as these, we are inexpressibly disappointed to have him say, as he does, that the operation of the great “central changes” to which we are to be indebted for all this is so slow that it may be a thousand years, or even longer, before they get to their work with perceptible efficacy. Of course one must recognize the stern necessity that dominates the scientific prophet — he has to carry the fulfilment so far into the future as to avoid the melancholy fate of short-range prophets, like Zadkiel; and therein we discern the true difference between the scientist and the impostor.

Nevertheless, in a matter of such pith and moment it would have been agreeable to be permitted to hope that these fascinating events would begin to occur in our day, and their author (if one may reverently venture to call him so) would have done a graceful thing if he had so far departed from the strictly scientific method as to assure us that some of us, at least, might reasonably expect to be frozen into the advancing wall of ice, like the famous Siberian mastodon of blessed memory, and become objects of interest to the possible Haydens of a later dispensation. As he has denied us the gratification which he could so cheaply have given to our curiosity and ambition, one feels justified in denouncing him as a miscreant and a viper.

THE LOVE OF COUNTY

HISTORIANS, homilists, orators, poets and magazine poets have for ages been justly extolling the love of country as one of the noblest of human sentiments; and it has been officially recommended to the fair members of the Women's Press Association as an appropriate subject to write about — as "the vanity of life" was by the good-natured traveler suggested to the inquiring hermit as a suitable theme for meditation. Through all the ages has sounded the praise of patriotism, the love of country. Philanthropy, the love of mankind, is a modern invention — a newfangled notion with which it is unprofitable to reckon.

But while the love of country has been so generally and so justly extolled, too little has been said in praise of that still more highly concentrated virtue, the love of county. This noble sentiment is even more nearly general (where there are counties) than the other. That it is a stronger and more fervent passion goes without saying. The natural laws of affection are extremely simple and commonplace. The human heart has a fixed and definite quantity of affection; no two have the same quantity, but in each it is definite and incapable of augmentation. It follows that the more objects it is bestowed upon, the less each object will get; the more ground it is made to cover, the more thinly it must be spread out. A woman, for example, cannot love a child, five dogs, a Japanese teapot, *The Ladies' Weekly Dieaway,* an exquisite shade of lavender and a foreign count any harder than, in the absence of the other blessings, she could love the child alone. Similarly, the man whose patriotism embraces the ninety millions of Americans, Americanesses and Americanettes can care very little for any one of them; whereas he whose less comprehensive heart takes in the inhabitants of only a single county must, especially in the sparsely settled districts, be comparatively enamored of each individual. It is this that gives to parochialism (it has not been more definitely named) a dignity altogether superior to that of the diffused sentiment which the historians, the homilists, orators, poets and newspaper poets have united in belauding, not without reason, though, in the case of those last mentioned, commonly without rhyme. In the love of county the gifted ladies of the Women's Press Association would find a theme surpassed in sublimity by but one other, namely the love of township. Of that sacred passion no uninspired pen would dare to write.

DISINTRODUCTIONS

THE devil is a citizen of every country, but only in our own are we in constant peril of an introduction to him. That is democracy. All men are equal; the devil is a man; therefore, the devil is equal. If that is not a good and sufficient syllogism I should be pleased to know what is the matter with it.

To write in riddles when one is not prophesying is too much trouble; what I am affirming is the horror of the characteristic American custom of promiscuous, unsought and unauthorized introductions.

You incautiously meet your friend Smith in the street; if you had been prudent you would have remained indoors. Your helplessness makes you desperate and you plunge into conversation with him, knowing entirely well the disaster that is in cold storage for you.

The expected occurs: another man comes along and is promptly halted by Smith and you are introduced! Now, you have not given to the Smith the right to enlarge your circle of acquaintance and select the addition himself; why did he do this thing? The person whom he has condemned you to shake hands with may be an admirable person, though there is a strong numerical presumption against it; but for all that the Smith knows he may be your bitterest enemy. The Smith has never thought of that. Or you may have evidence (independent of the fact of the introduction) that he is some kind of thief — there are one thousand and fifty kinds of thieves. But the Smith has never thought of that. In short, the Smith has never thought. In a Smithocracy all men, as aforesaid, being equal, all are equally agreeable to one another.

That is a logical extension of the Declaration of American Independence. If it is erroneous the assumption that a man will be pleasing to me because he is pleasing to another is erroneous too, and to introduce me to one that I have not asked nor consented to know is an invasion of my rights — a denial and limitation of my liberty to a voice in my own affairs. It is like determining what kind of clothing I shall wear, what books I shall read, or what my dinner shall be.

In calling promiscuous introducing an American custom I am not unaware that it obtains in other countries than ours. The difference is that in those it is mostly confined to persons of no consequence and no pretensions to respectability; here it is so nearly universal that there is no escaping it. Democracies are naturally and necessarily gregarious. Even the French of to-day are becoming so, and the time is apparently not distant when they will lose that fine distinctive social sense that has made them the most punctilious, because the most considerate, of all nations excepting the Spanish and the Japanese. By those who have lived in Paris since I did I am told that the chance introduction is beginning to devastate the social situation, and men of sense who wish to know as few persons as possible can no longer depend on the discretion of their friends.

To say so is not the same thing as to say “Down with the republic I” The republic has its advantages. Among these is the liberty to say, “Down with the republic!”

It is to be wished that some great social force, say a billionaire, would set up a system of disintroductions, It should work somewhat like this; Mr. WHITE — Mr. Black, knowing the low esteem in which you hold each other, I have the honor to disintroduce you from Mr. Green.

Mr. Black (*bowing)* — Sir, I have long desired the advantage of your unacquaintance.

MR. GREEN (*bowing*) — Charmed to unmeet you, sir. Our acquaintance (the work of a most inconsiderate and unworthy person) has distressed me beyond expression. We are greatly indebted to our good friend here for his tact in repairing the mischance.

MR. WHITE — Thank you. I’m sure you will become very good strangers.

This is only the ghost of a suggestion; of course the plan is capable of an infinite elaboration. Its capital defect is that the persons who are now so liberal with their unwelcome introductions, will be equally lavish with their disintroductions, and will estrange the best of friends with as little ceremony as they now observe in their more fiendish work.

1902.

THE TYRANNY OF FASHION

I

THE mindless male of our species is commonly engaged in committing an indelicate assault upon woman’s taste in dress. He is graciously pleased to dislike the bright colors that she wears. Her dazzling headgear, her blinding parasol, her gorgeous frock with its burning bows and sunset streamers, the iridescence of her neckwear, the radiant glories of her scarves and the flaming splendor of her hose — these various and varied brilliances pain the eyes of this weakling, making him sad. He seems so miserable that it is charity to wish that he had died when he was little — when he was himself in hue (and cry) a blazing scarlet Every man to his taste; doubtless mine is barbaric. Anyhow, I like the rich, bright bravery that the ladies wear. It is not a healthy eye that is offended by intensity of color. It is not an honest taste that admires it in a butterfly, a humming bird or a sunset, and derides it in a woman. Nature is opulent of color; one has to look more than twice to see what a wealth of brilliant hues are about him, so used to them have our eyes become. They are everywhere — on the hills, in the air, the water, the cloud. They float like banners in the sunlight and lurk in shadows. No artist can paint them; none dares to if he could. The critics would say he had gone mad and the public would believe them. And it is wicked to believe a critic.

Nature has no taste; she makes odious and hideous combinations of tints that swear at one another like quarreling cats — hues that mutually rend and slay. She has the unparalleled stupidity to spread a blue sky above a green plain and draw it down to the horizon, where the two colors exhaust themselves in debating their differences. To be quite plain about it, Nature is a dowdy old vulgarian.

She has no more taste than Shakspeare.

Just as Shakspeare poured out the unassorted jewels of his inexhaustible understanding — cut, uncut, precious, bogus, crude, contemptible and superb, all together, so Nature prodigally lavishes her largess of color. I am not sure that Shakspeare did not teach her the trick. Let the ladies, profiting by her bounty, emulate her virtues and avoid her vice, each having due regard to her own kind of beauty, and taking thought for its fitting embellishment and display. Let them not permit the neutral-tinted minds of the “subdued-color” fiends to fray them with utterance of feeble platitude.

An intolerable deal of nonsense has been uttered, too, about the heartlessness of fashionable women in wearing the plumage of songbirds — and all women are fashionable, and therefore “heartless,” whom fortune has favored with means to that end. It is conceded by those who utter the nonsense that it does no good; and that fact alone would make it nonsense if the lack of wisdom did not inhere in its every proposition. No doubt the offending female is herself somewhat punctured in the conscience of her as she goes beautifuling herself with the *11* starry plumes” which “expanded shine with azure, green and gold,” and remembers the unchristian censure entailed by her passion for this manner of headgear. If so, let her take comfort in this present assurance that she is only obeying an imperious mandate of her nature, which is also a universal law. To be comely in the eyes of the male — that is the end and justification of her being, and she knows it. Moreover, to the task of its accomplishment she brings an intelligence distinctly superior to that with which we judge the result. We may say that we don’t like her to have a fledged head; and that may be true enough: our error consists in thinking that this is the same proposition as that we don’t like her with her head fledged. Clearly, we do: we like her better with her feathers than without, and shall continue to prefer her that way as long as she is likely to hold the feathers in service; then we shall again like her better without them, even as we liked her better with them. The lesson whereof is that what are called the “caprices” of fashion have an underlying law as constant as that of gravitation.

In this one thing the woman is wise in her day and generation. She may be unable to formulate her wisdom; it must, indeed be confessed that she commonly makes a pretty bad attempt at explanation of anything; but she knows a deal more than she knows that she knows. One of the things that she perfectly apprehends is the evanescence of aesthetic gratification, entailing the necessity of infinite variety in the method of its production; and the knowledge of this is power. In countries where the women of one generation adorn themselves as the women of another did, they are slaves, and their bondage, I am constrained to say, is just. Efface the caprices of fashion — let our women look always the same, even their loveliest, and in a few years we should be driving them in harness. If the fowls of the air can serve her in averting the catastrophe, woman is right in employing their artful aid. Moreover — a point hitherto overlooked — it is mostly men who kill the fowls.

Urged to its logical conclusion, the argument of the Audubon Society (named in honor of the most eminent avicide of his time) against the killing of songbirds to decorate their betters withal would forbid the killing of the sheep, an amiable quadruped; the fur-seal — extremely graceful in the water; the domestic cow — distinguished for matronly virtues; and the donkey, which, although it has no voice, is gifted with a fine ear and works up well into a superior foreign sausage. In short, we should emancipate ourselves from Nature's universal law of mutual destruction, and, lest we efface something which has the accidental property of pleasing some of our senses, go naked, feed upon the viewless wind and sauce our privation with the incessant spectacle of songbirds pitching into one another with tigerish ferocity and committing monstrous excesses on bees and butterflies.

We need not concern ourselves about "extermination"; the fashion is not going to last long enough for that, and if it threatened to do so the true remedy is not abstention, but breeding. Probably there was a time when appeals were made for preservation of what is now the domestic "rooster" — a truly gorgeous bird to look at. If he had not been good to eat (in his youth) and his wife a patient layer their race would have been long extinct. All that preserves the ostrich is the demand for its plumage. If dead pigs were not erroneously considered palatable there would not be a living pig within reach of man's avenging arm. Who but for the value of their scalps would be at the trouble and expense of breeding coyotes? Thus we see how it is in the economy of nature that out of the nettle danger the lower animals pluck the flower safety; and it may easily be that the hatbird will owe its life to the profit that we have in its death, and in the flare of the plume-hunter's gun will "hail the dawn of a new era."

II

Women have a comfortable way of personifying their folly under the name "Fashion," and laying their sins upon it. The "tyranny of Fashion" is of a more iron-handed quality than that of anything else excepting Man. I do steadfastly believe that many women have a distinct and definitive conception of this monster as a gigantic biped (male, of course) ever in session upon an iron throne, promulgating and enforcing brutal decrees for their enslavement. Against this cruel being they feel that rebellion would be perilous and remonstrance vain. The person who complains of "the tyranny of fashion" is a self-confessed fool. There is no such thing as fashion; it is as purely an abstraction as, for example, indolence in a cat, or speed in a horse. Fancy a wild mare complaining that she is a slave to celerity! Moralizers, literarians and divers sorts of homilizers have been cracking this meatless nut on our heads and comforting the stomachs of their understandings with the imaginary kernel for lo! these many generations, and have even persuaded the rest of us that there is something in it — as much, at least as there was in the pocket of Lady Locket. It has not even so much in it as that; not the half of it: the phrase “women’s slavery to fashion” has absolutely *no* meaning, and one about to use it might as profitably use, instead, John Stuart Mill’s faultless example of jargon: “Humpty Dumpty is an abracadabra.” Woman can not be called submissive to fashion, for the submission and the thing submitted to are the same thing. Even a woman can not be called a slave to slavery; and it is the slavery that *is* the fashion. What else can we possibly mean by “fashion,” when using the word with reference to women’s bondage, than women’s habit of dressing alike and badly? It can not mean, in this connection, the style of their clothing; that cannot “enslave”; and we do not speak of slavery to anything good and desirable. Habit and addiction to habit are not two things, but one. In short, women, having chosen to make fools of themselves, have personified their folly and persuaded men to see in it a tyrant with a chain and whip.

The word fashion is used as a convenient generic term for a multitude of related stupidities and cowardices in character and conduct, and for the results of them. To say that one must “follow the fashions” is to say that one is compelled to be stupid and cowardly. What compels? Under what stress of compulsion are women in making themselves hideous in one way or another all the time — each year a different kind of hideousness? Who commands them to get their shoulders above their heads, blow up their sleeves and elongate their lapels to suggest the collar-points of a negro minstrel? When have not men tried to prevent them from doing these things and remain content with a tideless impulchritude — an ugliness having slight and slow vicissitudes, such as themselves are satisfied withal? Doubtless women’s quarrel with their outward and visible appearance is a natural and reasonable sentiment, a noble discontent; for they do look scarecrows, and no mistake; but the effect which they have at any given time achieved, and at which they afterward are aghast, is not to be bettered by eternal tinkering with the same tools. In new brains and a new taste lies their only hope of repair; lacking which, they would do well to let Time the healer touch our wounded eyes, and inurement bring toleration.

“The iron hand of custom and tradition,” wails one of the female disputants, “makes a pitiable race of us.” What a way to put it! Could it not occur to this gentle creature that if we were not a pitiable race — pitiable for our brute stupidity — custom and tradition would not be iron-handed? We are savages in the same sense that the N’gamwanee is a savage, who will not appear at any festival without his belly painted a joyous sky-blue. But among us none is so amusing a savage as she who squeals like a pig in a gate at “the tyranny of custom,” when nothing is pinching her.

III

An error analogous to this personification of her own folly as a pitiless oppressor is that of considering at length and with gravity the character, fortunes, motives and duties of "woman." Woman does not exist — there are women. Of woman nothing that has more than a suggestive, literary or rhetorical value can be said. Like the word "fashion," the word "woman" is convenient, and of legitimate use by persons of sense who understand that it is not the name of anything on the earth, in the heavens above the earth, nor in the waters under the earth — that there is nothing in nature corresponding to it. To others its use should be interdicted, for like all abstract words, it is a pitfall to their clumsy feet. If the word is used to signify the whole body of women it obviously assumes that, with regard to the matters under consideration, they are all alike — which is untrue, for some are dead. If it means less than the whole body of women it is obligatory upon the person using it to say precisely what proportion of the sex it means. The way to determine woman's true place in the social scheme is simple: make an exhaustive inquiry into the character, capacities, desires, needs and opportunities of every individual woman. When you have finished the result will be glorious: you will know almost as much as you knew before.

Concerning woman, I should like to be allowed a brief digression into the troubled territory of her "rights" — a field of contention in which her champions manifest an inadequate conception of the really considerable powers of Omnipotence. A distinguishing feature of this logomachy is the frequent outcrop of a certain kind of piety that is unconnected with any respect for, or belief in, the power of Him evoking it. These linked assumptions of God's worth and God's incompetence are made variously: sometimes by implication, sometimes with a directness that distresses the agnostic and makes the atheist blush. One disputant says: "Would a woman be less womanly because conceited Man had granted her the rights that God intended she should have?" Now, if man really has the power to baffle the divine will and make the divine intentions void of effect he may reasonably enough cherish a fairly good opinion of himself — perhaps any degree of conceit that is consistent with his scriptural character of poor worm of the dust.

A noble example of piety undimmed by disrespect is that of a Presbyterian minister, who began his remarks thus: "Has woman today all the rights she ought to have — all the rights Christ meant her to have? I fully concede she has not." This is not very good English, but I dare say it is good religion, this conception of Christ as a "well-meaning person," but without much influence in obtaining favors for his friends. Anyhow, it is authenticated by the clerical sign-manual, which sets it at a longer remove from blasphemy than at first sight it may seem to be, and makes it so holy that I hardly dared to mention it. I hope it is not irreverent to say so; it is not said in that spirit, but I can not help thinking that if I were God I should find some way to carry out my intentions; and that if I were Christ and had not a sufficient influence to secure for Lively Woman the rights that I meant her to have I should retire from public life, sever my connection with the Presbyterian church and go to work.

IV

Ladies of “health culture” clubs are sharply concerned about the length of the skirts they wear. The purpose of their organizations, indeed, is to protect them against their habit of wearing the skirts too long. It has apparently not occurred to them that here, too, nobody is compelling them to continue a disagreeable practice, and that with a pair of scissors any woman can accomplish for herself all that she wants the clubs to do for her. If the long skirt no longer please, why not drop it? Nothing is easier. No concert of action definitely agreed on was required to bring it in; none is required to oust it. The enterprising gentleman who, having laid hold of the tail of a bear, called lustily for somebody to help him let go, acted from an intelligible motive, but 1 submit that if a woman stop following a disagreeable fashion it will not turn and rend her.

No more hideous garment than the skirt is knowable or thinkable. In its every aspect it discloses an inherent and irremediable impulchritude. It is devoid of even the imaginary beauty of utility, for it is not only needless but obstruent, impeditive, oppugnant. Promoting the sense of restraint, it enslaves the character. Had one been asked to invent a garment that should make its wearer servile in spirit one would have consulted the foremost living oppressor and designed the skirt. That reasonless habiliment ought long ago to have been flung into Nature’s vacant lot and found everlasting peace along with gone-before cats, late-lamented dogs, unsouled tin cans and other appurtenances and proofs of mortality. There is not a valid reason in the world why a skirt of any length, shape or material should ever have been worn; and one of the strongest evidences of women’s unfitness for a part in the larger affairs of the race is their obstinacy in clinging to the skirt — or rather in permitting it to cling to them. So long as women garb their bodies and their legs foolwise they may profitably save that part of their breath now wasted in becoloneling themselves and reducing Tyrant Man to the ranks.

Doubtless the skirt figures as one count in the long indictment against the Oppressor Sex, as once bracelets and bangles did — it being pointed out with acerbity that these are vestigial remnants of chains and shackles. The same “claim” has been made for the eviscerating corset — I forget upon what grounds. Of course men have had nothing to do with the corset, excepting, in season and out of season, to implore women not to wear it. The skirt we have merely tolerated, or from lack of thought assented to. But if we were the sons of darkness which in deference to the lady colonels we feel that we ought to confess ourselves, and if we had been minded to enslave our bitter halves, we could hardly have done better than to have “invented and gone round advising” the skirt. Any constant restraint of the body reacts upon the mind. To hamper the limbs is to subdue the spirit. Other things equal — which they could not be — a naked nation would be harder to conquer than one accustomed to clothing. The costume of the modern “civilized” man is bad enough in this way, but that of his female is a standing challenge to the fool-killer. Considering the use and purpose of the human leg, it seems almost incredible that this hampering garment could have been imposed upon women by anything less imperative than a divine commandment.

One reads a deal about the “immodesty” of the skirtless costume, not, I think, because any one believes it immodest, but because its opponents find in that theme an assured immunity from prosecution in making an indecent exposure of their minds. This talk of immodesty is simply one manifestation of public immorality — the immorality of an age in which it is considered right and reputable for women and girls, in company with men, to witness the capering of actresses and dancers who in the name of art strip themselves to the ultimate inch — whose every motion in their saltatory rites is nicely calculated to display as much of the person as the law allows! Why else do they whirl and spin till their make-believe skirts are horizontal? Why else do they spring into the air and come down like a collapsed parachute? These motions have nothing of grace; in point of art they are distinctly disagreeable. Their sole purpose is indelicate suggestion. Every male spectator knows this; every female as well; yet we lie to ourselves and to one another in justification — lie knowing that no one is thereby deceived as to the nature of the performance and our motives in attending it. We call it art, and if that flimsy fiction were insufficient would doubtless call it duty. The only person that affects no illusion in the matter is the exhibiting hussy herself. She at least is free of the sin of hypocrisy — save when condemning “bloomers” in the public press.

As censors of morals the ladies of the ballet are perhaps half-a-trifle insincere; I like better the simple good faith of the austere society dame who to a large and admiring audience of semi-nude men displays her daughter’s charms of person at the bathing beach, with an occasional undress parade of her own ample endowments. She is in deadly earnest, the good old girl — she is entirely persuaded of the wickedness of the “bloomers.” Why, it would hardly be more indelicate (she says) to wear her bathing habit in the street or drawing-room! If she were not altogether destitute of reason she would deprive herself of that illustration, for a costume is no more indelicate in one public place than in another. One of the congenital ear-marks of the Philistine understanding is inability to distinguish inappropriateness from immodesty — bad taste from faulty morals. The blush that would crimson the cheek of a woman shopping in evening dress (and women who wear evening dress sometimes retain the blush-habit; such are the wonders of heredity!) would indubitably have its origin in a keen sense of exposure. It would make a cat laugh, but it would be an honest blush and eminently natural. The phenomenon requiring an explanation is the no-blush when she is caught in the same costume at a ball or a dinner.

In nations that cover the body for another purpose than decoration and protection from the weather, disputes as to how much of it, and in what circumstances, should be covered are inevitable and uncomposable. Alike in nature and in art, the question of the nude will be always demanding adjustment and be never adjusted. This wrangle we have always with us as a penalty for the prudery of concealment, creating and suggesting the prurience of exposure.

Offended Nature hides her lash In the purple-black of a dyed mustache, and the lash lurks in every fold of the clothing of her choice. In ancient Greece the disgraceful squabble was unknown; it did not occur to the great-hearted, broad-brained and wholesome people of that blessed land that any of the handiwork of the gods was ignoble. Nor are the modern Japanese vexed with “the question of the nude”; save where their admirable civilization has suffered the polluting touch of ours they have not learned the infamy of sex. Among the blessings in store for them are their conversion to decorous lubricity and instruction in the nice conduct of a clouded mind.

I am not myself prepared to utter judgment in all these matters. I do not know the precise degree of propriety in a lady’s “full dress” at dinner, nor exactly how suggestive it is at breakfast. I can not say with accuracy when and where and why a costume is immodest that is modest in a mixed crowd at the sea beach. But this I know, despite all the ingenious fictions, subtleties and sophistries wherewith naked Nonsense is accustomed to drape herself as with a skeletonized fig-leaf: that no man nor any woman addicted to play-going, society entertainments and surf-bathing has the right to censure any costume that is tolerated by the police. As to the “bloomers,” they have not a suggestion of indelicacy, and of the person who professes to see it in them I, for one, am fatigued and indisposed; and I confidently affirm the advantage to the commonwealth of binding him to his own back and removing the organ that he is an idiot with.

I have the vanity to think it already known to me why our women wear the skirt — just as it is known to me why the women of certain African tribes load themselves with enormous metal neck-rings and the male of their variety attaches a cow-tail to his barren rear. But what these impedimental adornments are for, the wearers can no more explain than the Caucasian female (assisted by her “man of equal mind”) can expound the purpose of her skirt, nor even be made to understand that its utility is actually challenged. But what would one have? Wisdom comes of mental freedom; are we to look for that in victims and advocates of physical restraint? Can we reasonably expect large intellectual strides in those who voluntarily hamper their legs? Is it to be believed that an unremittent sense of hindrance will not affect the mind and character? With woman’s inconsiderable reasoning power the skirt, the corset and the finery have had as much to do as anything. If she wants emancipation from the imaginary tyranny of Man the Monster, let her show herself worthy of it by overthrowing the actual despotism maintained by herself. Let her unbind her body and liberate her legs; then we shall know if she has a mind that can be taught to stand alone and march without the suasion of a bayonet.

1895.

BREACHES OF PROMISE

THERE should be no such thing as an action for a breach of promise of marriage. An action for promise of marriage would be in some ways preferable, for where damages ensue it is the promise that has caused them. Doubtless the hurt heart of one who is abandoned by her lover, especially after providing the trousseau and kindly apprising all her rivals, is justly entitled to sympathetic commiseration, but the pain is one that the law can not undertake to heal. In theory at least it concerns itself with actual privation of such pecuniary advantages as would have accrued to the plaintiff from marriage with the defendant, and such other losses as can be denoted by the figures of arithmetic. If the defendant were liable for the pain he inflicted by breaking his promise he might justly demand compensation for the joy that he gave in making it. Where the courtship had been long there might be a considerable balance in his favor. Nor is it altogether clear that he ought not to be allowed to file a counter-claim based upon the profit of getting rid of him.

But is the loss of a merely promised advantage a loss that ought to be a matter of legal inquiry and repair? In the promise to pay money, and in papers transferring property from one person to another, it is requisite that a “consideration” be expressed: the person claiming value from another must show that value was given. What is the consideration in the case of a marriage-promise? What computable value has the defendant in a breach of promise case received that the plaintiff could, or if she could would care to, estimate in dollars and cents? Would she undertake to submit an itemized bill? As a rule, the promiser of marriage receives nothing for which the performance of his promise would be an “equivalent” in the commercial sense. True, he obtains by his promise certain privileges which (it is said) he deems precious; but all the accepted authorities on this subject declare that in the exercise of these he imparts no small satisfaction to the person bestowing them.

Accurately speaking, then, a promise of marriage is a promise without consideration; and whatever merely sentimental injuries result from its infraction might justly be squared by a merely sentimental reparation. Perhaps it would be enough if the injured plaintiff in a breach of promise suit were awarded the illusory advantage but acceptable gratification of wigging the defendant’s attorney.

It may be said that the defendant’s equivalent for his promise was the lady’s tender of such services as wives perform for husbands t — among which the peasant-born humorist of the period loves to enumerate such mysterious functions as “building the fire” and assisting to search for the soap in the bath-tub. But it must not be overlooked that this tender is itself only a promise whereof the performance fails, along with that of the one for which it is given in exchange: the fire remains unbuilded and the soap is lost. One unfulfilled promise is no better than another. Nay, it is not so good.

But if we are to have suits for breach of promise of marriage it can at least be so ordered that there shall be no question of proof. An act of the legislature is enough for that. Let there be a law that marriage engagements *to* be valid shall be in writing. This would work no hardship to anybody, and would be a pleasing contrast to the law which does *not* require any authenticating formality for the marriage itself. If a man really wish and mean to marry he will not be unwilling to say so over his hand and seal, and have the declaration duly attested. The lack of such evidence as this should be a bar to any action. It is admitted that this rigorous requirement would be pretty hard on such ladies as rich bachelors and widowers have the hardihood to be civil to, and that it would deprive the intelligent juror of such delight as he derives from giving away another man’s property without loss to Himself. Its advantage would be found in its tendency to prevent the courts of law from being loaded up with the class of cases under consideration, to the exclusion of much other business. The number of wealthy men increases yearly with the country’s prosperity, and they grow more and more unmarried. Under the present system they are easy prey, but the operation of despoiling them is tedious; wherefore worthy assassins are compelled to wait an unconscionably long time for acquittal. The reform that I venture to suggest would disembarrass the courts of the ambitious “ladifrend” and the scheming domestic, and give the murderers a chance. As a matter of expediency, I think a man should be permitted to change his mind as to whom he will marry, as frequently as it may please him to do so; almost any change in the mind of a man in love must be in the direction of improvement.

THE TURKO-GRECIAN WAR

THE Turks are not the ferocious fanatics that our respect for the commandment against bearing false witness does not forbid us to affirm. They are a good-natured, rather indolent people, among whom all races and religions find security in good behavior, and, in so far as differences of social and religious customs will allow, fraternity. They are a trifle corrupt, but from neither an American legislator nor his constituents is censure of political profligacy in other lands than ours an edifying utterance. In Mohammedan countries even slavery is a light affliction. As to “savagery,”

“butchery” and the rest of it, let the ten thousand Americans murdered with impunity by their own countrymen last year open their white lips and testify. And let the ten thousand who are to be murdered this year reserve judgment on the right of the American character to mount the pulpit and deal damnation round on heads that wear the fez.

Like the Bulgarian “massacres” of a few years ago, which so pained the blameless soul of Christendom and drew from holy Mr. Gladstone that Christianly charitable term, “the unspeakable Turk,” the Armenian “massacres” are mostly moonshine — as massacres. It should never be forgotten that our accounts of these deplorable events come almost altogether from Christian missionaries — narrow, bigoted zealots, who doubtless stand well in the other world, but in this world are untrustworthy historians of the troubles which their impenitent meddlesomeness incites. They are swift and willing witnesses, and their interest lies in the direction of exaggeration. Not much of moderation and disinterestedness can under any circumstances be expected of persons who make it the business of their lives to go abroad to crack theological nuts upon the heads of others and eat the kernels themselves. A man of sane heart and right reason will no more interfere with the spiritual affairs of others than with their temporal. This much any one may know who has the sense to learn: that the troubles in Armenia are not religious persecutions, but political disturbances, and that next to Mohammedan Kurds the most incorrigible scamps in Asia are Armenian Christians.

Among military men the superior character of Turkish soldiers is a familiar consideration. The war minister or general who should order or conduct a campaign against them without conceding to their terrible fighting qualities a particular attention in reckoning the chances of success would show a lamentable ignorance of his business. For that veritable folly the Greeks recently paid through the nose. With a childish trust in an enthusiasm that hardly outlasted the smoke of the first gun, they threw their undisciplined crowds against superior numbers of these formidable fighters in a quarrel in which their only hope of national existence if beaten lay in the magnanimity of the Powers whose protection they disclaimed. It is by the sufferance and grace of these Powers that the name of Greece remains on the map of Europe.

All this sentiment about the debt that civilization owes to Greece is foolish: the Greece to which civilization is indebted for its glorious heritage of art, philosophy and literature is dead these many ages — a memory and a name. The debtor is without a creditor, the claimant without a claim. Greece would herself be justly liable for her share of the debt if there were anybody to whom to pay it. As to the claims of "our common religion" (that is, the right to our assistance in violating our common religion's fundamental and most precious precepts) it should be sufficient to say that if the modern Greek is a Christian Christ was not. If Christ were among the Athenians to-day they would part his raiment among them before crucifixion and cast lots for his vesture with loaded dice.

From the first the cause of the Greeks was hopeless. They were a feeble nation making unjust war against a strong one. They were a merely warlike people attacking a military people — the worst soldiers in Europe, without commanders, challenging the best soldiers in the world led by two able strategists. Without resources, without credit, without allies, and relying upon miracles, they flung themselves upon an enemy favored by united Europe. It was the act not of heroes, but of madmen. Had they been content to accept the autonomy of Crete their action in occupying that island would have commanded at least the respect of every poker-player in the world. Demanding all, they naturally got nothing. True, they had the moral support of that part of Christendom addicted to the flourish of tongues, and were particularly rich in resolutions of American sympathy, some of them beautifully engrossed on parchment.

One of the most amusing rascalities of that war was the attempt to invest it with a religious character. This smug villainy was especially manifest in the "resolutions" and the telegrams of press correspondents, from whom we heard very little about the Turks and the Greeks, but a great deal about the "Moslems" and the "Christians." Even the soldierly superiority of the Turks in valor and discipline was perverted to their disparagement. We were told of their "mad, fanatical charges," which by way of variety were called also "irresistible rushes of crazy zealots"; and one splendorous historiographer described the victorious battalions as "drunken with Armenian blood"1 How to distinguish between an assault that is fanatical and one that is merely courageous — that is a secret that neither the saintly scribe nor the sober Greek lingered to learn. In a general way the gallant charge is made by troops of our own race and religion, the fanatical rush by; those of another and inferior faith.

Hardly less brilliant were the accounts of “Moslem” cruelty, particularly to prisoners, under whom their captors kindled discomforting fires — a needless labor, for it would have been greatly easier to make the fire on unoccupied ground and superpose the prisoner afterward. The customary rites of parting the heads of women and eviscerating babes were not neglected: all the requirements of invasion received careful attention — as they did in Cuba, as they once did in France, as they previously did in the Southern States of our Union, and before that in the revolted colonies of Great Britain. Edhem Pasha was a strict constructionist of the popular law; as a conscientious invader operating among an inhospitable populace, he thoughtfully gave himself the trouble to be a “butcher” — as Cornwallis was in the Colonies, as Grant was in the South, as Von Moltke was in France, and as Weyler was in Cuba. If it were not for picturesque narratives of tortured prisoners, multisected women, children ingeniously bayoneted and old men fearfully and wonderfully defaced by the hand of an artist, the literature of conquest would lack the salt that keeps it sweet in the memory and the spice that gives it glow.

Of course it is all nonsense: cruelties are not practiced in modern wars between civilized nations. (It is true that the Turks, or some of them, are so uncivilized as to have a number of Turkesses each, but that is not visibly bad for them, and appears to be condemned on the ground that it is somehow bad for us.) Indubitably Turkey’s doom as a European Power was long ago pronounced in the Russian language, but she dies with a dignity befitting her glorious history. Foot to foot and sword to sword she struggles with the hosts assailing her, now on this side, and now on that. Against attack by her powerful neighbors and insurrection of her heterogeneous provinces, she has manifested a courage, a vitality, a fertility of resource, a continuity and tenacity of purpose which in a Christian nation would command our respect and engage our enthusiasm. Unfortunately for them, her people worship God in a way that is different from our way, and with a sincerity which in us would be zeal if we had it, but which in them is fanaticism. Therefore they are hateful. Therefore they are unspeakable. Therefore we lie about them and, because of the respectability of the witnesses, believe our own lies. Truth is not in us, nor the sense of its need; charity nor the memory of its primacy among virtues.

1897.

CATS OF CHEYENNE

THE city of Cheyenne, Wyoming, recently experienced a peculiar and singularly sharp affliction in the insanity of all its cats. Cheyenne cats had theretofore been regarded as the most level-headed and least mercurial of their species. Nothing in their aspect nor demeanor had been observed to justify a suspicion that they suffered from uncommonness of mind; then they developed symptoms of such pronounced intellectual independence that even the local physicians, inured to all phases and degrees of eccentricity in the human contingent of Cheyenne's population, were unable to ignore the melancholy significance of the phenomena — the cats of Cheyenne were indubitably as mad as hatters.

To him who has duly considered the cat's place in the scheme of modern civilization, the actual calamity will suggest possibilities of the most dismal and gruesome sort. In imagination he will see (and hear) the mental epidemic spreading by contagion until it affects the cats of the whole world, and perhaps those of Denver. The musical outlook is discouraging: the orchestration of a feline lunatic in one of its deuced intervals can be nothing less than appalling! Fancy a maniacal male of the species, beneath his favorite window of the dormitory of a hospital for nervous insomnia, securely casemented in an empty crate and courting rather than avoiding the assaults of the wild bootjacquerie above, while twanging his disordered fiddle-strings for the production of

a long unmeasured tone

To mortal minstrelsy unknown, and then executing such variants of his theme as no rational cat has ever been able or willing to compose!

The cause of the outbreak was no less remarkable than the outbreak itself: the cats of Cheyenne incurred mental confusion from being supercharged with electricity. For a period of seven weeks the wind blew across the delightful region of which that city is the capital, at a calculated average velocity of thirty miles an hour. "The ground in consequence," according to a resident scientist, "has become extremely dry, and the friction of the wind in passing over it has produced an enormous quantity of electricity, and every one is more or less charged." So seriously indeed were some of the newer residents affected that they have had to leave Cheyenne and go to California for relief; and of those remaining it is related that even now when they shake hands there is a distinct and painful shock to him who is the less electrified. The performance of this social rite has therefore fallen into "innocuous desuetude," men conscious of being imperfectly charged eying every approaching friend with natural suspicion, and preferring to pain him with a distant bow rather than incur the thunderbolt of a more familiar greeting. It is not apprehended that our most sacred American custom is menaced with anything more than local and temporary suspension, but it is feared that the American cat is on the eve of stupendous intellectual and musical changes that will make the name of Cheyenne memorable forever.

THANKSGIVING DAY

THERE be those whose memories though vexed with a rake would yield no matter for gratitude. With a waistcoat fitted to the occasion, it is easy enough to eat one's allowance of turkey and hide away one's dishonest share of the wine; if this be returning thanks, why, then, gratitude is considerably easier, and vastly more agreeable, than "falling off a log," and may be acquired in one easy lesson. But if more than this be required — if to be grateful is more than merely to be gluttonous, your true philosopher (he of the austere brow upon which logic has stamped its eternal impress, and from whose heart sentiment has been banished along with other vestigial vices) will think twice and again before leveling his serviceable shins in humble observance of the day.

For here is the nut of reason that he is compelled to crack for the kernel of emotion appropriate to the rite. Unless the blessings that we think we enjoy are favors of the Omnipotent, to be grateful is to be absurd. If they are, then, also, the evils with which we are indubitably afflicted have the same origin. Grant this, as you must, and you make an offset of the ill against the good, or are driven either to the untenable position that we should be grateful for both, or the no more defensible one that all evils are blessings in disguise.

Truth is, my fine fellow of the distensible weskit, your annual gratitude is a sorry pretense, a veritable sham, a cloak, dear man, to cover your unhandsome gluttony; and when by chance you actually do take to your knees on one day in the year it is for physical relief and readier digestion of your bird. Nevertheless, there is truly a subtle but significant relation between the stuffing of the flesh and the gratitude of the spirit, as you shall see.

I have ever held and taught the identity of Stomach and Soul — one entity considered under two aspects. Gratitude I believe to be a kind of imponderable ether evolved, mainly, from the action of the gastric fluid upon rich provend and comforting tope. Like other gases it ascends, and so passes out at mouth, audible, intelligible, gracious. This beautiful theory has been tested by convincing experiment in the manner scientific, as here related.

Experiment I. A quantity of grass was put into a leathern bottle and a gill of the gastric fluid of a sheep introduced. In ten minutes the neck of the bottle emitted a contented bleat.

Experiment II. A pound of beef was substituted for the grass and the fluid of a dog for that of the sheep. The result was a cheerful bark, accompanied by agitation of the bottom of the bottle, as if an attempt were making to wag it.

Experiment III. The bottle was charged with a handful of chopped turkey, a glass of old port, and four ounces of human gastric fluid obtained from a coroner. At first nothing escaped from the neck but a deep sigh of satisfaction, followed by a grunt like that of a banqueting pig. The proportion of turkey being increased and the gas confined, the bottle was greatly distended, appearing to suffer a slight uneasiness. The restriction being removed, the experimenter had the happiness to hear, distinctly articulated, the words: “Praise God, from whom all blessings flow — praise Him all bottles here below!”

Against such demonstration as this all theological interpretation of the phenomena of gratitude is of no avail, 1869.

THE HOUR AND THE MAN

CONTRARY to popular belief, “the hour” does not always bring “the man.” It did not bring him for France in 1870. In our civil war it brought him for the Confederacy, but a chance bullet took him off. Every defeat of a cause discredits anew the superstition about “the hour and the man.” When the hour strikes, the man may be already present and not hear. The “mute, inglorious Milton,” dying with all his music in him, is no more real a character than the mute, inglorious Cæsar trudging along in the ranks, unsuspected by his comrades and unaware of himself. Even if conscious of his own consummate genius, and impressing a sense of it upon others, it is by no means certain that he will come to the control. An intrigue, the selfish jealousy of some little soul in authority, the caprice of a woman behind the throne, an unfortunate peculiarity of manner in himself, a stumbling horse, a random bullet — any one of ten thousand accidents may deprive his country of the stupendous advantage of his directing hand.

It was once the fashion among the school of thinkers of which that truly great man, John Stuart Mill, was the head almost altogether to ignore the “personal equation” in matters of “great pith and moment.” They recognized the trend of tendencies — great currents of energy which apparently had an existence and control quite independent of, and apart from, human agency. In their view, individual men, so far from guiding the course of events, were borne along by them like leaves by the wind. They taught, by implication if not directly, that the Europe of their day would have been pretty much the same without, for example, the Napoleon of the day before. The conception of a single dominating mind bending other minds to its will and working stupendous changes, even by its caprices, these philosophers considered altogether too primitive and crude for the world’s manhood, and most of us who were young in their day assisted in discrediting their theory by reverently accepting it. We have recovered now; nobody today thinks after that fashion of thought, excepting Tolstoi. The importance of the individual will, consciously striving for the attainment of definitive ends, yet subject to all the caprices of chance and accident, is restored in the minds of men to its own reign of reason.

Considering the matter only in the limited view of its relation to military success, we all see, or suppose ourselves to see, that if Marlborough had died of measles when he was John Churchill; if Frederick had burst a blood vessel in one of his blind rages before he became the Great; if Carnot had fallen down a cellar stairway when he was a boy; if Napoleon had been knocked over at the bridge of Areola, or Von Moltke had deserted to the French and been given command of the column that was headed for Berlin, the historian of to-day would have had a Europe to deal with which it is impossible now even to conceive. Suppose that “the hour” had not brought John Sobieski to confront the victorious Turk a couple of centuries ago. Europe might now be Mohammedan and the word Russia destitute of meaning. Considerations of this character may advantageously be permitted to teach us humility in the matter of prophecy, and particularly with reference to military undertakings, than the result of which nothing is more beset with accident and dependent upon the unknowable and incalculable.

MORTUARY ELECTROPLATING

TO the proposition that electroplating the dead is the best way to dispose of them there is this considerable objection — it does not dispose of them. The plan is not without its advantages, some of which are obvious enough to mention. Nothing, for example, can be more satisfactory to a husband engaged in dying than the reflection that as a nickel-plated statue of himself he may still adorn the conjugal fireside and become an object of peculiar interest and sympathy to his successor. There are few remains, indeed, to whom this would not seem a softer billet than "to lie in cold obstruction" in a cemetery, from which, after all, one is usually routed out in a few years to accommodate a corner grocery or a boarding-house.

The light cost of ornamenting our public buildings with distinguished men themselves, as compared with the present enormous expense of obtaining statues of them, will commend the régime of electroplating to every frugal taxpayer and make him hail its dawn with a peculiar joy. In order to make the most of this advantage it is to be hoped that any public-spirited "prominent citizen" feeling his sands of life about run out, would consent to be posed by an artist in some striking and heroic attitude, ready for the *rigor mortis* to fix him in it for the plater. It would be but a trifling sacrifice for a great writer to pass the last ten minutes of his life cross-legged in a chair, with a pen in one hand and a thumb and forefinger of the other spanning a space on his dome of thought. A distinguished statesman would not find it so very inconvenient to breathe his last standing in the characteristic attitude of his profession, his left thumb supported in the opening of a waistcoat thoughtfully constructed to button the wrong way, and his right hand holding a scroll. In dying grandly on the acclivity of a rearing horse, a famous warrior could at the same time lay his countrymen under an added obligation and assist them fitly to discharge it.

The process of electroplation (if one may venture to anticipate a word that is inevitable) does not, unluckily, permit us to retain the deceased "in his habit as he lived," textile fabrics not being susceptible to the magic of its method; but the figures of eminent decedents exposed in public places to fire the ambition of American youth could be provided with real tailor-made suits, either in the fashion of their time and Congressional district or in that of ancient Rome, as might be preferred by the public taste for the time being, and the tailors' bills would probably, in some instances, be almost as interesting, if not nearly so startling, as that item in an early English Passion-play account, in which the management is charged five shillings and sixpence for “a cote for Godd.”

To that entire class of decedents whom we may call eminent-public-services men, the objection that electroplating the dead does not permanently dispose of them has no practical application. Of them we do not wish to dispose; we want to retain them for embellishment of our parks, the facades of our public buildings and the walls of our art galleries. But in its relation to “vulgar deaths unknown to fame” the objection is indeed fatal. If this mortal is going to put on immortality in so strictly literal a sense — if the dead are to be still with us in a tangible and visible reality, the fact will be embarrassing, no doubt. Under a régime in which a dead man will take up as much room as a living one, it is evident that the dead in general will take up a deal more than the living, and the disproportion will increase at an alarming rate.

Science assures us that but for death — including decay — the world would now be so overcrowded that there would be “standing room only,” even for scientists. Electroplating proposes to enjoin decay. Is it advisable? Is it wise? Is it fair to posterity? Shall we impose ourselves upon those who “inherit us,” without providing for the expense of our warehousing? It can hardly be expected that even the most “well-preserved old gentleman” will be an object of veneration and affection to his great-great-great-grandchild, even if he is so fortunate as to be authentic — unless, indeed, he happen to be plated with gold. In that case, though, he would be hardly likely to descend intact to so remote a generation. An unusually comely electroplatee of the opposing sex might be a joy forever as a work of art, and the task of polishing her be a labor of love for many centuries; but the common ruck of hard-shell ancestors, although bearing inscriptions attesting their possession of the loftiest virtues in their day and generation, would inspire an insufficiently tender emotion to pay for their lodging.

The time when our beautiful, but not altogether wholesome, cemeteries shall be no more, and in the place of them countless myriads of battered and rusted images shall be corded up like firewood all over the smiling land is a time which we may be thankful that we shall not live to see, and which our love of display should not make us selfishly assist in expediting. It is a glittering temptation, but in fair play to posterity (which has never done anything to embarrass us) it ought to be put resolutely aside.

THE AGE ROMANTIC

WHO would not like to have been an Athenian of the time of Pericles? Yet who would have liked to be one? The Periclesian Athenian whom we would all like to have been — provided that we could be also Rooseveltian Americans — took little thought, doubtless, of “the glory that was Greece.” He considered himself singularly unfortunate to live in so prosaic an age. Ah, if he could only have been born an Assyrian in the golden prime of good King Assurbanipal, before the invention of such hideous commonplaces as mathematics, oratory, navigation (with its flaring pharos on every headland), its bad poets, its Pan and the peplum!

A picturesque period is always remote in time; a picturesque land, in distance. It is of the essence of the picturesque that it be unfamiliar. Look at the suave Mexican *caballero* with his silvered *sombrero,* his silken sash, embroidered jacket fearfully and wonderfully bebraided, his ornate footgear. How he shines in the light of his uncommon identity! — how dull we look, how odious in the comparison! Can it be possible that this glorious creation envies us the engaging simplicity of our habiliments and the charm of our unstudied incivility? And does he execute a rapture over the title “Mister” and the soft, musical vocables of the name “John Henry Smith”?

Who would care to lose his life in ascending White Mountain by a new trail? But Mont Blanc — that is different.

Mont Blanc is the monarch of mountains;

They crowned him long ago, but be sure it was no Frenchman that did the crowning — not with such a name as that! And if the exigencies of the literary situation had compelled Coleridge to think of him in the vernacular he would never have stood in the valley of Chamouni asking him who sank his sunless pillars deep in earth. “White Mountain” is well enough in its way if one think only of its color; but there is the disquieting possibility that it was named in honor of its discoverer (Ezekiel White, of Podunk) like the eminences that “stand dressed in living green” down in New Hampshire.

Call Capri “Goat Island” and you class it with an abomination of that name in the harbor of San Franscisco. To the Neapolitan looking

Across the charmed bay

Whose blue waves keep, with Capri's sunny fountains,

Perpetual holiday it is just Goat Island, and it is nothing more. The sunny fountains and the famous sea-caverns do not interest him. They are possibly fine, but indubitably familiar.

All this has perhaps something to do with contentment; it may go a short way toward making us willing to be alive. We hear much from the writer-folk about the horrors of this commercial age, the dull monotony of modern life, the depressing daily contact with the things we loathe, to wit, railways, steamships, telephones, electric street-cars and other prosaic things which, when we are not boasting of them, we are reviling. We shudder to think of the railway from Joppa to Jerusalem (if there is one) and sigh for the good old days of the camel — even as we sigh for those of the stagecoach, whereby the traveler met with many romantic adventures in lonely roads and at wayside inns. Well, as to all that, it is still possible to renounce one's purse to a "road agent" between Squaw Gulch and Ginger Gap if one wish to, and "hold-ups" are not altogether unknown to those who in default of the stagecoach are compelled to travel by express trains.

Is any spectacle really more interesting than a railway train in motion? Why, even the stolidest laborer in the field, or the most *blase* switchman off duty, takes a moment off to stare at it. By night, with its dazzling headlight, its engine eating fire and breathing steam and smoke, its flashes of red light upon the trees as its furnace doors are opened and closed, its long line of gleaming windows, the roar and clang of its progress — not in the world is anything more fascinating, more artistic nor, but for its familiarity, more picturesque.

It is so all round: the Atlantic liner is a nobler sight than the clipper ship of our fathers, as that was a nobler sight than the carvel of *their* fathers, and that than the Roman trireme — each in its turn lamented by solemn protagonists of "the days that are no more" and might advantageously never have been. How the intellectual successors of these lugubrious persons will envy their dead predecessors in the days that are to come! As they go careering through the sky in their airships they will blow apart the clouds with sighs of regret for the golden age of the express train, the trolley car and the automobile. While penetrating the ocean between the German port of Liverpool and the Japanese port of New York they will read with avid interest quaint old chronicles relating to steam-driven vessels that floated on the surface and had many a merry bout with wind and wave. Immersed in waters all aglow with artificial light and color, passing in silence and security above charming landscapes of the sea, and among

The wide-faced, infamous monsters of the deep, they will deplore their hard lot in living in so prosaic an age, *a* even as you and I."

The truth of it all is that we of to-day are favored beyond the power of speech to express in having been born in so fascinating and romantic a period. Not in literature, not in art, but in those things that touch the interest and hold the attention of all classes alike, the last century was as superior to all those that went before as a bird of paradise is superior in beauty and interest to a slug of the field. Science and invention have made our world a spectacular extravaganza, a dream of delight to the senses and the mind. Man has employment for all his eyes and all his ears. Yet always he throws a longing look backward to the barbarism to which eventually he will return.

1902.

THE WAR EVERLASTING

I

FOR thousands of years — doubtless for hundreds of thousands — an incessant civil war has been going on in every country that has even a rudimentary civilization, and the prospect of peace is no brighter to-day than it was at the beginning of hostilities. This war, with its dreadful mortality and suffering, loses none of its violence in times of peace; indeed, a condition of national tranquillity appears to be most favorable to its relentless prosecution: when the people are not fighting foreigners they have more time for fighting one another. This never-ending internal strife is between the law-breaking and the law-abiding classes. The latter is the larger force — at least it is the stronger and is constantly victorious, yet never takes the full benefit of its victory. The commander of an army who should so neglect his opportunities would be recalled in disgrace, for it is a rule of warfare to take the utmost possible advantage of success.

There should be no such person as an habitual criminal, and there would be none if criminals were not permitted to breed. There are several ways to prevent them — some, like perpetual imprisonment, too expensive; others impossible of discussion here. The best practical and discussible way is to kill them. And in this is no injustice. The man who will not live at peace with his countrymen has no inherent right to live at all. The community against which he wages private war has as clear a right to deprive him of his life as of his liberty by imprisonment, or his property by fines.

We grade crimes and punishments only for expediency, not because there are degrees of guilt, for it is as easy to obey the law against theft as the law against murder, and the true criminality of an offense against the state lies in its infraction of the law, not in the damage to its victim. The venerable dictum that, whereas

It is a sin to steal a pin,
It is a greater to steal a potater,

is brilliant, but erroneous. Logically there are no degrees of crime; a misdemeanor is as hardy a defiance of the community as a felony. The distinction is an administrative fiction to facilitate punishment. It is thought that rather than condemn a misdemeanant to perpetual restraint in prison or death on the gallows jurors would acquit him; and indubitably they would. The purpose of these feeble remarks is to lead public opinion upward through flowery paths of reason to a higher philosophy and a broader conception of duty.

My notion is that a great saving of life and property could be effected by extermination of habitual criminals. Some crime would remain. Under the stress of want, men would occasionally take the property of others; crazed by sudden rage, they would sometimes slay; and so forth. But crimes of premeditation would disappear and the enormously expensive machinery of justice could be abolished. One small prison might suffice for an entire nation. A few courts of criminal jurisdiction, an insignificant constabulary, would preserve the peace and punishment could be made truly reformatory — it would not need to be deterrent. In short, the dream of the reformer, with his everlastingly futile methods of deterrence by mental and moral education, could be made to come to pass in a generation or two by the forthright and merciful plan of effacing the criminal class.

Of course I do not mean to advocate the death penalty for every premeditated infraction of the law, nor do I know how many convictions should be considered as proving the offender an habitual criminal; but certainly I think that, having exceeded the number allowed him, his right to life should be held to have lapsed and he should be removed from this vale of tears forthwith. The fact that a man who habitually breaks the law may be better than another who habitually obeys it, or the fact that he who is convicted may be less guilty than he who escapes conviction, has nothing to do with the matter. If we can not remove all the irreclaimable the greater is the expediency of removing all that we can catch and convict. The law’s inadequacy and inconsistency are patent, but they constitute the silliest plea for “mercy” that stupidity has ever invented.

II

This is an age of mercy to the merciless. The good Scriptural code, “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” has fallen into the sere and yellow leaf: it is a creed outworn. We have replaced it with a régime of “reformation,” a penology of persuasion. In our own country this sign and consequence of moral degeneration, this power and prevalence of the mollycoddle, are especially marked. We no longer kill our assassins; as a rule, the only disadvantages they suffer for killing us are those incident to detention for acquittal, with a little preaching to remind them of their mortality. Wherefore our homicide list is about twice annually that of the battle of Gettysburg.

The American prison of to-day is carefully outfitted with the comforts of home. Those who succeed in breaking into it find themselves distinctly advantaged in point of housing, and are clothed and fed better than they ever were before, or will be elsewhere. Light employment, gentle exercise, cleanliness, and sound sleep reward them, and when expelled their one ambition is to go back. The "reformation" consists in lifting them to a higher plane of criminality: the man who enters as a stupid thief is graduated a competent forger, and comes back (if he can) with an augmented self-respect and an ambition to kill the warden. Some of us old fogies think that a prison was best worth its price to the community when it was a place that a rascal would rather die out of than get into; but we are *voces in deserto* and in the ramp and roar of the new penology altogether unheard.

These remarks are suggested by something in France. In that half-sister republic the guillotine, though still a lawful dissuader from the error of assassination, is not at the time of writing in actual use. Murderers are still sentenced to it, but always the sentence is commuted to imprisonment during life or good behavior. Coincidently with the decline of the guillotine there is a notable rise in the rate of assassination. Somebody having had the sagacity to suggest the possibility of something more than an accidental relation between the two phenomena, it occurred to a Parisian editor to collect "views" as to the expediency of again bringing knife and neck together in the good old way. He got views of all sorts of kinds, naturally, and knows almost as much about public opinion as he did before. It is interesting to note that the literary class is nearly a unit against the chopping-block, as was to be expected: persons who work with the head naturally set a high value upon it — an over-appraisement in their own case, for their heads are somewhat impaired by their habit of housing their hearts in them. There was an honorable minority: Mistral, the Provencal poet, who pointed out (in verse) that a people too squeamish to endure the shedding of criminal blood has taken a long step in the downward path leading to feebleness.

Wherefore I say: Bravo, Mistral! You have done something to prove that not all poets are persons of criminal instincts.

III

There is a general tendency to attribute the popular distrust of the death penalty to the “softening” effect of civilization. One might accept that view without really agreeing with its expounder; for it is the human heart which the expounder believes to have been softened, whereas there is reason to think that the softening process has involved the human head.

As a matter of fact, gentlemen experiencing an inhospitality to the death penalty (including those on the gallows) should not felicitate themselves; their feeling is due to quite other causes. It is mostly a heritage of unreason from the dark ages when in all Europe laws were made and enforced, with no great scruples of conscience, by conquerors and the descendants of conquerors alien in blood, language and manners. Between these and the masses of the original inhabitants there was no love lost. The peasantry hated their foreign oppressors with a silent antipathy which, like a covered fire, burned with a sullen and more lasting fervor for lack of vent. Hatred of the oppressor embraced hatred of all his works and ways, his laws included, and from hatred of particular laws to hatred of all law the transition was easy, natural and, human nature being what it is, inevitable.

So there is a distinctly traceable connection between wars of conquest and sympathy with crime — between the subjugation of races and their disrespect of law. Here we find the true fountain and origin of anarchism. A country “occupied” implies a people imbruted. It may some time “assimilate” with its conquerors, bringing to the new compound, as in the instance of the Anglo-Saxon combination with the Norman-French, some of the sturdiest virtues of the new national life; but along with these it will surely bring servile vices acquired during the period of inharmony. There is no doubt that much of whatever turbulence and lawlessness distinguish the American people from the more orderly communities across the sea is the work of William the Conqueror and his men-at-arms. The evil that they did lives after them in the congenial conditions supplied by a republic.

What manner of men the Anglo-Saxons became under Norman dominion before the moral renascence is shown in all the chronicles of the time. A Roman historian has described the Saxon of the period as a naked brute, who lay all day by his fireside sluggish and dirty, always eating and drinking. Even after the assimilation was nearly complete — no longer ago than “the spacious times of great Elizabeth,” who, by the way, used to thwack her courtiers on the mazzard when they displeased her — the homogeneous race was a lawless lot. Speaking of their fondness for violent bodily exercise and their inaccessibility to the softer sentiments, Taine says:

This is why man, who for three centuries had been a domestic animal, was still almost a savage beast, and the force of his muscles and the strength of his nerves increased the boldness and energy of his passions. Look at these uncultivated men, men of the people, how suddenly the blood warms and rises to their faces; their fists double, their lips press together and their vigorous bodies rush at once into action. The courtiers of that age were like our men of the people. They had the same taste for the exercise of their limbs, the same indifference to the inclemencies of the weather, the same coarseness of language, the same undisguised sensuality.

Before he grew too fat, Henry VIII was so fond of wrestling that he took a fall out of Francis I on the field of the Cloth of Gold.

> “That,” says the historian of English literature, “is how a common soldier or a bricklayer nowadays tries a new comrade. In fact, they regarded gross jests and brutal buffooneries as amusements, as soldiers and bricklayers do now. * They thought insults and obscenity a joke. They were foul-mouthed, they listened to Rabelais’ words undiluted, and delighted in conversation that would revolt us. They had no respect for humanity; the rules of proprieties and the habits of good breeding began only in the time of Louis XIV, and by imitation of the French.”

Such were “our sturdy Anglo-Saxon ancestors” from whom we inherit our no good opinion of the law and our selfish indisposition to the penalty of death.

ON THE USES OF EUTHANASIA

I

THE proposal to forestall a painful death by a painless one is not, to normal sensibilities, “shocking.” If persuaded of its expediency no physician should give it a hesitating advocacy through fear of being thought brutal. It is an error to suppose that familiarity with death and suffering exhausts the springs of compassion in one born compassionate. Like many other qualities, compassion grows by use: none has more of it than the physician, the nurse, the soldier in war. He to whom the menace of an injustice is a louder voice than the call of conscience has no standing in the House of Pain, no warrant to utter judgment as to the conduct of its affairs.

Pain is cruel, death is merciful. Prolongation of a mortal agony is hardly less barbarous than its infliction. Who when sane in mind and body would not choose to guard himself against a futile suffering by an assurance of accelerated release? Every memory is charged with instances, observed or related, of piteous appeals for death from the white lips of agony, yet how rarely can these formulate the prayer!

To its concession, regulated by law, there is the objection that law is frangible and judgment fallible. But that objection has no greater cogency in this than in other matters; laws we must have, and execute them with such care as we can. Our courts sometimes err in the diagnosis of crime, yet they warrant our trust in the general service of our need. The mariner’s compass is fallible, the winds baffle and the waves destroy; yet we have navigation. Even the anarchist cries out against law, not because it does not accomplish its purpose, but because, roughly, it does.

We build civilization with such tools as we have; if we waited for perfect ones the structure would never rise. The juror is no more nearly just and infallible than the physician; if we can entrust ourselves with death as a penalty for crime we need not shrink from the no more awful responsibility of according it as a boon to hopeless pain. In neither case can a blunder do more than hasten the inevitable. “When I was born I cried,” said a philosopher; “now I know why.” He did not know why; it was because at the moment of his birth Nature spoke the sentence of his death.

It may be that proponents of euthanasia for suffering incurables are pushing their adventurous feet too far ahead in the march of mind to expect anything better in the nature of encouragement than a copious dead-catting and bad-egging from laggard processionists arear. Sometimes, however, they get decenter treatment than they have the hardihood to claim: occasionally, through the roar of calumniation is heard the voice of dull and dignified protestation, even of argument. For example, *The British Medical Journal* once pointed out, with more gravity than grammar, that "the medical profession has always strongly, set its face against a measure that would inevitably pave the way to the grossest abuses, and which would degrade them to the position of executioners."

I don't know that the medical profession speaks with any special authority in a matter of this kind. Perhaps it knows a little better than other trades and professions that cases of hopeless agony are of frequent occurrence, but as to the expediency of relieving them by the compassionate *coup de grace* — of that a physician is no better judge than anyone else. As to the fear of being "degraded to the position of executioners," the position is not degrading. The office of executioner — even when execution is punishment, not mercy — is, and should be considered, an almost sacred office. Its popular disrepute harks back to the bad old days when a majority of the people in countries now partly civilized were criminal in act or sympathy, living in hate and terror of the law — the days of Tyburn Tree with its roaring mobs, cheering the malefactor and pelting the hangman. It was not from fear of a merely social reprobation that the mediæval headsman wore a mask; it was from fear of being torn to pieces if ever recognized unguarded in the public street. A man of to-day, ambitious to prove his descent from a criminal ancestry, can most easily do so by damning the hangman. His humble origin is no disgrace to him if he is a good citizen, but it makes him invincible to the suasion of argument against his fad. One might as profitably attempt to reform the color of his eyes or dissuade him from the shape of his nose.

II

"It is a physician's mission to cure disease and alleviate suffering," says Dr. Nehemiah Nickerson. "There is a point beyond which he can not cure disease; after that it is his duty to alleviate suffering."

A mission implies a mandate; a mandate an authority superior to that of the missionary. I do not know from what higher authority a physician derives his own, nor who has the right to lay down the lines within which his activity must lie. Within the civil and the moral law he is a free agent — free to observe or disregard the customs of his trade, as conscience may determine. He has no mandate, no mission.

It is true, however, that to cure disease and to alleviate suffering are purposes commonly recognized as important among those belonging to the practice of medicine. Having failed to accomplish the first, how far may a physician go in accomplishing the second? — that is a question that finds no answer in any imaginary mandate. It is not even answered by the Decalogue, for the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” has so many obvious and necessary limitations that its value as a guide to conduct is virtually nothing. Dr. Nickerson believes he may go so far as to kill the patient he can not cure. Moreover, he candidly affirms his habit of doing so. I am told that he is a distinguished physician; there is apparently nothing in his frank avowal to lessen his distinction. It would not surprise, indeed, if his fame should take attention from even the officers of the law. To make himself an object of lively interest in quarters where the several kinds of distinction in his profession are commonly overlooked he has only to descend from generals to particulars, naming the patients whom he has turned out of the frying-pan of physical pain into whatever state awaited them, and the means (under Providence) which he employed to that end.

A man may be the best judge of what he is for, but by laymen unskilled in physic it is usually held that a physician’s business is not only to cure disease and alleviate suffering, but to prolong life — to save it altogether being impossible, for all must eventually die. But laymen have no mandate always to be right; now and again they have been in error. The righteousness and expediency of releasing an incurable sufferer from the horrors of life should not be clouded and discredited by an erring advocacy.

When a horse or a dog incurs the mischance of a broken back no question is raised as to the propriety of “putting it out of its misery.” Unable to cure it, we kill it, and in doing so feel a comfortable sense of benevolence, a consciousness of having performed a disagreeable duty, of having discharged an obligation inseparable from our dominion over the beasts of the field. It may be said that in the instance of a human being similarly incurable the dominion is lacking. But that does not go to the root of the matter, and is, moreover, untrue; for a helpless man is as much subject to our power as a helpless animal, and as much a charge upon our good will. And in many cases he is as little capable of deciding wisely what is good for him. A wounded bird or squirrel will manifest a strong indisposition to be “put out of misery,” by struggling to escape into the bush; a man will sometimes beg for death, even when he does not know himself incurable. If there should be a difference in the treatment of the two in respect of the matter in hand it would seem that the beast should be spared and the man killed.

But Dr. Nickerson’s critics think that a different rule should hold, because the man is an immortal soul, whereas the beast is a thing of to-day, divinely ordained to “perish.” To this it may be said in reply: All the stronger reason for a reversal of our practice, for in putting the man out of his misery you would not really kill, but only change, him; but the animal having only one life, in taking that you make him “poor indeed,” depriving him of all that he has.

That the man is an immortal soul is, however, a proposition which, after centuries of discussion, remains unsettled; and those who hold Dr. Nickerson’s view must in conscience forego the advantage of the argument which their generous opponents try to thrust upon them. If we actually knew human beings to be immortal many of the current popular objections to killing them would disappear, and not only soldiers but physicians and assassins could work at their trades with a comparatively free hand, along lines of usefulness not always and entirely divergent. Surely there could be no great wrong in “removing” a good Christian, whether he were ill at ease or not: to translate him to the shining altitudes of Paradise is distinctly to augment the sum of human happiness. For that matter, it would not be difficult to demonstrate logically the proposition that any Christian may rightly slay any other Christian upon whom he can lay his hands. True, he is forbidden by his religion to do so. All the more noble and generous of him to invite eternal punishment in order to abridge his brother’s season of earthly trial, insure him against backsliding and usher him at once into the Kingdom of Delights. In point of mere expediency a general observance of this high duty is open to the objection that it would somewhat reduce the church militant in point of numerical strength. But this is perhaps a digression.

It is urged that not knowing the purposes of the Creator in creating and giving us life, we should endure (and make our helpless friends endure) whatever ills befall, lest by death we ignorantly frustrate the divine plan. Merely pausing to remark that the plan of an omnipotent Deity is not easily frustrated, I should like to point out that in this very ignorance of the purpose of existence lies a justification of putting an end to it. I did not ask for existence; it was thrust upon me without my assent. As He who gave it has permitted it to become an affliction to me, and has not apprised me of its advantages to others or to Himself, I am not bound to assume that it has any such advantages. If when in my despair I ask why I ought to continue a life of suffering I am uncivilly denied an answer, I am not bound to believe, and in lack of light may be unable to believe, that the answer if given would satisfy me. So the game having gone against me and the dice appearing to be loaded, I may rightly and reasonably quit.

That is the way that a logical patient would probably reason if incurable and in great pain. I confess my inability to discern the fallacy of his argument. Indeed, it seems to me that so far as concerns baffling the divine purpose the patient who calls in a physician and tries to recover is more obviously guilty of attempting to do that than the patient who tries to die. To an understanding that accepts life as a gift from God, illness might very naturally seem a divine intimation of God's altered mind. To one thinking after that fashion voluntary death would necessarily appear as cheerful submission to the divine will, and the taking of medicine as impious rebellion.

The right of suicide implies and carries with it the right to put to death a sufferer incurably ill; for the relief which we claim for ourselves we cannot righteously deny to those in our care. We would naturally expect a medical advocate of suicide to kill a patient occasionally, as humanity may suggest and opportunity serve. Dr. Nickerson's frankness is shocking, but on a survey of the entire question it seems a good deal easier to point out his infractions of the law than his disloyalty to reason and the higher sentiments which distinguish us from the priests that perish.

1899.

THE SCOURGE OF LAUGHTER

THE world is growing wiser. Ancient Error is drawing off his defeated forces, the rear guard blinking in the destructive light of reason and science. It has now been ascertained that wrinkles are not caused by care and grief, but by laughing. Such is the dictum of an eminent physician, and it is becoming in us laymen to accept it with due humility and govern ourselves accordingly, subduing the rebellious diaphragm and mortifying the countenance. More easily said than done, doubtless, but what that is easily done is worth doing?

It is to be feared that much of the laughing that is done has its energizing motive in some fundamental principle of human nature not affectable by human will; that we frequently laugh from causes beyond our control, between which and the thing we think we laugh at there is no other relation than coincidence in point of time. That which we happen to have in attention at the time of the mysterious impulse is mistaken as the cause of the impulse and thought comic, whereas it has no such character, and under other circumstances would have been thought a very serious matter. This view is abundantly confirmed by observation. Men have been known to laugh even when reading the work of the professional humorist, when listening to a story at a club, when in the very presence of a negro minstrel. It is difficult, indeed, to mention environing conditions so dispiriting as to assure gravity.

But there, is a kind of laughter essentially ‘different in origin. It is not spontaneous, but induced. It has not, like death, all seasons for its own — is not a purely subjective phenomenon, like hereditary gout, but requires the conspiracy of occasion and stimulation by something outside the laughter; for examples a candidate’s assurance of devotion to the public interest, a pig standing on its head, or an editorial article by Deacon George Harvey.

It is clear that by diligence, vigilance and determination this latter kind of laughter can be greatly reduced in frequency, intensity and duration, and its ravages upon the human countenance stayed to that extent. We have only to keep ourselves out of the way of its exciting causes. If we find ourselves within ear-shot of the candidate attesting his love of the people we can close our ears and retire. Seeing a pig preparing to stand on its head, we may turn away our eyes and fix the mind upon some solemn subject — Mark Twain at the grave of Adam, or Adam at the grave of Mark Twain. Catching the sense of a Harvey editorial we can lay down the paper and put a stone on it. So shall our faces retain their pristine smoothness, enabling us to falsify with impunity the family Bible record with regard to date of birth.

It is of course impossible to enumerate here many of the things to be sought or avoided in order not to laugh and grow wrinkled, but two are so obviously important that they force themselves forward for mention. Our reading should be confined as much as possible to the comic weeklies, and we should give a wide berth to those dailies which deem it their duty to rebuke the commercial spirit of the age. It is believed that by taking these two precautions against the furrowing finger: nails of Mirth one can retain a fresh and youthful rotundity of countenance to the end of one’s days and transmit it to those who come after.

THE LATE LAMENTED

HOW long one must be dead before his “relics” — including not only his remains proper, but the several appurtenances thereunto belonging — cease to be “sacred,” is a question which has never been settled. London was once divided in opinion, or rather in feeling, as to the propriety of publicly exhibiting the body-linen worn by Charles I when that unhappy monarch had the uncommon experience of losing his head. Not only was this underwear shown, but also some of the royal hair which was cut away by the headsman. Many persons considered the exhibition distasteful and in a measure sacrilegious. But the entire body of the great Rameses has been dug out and is freely shown without provoking a protest.

Rameses was a mightier king than Charles, and a more famous. He was the veritable Pharaoh of sacred history whose daughter (who, I regret to say, was also his wife) found the infant Moses in the bulrushes. He could also point with pride to his record in profane history, and was, altogether, a most respectable person. Between the power, splendor and civilization of the Egypt of Rameses and the England of Charles there is no comparison: in the imperishable glory of die former the latter seems a nation of savage pigmies. Why, then, are the actual remains of the one monarch considered a fit and proper “exhibit” in a museum and the mere personal adornments of the other too sacred for desecration by the public eye? Probably political and ethnic considerations have something to do with it: perhaps in Cairo the sentiment would be the other way, though the stoical indifference of successive Egyptian Governments to mummy-mining by the thrifty European does not sustain that view.

Schliemann and many of his moling predecessors have dug up and removed the sleeping ancients from what these erroneously believed to be their last resting-places in Asia Minor and the other classic countries, without rebuke, and the funeral urn of an illustrious Roman can be innocently haled from its pigeon-hole in a *columbarium*. We open the burial mounds of our Indian predecessors and pack off their skulls with never a thought of wrong, and even the bones of our own early settlers when in course of removal to make way for a new city hall are treated with but scant courtesy. There seems to be no statute of limitations applicable to the sanctity of tombs; every case is judged on its merits, with a certain loose regard to local conditions and considerations of expediency.

It was an ancient belief that the shade of even the most worthy deceased could not enter Elysium so long as the body was unburied, but no provision was made for expulsion of those already in if their bodies were exhumed and used as “attractions” for museums. So we may reasonably hope that the companions of Agamemnon contemplate the existence of Schliemanns with philosophic indifference; and doubtless Rameses the Great, who, according to the religion of his country, had an immortality conditioned on the preservation of his mortal part, is as well content that it lie in a museum as in a pyramid.

DETHRONEMENT OF THE ATOM

IT is of course to be expected that the advance of scientific knowledge will destroy, here and there, a cherished illusion. It was so when Darwin showed us that we are not made of mud, but have “just growed.” At least that is what Darwin is by many held to have done, and deep is their resentment. In a general way it may be said that the path of scientific progress is strewn with the mouldering bones of our dearest creations.

To this melancholy company must now be added the precious Atom. It has had a fairly long reign, has the atom; the youths who first worshiped at its shrine are in the lean and slippered pantaloon stage of existence. It will be all the harder for them to see their idol depedestaled.

That the atom was the ultimate unit of matter, the absolute smallest thing in the universe, a fraction incapable of further division — that is what we had been commanded to believe by those in authority over the many things of science. And with such powers of conviction as we are gifted withal we had believed.

Now, what do we hear — what do we hear? Why, that an atom is an aggregation of electrons! These are so much smaller than atoms that the latter can be easily conceived as cut in halves — nay, chopped into hash. Before the inven — that is to say, the discovery — of the electron such a thing as that was unthinkable. So, at each enlargement of the field of knowledge the human mind receives new powers. The time may come when we shall be able (with an effort) to conceive the division of an electron.

The difference in magnitude, or rather minitude, between our old friend the atom and this new though doubtless excellent thing, the other thing, is characteristically expounded thus:

“If an electron is represented by a sphere an inch in diameter, an atom on the same scale is a mile and a half. Or, if an atom is represented by the size of a theater, an electron is represented on the same scale by a printer’s full stop.”

The electron, it seems, is not only unthinkably little; it is impalpable, invisible, inaudible and probably insipid and inodorous. In brief, it is immaterial. It is not matter, though matter is composed of it. That is easy to understand if one has a scientific mind.

Not only are electrons immaterial, or at least inconceivably attenuated; they are immense distances apart — immense in comparison with their bulk. Likewise, they are inconceivably rapid in motion about a common center. The electrons forming a single atom are analogous to our solar system, but whether there is a big electron in the center science does not as yet tell us.

When a steam hammer descends upon a piece of steel it merely strikes the outside of an infinite aggregation of moving, impalpable things widely separated in space. But they stop the hammer.

Scientists know these facts, and we know that they know them — this is our delightful part in the matter. But we do not know how they know them — that is not granted to our humble degree of merit. As we grow in grace, we may perhaps hope to be told, preferably in words of one syllable, how they learned it all; how they count the electrons; how they measure them; with what kind of instrument they determine their actual and comparative magnitudes, and so forth. No doubt the columns of the newspapers are open to them for explanation and exposition even now.

In the meantime let us be pleasant about it. It is more amiable to believe without comprehending than to comprehend without believing.

DOGS FOR THE KLONDIKE

THE spectacle of great tides of men sweeping hither and thither across the face of the globe under suasion of so mean a passion as cupidity, as the waters of ocean are led by the moon, is more spectacular than pleasant. See in it however much one prophetically may of future empire and civilizations growing where none grew before — hear as one can on every breeze that blows from the newest and richest placers the hum of the factory to be, the song of the plowman (such as it is) and the drone of the Sunday sermon, replacing “the petulant pop of the pistol” — yet one can not be altogether insensible to the hideousness of the motive out of which all these pleasing results are to come. Doubtless in looking at the pond-lily a healthy mind makes light account of the muck and slime at the bottom of the pond, whence it derives its glories; but while the muck and slime only are in evidence, the water and the flower mere presumptions of the future, the case is a trifle different.

It is conceded that out of this mad movement to the Klondike great good may come. Many of those who go to dig will remain to plow, jocundly driving their teams afield to tickle the tundra till it laughs in pineapples, bananas and guavas. It is not denied that great cities (with roof-gardens and slums) will rise like exhalations along the mighty Yukon, nor that that noble stream will know the voice of the gondolier and the lute of the lover. In place of the moose and the caribou, the patient camel will kneel in the shade of palms to receive his cargo of dates, spices and native silks.

But just now the Klondike region is a trifle raw. In the stark simplicity of life there men do not veil their characters with a shining hypocrisy; all, by their presence in that unutterable country, being convicted of the greed for gold, every man feels that it is useless to profess any of the virtues; as the discharged inmate of a reformatory institution has no choice but a life of crime. Later, when the beneficent influences that track the miner to his gulch shall have set up a more complex social system under which the presumption of a base motive may be less strong, we shall hear, doubtless, of Dawsonians and even Skagwegians who would take the trouble to deny an accusation of theft and to affirm a disposition to go to church between drinks on a Sunday.

Ugly as these “rushes” to mining regions seem to one unskilled in use of the muck-rake and a stranger to avarice — discouraging as they are to the good optimist, and correspondingly delightful to his natural enemy, the wicked pessimist — yet it must be confessed that in the present rush there is one feature that goes far in mitigation of its general unpleasantness: it has created in distant and unwholesome regions a demand for the domestic dog.

For the first time in his immemorial existence this comfortable creature has thrown open to him a wide field of usefulness of exactly the kind that he deserves — a long way from the comforts of home, imperfectly supplied with beef-steaks, cold as blazes, with plenty of hard work and the worst society in the world!

“Good long-haired dogs” are “quoted” in Dawson at one hundred and fifty to two hundred dollars. Such prices ought to result in drawing all that kind of dogs out of the rest of the country, which in itself would be a great public benefaction; for the popular belief in the superior virtues of the long-haired dog is a lamentable error. The type and exemplar of that variety, the so-called Newfoundland, is, in point of general, all-round unworth, superior to any living thing that we have the advantage to know. Not only is his bite more deadly than that of the ordinary snapdog, but that of the fleas which he cherishes is peculiarly insupportable. The fleas of all other dogs merely sadden; those of the Newfoundland madden to crime! His fragrance, moreover, is less modest than that of even the Skye terrier; it is distinctly declarative. A charming fiction ascribes to him a tender solicitude for drowning persons, especially children; but history may be searched in vain for a single authentic proof — and history is not over-scrupulous in the matter of veracity. Every one has heard and read of rescues from drowning, by Newfoundland dogs, but no human being ever saw one. It is to be hoped that the hyperborean demand for “good long-haired dogs” will not fall upon heedless ears.

The Great Dane is not a “long-haired” dog, but he is large and strong, and should be wanted in the Klondike country. His size and strength would there be his best recommendations; here they are his worst. Having a giant’s strength he uses it as a giant, and his multiplication in the land is a terror and a curse. His manner of unloading a bicycle has been justly described as the acme of inconsiderateness. Moreover, he is increasing all the time in magnitude as well as in quantity; at his present rate of growth he will within a decade or so overtop the horse and outnumber the sheep. There will be no resisting him. But what an excellent roadster he would be in Alaska! The brevity of his hair is really an advantage: in calculating his load less allowance will need to be made for icicles. Indubitably the value of a Great Dane in Dawson is at least one thousand dollars.

The most pernicious varieties of the species — the small animated pestilences upon which our ladies waste so much of the affection which, it is reverently submitted, might with better results be bestowed upon the males of their own species — these pampered laplings are unfortunately not useful for draught purposes in the Arctic. One of them could not pull a tin plate from Squottacoota to Nickalinqua. So they are not “quoted” in the Dawson market reports. But something has been overlooked: the incomparable excellence of their flesh! It is respectfully suggested that a few of these curled darlings and glossy sweethearts be sent to the Klondike, suitably canned and spiced as commercial samples. The miners may be assured that the flesh is not only wholesome, but is entirely free from that objectionable delicacy that distinguishes, for example, the yellow-legged pullet; it is honestly rank and strong and has plenty of “chew” in it — just the right kind of meat for founders of empires and heralds of civilization. A dozen cans of Dandy Dinmont or King Charles Spaniel should have in Dawson an actual value of three thousand dollars, but doubtless could be supplied at a much smaller price. So much as that would hardly be needed in any one outfit, for such is the nutritious property of small dog that most persons would find a single can of it enough.

We are able to supply all Alaska and the Northwest Territory with dogs and with dog. Every township has always a surplus. I invite attention to our peerless canine wealth and to the eminent fitness of its units for service on the northern trails and along the northern alimentary canal. Before purchasing elsewhere let the judicious Klondiker examine our stock. He is too far away to look at it, but when the wind is in the southeast that is needless.

MONSTERS AND EGGS

THE Gila Monster has at last succeeded in disclosing to Science the trend of his appetite toward that comestible with the strong foreign accent, the gull’s egg. That the product of the merry sea-fowl is the creature’s regular diet in his desert habitat circumjacent to Death Valley is a proposition so obvious that one would have thought it self-evident, even to him on whose humble birth fair science frowned not; yet the discovery appears to have been made by accident, as is so frequently the case with great truths which seem so simple when we come to know them.

Now that his Monstership’s favorite food is no longer a matter of controversy to scientists and concern to the tenderfoot, we may reasonably hope that the interesting but hitherto misunderstood and calumniated reptile may be domesticated among us; for there is no longer a doubt of our ability to support him in the style to which he is accustomed, nourishing him to a proper growth and suitable flavor for the table.

In the gastronomical curriculum of the southern Red Man the Gila Monster has always held an honorable place when well roasted by exposure to the climate of his choice; and that aboriginal trencherman’s dietetic practices have frequently pointed the way to reform at the tables of the Paleface, a notable instance being his advocacy of the potato and the tobacco leaf, in the consumption of which he had long been happy before he discovered Columbus and Sir Walter Raleigh. In the spud and the quid we have, doubtless, his best benefactions to Caucasian gastronomy; but if the seed of his example with regard to the Gila Monster do not fall upon the stony soil of a reasonless conservatism the minor pleasures of existence may be augmented by an addition distinctly precious, and the female gull be accepted and venerated as a philanthropist of the deepest dye.

By knowledge not only of the gratifying fact that the Monster eats gulls’ eggs, but of the at least interesting one that he does *not* eat the Eastern tourist, we attain to something like an understanding of his disposition, which is seen to be peaceable and humane. It is therefore probable that he is no more venomous when he bites than poisonous when bitten. The current stories attesting the noxiousness of his tooth have their origin, perhaps, in a strong sense of his destitution of beauty; for it must be frankly confessed that the impulchritude of his expression and general make-up is disquieting to the last degree. But, for that matter, so is that of the toad — not only the horned toad, which is known to be harmless, but the common hoptoad of the garden, whose bite is believed by some to be actually wholesome. Shakspeare was of a different conviction, but Shakspeare was not very strong in zoology, nor was he over-conscientious in verification of all the statements that he put into the mouths of his characters — a circumstance which seems to have been overlooked by those who are most addicted to quoting him.

Science having done so much for the Gila Monster and, in a sense, made him its own, will be expected by the public to carry the good work forward by settling, once for all, the vexed question of his brotherhood to the rattlesnake and the woman scorned. Is he really venomous? With a view to determining the point it is to be hoped that some unselfish investigator may permit himself to be bitten by the accused; and I think a very proper person to make the experiment is Dr. Theodore Roosevelt, the illustrious zoologist who wrote the monograph on the invertebracy of the spineless cactus.

MUSIC

LET him to whom, as to me, nature has denied “an ear for music,” or circumstance an opportunity for its education, take heart and comfort: he has escaped a masterful temptation to commit nonsense in the first degree. Doubtless there are music makers and music lovers who can write and speak of the art with a decent regard to the demands of common sense, but doubtless they don’t; their history is a record of ignored opportunities. As to the others — the chaps who push in between our hearing and our understanding — they possibly “play by note,” but they write “by ear.” They say whatever sounds well to themselves, and there they leave it. Theirs is the art of sound and they expound its principles with due observance of its results: in speaking of it they are satisfied to make a pleasant noise. The louder the noise of their exposition, the more glorious the art which it expounds. As members of mystic brotherhoods are bound by oath not to divulge the solemn secrets which they do not possess; as the married have a tacit undertaking to wreathe their chains with flowers, smile away their wounds, and exhibit as becoming ornaments the handles of the daggers rusting in their hearts; as priesthoods plate with gold their empty shrines; as the dead swear in stone and brass that they were virtuous and great — so the musical are in conspiracy to magnify and exalt their art. It is a pretty art: it is rich in elements of joy, purveying to the sense a refined and keen delight. But it is not what they say it is. It is not what the uninitiated believe it. What is?

I am led to these reflections — provoked were the better word — by reading one Krehbiel. “Wagner,” Mr. Krehbiel explains, “strove to express artistic truths, not to tickle the ear, and therefore his work will stand, while Italian opera, which is founded on sensual enjoyment, must pass away.” A more amusing *non sequitur* it would be difficult for the most accomplished logician to construct. Because the city is founded on a rock it will topple down! I think I could name several sorts of sensual enjoyment which give promise of enduring as long as the senses. Among them I should give a high place to whatever kind of music the sense of hearing most enjoys. If posterity is going to be such an infinite fool as to stop its ears to sounds which please them, I thank Heaven that I live in antiquity.

The enjoyment of music is a purely sensual enjoyment. It “tickles the ear,” and it does nothing else. The ear being skilfully tickled after the fashion which the composer and the executant understand, emotion ensues; but not thought, save by association — by memory. Music does not touch the springs of the intellect. It never generated a process of reasoning, nor expressed a truth, "artistic" or other, which could be formulated in a definitive proposition. It has no intellectual character whatever. I have heard this disputed scores of times, but never by one who had himself much intellect. And, in truth, musicians, if I must say it, are not commonly distinguished above their fellows by mental capacity. The greater their gift, the less they know; and when you find a tremendously skilful and enthusiastic executant you will have as nearly sensual an animal as you care to catch.

To those having knowledge of the essential meaning of music, its original place among the influences that wrought their results upon primitive man, this will seem natural and sequent. Music was originally vocal; before men became wise enough and deft enough to make instruments they merely sang, as the birds do now, and certain animals — the latter pretty badly, it must be confessed. But why did the primitive man and woman sing? To commend themselves in the matter of love, as the birds do, and the beasts. Abundant vestiges of this practice survive among us. The young woman who bangs her piano and her hair has a single motive in the double habit. She is hardly conscious of it; she has inherited it along with the desire to brandish her eyes, and otherwise manslay. Consider, my tuneless youth, how slender is your chance in rivalry with the fellow who can sing. He will "knock you out" with a bar of music better than a Chinese highbinder could with a bar of iron. It did not occur to our good arboreal ancestor (him of the prehensile tail, aswing upon his branch) to address his wood-notes wild to a mixed audience for gate-money; he sought to charm a single pair of ears, and those more hairy than critical. Later, as the race went on humaning, there grew complexity of sentiment and varying emotional needs, for the gratification whereof song took on a matching complexity and variance. There were war songs, and death songs, and hunting songs, harvest songs and songs of adoration. Wood and metal were taught to perform acceptably.

The shells of tortoises were made to sing,
And, touched in tenderness, the captive string.

Did it ever occur to you, intelligent reader, that the simplest musical instrument is a more astonishing invention than the talking phonograph? But the human love-tone is the soul and base of the system; and should men and women henceforth be born happily married the entire musical edifice would fade and vanish like a palace of clouds.

MALFEASANCE IN OFFICE

IN these days of societies for the prevention of this and that, why can not we have a Society for the Prevention of Malfeasance in Office? More than half of all the money paid in taxes is in one way or another stolen. From the humblest janitorship up to the chief magistracy of the state (both inclusive) the offices are held by men of whom a majority are as scurvy knaves as many of those in the penitentiaries. There is no exaggeration in this statement; it is literally, absolutely true. Then why, it may be asked, does not the press expose all this corruption? For many reasons, among them these: the corruption of the press; the circumstance that malfeasance in office is no news; the absence of a public opinion that will do more than passively approve, whereas the private animosities engendered by exposure are active, implacable, and dangerous; the absence of such a society as the one suggested. An additional reason may be called, softly, the rascality of the courts. Not all horses are sorrel, and not all judges rogues. Not all pigs have spiral tails, nor all prosecuting attorneys crooked morals. Nevertheless he who lightly incurs law suits, relying upon the justice of his cause, has no need to wear motley, for assuredly none will think him other than a fool.

It is in our courts that officers and members of the Society for the Prevention of Malfeasance in Office would be least welcome and most terrifying. Their presence would be to our boss-made judges and thrifty district attorneys what the sudden apparition of the late Mr. Henry Bergh used to be to draygentlemen engaged in tormenting their horses. It would be easy, without stopping to take thought or breath, to name a score of judges of our higher courts, in present incumbency or newly retired, whose perturbations from that cause would attain to the dignity of a panic.

The thing is easily feasible. It requires, mainly, liberal endowment by that class of the wealthy whose interests do not lie in the stability of misgovernment. Zealous and incorruptible officers to investigate, able attorneys to prosecute, honest newspapers to assist and spread the light. These will come of themselves. A few successful prosecutions of official offenders, a few impeachments and removals, a few hitherto invincible rascals sent to the penitentiary, a little educating of the people to the fact that a new power for good is risen among them, and money will come in abundantly. Rightly conducted the Society will become a popular favorite, accredited alike by alliance of the wise and hostility of knaves, and fairly good government by unofficial supervision become an accomplished fact. Apparently there is no other way whereby it may be obtained.

Of course the Society need not be named what I have called it, and the scope of its activity should be greater than that name implies. It should aim to prevent (by exposure and punishment) not only malfeasance in office, but all manner of sins and stupidities in public life. Our existing machinery for obtaining honest and intelligent government is altogether inadequate; it breaks down at all points and — fatal defect! — it is not automatic. The laws do not enforce themselves — not even the laws for enforcing the laws. The “wheels of justice” are easily “blocked” because nobody is concerned to put his shoulder to them. Who will come forward and provide a motor for this inert and sluggish mechanism? Here is as good an opportunity for distinction as one can want. But let no one seek to grasp it who has not a strong hand and a hard head; there will be bloody noses and cracked crowns enow, God wot. If one have a taste for fighting he can have it by the bellyful. If he enjoy ridicule, calumniation, persecution, they shall come to him in quantity to fit his appetite. Maylike he shall have knowledge of how it feels to sleep in field-feathers on stone. But assuredly there are for that man, if he be of the right kidney, an imperishing renown and “the thanks of millions yet to be.” Let him stand forth. Let him fall to and organize. Let him tout the country for subscriptions and begin. In the end he shall find that the little fire that he kindled has spread over all the land with a crackling consumption of rascalry; and his children’s children shall warm them in the memory.

1881.

FOR STANDING ROOM

AT no time in the world’s history have the relations between laborers and employers of labor received so much attention as now. All men who think are thinking of them, the meditation being quickened by the importance of the interests involved, the sharp significance of some of their observed phenomena and the conditions entailing them. Among these last, one of the most important is overpopulation in civilized countries; and it is only in such countries that any controversy has arisen between — to speak in the current phrase — capital and labor. Despite the magnitude and frequency of modern wars, the population of all civilized countries increases in the most astonishing way. In the six great nations of Europe the increase since the Napoleonic wars has been between fifty and sixty per cent. In this country our progression is geometrical — we double our population every twenty-five years!

Conquest and commerce have brought the whole world under contribution to the strong nations. Inter-communication has reduced the areas of privation and almost effaced those of famine. Railways and steamships and banks and exchanges have diminished the friction between producer and consumer. By sanitary and medical science the average length of human life has been increased. Chemistry has taught us how to fertilize the fields, forestry and engineering how to prevent both inundation and drought, invention how to master the adverse forces of Nature and make alliance with the friendly ones by labor-saving machinery, so that the work of one man will now sustain many in idleness — with no lack of persons who by birth, breeding, disposition and taste are eligible to sustentation. The milder sway of modern government, the elimination of the “gory tyrant” as a factor in the problem of existence and the better protection of property and life have had, even directly, no mean influence on the death rate. These and many other causes have combined to make the conditions of life so comparatively easy that an extraordinary impetus has been given to the business of living; mankind may be said to have taken it up as a congenial pursuit. The cloud of despair that shadowed the face of all Europe during those centuries of misrule and ignorance fitly called the Dark Ages has lifted, and multitudes are thronging into the sunshine. It is not a perfect beam, but its warmth and lumination are incomparably superior to anything of which the older generations ever dreamed. But the result is over population, and the result of over population is war, pestilence, famine, rapine, immorality, ignorance, anarchy, despotism, slavery, decivilization — depopulation!

This is man’s eternal round; this is the course of “progress”; in this circle moves the “march of mind.” The one goal of civilization is barbarism; to the condition whence it emerged a nation must return, and every invention, every discovery, every beneficent agency hastens the inevitable end. An ancient civilization would last a thousand years; confined to the same boundaries, a modern civilization would exhaust itself in half that time; but by emigration and interchange we uphold ourselves till all can go down together. One people cannot relapse till all similar peoples are ready.

Already we discern ominous instances of the working of the universal law. Consciously or unconsciously, all the modern statesman of Europe are contesting for “territorial aggrandizement.” They desire both extension of boundaries and colonial possessions. They quarrel with the statesmen of neighboring nations on this pretext and on that, and send their armies of invasion to capture and hold provinces. They dispatch their navies to distant seas to take possession of unconsidered islands. They must have more of the earth’s surface upon which to settle their, surplus populations. All the wars of modern Europe have that ultimate, underlying cause.

The battle knows not why it is fought. It is for standing room. If it were not for the horrors of war the horrors of peace would be appalling. Peace is more fatal than war, for all must die, and in peace more are born. The bullet forestalls the pestilence by proffering a cleaner and decenter death.

What has all this to do with the labor question? “Industrial discontent” has many causes, but the chief is overpopulation. (In this country it is as yet a “coming event,” but its approach is rapid, and already it has “cast its shadow before.”) Where there are too many producers they are thinned out to make an army, which serves the double purpose of keeping the rest of them in subjection and resisting the pressure from without. Armies are to fight with; no nation dares long maintain one in idleness; it is too costly for a toy; the people burn to see it put to practical use. They do not love it; they promise themselves the advantage of seeing it killed; but when the killing begins their blood is up and they want to go soldiering.

Our labor troubles — our strikes, boycotts, riots, dynamitation, can have but one outcome. We are not exempt from the inexorable. We shall soon hear a general clamor for increase of the army — to protect us against aggression from the east and the west. We shall have the army.

That is as far as one cares to follow the current of events into the dubious regions of prediction. What lies beyond is momentous enough to be waited for; but any man who fails to discern the profound significance of the events amongst which he is moving to-day may justly boast himself impregnable to the light.

THE JEW

A NOTED Jewish rabbi has been uttering his mind concerning “manufacturers of mixed marriages” — clergymen, that is to say, who marry Christians to Jewesses and Jews to Christianesses. In the opinion of this gentleman of God such marriages are accursed, and those of his pious brethren who assist the devil in bringing them about are imperfectly moral. Doubtless it is desirable that the parties to a marriage should cherish the same form of religious error, lest in their zeal to save each other’s immortal part they lay too free a hand upon the part that is mortal. But domestic infelicity is not the evil that the learned doctor has in apprehension: what he fears is nothing less momentous than the extinction of Judaism! On consideration it appears not unlikely that in a general blending of races that result would ensue. But what then? — will the hand of some great anarch let the curtain fall and universal darkness cover all? Will the passing of Judaism be attended with such discomfortable befallings as the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds?

Good old Father Time has seen the genesis, development, decay and effacement of thousands of religions far more ancient and quite as well credentialed as that of Israel. The most daring of that faith’s expounders will hardly claim for it an age exceeding a halfdozen millenniums; whereas the least venturesome anthropologian will affirm for the human race an antiquity of hundreds. It is hardly likely that the world has ever been without great religions, of which all but a few (so new that they smell of paint and varnish) are as dead as the dodo. No portents foreshadowed their extinction, no cataclysms followed. The world went spinning round the sun in its immemorial way; men lived and loved, fought, laughed, cursed, lied, gathered gold and dreamed of an after-life as before. No mourners follow the hearse of a dead religion, no burial service is read at the grave. Does the good rabbi really believe that the faith which he professes, rooted in time, will flourish in eternity? Can he suppose that its fate will be different from that of its predecessors, whose temples, rearing their fronts in great cities, the seats of mighty civilizations in every part of the habitable globe, have perished with the empires that they adorned, and left not a vestige nor a memory behind? Does he think that of all the incalculable religions that have swept in successive dream-waves the ocean of mystery his alone marks a continuous current setting toward some shining shore of truth and life and bearing thither all ships obedient to its trend?

I can not help thinking that the pious rabbi would better serve his people by less zeal in broadening and blackening the delimiting lines by which their foolish fathers circumscribed their sympathies and interests and made their race a peculiar people, peculiarly disliked. The best friend of the Jews is not he who confirms them in their narrow and resented exclusiveness, but he who persuades them of its folly, advises them to a larger life than is comprised in rites and rituals, the ceremonies and symbolisms of a long-dead past, and strives to show them that the world is wider than Judea and God more than a private tutor to the children of Israel.

Why do they fear effacement by absorption? If the entire Jewish race should disappear (as sooner or later all races do) that would not mean that the Jews were dead, but that Judaism was dead. No single life would have gone out because of that, and all that is good in the race would live, suffusing and perhaps ennobling the characters of races having still a name. All that is useful and true in Jewish law and Jewish letters and Jewish art would be preserved to the world; the rest could well be spared. Even the rabbis' occupation would not be gone: they would thrive as priests of another faith. Man is not likely to cease forming himself into "congregations," for he likes to see his teachers "close to." Even if preaching were abolished many kinds of light and profitable employment would remain.

As matters now are, mixed marriages — between Jew and Gentile — are not to be advised. But matters are now not as they should be, nor does our holy friend's teaching tend to make them so. Let the Jew learn why he is subject to hate and persecution by the Gentile. It is not, as he professes to think, and doubtless does think, because his ancestors, ages ago, denied the Godhood and demanded the life of another Jew. Other races and sects deny Christ without offense; and the Gentile who daily crucifies him afresh is no less active in dislike of the Jew than the most devout Christian of them all. Christ and Christianity have nothing to do with it. Nor is the explanation found in the Jew's superior thrift, nor in any of those commercial qualities whereby, legitimately or illegitimately, he gets the better of his Gentile competitor; though those advantages too pitilessly used against a stupid and improvident peasantry have sometimes compelled his expatriation by sovereigns who cared no more what he believed than what he ate.

The Christians will cease to dislike and persecute the Jews when the Jews abandon their affronting claim to special and advantageous relations with the Lord of All. The claim would be no less irritating if well founded, as many Christians believe that once it was. When has it not been observed that a favorite child is hated by its brothers and sisters? Did not the brethren of Joseph seek his undoing? In missing the lesson of it the Jew "recks not his own rede." When was it not thought an insult to say, "I am holier than thou," and when did not small minds "strike back" with brutal hands? The Christian mind is a small mind, the Christian hand a brutal hand.

The Jew may reply: "I do not say so; in the pulpit I forbear to denounce other peoples and other creeds as outside the law and devoid of the divine grace." In words he does not say so, but he says so with emphasis in his care to preserve his racial and religious isolation; in his practice of self-mutilation and the affronting reasons in which he disguises his consciousness of the shame of it; in his maintenance of a spiritual quarantine; in the diligence with which he repairs time's ravages in his Great Wall, lest Nature take advantage of the breach and some caroling Gentile youth leap lightly through to claim a Jewish maid. In a thousand ways, all having for purpose the safeguarding of his racial isolation in a ghetto of his own invention, the orthodox Jew shouts aloud his conviction of his superior holiness and peculiar worth. Naturally, the echo is not unmixed with Christian denial, formulated too frequently into unrighteous decrees by the voice of authority.

None than I can have a greater regard for the Jewish character, as found at its best in the higher types of the Jewish people, and not found at all in those members of the race who alone are popularly thought of as Jews. None than I can have a deeper detestation of the spirit at the back of persecution of the Jews, in all its forms and degrees. Rather than have a hand in it I would have no hand. Yet I venture to say that if a high degree of contributory negligence, constituting a veritable invitation to evil, is foolish the calamity entailed is entitled to a place in the list of expectable phenomena; and if a certain presumptuous self-righteousness is bad its natural and inevitable punishment is not entirely undeserved.

In the mud that the Christian hand flings at the Jew there is a little gold; in the Christian's dislike of him there is what the assayers and analysts call "*a* trace" of justice. He who thinks that whole races of men, through long periods of time, hate for nothing has considered history to little purpose and knows not well the constitution of the human mind. It should seriously be considered whether, not the chief, but the initial, fault may not be that of the Jew, who was not always the unaggressive non-combatant, the long-suffering victim, that centuries of oppression and repression have tended to make him. If we may believe his own historical records, which the Christian holds in even higher veneration than he does himself, he was once a very bad neighbor. No worse calamity could then befall a feeble people than the attention of an Israelite king. Believing themselves the salt of the earth, his warlike subjects had always in pickle a rod for every Gentile back. Every contiguous tribe which did not accept their God incurred their savage hatred, expressed in incredible cruelties. They ruled their little world with an iron hand, dealing damnation round and forcing upon their neighbors a currency of bloody noses and cracked crowns. Even now they have not renounced their irritating claim to primacy in the scale of being, though no longer able to assert it with fire and sword. It is significant, however, that here in the new world, at a long remove from the inspiring scenes of their petty power and gigantic woes — their parochial glory and imperial abjection — they have somewhat abated the arrogance of their pretensions; and in obvious consequence, the brutal Christian hand is lifted more languidly against them in service of a softened resentment.

Being neither Christian nor Jew, and with only an intellectual interest in their immemorial feud, I find in it, despite its most tragic and pathetic incidents, something essentially comic — something to bring a twinkle to the eye of an Apuleius and draw the merriment of a Rabelais, "laughing sardonically in his easy chair." That two races of reasoning beings, inhabiting one small planet and having the same sentiments, passions, virtues, vices and interests, should pass loveless centuries, distrusting, hating and damaging each other is so ludicrous a proposition that no degree of familiarity with it as a fact suffices to deprive it altogether of its opera bouffe character. Nevertheless it is not to be laughed away. It must be dealt with seriously, if at all; and it is encouraging to observe that more and more it is taking attention in this country, where it can be considered with less heat, and therefore more light, than elsewhere.

If the Jew cares for justice he must learn, first, that it does not exist in this world, and second, that the least intolerable form of injustice goes by favor with the hand of fellowship; and the hand of fellowship is not offered to him who stands austerely apart saying: "I am holier than thou." America has given to the Jews political and civic equality. If they want more more is attainable. But it is their move.

WHY THE HUMAN NOSE HAS A WESTERN EXPOSURE

WHEN Bishop Berkeley had the good luck to write, Westward the course of empire takes it way, he suggested a question which has not, to my knowledge, been adequately answered: Why? Why do all the world's peoples that move at all move ever toward the west, a human tide, obedient to the suasion of some mysterious power, setting up new "empires" superior to those enfeebled by time, as is the fate of empires? Many a thoughtful observer has confessed himself unable to name the law at the back or front of the movement. Yet a law there must be: things of that kind do not come about by accident.

A natural law is one thing, a cause is another, and the cause of this universal tendency to "go West" may not lie too deep for discovery. May it not be that the glory of the sunset has something to do with it? — has all to do with it, for that matter. In civilization sunsets count for little — we know too much. We know that the magical landscapes of the sunset are "airy nothings" — optical illusions. But we inherit instincts from primitive ancestors to whom they were less unreal. The savage is a poet who

Sees God in clouds, and hears Him in the wind, reading into the visible aspects of nature many a meaning which in the light of exact knowledge we have read out of them. Not a Grecian of the whole imaginative race that had sight of Proteus rising from the sea and heard old Triton blow his wreathed horn could beat him at that. He knows that beyond the mountains that he dares not scale, and beyond the sea-horizon that he has not the means to transgress, lies a land wherein are all beauty and possibilities of happiness. To him the crimson lakes, purple promontories, golden coasts and happy isles of cloudland are veritable presentments of actual regions below. He never bothers his shaggy pate with the question "Can such things be?" — his eyes tell him that they are. Why should he not have ever in heart the wish to reach and occupy the delectable realm to which the sun daily points the way and sometimes discloses? That is the way he feels about it and his forefathers felt about it, as is shown in the myths and legends of many tribes. And because they so felt we have from them the wanderlust that lures us ever a-west.

To this hypothesis it may be objected that the cloudscapes of the sunrise ought, logically, to offset the others, giving the race a divided urge. But the primitive ancestor was not an early riser; he was a notorious sluggard, as is the savage of to-day, and seldom saw the sunrise — so seldom that its fascination did not get into the blood of him and from his into ours. Even when he did see the cloudlands of the dawn he was not in a frame of mind to observe them, being engrossed in rounding up the early cave-bear or preparing an astonishment for his sleeping enemy. But the chromatic glories of the country reflected in the sunset sky took his attention when it was most alert. Moreover those of the dawn are distinctly inferior, as we are assured by credible witnesses who have observed them, through the happy chance of having been up all night companioning the katydids and whip-poor-wills.

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On a Mountain

They say that the lumberman has looked upon the Cheat Mountain country and seen that it is good, and I hear that some wealthy gentlemen have been there and made a game preserve. There must be lumber and, I suppose, sport, but some things one could wish were ordered otherwise. Looking back upon it through the haze of near half a century, I see that region as a veritable realm of enchantment; the Alleghanies as the Delectable Mountains. I note again their dim, blue billows, ridge after ridge interminable, beyond purple valleys full of sleep, "in which it seemed always afternoon." Miles and miles away, where the lift of earth meets the stoop of sky, I discern an imperfection in the tint, a faint graying of the blue above the main range — the smoke of an enemy's camp.

It was in the autumn of that "most immemorial year," the 1861st of our Lord, and of our Heroic Age the first, that a small brigade of raw troops — troops were all raw in those days — had been pushed in across the Ohio border and after various vicissitudes of fortune and mismanagement found itself, greatly to its own surprise, at Cheat Mountain Pass, holding a road that ran from Nowhere to the southeast. Some of us had served through the summer in the "three-months' regiments," which responded to the President's first call for troops. We were regarded by the others with profound respect as "old soldiers." (Our ages, if equalized, would, I fancy, have given about twenty years to each man.) We gave ourselves, this aristocracy of service, no end of military airs; some of us even going to the extreme of keeping our jackets buttoned and our hair combed. We had been in action, too; had shot off a Confederate leg at Philippi, "the first battle of the war," and had lost as many as a dozen men at Laurel Hill and Carrick's Ford, whither the enemy had fled in trying, Heaven knows why, to get away from us. We now "brought to the task" of subduing the Rebellion a patriotism which never for a moment doubted that a rebel was a fiend accursed of God and the angels — one for whose extirpation by force and arms each youth of us considered himself specially "raised up."

It was a strange country. Nine in ten of us had never seen a mountain, nor a hill as high as a church spire, until we had crossed the Ohio River. In power upon the emotions nothing, I think, is comparable to a first sight of mountains. To a member of a plains-tribe, born and reared on the flats of Ohio or Indiana, a mountain region was a perpetual miracle. Space seemed to have taken on a new dimension; areas to have not only length and breadth, but thickness.

Modern literature is full of evidence that our great grandfathers looked upon mountains with aversion and horror. The poets of even the seventeenth century never tire of damning them in good, set terms. If they had had the unhappiness to read the opening lines of “The Pleasures of Hope,” they would assuredly have thought Master Campbell had gone funny and should be shut up lest he do himself an injury.

The flatlanders who invaded the Cheat Mountain country had been suckled in another creed, and to them western Virginia — there was, as yet, no West Virginia — was an enchanted land. How we reveled in its savage beauties! With what pure delight we inhaled its fragrances of spruce and pine! How we stared with something like awe at its clumps of laurel! — real laurel, as we understood the matter, whose foliage had been once accounted excellent for the heads of illustrious Romans and such — mayhap to reduce the swelling. We carved its roots into fingerrings and pipes. We gathered spruce-gum and sent it to our sweethearts in letters. We ascended every hill within our picket-lines and called it a “peak.”

And, by the way, during those halcyon days (the halcyon was there, too, chattering above every creek, as he is all over the world) we fought another battle. It has not got into history, but it had a real objective existence although by a felicitous afterthought called by us who were defeated a “reconnaissance in force.” Its short and simple annals are hat we marched a long way and lay down before a fortified camp of the enemy at the farther edge of a valley. Our commander had the forethought to see that we lay well out of range of the small-arms of the period. A disadvantage of this arrangement was that the enemy was out of reach of us as well, for our rifles were no better than his. Unfortunately — one might almost say unfairly — he had a few pieces of artillery very well protected, and with those he mauled us to the eminent satisfaction of his mind and heart. So we parted from him in anger and returned to our own place, leaving our dead — not many.

Among them was a chap belonging to my company, named Abbott; it is not odd that I recollect it, for there was something unusual in the manner of Abbott’s taking off. He was lying flat upon his stomach and was killed by being struck in the side by a nearly spent cannon-shot that came rolling in among us. The shot remained in him until removed. It was a solid round-shot, evidently cast in some private foundry, whose proprietor, setting the laws of thrift above those of ballistics, had put his “imprint” upon it: it bore, in slightly sunken letters, the name “Abbott.” That is what I was told — I was not present.

It was after this, when the nights had acquired a trick of biting and the morning sun appeared to shiver with cold, that we moved up to the summit of

Cheat Mountain to guard the pass through which nobody wanted to go. Here we slew the forest and builded us giant habitations (astride the road from Nowhere to the southeast) commodious to lodge an army and fitly loopholed for discomfiture of the adversary. The long logs that it was our pride to cut and carry! The accuracy with which we laid them one upon another, hewn to the line and bullet-proof! The Cyclopean doors that we hung, with sliding bolts fit to be “the mast of some great admiral”! And when we had “made the pile complete” some marplot of the Regular Army came that way and chatted a few moments with our commander, and we made an earthwork away off on one side of the road (leaving the other side to take care of itself) and camped outside it in tents! But the Regular Army fellow had not the heart to suggest the demolition of our Towers of Babel, and the foundations remain to this day to attest the genius of the American volunteer soldiery.

We were the original game-preservers of the Cheat Mountain region, for although we hunted in season and out of season over as wide an area as we dared to cover we took less game, probably, than would have been taken by a certain single hunter of disloyal views whom we scared away. There were bear galore and deer in quantity, and many a winter day, in snow up to his knees, did the writer of this pass in tracking bruin to his den, where, I am bound to say, I commonly left him. I agreed with my lamented friend, the late Robert Weeks, poet:

Pursuit may be, it seems to me,
Perfect without possession.

There can be no doubt that the wealthy sportsmen who have made a preserve of the Cheat Mountain region will find plenty of game if it has not died since 1861. We left it there.

Yet hunting and idling were not the whole of life’s programme up there on that wild ridge with its shaggy pelt of spruce and firs, and in the riparian lowlands that it parted. We had a bit of war now and again. There was an occasional “affair of outposts”; sometimes a hazardous scout into the enemy’s country, ordered, I fear, more to keep up the appearance of doing something than with a hope of accomplishing a military result. But one day it was bruited about that a movement in force was to be made on the enemy’s position miles away, at the summit of the main ridge of the Alleghanies — the camp whose faint blue smoke we had watched for weary days. The movement was made, as was the fashion in those ‘prentice days of warfare, in two columns, which were to pounce upon the foeman from opposite sides at the same moment. Led over unknown roads by untrusty guides, encountering obstacles not foreseen — miles apart and without communication, the two columns invariably failed to execute the movement with requisite secrecy and precision. The enemy, in enjoyment of that inestimable military advantage known in civilian speech as being “surrounded,” always beat the attacking columns one at a time or, turning red-handed from the wreck of the first, frightened the other away.

All one bright wintry day we marched down from our eyrie; all one bright wintry night we climbed the great wooded ridge opposite. How romantic it all was; the sunset valleys full of visible sleep; the glades suffused and interpenetrated with moonlight; the long valley of the Greenbrier stretching away to we knew not what silent cities; the river itself unseen under its “astral body” of mist! Then there was the “spice of danger.”

Once we heard shots in front; then there was a long wait. As we trudged on we passed something — some things — lying by the wayside. During another wait we examined them, curiously lifting the blankets from their yellow-clay faces. How repulsive they looked with their blood-smears, their blank, staring eyes, their teeth uncovered by contraction of the lips! The frost had begun already to whiten their deranged clothing. We were as patriotic as ever, but we did not wish to be that way. For an hour afterward the injunction of silence in the ranks was needless.

Repassing the spot the next day, a beaten, dispirited and exhausted force, feeble from fatigue and savage from defeat, some of us had life enough left, such as it was, to observe that these bodies had altered their position. They appeared also to have thrown off some of their clothing, which lay near by, in disorder. Their expression, too, had an added blankness — they had no faces.

As soon as the head of our straggling column had reached the spot a desultory firing had begun. One might have thought the living paid honors to the dead. No; the firing was a military execution; the condemned, a herd of galloping swine. They had eaten our fallen, but — touching magnanimity! — we did not eat theirs.

The shooting of several kinds was very good in the Cheat Mountain country, even in 1861.

What I Saw of Shiloh

I

This is a simple story of a battle; such a tale as may be told by a soldier who is no writer to a reader who is no soldier.

The morning of Sunday, the sixth day of April, 1862, was bright and warm. Reveille had been sounded rather late, for the troops, wearied with long marching, were to have a day of rest. The men were idling about the embers of their bivouac fires; some preparing breakfast, others looking carelessly to the condition of their arms and accoutrements, against the inevitable inspection; still others were chatting with indolent dogmatism on that never-failing theme, the end and object of the campaign. Sentinels paced up and down the confused front with a lounging freedom of mien and stride that would not have been tolerated at another time. A few of them limped unsoldierly in deference to blistered feet. At a little distance in rear of the stacked arms were a few tents out of which frowsy-headed officers occasionally peered, languidly calling to their servants to fetch a basin of water, dust a coat or polish a scabbard. Trim young mounted orderlies, bearing dispatches obviously unimportant, urged their lazy nags by devious ways amongst the men, enduring with unconcern their good-humored raillery, the penalty of superior station. Little negroes of not very clearly defined status and function lolled on their stomachs, kicking their long, bare heels in the sunshine, or slumbered peacefully, unaware of the practical waggery prepared by white hands for their undoing.

Presently the flag hanging limp and lifeless at headquarters was seen to lift itself spiritedly from the staff. At the same instant was heard a dull, distant sound like the heavy breathing of some great animal below the horizon. The flag had lifted its head to listen. There was a momentary lull in the hum of the human swarm; then, as the flag drooped the hush passed away. But there were some hundreds more men on their feet than before; some thousands of hearts beating with a quicker pulse.

Again the flag made a warning sign, and again the breeze bore to our ears the long, deep sighing of iron lungs. The division, as if it had received the sharp word of command, sprang to its feet, and stood in groups at “attention.” Even the little blacks got up. I have since seen similar effects produced by earthquakes; I am not sure but the ground was trembling then. The mess-cooks, wise in their generation, lifted the steaming camp-kettles off the fire and stood by to cast out. The mounted orderlies had somehow disappeared. Officers came ducking from beneath their tents and gathered in groups. Headquarters had become a swarming hive.

The sound of the great guns now came in regular throbbings — the strong, full pulse of the fever of battle. The flag flapped excitedly, shaking out its blazonry of stars and stripes with a sort of fierce delight. Toward the knot of officers in its shadow dashed from somewhere — he seemed to have burst out of the ground in a cloud of dust — a mounted aide-de-camp, and on the instant rose the sharp, clear notes of a bugle, caught up and repeated, and passed on by other bugles, until the level reaches of brown fields, the line of woods trending away to far hills, and the unseen valleys beyond were "telling of the sound," the farther, fainter strains half drowned in ringing cheers as the men ran to range themselves behind the stacks of arms. For this call was not the wearisome "general" before which the tents go down; it was the exhilarating "assembly," which goes to the heart as wine and stirs the blood like the kisses of a beautiful woman. Who that has heard it calling to him above the grumble of great guns can forget the wild intoxication of its music?

II

The Confederate forces in Kentucky and Tennessee had suffered a series of reverses, culminating in the loss of Nashville. The blow was severe: immense quantities of war material had fallen to the victor, together with all the important strategic points. General Johnston withdrew Beauregard's army to Corinth, in northern Mississippi, where he hoped so to recruit and equip it as to enable it to assume the offensive and retake the lost territory.

The town of Corinth was a wretched place — the capital of a swamp. It is a two days' march west of the Tennessee River, which here and for a hundred and fifty miles farther, to where it falls into the Ohio at Paducah, runs nearly north. It is navigable to this point — that is to say, to Pittsburg Landing, where Corinth got to it by a road worn through a thickly wooded country seamed with ravines and bayous, rising nobody knows where and running into the river under sylvan arches heavily draped with Spanish moss. In some places they were obstructed by fallen trees. The Corinth road was at certain seasons a branch of the

Tennessee River. Its mouth was Pittsburg Landing. Here in 1862 were some fields and a house or two; now there are a national cemetery and other improvements.

It was at Pittsburg Landing that Grant established his army, with a river in his rear and two toy steamboats as a means of communication with the east side, whither General Buell with thirty thousand men was moving from Nashville to join him. The question has been asked, Why did General Grant occupy the enemy's side of the river in the face of a superior force before the arrival of Buell? Buell had a long way to come; perhaps Grant was weary of waiting. Certainly Johnston was, for in the gray of the morning of April 6th, when Buell's leading division was *en bivouac* near the little town of Savannah, eight or ten miles below, the Confederate forces, having moved out of Corinth two days before, fell upon Grant's advance brigades and destroyed them. Grant was at Savannah, but hastened to the Landing in time to find his camps in the hands of the enemy and the remnants of his beaten army cooped up with an impassable river at their backs for moral support. I have related how the news of this affair came to us at Savannah. It came on the wind — a messenger that does not bear copious details.

III

On the side of the Tennessee River, over against Pittsburg Landing, are some low bare hills, partly inclosed by a forest. In the dusk of the evening of April 6 this open space, as seen from the other side of the stream — whence, indeed, it was anxiously watched by thousands of eyes, to many of which it grew dark long before the sun went down — would have appeared to have been ruled in long, dark lines, with new lines being constantly drawn across. These lines were the regiments of Buell's leading division, which having moved up from Savannah through a country presenting nothing but interminable swamps and pathless "bottom lands," with rank overgrowths of jungle, was arriving at the scene of action breathless, footsore and faint with hunger. It had been a terrible race; some regiments had lost a third of their number from fatigue, the men dropping from the ranks as if shot, and left to recover or die at their leisure. Nor was the scene to which they had been invited likely to inspire the moral confidence that medicines physical fatigue. True, the air was full of thunder and the earth was trembling beneath their feet; and if there is truth in the theory of the conversion of force, these men were storing up energy from every shock that burst its waves upon their bodies. Perhaps this theory may better than another explain the tremendous endurance of men in battle. But the eyes reported only matter for despair.

Before us ran the turbulent river, vexed with plunging shells and obscured in spots by blue sheets of low-lying smoke. The two little steamers were doing their duty well. They came over to us empty and went back crowded, sitting very low in the water, apparently on the point of capsizing. The farther edge of the water could not be seen; the boats came out of the obscurity, took on their passengers and vanished in the darkness. But on the heights above, the battle was burning brightly enough; a thousand lights kindled and expired in every second of time. There were broad flushings in the sky, against which the branches of the trees showed black. Sudden flames burst out here and there, singly and in dozens. Fleeting streaks of fire crossed over to us by way of welcome. These expired in blinding flashes and fierce little rolls of smoke, attended with the peculiar metallic ring of bursting shells, and followed by the musical humming of the fragments as they struck into the ground on every side, making us wince, but doing little harm. The air was full of noises. To the right and the left the musketry rattled smartly and petulantly; directly in front it sighed and growled. To the experienced ear this meant that the death-line was an arc of which the river was the chord. There were deep, shaking explosions and smart shocks; the whisper of stray bullets and the hurtle of conical shells; the rush of round shot. There were faint, desultory cheers, such as announce a momentary or partial triumph. Occasionally, against the glare behind the trees, could be seen moving black figures, singularly distinct but apparently no longer than a thumb. They seemed to me ludicrously like the figures of demons in old allegorical prints of hell. To destroy these and all their belongings the enemy needed but another hour of daylight; the steamers in that case would have been doing him fine service by bringing more fish to his net. Those of us who had the good fortune to arrive late could then have eaten our teeth in impotent rage. Nay, to make his victory sure it did not need that the sun should pause in the heavens; one of the many random shots falling into the river would have done the business had chance directed it into the engine-room of a steamer. You can perhaps fancy the anxiety with which we watched them leaping down.

But we had two other allies besides the night. Just where the enemy had pushed his right flank to the river was the mouth of a wide bayou, and here two gunboats had taken station. They too were of the toy sort, plated perhaps with railway metals, perhaps with boiler-iron. They staggered under a heavy gun or two each. The bayou made an opening in the high bank of the river. The bank was a parapet, behind which the gunboats crouched, firing up the bayou as through an embrasure. The enemy was at this disadvantage: he could not get at the gunboats, and he could advance only by exposing his flank to their ponderous missiles, one of which would have broken a half-mile of his bones and made nothing of it. Very annoying this must have been — these twenty gunners beating back an army because a sluggish creek had been pleased to fall into a river at one point rather than another. Such is the part that accident may play in the game of war.

As a spectacle this was rather fine. We could just discern the black bodies of these boats, looking very much like turtles. But when they let off their big guns there was a conflagration. The river shuddered in its banks, and hurried on, bloody, wounded, terrified! Objects a mile away sprang toward our eyes as a snake strikes at the face of its victim. The report stung us to the brain, but we blessed it audibly. Then we could hear the great shell tearing away through the air until the sound died out in the distance; then, a surprisingly long time afterward, a dull, distant explosion and a sudden silence of small-arms told their own tale.

IV

There was, I remember, no elephant on the boat that passed us across that evening, nor, I think, any hippopotamus. These would have been out of place. We had, however, a woman. Whether the baby was somewhere on board I did not learn. She was a fine creature, this woman; somebody’s wife. Her mission, as she understood it, was to inspire the failing heart with courage; and when she selected mine I felt less flattered by her preference than astonished by her penetration. How did she learn? She stood on the upper deck with the red blaze of battle bathing her beautiful face, the twinkle of a thousand rifles mirrored in her eyes; and displaying a small ivory-handled pistol, she told me in a sentence punctuated by the thunder of great guns that if it came to the worst she would do her duty like a man! I am proud to remember that I took off my hat to this little fool.

V

Along the sheltered strip of beach between the river bank and the water was a confused mass of humanity — several thousands of men. They were mostly unarmed; many were wounded; some dead. All the camp-following tribes were there; all the cowards; a few officers. Not one of them knew where his regiment was, nor if he had a regiment. Many had not. These men were defeated, beaten, cowed. They were deaf to duty and dead to shame. A more demented crew never drifted to the rear of broken battalions. They would have stood in their tracks and been shot down to a man by a provost-marshal’s guard, but they could not have been urged up that bank. An army’s bravest men are its cowards. The death which they would not meet at the hands of the enemy they will meet at the hands of their officers, with never a flinching.

Whenever a steamboat would land, this abominable mob had to be kept off her with bayonets; when she pulled away, they sprang on her and were pushed by scores into the water, where they were suffered to drown one another in their own way. The men disembarking insulted them, shoved them, struck them. In return they expressed their unholy delight in the certainty of our destruction by the enemy.

By the time my regiment had reached the plateau night had put an end to the struggle. A sputter of rifles would break out now and then, followed perhaps by a spiritless hurrah. Occasionally a shell from a far-away battery would come pitching down somewhere near, with a whir crescendo, or flit above our heads with a whisper like that made by the wings of a night bird, to smother itself in the river. But there was no more fighting. The gunboats, however, blazed away at set intervals all night long, just to make the enemy uncomfortable and break him of his rest.

For us there was no rest. Foot by foot we moved through the dusky fields, we knew not whither. There were men all about us, but no camp-fires; to have made a blaze would have been madness. The men were of strange regiments; they mentioned the names of unknown generals. They gathered in groups by the wayside, asking eagerly our numbers. They recounted the depressing incidents of the day. A thoughtful officer shut their mouths with a sharp word as he passed; a wise one coming after encouraged them to repeat their doleful tale all along the line.

Hidden in hollows and behind clumps of rank brambles were large tents, dimly lighted with candles, but looking comfortable. The kind of comfort they supplied was indicated by pairs of men entering and reappearing, bearing litters; by low moans from within and by long rows of dead with covered faces outside. These tents were constantly receiving the wounded, yet were never full; they were continually ejecting the dead, yet were never empty. It was as if the helpless had been carried in and murdered, that they might not hamper those whose business it was to fall to-morrow.

The night was now black-dark; as is usual after a battle, it had begun to rain. Still we moved; we were being put into position by somebody. Inch by inch we crept along, treading on one another’s heels by way of keeping together. Commands were passed along the line in whispers; more commonly none were given. When the men had pressed so closely together that they could advance no farther they stood stock-still, sheltering the locks of their rifles with their ponchos. In this position many fell asleep. When those in front suddenly stepped away those in the rear, roused by the tramping, hastened after with such zeal that the line was soon choked again. Evidently the head of the division was being piloted at a snail’s pace by some one who did not feel sure of his ground. Very often we struck our feet against the dead; more frequently against those who still had spirit enough to resent it with a moan. These were lifted carefully to one side and abandoned. Some had sense enough to ask in their weak way for water. Absurd! Their clothes were soaken, their hair dank; their white faces, dimly discernible, were clammy and cold. Besides, none of us had any water. There was plenty coming, though, for before midnight a thunderstorm broke upon us with great violence. The rain, which had for hours been a dull drizzle, fell with a copiousness that stifled us; we moved in running water up to our ankles. Happily, we were in a forest of great trees heavily “decorated” with Spanish moss, or with an enemy standing to his guns the disclosures of the lightning might have been inconvenient. As it was, the incessant blaze enabled us to consult our watches and encouraged us by displaying our numbers; our black, sinuous line, creeping like a giant serpent beneath the trees, was apparently interminable. I am almost ashamed to say how sweet I found the companionship of those coarse men.

So the long night wore away, and as the glimmer of morning crept in through the forest we found ourselves in a more open country. But where? Not a sign of battle was here. The trees were neither splintered nor scarred, the underbrush was unmown, the ground had no footprints but our own. It was as if we had broken into glades sacred to eternal silence. I should not have been surprised to see sleek leopards come fawning about our feet, and milk-white deer confront us with human eyes.

A few inaudible commands from an invisible leader had placed us in order of battle. But where was the enemy? Where, too, were the riddled regiments that we had come to save? Had our other divisions arrived during the night and passed the river to assist us? or were we to oppose our paltry five thousand breasts to an army flushed with victory? What protected our right? Who lay upon our left? Was there really anything in our front?

There came, borne to us on the raw morning air, the long, weird note of a bugle. It was directly before us. It rose with a low, clear, deliberate warble, and seemed to float in the gray sky like the note of a lark. The bugle calls of the Federal and the Confederate armies were the same: it was the “assembly”! As it died away I observed that the atmosphere had suffered a change; despite the equilibrium established by the storm, it was electric. Wings were growing on blistered feet. Bruised muscles and jolted bones, shoulders pounded by the cruel knapsack, eyelids leaden from lack of sleep — all were pervaded by the subtle fluid, all were unconscious of their clay. The men thrust forward their heads, expanded their eyes and clenched their teeth. They breathed hard, as if throttled by tugging at the leash. If you had laid your hand in the beard or hair of one of these men it would have crackled and shot sparks.

VI

I suppose the country lying between Corinth and Pittsburg Landing could boast a few inhabitants other than alligators. What manner of people they were it is impossible to say, inasmuch as the fighting dispersed, or possibly exterminated them; perhaps in merely classing them as non-saurian I shall describe them with sufficient particularity and at the same time avert from myself the natural suspicion attaching to a writer who points out to persons who do not know him the peculiarities of persons whom he does not know. One thing, however, I hope I may without offense affirm of these swamp-dwellers — they were pious. To what deity their veneration was given — whether, like the Egyptians, they worshiped the crocodile, or, like other Americans, adored themselves, I do not presume to guess. But whoever, or whatever, may have been the divinity whose ends they shaped, unto Him, or It, they had builded a temple. This humble edifice, centrally situated in the heart of a solitude, and conveniently accessible to the supersylvan crow, had been christened Shiloh Chapel, whence the name of the battle. The fact of a Christian church — assuming it to have been a Christian church — giving name to a wholesale cutting of Christian throats by Christian hands need not be dwelt on here; the frequency of its recurrence in the history of our species has somewhat abated the moral interest that would otherwise attach to it.

VII

Owing to the darkness, the storm and the absence of a road, it had been impossible to move the artillery from the open ground about the Landing. The privation was much greater in a moral than in a material sense. The infantry soldier feels a confidence in this cumbrous arm quite unwarranted by its actual achievements in thinning out the opposition. There is something that inspires confidence in the way a gun dashes up to the front, shoving fifty or a hundred men to one side as if it said, “*Permit me!*” Then it squares its shoulders, calmly dislocates a joint in its back, sends away its twenty-four legs and settles down with a quiet rattle which says as plainly as possible, “I’ve come to stay.” There is a superb scorn in its grimly defiant attitude, with its nose in the air; it appears not so much to threaten the enemy as deride him.

Our batteries were probably toiling after us somewhere; we could only hope the enemy might delay his attack until they should arrive. “He may delay his defense if he like,” said a sententious young officer to whom I had imparted this natural wish. He had read the signs aright; the words were hardly spoken when a group of staff officers about the brigade commander shot away in divergent lines as if scattered by a whirlwind, and galloping each to the commander of a regiment gave the word. There was a momentary confusion of tongues, a thin line of skirmishers detached itself from the compact front and pushed forward, followed by its diminutive reserves of half a company each — one of which platoons it was my fortune to command. When the straggling line of skirmishers had swept four or five hundred yards ahead, “See,” said one of my comrades, “she moves!” She did indeed, and in fine style, her front as straight as a string, her reserve regiments in columns doubled on the center, following in true subordination; no braying of brass to apprise the enemy, no fifing and drumming to amuse him; no ostentation of gaudy flags; no nonsense. This was a matter of business.

In a few moments we had passed out of the singular oasis that had so marvelously escaped the desolation of battle, and now the evidences of the previous day’s struggle were present in profusion. The ground was tolerably level here, the forest less dense, mostly clear of undergrowth, and occasionally opening out into small natural meadows. Here and there were small pools — mere discs of rainwater with a tinge of blood. Riven and torn with cannon-shot, the trunks of the trees protruded bunches of splinters like hands, the fingers above the wound interlacing with those below. Large branches had been lopped, and hung their green heads to the ground, or swung critically in their netting of vines, as in a hammock. Many had been cut clean off and their masses of foliage seriously impeded the progress of the troops. The bark of these trees, from the root upward to a height of ten or twenty feet, was so thickly pierced with bullets and grape that one could not have laid a hand on it without covering several punctures. None had escaped. How the human body survives a storm like this must be explained by the fact that it is exposed to it but a few moments at a time, whereas these grand old trees had had no one to take their places, from the rising to the going down of the sun. Angular bits of iron, concavo-convex, sticking in the sides of muddy depressions, showed where shells had exploded in their furrows. Knapsacks, canteens, haversacks distended with soaken and swollen biscuits, gaping to disgorge, blankets beaten into the soil by the rain, rifles with bent barrels or splintered stocks, waist-belts, hats and the omnipresent sardine-box — all the wretched debris of the battle still littered the spongy earth as far as one could see, in every direction. Dead horses were everywhere; a few disabled caissons, or limbers, reclining on one elbow, as it were; ammunition wagons standing disconsolate behind four or six sprawling mules. Men? There were men enough; all dead, apparently, except one, who lay near where I had halted my platoon to await the slower movement of the line — a Federal sergeant, variously hurt, who had been a fine giant in his time. He lay face upward, taking in his breath in convulsive, rattling snorts, and blowing it out in sputters of froth which crawled creamily down his cheeks, piling itself alongside his neck and ears. A bullet had clipped a groove in his skull, above the temple; from this the brain protruded in bosses, dropping off in flakes and strings. I had not previously known one could get on, even in this unsatisfactory fashion, with so little brain. One of my men, whom I knew for a womanish fellow, asked if he should put his bayonet through him. Inexpressibly shocked by the cold-blooded proposal, I told him I thought not; it was unusual, and too many were looking.

VIII

It was plain that the enemy had retreated to Corinth. The arrival of our fresh troops and their successful passage of the river had disheartened him. Three or four of his gray cavalry videttes moving amongst the trees on the crest of a hill in our front, and galloping out of sight at the crack of our skirmishers' rifles, confirmed us in the belief; an army face to face with its enemy does not employ cavalry to watch its front. True, they might be a general and his staff. Crowning this rise we found a level field, a quarter of a mile in width; beyond it a gentle acclivity, covered with an undergrowth of young oaks, impervious to sight. We pushed on into the open, but the division halted at the edge. Having orders to conform to its movements, we halted too; but that did not suit; we received an intimation to proceed. I had performed this sort of service before, and in the exercise of my discretion deployed my platoon, pushing it forward at a run, with trailed arms, to strengthen the skirmish line, which I overtook some thirty or forty yards from the wood. Then — I can't describe it — the forest seemed all at once to flame up and disappear with a crash like that of a great wave upon the beach — a crash that expired in hot hissings, and the sickening "spat" of lead against flesh. A dozen of my brave fellows tumbled over like ten-pins. Some struggled to their feet, only to go down again, and yet again. Those who stood fired into the smoking brush and doggedly retired. We had expected to find, at most, a line of skirmishers similar to our own; it was with a view to overcoming them by a sudden *coup* at the moment of collision that I had thrown forward my little reserve. What we had found was a line of battle, coolly holding its fire till it could count our teeth. There was no more to be done but get back across the open ground, every superficial yard of which was throwing up its little jet of mud provoked by an impinging bullet. We got back, most of us, and I shall never forget the ludicrous incident of a young officer who had taken part in the affair walking up to his colonel, who had been a calm and apparently impartial spectator, and gravely reporting: "The enemy is in force just beyond this field, sir."

IX

In subordination to the design of this narrative, as defined by its title, the incidents related necessarily group themselves about my own personality as a center; and, as this center, during the few terrible hours of the engagement, maintained a variably constant relation to the open field already mentioned, it is important that the reader should bear in mind the topographical and tactical features of the local situation. The hither side of the field was occupied by the front of my brigade — a length of two regiments in line, with proper intervals for field batteries. During the entire fight the enemy held the slight wooded acclivity beyond. The debatable ground to the right and left of the open was broken and thickly wooded for miles, in some places quite inaccessible to artillery and at very few points offering opportunities for its successful employment. As a consequence of this the two sides of the field were soon studded thickly with confronting guns, which flamed away at one another with amazing zeal and rather startling effect. Of course, an infantry attack delivered from either side was not to be thought of when the covered flanks offered inducements so unquestionably superior; and I believe the riddled bodies of my poor skirmishers were the only ones left on this “neutral ground” that day. But there was a very pretty line of dead continually growing in our rear, and doubtless the enemy had at his back a similar encouragement.

The configuration of the ground offered us no protection. By lying flat on our faces between the guns we were screened from view by a straggling row of brambles, which marked the course of an obsolete fence; but the enemy’s grape was sharper than his eyes, and it was poor consolation to know that his gunners could not see what they were doing, so long as they did it. The shock of our own pieces nearly deafened us, but in the brief intervals we could hear the battle roaring and stammering in the dark reaches of the forest to the right and left, where our other divisions were dashing themselves again and again into the smoking jungle. What would we not have given to join them in their brave, hopeless task! But to lie inglorious beneath showers of shrapnel darting divergent from the unassailable sky — meekly to be blown out of life by level gusts of grape — to clench our teeth and shrink helpless before big shot pushing noisily through the consenting air — this was horrible! “Lie down, there!” a captain would shout, and then get up himself to see that his order was obeyed. “Captain, take cover, sir!” the lieutenant-colonel would shriek, pacing up and down in the most exposed position that he could find.

O those cursed guns! — not the enemy’s, but our own. Had it not been for them, we might have died like men. They must be supported, forsooth, the feeble, boasting bullies! It was impossible to conceive that these pieces were doing the enemy as excellent a mischief as his were doing us; they seemed to raise their “cloud by day” solely to direct aright the streaming procession of Confederate missiles. They no longer inspired confidence, but begot apprehension; and it was with grim satisfaction that I saw the carriage of one and another smashed into matchwood by a whooping shot and bundled out of the line.

X

The dense forests wholly or partly in which were fought so many battles of the Civil War, lay upon the earth in each autumn a thick deposit of dead leaves and stems, the decay of which forms a soil of surprising depth and richness. In dry weather the upper stratum is as inflammable as tinder. A fire once kindled in it will spread with a slow, persistent advance as far as local conditions permit, leaving a bed of light ashes beneath which the less combustible accretions of previous years will smolder until extinguished by rains. In many of the engagements of the war the fallen leaves took fire and roasted the fallen men. At Shiloh, during the first day's fighting, wide tracts of woodland were burned over in this way and scores of wounded who might have recovered perished in slow torture. I remember a deep ravine a little to the left and rear of the field I have described, in which, by some mad freak of heroic incompetence, a part of an Illinois regiment had been surrounded, and refusing to surrender was destroyed, as it very well deserved. My regiment having at last been relieved at the guns and moved over to the heights above this ravine for no obvious purpose, I obtained leave to go down into the valley of death and gratify a reprehensible curiosity.

Forbidding enough it was in every way. The fire had swept every superficial foot of it, and at every step I sank into ashes to the ankle. It had contained a thick undergrowth of young saplings, every one of which had been severed by a bullet, the foliage of the prostrate tops being afterward burnt and the stumps charred. Death had put his sickle into this thicket and fire had gleaned the field. Along a line which was not that of extreme depression, but was at every point significantly equidistant from the heights on either hand, lay the bodies, half buried in ashes; some in the unlovely looseness of attitude denoting sudden death by the bullet, but by far the greater number in postures of agony that told of the tormenting flame. Their clothing was half burnt away — their hair and beard entirely; the rain had come too late to save their nails. Some were swollen to double girth; others shriveled to manikins. According to degree of exposure, their faces were bloated and black or yellow and shrunken. The contraction of muscles which had given them claws for hands had cursed each countenance with a hideous grin. Faugh! I cannot catalogue the charms of these gallant gentlemen who had got what they enlisted for.

XI

It was now three o'clock in the afternoon, and raining. For fifteen hours we had been wet to the skin. Chilled, sleepy, hungry and disappointed — profoundly disgusted with the inglorious part to which they had been condemned — the men of my regiment did everything doggedly. The spirit had gone quite out of them. Blue sheets of powder smoke, drifting amongst the trees, settling against the hillsides and beaten into nothingness by the falling rain, filled the air with their peculiar pungent odor, but it no longer stimulated. For miles on either hand could be heard the hoarse murmur of the battle, breaking out near by with frightful distinctness, or sinking to a murmur in the distance; and the one sound aroused no more attention than the other.

We had been placed again in rear of those guns, but even they and their iron antagonists seemed to have tired of their feud, pounding away at one another with amiable infrequency. The right of the regiment extended a little beyond the field. On the prolongation of the line in that direction were some regiments of another division, with one in reserve. A third of a mile back lay the remnant of somebody's brigade looking to its wounds. The line of forest bounding this end of the field stretched as straight as a wall from the right of my regiment to Heaven knows what regiment of the enemy. There suddenly appeared, marching down along this wall, not more than two hundred yards in our front, a dozen files of gray-clad men with rifles on the right shoulder. At an interval of fifty yards they were followed by perhaps half as many more; and in fair supporting distance of these stalked with confident mien a single man! There seemed to me something indescribably ludicrous in the advance of this handful of men upon an army, albeit with their left flank protected by a forest. It does not so impress me now. They were the exposed flanks of three lines of infantry, each half a mile in length. In a moment our gunners had grappled with the nearest pieces, swung them half round, and were pouring streams of canister into the invaded wood. The infantry rose in masses, springing into line. Our threatened regiments stood like a wall, their loaded rifles at "ready," their bayonets hanging quietly in the scabbards. The right wing of my own regiment was thrown slightly backward to threaten the flank of the assault. The battered brigade away to the rear pulled itself together.

Then the storm burst. A great gray cloud seemed to spring out of the forest into the faces of the waiting battalions. It was received with a crash that made the very trees turn up their leaves. For one instant the assailants paused above their dead, then struggled forward, their bayonets glittering in the eyes that shone behind the smoke. One moment, and those unmoved men in blue would be impaled. What were they about? Why did they not fix bayonets? Were they stunned by their own volley? Their inaction was maddening! Another tremendous crash! — the rear rank had fired! Humanity, thank Heaven! is not made for this, and the shattered gray mass drew back a score of paces, opening a feeble fire. Lead had scored its old-time victory over steel; the heroic had broken its great heart against the commonplace. There are those who say that it is sometimes otherwise.

All this had taken but a minute of time, and now the second Confederate line swept down and poured in its fire. The line of blue staggered and gave way; in those two terrific volleys it seemed to have quite poured out its spirit. To this deadly work our reserve regiment now came up with a run. It was surprising to see it spitting fire with never a sound, for such was the infernal din that the ear could take in no more. This fearful scene was enacted within fifty paces of our toes, but we were rooted to the ground as if we had grown there. But now our commanding officer rode from behind us to the front, waved his hand with the courteous gesture that says *apres vous*, and with a barely audible cheer we sprang into the fight. Again the smoking front of gray receded, and again, as the enemy's third line emerged from its leafy covert, it pushed forward across the piles of dead and wounded to threaten with protruded steel. Never was seen so striking a proof of the paramount importance of numbers. Within an area of three hundred yards by fifty there struggled for front places no fewer than six regiments; and the accession of each, after the first collision, had it not been immediately counterpoised, would have turned the scale.

As matters stood, we were now very evenly matched, and how long we might have held out God only knows. But all at once something appeared to have gone wrong with the enemy's left; our men had somewhere pierced his line. A moment later his whole front gave way, and springing forward with fixed bayonets we pushed him in utter confusion back to his original line. Here, among the tents from which Grant's people had been expelled the day before, our broken and disordered regiments inextricably intermingled, and drunken with the wine of triumph, dashed confidently against a pair of trim battalions, provoking a tempest of hissing lead that made us stagger under its very weight. The sharp onset of another against our flank sent us whirling back with fire at our heels and fresh foes in merciless pursuit — who in their turn were broken upon the front of the invalided brigade previously mentioned, which had moved up from the rear to assist in this lively work.

As we rallied to reform behind our beloved guns and noted the ridiculous brevity of our line — as we sank from sheer fatigue, and tried to moderate the terrific thumping of our hearts — as we caught our breath to ask who had seen such-and-such a comrade, and laughed hysterically at the reply — there swept past us and over us into the open field a long regiment with fixed bayonets and rifles on the right shoulder. Another followed, and another; two — three — four! Heavens! where do all these men come from, and why did they not come before? How grandly and confidently they go sweeping on like long blue waves of ocean chasing one another to the cruel rocks! Involuntarily we draw in our weary feet beneath us as we sit, ready to spring up and interpose our breasts when these gallant lines shall come back to us across the terrible field, and sift brokenly through among the trees with spouting fires at their backs. We still our breathing to catch the full grandeur of the volleys that are to tear them to shreds. Minute after minute passes and the sound does not come. Then for the first time we note that the silence of the whole region is not comparative, but absolute. Have we become stone deaf? See; here comes a stretcher-bearer, and there a surgeon! Good heavens! a chaplain!

The battle was indeed at an end.

XII

And this was, O so long ago! How they come back to me — dimly and brokenly, but with what a magic spell — those years of youth when I was soldiering! Again I hear the far warble of blown bugles. Again I see the tall, blue smoke of camp-fires ascending from the dim valleys of Wonderland. There steals upon my sense the ghost of an odor from pines that canopy the ambuscade. I feel upon my cheek the morning mist that shrouds the hostile camp unaware of its doom, and my blood stirs at the ringing rifle-shot of the solitary sentinel. Unfamiliar landscapes, glittering with sunshine or sullen with rain, come to me demanding recognition, pass, vanish and give place to others. Here in the night stretches a wide and blasted field studded with half-extinct fires burning redly with I know not what presage of evil. Again I shudder as I note its desolation and its awful silence. Where was it? To what monstrous inharmony of death was it the visible prelude?

O days when all the world was beautiful and strange; when unfamiliar constellations burned in the Southern midnights, and the mocking-bird poured out his heart in the moon-gilded magnolia; when there was something new under a new sun; will your fine, far memories ever cease to lay contrasting pictures athwart the harsher features of this later world, accentuating the ugliness of the longer and tamer life? Is it not strange that the phantoms of a blood-stained period have so airy a grace and look with so tender eyes? — that I recall with difficulty the danger and death and horrors of the time, and without effort all that was gracious and picturesque? Ah, Youth, there is no such wizard as thou! Give me but one touch of thine artist hand upon the dull canvas of the Present; gild for but one moment the drear and somber scenes of to-day, and I will willingly surrender an other life than the one that I should have thrown away at Shiloh.

A Little of Chickamauga

The history of that awful struggle is well known — I have not the intention to record it here, but only to relate some part of what I saw of it; my purpose not instruction, but entertainment.

I was an officer of the staff of a Federal brigade. Chickamauga was not my first battle by many, for although hardly more than a boy in years, I had served at the front from the beginning of the trouble, and had seen enough of war to give me a fair understanding of it. We knew well enough that there was to be a fight: the fact that we did not want one would have told us that, for Bragg always retired when we wanted to fight and fought when we most desired peace. We had manoeuvred him out of Chattanooga, but had not manoeuvred our entire army into it, and he fell back so sullenly that those of us who followed, keeping him actually in sight, were a good deal more concerned about effecting a junction with the rest of our army than to push the pursuit. By the time that Rosecrans had got his three scattered corps together we were a long way from Chattanooga, with our line of communication with it so exposed that Bragg turned to seize it. Chickamauga was a fight for possession of a road.

Back along this road raced Crittenden’s corps, with those of Thomas and McCook, which had not before traversed it. The whole army was moving by its left.

There was sharp fighting all along and all day, for the forest was so dense that the hostile lines came almost into contact before fighting was possible. One instance was particularly horrible. After some hours of close engagement my brigade, with foul pieces and exhausted cartridge boxes, was relieved and withdrawn to the road to protect several batteries of artillery — probably two dozen pieces — which commanded an open field in the rear of our line. Before our weary and virtually disarmed men had actually reached the guns the line in front gave way, fell back behind the guns and went on, the Lord knows whither. A moment later the field was gray with Confederates in pursuit. Then the guns opened fire with grape and canister and for perhaps five minutes — it seemed an hour — nothing could be heard but the infernal din of their discharge and nothing seen through the smoke but a great ascension of dust from the smitten soil. When all was over, and the dust cloud had lifted, the spectacle was too dreadful to describe. The Confederates were still there — all of them, it seemed — some almost under the muzzles of the guns. But not a man of all these brave fellows was on his feet, and so thickly were all covered with dust that they looked as if they had been reclothed in yellow.

“We bury our dead,” said a gunner, grimly, though doubtless all were afterward dug out, for some were partly alive.

To a “day of danger” succeeded a “night of waking.” The enemy, everywhere held back from the road, continued to stretch his line northward in the hope to overlap us and put himself between us and Chattanooga. We neither saw nor heard his movement, but any man with half a head would have known that he was making it, and we met it by a parallel movement to our left. By morning we had edged along a good way and thrown up rude intrenchments at a little distance from the road, on the threatened side. The day was not very far advanced when we were attacked furiously all along the line, beginning at the left. When repulsed, the enemy came again and again — his persistence was dispiriting. He seemed to be using against us the law of probabilities: of so many efforts one would eventually succeed.

One did, and it was my luck to see it win. I had been sent by my chief, General Hazen, to order up some artillery ammunition and rode away to the right and rear in search of it. Finding an ordnance train I obtained from the officer in charge a few wagons loaded with what I wanted, but he seemed in doubt as to our occupancy of the region across which I proposed to guide them. Although assured that I had just traversed it, and that it lay immediately behind Wood’s division, he insisted on riding to the top of the ridge behind which his train lay and overlooking the ground. We did so, when to my astonishment I saw the entire country in front swarming with Confederates; the very earth seemed to be moving toward us! They came on in thousands, and so rapidly that we had barely time to turn tail and gallop down the hill and away, leaving them in possession of the train, many of the wagons being upset by frantic efforts to put them about. By what miracle that officer had sensed the situation I did not learn, for we parted company then and there and I never again saw him.

By a misunderstanding Wood’s division had been withdrawn from our line of battle just as the enemy was making an assault. Through the gap of half a mile the Confederates charged without opposition, cutting our army clean in two. The right divisions were broken up and with General Rosecrans in their midst fled how they could across the country, eventually bringing up in Chattanooga, whence Rosecrans telegraphed to Washington the destruction of the rest of his army. The rest of his army was standing its ground.

A good deal of nonsense used to be talked about the heroism of General Garfield, who, caught in the rout of the right, nevertheless went back and joined the undefeated left under General Thomas. There was no great heroism in it; that is what every man should have done, including the commander of the army. We could hear Thomas's guns going — those of us who had ears for them — and all that was needful was to make a sufficiently wide detour and then move toward the sound. I did so myself, and have never felt that it ought to make me President. Moreover, on my way I met General Negley, and my duties as topographical engineer having given me some knowledge of the lay of the land offered to pilot him back to glory or the grave. I am sorry to say my good offices were rejected a little uncivilly, which I charitably attributed to the general's obvious absence of mind. His mind, I think, was in Nashville, behind a breastwork.

Unable to find my brigade, I reported to General Thomas, who directed me to remain with him. He had assumed command of all the forces still intact and was pretty closely beset. The battle was fierce and continuous, the enemy extending his lines farther and farther around our right, toward our line of retreat. We could not meet the extension otherwise than by "refusing" our right flank and letting him inclose us; which but for gallant Gordon Granger he would inevitably have done.

This was the way of it. Looking across the fields in our rear (rather longingly) I had the happy distinction of a discoverer. What I saw was the shimmer of sunlight on metal: lines of troops were coming in behind us! The distance was too great, the atmosphere too hazy to distinguish the color of their uniform, even with a glass. Reporting my momentous "find" I was directed by the general to go and see who they were. Galloping toward them until near enough to see that they were of our kidney I hastened back with the glad tidings and was sent again, to guide them to the general's position.

It was General Granger with two strong brigades of the reserve, moving soldier-like toward the sound of heavy firing. Meeting him and his staff I directed him to Thomas, and unable to think of anything better to do decided to go visiting. I knew I had a brother in that gang — an officer of an Ohio battery. I soon found him near the head of a column, and as we moved forward we had a comfortable chat amongst such of the enemy's bullets as had inconsiderately been fired too high. The incident was a trifle marred by one of them unhorsing another officer of the battery, whom we propped against a tree and left. A few moments later Granger's force was put in on the right and the fighting was terrific!

By accident I now found Hazen's brigade — or what remained of it — which had made a half-mile march to add itself to the unrouted at the memorable Snodgrass Hill. Hazen's first remark to me was an inquiry about that artillery ammunition that he had sent me for.

It was needed badly enough, as were other kinds: for the last hour or two of that interminable day Granger’s were the only men that had enough ammunition to make a five minutes’ fight. Had the Confederates made one more general attack we should have had to meet them with the bayonet alone. I don’t know why they did not; probably they were short of ammunition. I know, though, that while the sun was taking its own time to set we lived through the agony of at least one death each, waiting for them to come on.

At last it grew too dark to fight. Then away to our left and rear some of Bragg’s people set up “the rebel yell.” It was taken up successively and passed round to our front, along our right and in behind us again, until it seemed almost to have got to the point whence it started. It was the ugliest sound that any mortal ever heard — even a mortal exhausted and unnerved by two days of hard fighting, without sleep, without rest, without food and without hope. There was, however, a space somewhere at the back of us across which that horrible yell did not prolong itself; and through that we finally retired in profound silence and dejection, unmolested.

To those of us who have survived the attacks of both Bragg and Time, and who keep in memory the dear dead comrades whom we left upon that fateful field, the place means much. May it mean something less to the younger men whose tents are now pitched where, with bended heads and clasped hands, God’s great angels stood invisible among the heroes in blue and the heroes in gray, sleeping their last sleep in the woods of Chickamauga.

1898.

The Crime at Pickett’s Mill

There is a class of events which by their very nature, and despite any intrinsic interest that they may possess, are foredoomed to oblivion. They are merged in the general story of those greater events of which they were a part, as the thunder of a billow breaking on a distant beach is unnoted in the continuous roar. To how many having knowledge of the battles of our Civil War does the name Pickett’s Mill suggest acts of heroism and devotion performed in scenes of awful carnage to accomplish the impossible? Buried in the official reports of the victors there are indeed imperfect accounts of the engagement: the vanquished have not thought it expedient to relate it. It is ignored by General Sherman in his memoirs, yet Sherman ordered it. General Howard wrote an account of the campaign of which it was an incident, and dismissed it in a single sentence; yet General Howard planned it, and it was fought as an isolated and independent action under his eye. Whether it was so trifling an affair as to justify this inattention let the reader judge.

The fight occurred on the 27th of May, 1864, while the armies of Generals Sherman and Johnston confronted each other near Dallas, Georgia, during the memorable “Atlanta campaign.” For three weeks we had been pushing the Confederates southward, partly by manoeuvring, partly by fighting, out of Dalton, out of Resaca, through Adairsville, Kingston and Cassville. Each army offered battle everywhere, but would accept it only on its own terms. At Dallas Johnston made another stand and Sherman, facing the hostile line, began his customary manoeuvring for an advantage. General Wood’s division of Howard’s corps occupied a position opposite the Confederate right. Johnston finding himself on the 26th overlapped by Schofield, still farther to Wood’s left, retired his right (Polk) across a creek, whither we followed him into the woods with a deal of desultory bickering, and at nightfall had established the new lines at nearly a right angle with the old — Schofield reaching well around and threatening the Confederate rear.

The civilian reader must not suppose when he reads accounts of military operations in which relative positions of the forces are defined, as in the foregoing passages, that these were matters of general knowledge to those engaged. Such statements are commonly made, even by those high in command, in the light of later disclosures, such as the enemy’s official reports. It is seldom, indeed, that a subordinate officer knows anything about the disposition of the enemy's forces — except that it is unaimable — or precisely whom he is fighting. As to the rank and file, they can know nothing more of the matter than the arms they carry. They hardly know what troops are upon their own right or left the length of a regiment away. If it is a cloudy day they are ignorant even of the points of the compass. It may be said, generally, that a soldier's knowledge of what is going on about him is coterminous with his official relation to it and his personal connection with it; what is going on in front of him he does not know at all until he learns it afterward.

At nine o'clock on the morning of the 27th Wood's division was withdrawn and replaced by Stanley's. Supported by Johnson's division, it moved at ten o'clock to the left, in the rear of Schofield, a distance of four miles through a forest, and at two o'clock in the afternoon had reached a position where General Howard believed himself free to move in behind the enemy's forces and attack them in the rear, or at least, striking them in the flank, crush his way along their line in the direction of its length, throw them into confusion and prepare an easy victory for a supporting attack in front. In selecting General Howard for this bold adventure General Sherman was doubtless not unmindful of Chancellorsville, where Stonewall Jackson had executed a similar manoeuvre for Howard's instruction. Experience is a normal school: it teaches how to teach.

There are some differences to be noted. At Chancellorsville it was Jackson who attacked; at Pickett's Mill, Howard. At Chancellorsville it was Howard who was assailed; at Pickett's Mill, Hood. The significance of the first distinction is doubled by that of the second.

The attack, it was understood, was to be made in column of brigades, Hazen's brigade of Wood's division leading. That such was at least Hazen's understanding I learned from his own lips during the movement, as I was an officer of his staff. But after a march of less than a mile an hour and a further delay of three hours at the end of it to acquaint the enemy of our intention to surprise him, our single shrunken brigade of fifteen hundred men was sent forward without support to double up the army of General Johnston. "We will put in Hazen and see what success he has." In these words of General Wood to General Howard we were first apprised of the true nature of the distinction about to be conferred upon us.

General W.B. Hazen, a born fighter, an educated soldier, after the war Chief Signal Officer of the Army and now long dead, was the best hated man that I ever knew, and his very memory is a terror to every unworthy soul in the service. His was a stormy life: he was in trouble all round. Grant, Sherman, Sheridan and a countless multitude of the less eminent luckless had the misfortune, at one time and another, to incur his disfavor, and he tried to punish them all. He was always — after the war — the central figure of a court-martial or a Congressional inquiry, was accused of everything, from stealing to cowardice, was banished to obscure posts, “jumped on” by the press, traduced in public and in private, and always emerged triumphant. While Signal Officer, he went up against the Secretary of War and put him to the controversial sword. He convicted Sheridan of falsehood, Sherman of barbarism, Grant of inefficiency. He was aggressive, arrogant, tyrannical, honorable, truthful, courageous — skillful soldier, a faithful friend and one of the most exasperating of men Duty was his religion, and like the Moslem he proselyted with the sword. His missionary efforts were directed chiefly against the spiritual darkness of his superiors in rank, though he would turn aside from pursuit of his erring commander to set a chicken-thieving orderly astride a wooden horse, with a heavy stone attached to each foot. “Hazen,” said a brother brigadier, “is a synonym of insubordination.” For my commander and my friend, my master in the art of war, now unable to answer for himself, let this fact answer: when he heard Wood say they would put him in and see what success he would have in defeating an army — when he saw Howard assent — he uttered never a word, rode to the head of his feeble brigade and patiently awaited the command to go. Only by a look which I knew how to read did he betray his sense of the criminal blunder.

The enemy had now had seven hours in which to learn of the movement and prepare to meet it. General Johnston says:

“The Federal troops extended their intrenched line [we did not intrench] so rapidly to their left that it was found necessary to transfer Cleburne’s division to Hardee’s corps to our right, where it was formed on the prolongation of Polk’s line.”

General Hood, commanding the enemy’s right corps, says:

“On the morning of the 27th the enemy were known to be rapidly extending their left, attempting to turn my right as they extended. Cleburne was deployed to meet them, and at half-past five P.M. a very stubborn attack was made on this division, extending to the right, where Major-General Wheeler with his cavalry division was engaging them. The assault was continued with great determination upon both Cleburne and Wheeler.”

That, then, was the situation: a weak brigade of fifteen hundred men, with masses of idle troops behind in the character of audience, waiting for the word to march a quarter-mile up hill through almost impassable tangles of underwood, along and across precipitous ravines, and attack breastworks constructed at leisure and manned with two divisions of troops as good as themselves. True, we did not know all this, but if any man on that ground besides Wood and Howard expected a “walkover” his must have been a singularly hopeful disposition. As topographical engineer it had been my duty to make a hasty examination of the ground in front. In doing so I had pushed far enough forward through the forest to hear distinctly the murmur of the enemy awaiting us, and this had been duly reported; but from our lines nothing could be heard but the wind among the trees and the songs of birds. Some one said it was a pity to frighten them, but there would necessarily be more or less noise. We laughed at that: men awaiting death on the battlefield laugh easily, though not infectiously.

The brigade was formed in four battalions, two in front and two in rear. This gave us a front of about two hundred yards. The right front battalion was commanded by Colonel R.L. Kimberly of the 41st Ohio, the left by Colonel O.H. Payne of the 124th Ohio, the rear battalions by Colonel J.C. Foy, 23d Kentucky, and Colonel W.W. Berry, 5th Kentucky — all brave and skillful officers, tested by experience on many fields. The whole command (known as the Second Brigade, Third Division, Fourth Corps) consisted of no fewer than nine regiments, reduced by long service to an average of less than two hundred men each. With full ranks and only the necessary details for special duty we should have had some eight thousand rifles in line.

We moved forward. In less than one minute the trim battalions had become simply a swarm of men struggling through the undergrowth of the forest, pushing and crowding. The front was irregularly serrated, the strongest and bravest in advance, the others following in fan-like formations, variable and inconstant, ever defining themselves anew. For the first two hundred yards our course lay along the left bank of a small creek in a deep ravine, our left battalions sweeping along its steep slope. Then we came to the fork of the ravine. A part of us crossed below, the rest above, passing over both branches, the regiments inextricably intermingled, rendering all military formation impossible. The color-bearers kept well to the front with their flags, closely furled, aslant backward over their shoulders. Displayed, they would have been torn to rags by the boughs of the trees. Horses were all sent to the rear; the general and staff and all the field officers toiled along on foot as best they could. “We shall halt and form when we get out of this,” said an aide-de-camp.

Suddenly there were a ringing rattle of musketry, the familiar hissing of bullets, and before us the interspaces of the forest were all blue with smoke. Hoarse, fierce yells broke out of a thousand throats. The forward fringe of brave and hardy assailants was arrested in its mutable extensions; the edge of our swarm grew dense and clearly defined as the foremost halted, and the rest pressed forward to align themselves beside them, all firing. The uproar was deafening; the air was sibilant with streams and sheets of missiles. In the steady, unvarying roar of small-arms the frequent shock of the cannon was rather felt than heard, but the gusts of grape which they blew into that populous wood were audible enough, screaming among the trees and cracking against their stems and branches. We had, of course, no artillery to reply.

Our brave color-bearers were now all in the forefront of battle in the open, for the enemy had cleared a space in front of his breastworks. They held the colors erect, shook out their glories, waved them forward and back to keep them spread, for there was no wind. From where I stood, at the right of the line — we had "halted and formed," indeed — I could see six of our flags at one time. Occasionally one would go down, only to be instantly lifted by other hands.

I must here quote again from General Johnston's account of this engagement, for nothing could more truly indicate the resolute nature of the attack than the Confederate belief that it was made by the whole Fourth Corps, instead of one weak brigade:

"The Fourth Corps came on in deep order and assailed the Texans with great vigor, receiving their close and accurate fire with the fortitude always exhibited by General Sherman's troops in the actions of this campaign…. The Federal troops approached within a few yards of the Confederates, but at last were forced to give way by their storm of well-directed bullets, and fell back to the shelter of a hollow near and behind them. They left hundreds of corpses within twenty paces of the Confederate line. When the United States troops paused in their advance within fifteen paces of the Texan front rank one of their color-bearers planted his colors eight or ten feet in front of his regiment, and was instantly shot dead. A soldier sprang forward to his place and fell also as he grasped the color-staff. A second and third followed successively, and each received death as speedily as his predecessors. A fourth, however, seized and bore back the object of soldierly devotion."

Such incidents have occurred in battle from time to time since men began to venerate the symbols of their cause, but they are not commonly related by the enemy. If General Johnston had known that his veteran divisions were throwing their successive lines against fewer than fifteen hundred men his glowing tribute to his enemy's valor could hardly have been more generously expressed. I can attest the truth of his soldierly praise: I saw the occurrence that he relates and regret that I am unable to recall even the name of the regiment whose colors were so gallantly saved.

Early in my military experience I used to ask myself how it was that brave troops could retreat while still their courage was high. As long as a man is not disabled he can go forward; can it be anything but fear that makes him stop and finally retire? Are there signs by which he can infallibly know the struggle to be hopeless? In this engagement, as in others, my doubts were answered as to the fact; the explanation is still obscure. In many instances which have come under my observation, when hostile lines of infantry engage at close range and the assailants afterward retire, there was a “dead-line” beyond which no man advanced but to fall. Not a soul of them ever reached the enemy’s front to be bayoneted or captured. It was a matter of the difference of three or four paces — too small a distance to affect the accuracy of aim. In these affairs no aim is taken at individual antagonists; the soldier delivers his fire at the thickest mass in his front. The fire is, of course, as deadly at twenty paces as at fifteen; at fifteen as at ten. Nevertheless, there is the “dead-line,” with its well-defined edge of corpses — those of the bravest. Where both lines are fighting without cover — as in a charge met by a counter-charge — each has its “dead-line,” and between the two is a clear space — neutral ground, devoid of dead, for the living cannot reach it to fall there.

I observed this phenomenon at Pickett’s Mill. Standing at the right of the line I had an unobstructed view of the narrow, open space across which the two lines fought. It was dim with smoke, but not greatly obscured: the smoke rose and spread in sheets among the branches of the trees. Most of our men fought kneeling as they fired, many of them behind trees, stones and whatever cover they could get, but there were considerable groups that stood. Occasionally one of these groups, which had endured the storm of missiles for moments without perceptible reduction, would push forward, moved by a common despair, and wholly detach itself from the line. In a second every man of the group would be down. There had been no visible movement of the enemy, no audible change in the awful, even roar of the firing — yet all were down. Frequently the dim figure of an individual soldier would be seen to spring away from his comrades, advancing alone toward that fateful interspace, with leveled bayonet. He got no farther than the farthest of his predecessors. Of the “hundreds of corpses within twenty paces of the Confederate line,” I venture to say that a third were within fifteen paces, and not one within ten.

It is the perception — perhaps unconscious — of this inexplicable phenomenon that causes the still unharmed, still vigorous and still courageous soldier to retire without having come into actual contact with his foe. He sees, or feels, that he *cannot*. His bayonet is a useless weapon for slaughter; its purpose is a moral one. Its mandate exhausted, he sheathes it and trusts to the bullet. That failing, he retreats. He has done all that he could do with such appliances as he has.

No command to fall back was given, none could have been heard. Man by man, the survivors withdrew at will, sifting through the trees into the cover of the ravines, among the wounded who could drag themselves back; among the skulkers whom nothing could have dragged forward. The left of our short line had fought at the corner of a cornfield, the fence along the right side of which was parallel to the direction of our retreat. As the disorganized groups fell back along this fence on the wooded side, they were attacked by a flanking force of the enemy moving through the field in a direction nearly parallel with what had been our front. This force, I infer from General Johnston's account, consisted of the brigade of General Lowry, or two Arkansas regiments under Colonel Baucum. I had been sent by General Hazen to that point and arrived in time to witness this formidable movement. But already our retreating men, in obedience to their officers, their courage and their instinct of self-preservation, had formed along the fence and opened fire. The apparently slight advantage of the imperfect cover and the open range worked its customary miracle: the assault, a singularly spiritless one, considering the advantages it promised and that it was made by an organized and victorious force against a broken and retreating one, was checked. The assailants actually retired, and if they afterward renewed the movement they encountered none but our dead and wounded.

The battle, as a battle, was at an end, but there was still some slaughtering that it was possible to incur before nightfall; and as the wreck of our brigade drifted back through the forest we met the brigade (Gibson's) which, had the attack been made in column, as it should have been, would have been but five minutes behind our heels, with another five minutes behind its own. As it was, just forty-five minutes had elapsed, during which the enemy had destroyed us and was now ready to perform the same kindly office for our successors. Neither Gibson nor the brigade which was sent to his "relief" as tardily as he to ours accomplished, or could have hoped to accomplish, anything whatever. I did not note their movements, having other duties, but Hazen in his "Narrative of Military Service" says:

"I witnessed the attack of the two brigades following my own, and none of these (troops) advanced nearer than one hundred yards of the enemy's works. They went in at a run, and as organizations were broken in less than a minute."

Nevertheless their losses were considerable, including several hundred prisoners taken from a sheltered place whence they did not care to rise and run. The entire loss was about fourteen hundred men, of whom nearly one-half fell killed and wounded in Hazen's brigade in less than thirty minutes of actual fighting.

General Johnston says:

"The Federal dead lying near our line were counted by many persons, officers and soldiers. According to these counts there were seven hundred of them."

This is obviously erroneous, though I have not the means at hand to ascertain the true number. I remember that we were all astonished at the uncommonly large proportion of dead to wounded — a consequence of the uncommonly close range at which most of the fighting was done.

The action took its name from a water-power mill near by. This was on a branch of a stream having, I am sorry to say, the prosaic name of Pumpkin Vine Creek. I have my own reasons for suggesting that the name of that water-course be altered to Sunday-School Run.

Four Days in Dixie

During a part of the month of October, 1864, the Federal and Confederate armies of Sherman and Hood respectively, having performed a surprising and resultless series of marches and countermarches since the fall of Atlanta, confronted each other along the separating line of the Coosa River in the vicinity of Gaylesville, Alabama. Here for several days they remained at rest — at least most of the infantry and artillery did; what the cavalry was doing nobody but itself ever knew or greatly cared. It was an interregnum of expectancy between two régimes of activity.

I was on the staff of Colonel McConnell, who commanded an infantry brigade in the absence of its regular commander. McConnell was a good man, but he did not keep a very tight rein upon the half dozen restless and reckless young fellows who (for his sins) constituted his "military family." In most matters we followed the trend of our desires, which commonly ran in the direction of adventure — it did not greatly matter what kind. In pursuance of this policy of escapades, one bright Sunday morning Lieutenant Cobb, an aide-de-camp, and I mounted and set out to "seek our fortunes," as the story books have it. Striking into a road of which we knew nothing except that it led toward the river, we followed it for a mile or such a matter, when we found our advance interrupted by a considerable creek, which we must ford or go back. We consulted a moment and then rode at it as hard as we could, possibly in the belief that a high momentum would act as it does in the instance of a skater passing over thin ice. Cobb was fortunate enough to get across comparatively dry, but his hapless companion was utterly submerged. The disaster was all the greater from my having on a resplendent new uniform, of which I had been pardonably vain. Ah, what a gorgeous new uniform it never was again!

A half-hour devoted to wringing my clothing and dry-charging my revolver, and we were away. A brisk canter of a half-hour under the arches of the trees brought us to the river, where it was our ill luck to find a boat and three soldiers of our brigade. These men had been for several hours concealed in the brush patiently watching the opposite bank in the amiable hope of getting a shot at some unwary Confederate, but had seen none. For a great distance up and down the stream on the other side, and for at least a mile back from it, extended cornfields. Beyond the cornfields, on slightly higher ground, was a thin forest, with breaks here and there in its continuity, denoting plantations, probably. No houses were in sight, and no camps. We knew that it was the enemy’s ground, but whether his forces were disposed along the slightly higher country bordering the bottom lands, or at strategic points miles back, as ours were, we knew no more than the least curious private in our army. In any case the river line would naturally be picketed or patrolled. But the charm of the unknown was upon us: the mysterious exerted its old-time fascination, beckoning to us from that silent shore so peaceful and dreamy in the beauty of the quiet Sunday morning. The temptation was strong and we fell. The soldiers were as eager for the hazard as we, and readily volunteered for the madmen’s enterprise. Concealing our horses in a cane-brake, we unmoored the boat and rowed across unmolested.

Arrived at a kind of “landing” on the other side, our first care was so to secure the boat under the bank as to favor a hasty re-embarking in case we should be so unfortunate as to incur the natural consequence of our act; then, following an old road through the ranks of standing corn, we moved in force upon the Confederate position, five strong, with an armament of three Springfield rifles and two Colt’s revolvers. We had not the further advantage of music and banners. One thing favored the expedition, giving it an apparent assurance of success: it was well officered — an officer to each man and a half.

After marching about a mile we came into a neck of woods and crossed an intersecting road which showed no wheel-tracks, but was rich in hoof-prints. We observed them and kept right on about our business, whatever that may have been. A few hundred yards farther brought us to a plantation bordering our road upon the right. The fields, as was the Southern fashion at that period of the war, were uncultivated and overgrown with brambles. A large white house stood at some little distance from the road; we saw women and children and a few negroes there. On our left ran the thin forest, pervious to cavalry. Directly ahead an ascent in the road formed a crest beyond which we could see nothing.

On this crest suddenly appeared two horsemen in gray, sharply outlined against the sky — men and animals looking gigantic. At the same instant a jingling and tramping were audible behind us, and turning in that direction I saw a score of mounted men moving forward at a trot. In the meantime the giants on the crest had multiplied surprisingly. Our invasion of the Gulf States had apparently failed.

There was lively work in the next few seconds. The shots were thick and fast — and uncommonly loud; none, I think, from our side. Cobb was on the extreme left of our advance, I on the right — about two paces apart. He instantly dived into the wood. The three men and I climbed across the fence somehow and struck out across the field — actuated, doubtless, by an intelligent forethought: men on horseback could not immediately follow. Passing near the house, now swarming like a hive of bees, we made for a swamp two or three hundred yards away, where I concealed myself in a jungle, the others continuing — as a defeated commander would put it — to fall back. In my cover, where I lay panting like a hare, I could hear a deal of shouting and hard riding and an occasional shot. I heard some one calling dogs, and the thought of bloodhounds added its fine suggestiveness to the other fancies appropriate to the occasion.

Finding myself unpursued after the lapse of what seemed an hour, but was probably a few minutes, I cautiously sought a place where, still concealed, I could obtain a view of the field of glory. The only enemy in sight was a group of horsemen on a hill a quarter of a mile away. Toward this group a woman was running, followed by the eyes of everybody about the house. I thought she had discovered my hiding-place and was going to "give me away." Taking to my hands and knees I crept as rapidly as possible among the clumps of brambles directly back toward the point in the road where we had met the enemy and failed to make him ours. There I dragged myself into a patch of briars within ten feet of the road, where I lay undiscovered during the remainder of the day, listening to a variety of disparaging remarks upon Yankee valor and to dispiriting declarations of intention conditional on my capture, as members of the Opposition passed and repassed and paused in the road to discuss the morning's events. In this way I learned that the three privates had been headed off and caught within ten minutes. Their destination would naturally be Andersonville; what further became of them God knows. Their captors passed the day making a careful canvass of the swamp for me.

When night had fallen I cautiously left my place of concealment, dodged across the road into the woods and made for the river through the mile of corn. Such corn! It towered above me like a forest, shutting out all the starlight except what came from directly overhead. Many of the ears were a yard out of reach. One who has never seen an Alabama river-bottom cornfield has not exhausted nature's surprises; nor will he know what solitude is until he explores one in a moonless night.

I came at last to the river bank with its fringe of trees and willows and canes. My intention was to swim across, but the current was swift, the water forbiddingly dark and cold. A mist obscured the other bank. I could not, indeed, see the water more than a few yards out. It was a hazardous and horrible undertaking, and I gave it up, following cautiously along the bank in search of the spot where we had moored the boat. True, it was hardly likely that the landing was now unguarded, or, if so, that the boat was still there. Cobb had undoubtedly made for it, having an even more urgent need than I; but hope springs eternal in the human breast, and there was a chance that he had been killed before reaching it. I came at last into the road that we had taken and consumed half the night in cautiously approaching the landing, pistol in hand and heart in mouth. The boat was gone! I continued my journey along the stream — in search of another.

My clothing was still damp from my morning bath, my teeth rattled with cold, but I kept on along the stream until I reached the limit of the cornfields and entered a dense wood. Through this I groped my way, inch by inch, when, suddenly emerging from a thicket into a space slightly more open, I came upon a smoldering camp-fire surrounded by prostrate figures of men, upon one of whom I had almost trodden. A sentinel, who ought to have been shot, sat by the embers, his carbine across his lap, his chin upon his breast. Just beyond was a group of unsaddled horses. The men were asleep; the sentinel was asleep; the horses were asleep. There was something indescribably uncanny about it all. For a moment I believed them all lifeless, and O'Hara's familiar line, "The bivouac of the dead," quoted itself in my consciousness. The emotion that I felt was that inspired by a sense of the supernatural; of the actual and imminent peril of my position I had no thought. When at last it occurred to me I felt it as a welcome relief, and stepping silently back into the shadow retraced my course without having awakened a soul. The vividness with which I can now recall that scene is to me one of the marvels of memory.

Getting my bearings again with some difficulty, I now made a wide detour to the left, in the hope of passing around this outpost and striking the river beyond. In this mad attempt I ran upon a more vigilant sentinel, posted in the heart of a thicket, who fired at me without challenge. To a soldier an unexpected shot ringing out at dead of night is fraught with an awful significance. In my circumstances — cut off from my comrades, groping about an unknown country, surrounded by invisible perils which such a signal would call into eager activity — the flash and shock of that firearm were unspeakably dreadful! In any case I should and ought to have fled, and did so; but how much or little of conscious prudence there was in the prompting I do not care to discover by analysis of memory. I went back into the corn, found the river, followed it back a long way and mounted into the fork of a low tree. There I perched until the dawn, a most uncomfortable bird.

In the gray light of the morning I discovered that I was opposite an island of considerable length, separated from the mainland by a narrow and shallow channel, which I promptly waded. The island was low and flat, covered with an almost impenetrable cane-brake interlaced with vines. Working my way through these to the other side, I obtained another look at God's country — Shermany, so to speak. There were no visible inhabitants. The forest and the water met. This did not deter me. For the chill of the water I had no further care, and laying off my boots and outer clothing I prepared to swim. A strange thing now occurred — more accurately, a familiar thing occurred at a strange moment. A black cloud seemed to pass before my eyes — the water, the trees, the sky, all vanished in a profound darkness. I heard the roaring of a great cataract, felt the earth sinking from beneath my feet. Then I heard and felt no more.

At the battle of Kennesaw Mountain in the previous June I had been badly wounded in the head, and for three months was incapacitated for service. In truth, I had done no actual duty since, being then, as for many years afterward, subject to fits of fainting, sometimes without assignable immediate cause, but mostly when suffering from exposure, excitement or excessive fatigue. This combination of them all had broken me down — most opportunely, it would seem.

When I regained my consciousness the sun was high. I was still giddy and half blind. To have taken to the water would have been madness; I must have a raft. Exploring my island, I found a pen of slender logs: an old structure without roof or rafters, built for what purpose I do not know. Several of these logs I managed with patient toil to detach and convey to the water, where I floated them, lashing them together with vines. Just before sunset my raft was complete and freighted with my outer clothing, boots and pistol. Having shipped the last article, I returned into the brake, seeking something from which to improvise a paddle. While peering about I heard a sharp metallic click — the cocking of a rifle! I was a prisoner.

The history of this great disaster to the Union arms is brief and simple. A Confederate “home guard,” hearing something going on upon the island, rode across, concealed his horse and still-hunted me. And, reader, when you are “held up” in the same way may it be by as fine a fellow. He not only spared my life, but even overlooked a feeble and ungrateful after-attempt upon his own (the particulars of which I shall not relate), merely exacting my word of honor that I would not again try to escape while in his custody. Escape! I could not have escaped a new-born babe.

At my captor’s house that evening there was a reception, attended by the élite of the whole vicinity. A Yankee officer in full fig — minus only the boots, which could not be got on to his swollen feet — was something worth seeing, and those who came to scoff remained to stare. What most interested them, I think, was my eating — an entertainment that was prolonged to a late hour. They were a trifle disappointed by the absence of horns, hoof and tail, but bore their chagrin with good-natured fortitude. Among my visitors was a charming young woman from the plantation where we had met the foe the day before — the same lady whom I had suspected of an intention to reveal my hiding-place. She had had no such design; she had run over to the group of horsemen to learn if her father had been hurt — by whom, I should like to know. No restraint was put upon me; my captor even left me with the women and children and went off for instructions as to what disposition he should make of me. Altogether the reception was “a pronounced success,” though it is to be regretted that the guest of the evening had the incivility to fall dead asleep in the midst of the festivities, and was put to bed by sympathetic and, he has reason to believe, fair hands.

The next morning I was started off to the rear in custody of two mounted men, heavily armed. They had another prisoner, picked up in some raid beyond the river. He was a most offensive brute — a foreigner of some mongrel sort, with just sufficient command of our tongue to show that he could not control his own. We traveled all day, meeting occasional small bodies of cavalrymen, by whom, with one exception — a Texan officer — was civilly treated. My guards said, however, that if we should chance to meet Jeff Gatewood he would probably take me from them and hang me to the nearest tree; and once or twice, hearing horsemen approach, they directed me to stand aside, concealed in the brush, one of them remaining near by to keep an eye on me, the other going forward with my fellow-prisoner, for whose neck they seemed to have less tenderness, and whom I heartily wished well hanged.

Jeff Gatewood was a “guerrilla” chief of local notoriety, who was a greater terror to his friends than to his other foes. My guards related almost incredible tales of his cruelties and infamies. By their account it was into his camp that I had blundered on Sunday night.

We put up for the night at a farmhouse, having gone not more than fifteen miles, owing to the condition of my feet. Here we got a bite of supper and were permitted to lie before the fire. My fellow-prisoner took off his boots and was soon sound asleep. I took off nothing and, despite exhaustion, remained equally sound awake. One of the guards also removed his footgear and outer clothing, placed his weapons under his neck and slept the sleep of innocence; the other sat in the chimney corner on watch. The house was a double log cabin, with an open space between the two parts, roofed over — a common type of habitation in that region. The room we were in had its entrance in this open space, the fireplace opposite, at the end. Beside the door was a bed, occupied by the old man of the house and his wife. It was partly curtained off from the room.

In an hour or two the chap on watch began to yawn, then to nod. Pretty soon he stretched himself on the floor, facing us, pistol in hand. For a while he supported himself on his elbow, then laid his head on his arm, blinking like an owl. I performed an occasional snore, watching him narrowly between my eyelashes from the shadow of my arm. The inevitable occurred — he slept audibly.

A half-hour later I rose quietly to my feet, particularly careful not to disturb the blackguard at my side, and moved as silently as possible to the door. Despite my care the latch clicked. The old lady sat bolt upright in bed and stared at me. She was too late. I sprang through the door and struck out for the nearest point of woods, in a direction previously selected, vaulting fences like an accomplished gymnast and followed by a multitude of dogs. It is said that the State of Alabama has more dogs than school-children, and that they cost more for their keep. The estimate of cost is probably too high.

Looking backward as I ran, I saw and heard the place in a turmoil and uproar; and to my joy the old man, evidently oblivious to the facts of the situation, was lifting up his voice and calling his dogs. They were good dogs: they went back; otherwise the malicious old rascal would have had my skeleton. Again the traditional bloodhound did not materialize. Other pursuit there was no reason to fear; my foreign gentleman would occupy the attention of one of the soldiers, and in the darkness of the forest I could easily elude the other, or, if need be, get him at a disadvantage. In point of fact there was no pursuit.

I now took my course by the north star (which I can never sufficiently bless), avoiding all roads and open places about houses, laboriously boring my way through forests, driving myself like a wedge into brush and bramble, swimming every stream I came to (some of them more than once, probably), and pulling myself out of the water by boughs and briars — whatever could be grasped. Let any one try to go a little way across even the most familiar country on a moonless night, and he will have an experience to remember. By dawn I had probably not made three miles. My clothing and skin were alike in rags.

During the day I was compelled to make wide detours to avoid even the fields, unless they were of corn; but in other respects the going was distinctly better. A light breakfast of raw sweet potatoes and persimmons cheered the inner man; a good part of the outer was decorating the several thorns, boughs and sharp rocks along my sylvan wake.

Late in the afternoon I found the river, at what point it was impossible to say. After a half-hour's rest, concluding with a fervent prayer that I might go to the bottom, I swam across. Creeping up the bank and holding my course still northward through a dense undergrowth, I suddenly reeled into a dusty highway and saw a more heavenly vision than ever the eyes of a dying saint were blessed withal — two patriots in blue carrying a stolen pig slung upon a pole!

Late that evening Colonel McConnell and his staff were chatting by a campfire in front of his headquarters. They were in a pleasant humor: some one had just finished a funny story about a man cut in two by a cannon-shot. Suddenly something staggered in among them from the outer darkness and fell into the fire. Somebody dragged it out by what seemed to be a leg. They turned the animal on its back and examined it — they were no cowards.

“What is it, Cobb?” said the chief, who had not taken the trouble to rise.

“I don’t know, Colonel, but thank God it is dead!”

It was not.

What Occurred at Franklin

For several days, in snow and rain, General Schofield's little army had crouched in its hastily constructed defenses at Columbia, Tennessee. It had retreated in hot haste from Pulaski, thirty miles to the south, arriving just in time to foil Hood, who, marching from Florence, Alabama, by another road, with a force of more than double our strength, had hoped to intercept us. Had he succeeded, he would indubitably have bagged the whole bunch of us. As it was, he simply took position in front of us and gave us plenty of employment, but did not attack; he knew a trick worth two of that.

Duck River was directly in our rear; I suppose both our flanks rested on it. The town was between them. One night — that of November 27, 1864 — we pulled up stakes and crossed to the north bank to continue our retreat to Nashville, where Thomas and safety lay — such safety as is known in war. It was high time too, for before noon of the next day Forrest's cavalry forded the river a few miles above us and began pushing back our own horse toward Spring Hill, ten miles in our rear, on our only road. Why our infantry was not immediately put in motion toward the threatened point, so vital to our safety, General Schofield could have told better than I. Howbeit, we lay there inactive all day.

The next morning — a bright and beautiful one — the brigade of Colonel P. Sidney Post was thrown out, up the river four or five miles, to see what it could see. What it saw was Hood's head-of-column coming over on a pontoon bridge, and a right pretty spectacle it would have been to one whom it did not concern. It concerned us rather keenly.

As a member of Colonel Post's staff, I was naturally favored with a good view of the performance. We formed in line of battle at a distance of perhaps a half-mile from the bridge-head, but that unending column of gray and steel gave us no more attention than if we had been a crowd of farmer-folk. Why should it? It had only to face to the left to be itself a line of battle. Meantime it had more urgent business on hand than brushing away a small brigade whose only offense was curiosity; it was making for Spring Hill with all its legs and wheels. Hour after hour we watched that unceasing flow of infantry and artillery toward the rear of our army. It was an unnerving spectacle, yet we never for a moment doubted that, acting on the intelligence supplied by our succession of couriers, our entire force was moving rapidly to the point of contact. The battle of Spring Hill was obviously decreed. Obviously, too, our brigade of observation would be among the last to have a hand in it. The thought annoyed us, made us restless and resentful. Our mounted men rode forward and back behind the line, nervous and distressed; the men in the ranks sought relief in frequent changes of posture, in shifting their weight from one leg to the other, in needless inspection of their weapons and in that unfailing resource of the discontented soldier, audible damning of those in the saddles of authority. But never for more than a moment at a time did any one remove his eyes from that fascinating and portentous pageant.

Toward evening we were recalled, to learn that of our five divisions of infantry, with their batteries, numbering twenty-three thousand men, only one — Stanley's, four thousand weak — had been sent to Spring Hill to meet that formidable movement of Hood's three veteran corps! Why Stanley was not immediately effaced is still a matter of controversy. Hood, who was early on the ground, declared that he gave the needful orders and tried vainly to enforce them; Cheatham, in command of his leading corps, that he did not. Doubtless the dispute is still being carried on between these chieftains from their beds of asphodel and moly in Elysium. So much is certain: Stanley drove away Forrest and successfully held the junction of the roads against Cleburne's division, the only infantry that attacked him.

That night the entire Confederate army lay within a half mile of our road, while we all sneaked by, infantry, artillery, and trains. The enemy's camp-fires shone redly — miles of them — seemingly only a stone's throw from our hurrying column. His men were plainly visible about them, cooking their suppers — a sight so incredible that many of our own, thinking them friends, strayed over to them and did not return. At intervals of a few hundred yards we passed dim figures on horseback by the roadside, enjoining silence. Needless precaution; we could not have spoken if we had tried, for our hearts were in our throats. But fools are God's peculiar care, arid one of his protective methods is the stupidity of other fools. By daybreak our last man and last wagon had passed the fateful spot unchallenged, and our first were entering Franklin, ten miles away. Despite spirited cavalry attacks on trains and rear-guard, all were in Franklin by noon and such of the men as could be kept awake were throwing up a slight line of defense, inclosing the town.

Franklin lies — or at that time did lie; I know not what exploration might now disclose — on the south bank of a small river, the Harpeth by name. For two miles southward was a nearly flat, open plain, extending to a range of low hills through which passed the turnpike by which we had come. From some bluffs on the precipitous north bank of the river was a commanding overlook of all this open ground, which, although more than a mile away, seemed almost at one's feet. On this elevated ground the wagon-train had been parked and General Schofield had stationed himself — the former for security, the latter for outlook. Both were guarded by General Wood's infantry division, of which my brigade was a part. "We are in beautiful luck," said a member of the division staff. With some prevision of what was to come and a lively recollection of the nervous strain of helpless observation, I did not think it luck. In the activity of battle one does not feel one's hair going gray with vicissitudes of emotion.

For some reason to the writer unknown General Schofield had brought along with him General D.S. Stanley, who commanded two of his divisions — ours and another, which was not "in luck." In the ensuing battle, when this excellent officer could stand the strain no longer, he bolted across the bridge like a shot and found relief in the hell below, where he was promptly tumbled out of the saddle by a bullet.

Our line, with its reserve brigades, was about a mile and a half long, both flanks on the river, above and below the town — a mere bridge-head. It did not look a very formidable obstacle to the march of an army of more than forty thousand men. In a more tranquil temper than his failure at Spring Hill had put him into Hood would probably have passed around our left and turned us out with ease — which would justly have entitled him to the Humane Society's great gold medal. Apparently that was not his day for saving life.

About the middle of the afternoon our field-glasses picked up the Confederate head-of-column emerging from the range of hills previously mentioned, where it is cut by the Columbia road. But — ominous circumstance! — it did not come on. It turned to its left, at a right angle, moving along the base of the hills, parallel to our line. Other heads-of-column came through other gaps and over the crests farther along, impudently deploying on the level ground with a spectacular display of flags and glitter of arms. I do not remember that they were molested, even by the guns of General Wagner, who had been foolishly posted with two small brigades across the turnpike, a half-mile in our front, where he was needless for apprisal and powerless for resistance. My recollection is that our fellows down there in their shallow trenches noted these portentous dispositions without the least manifestation of incivility. As a matter of fact, many of them were permitted by their compassionate officers to sleep. And truly it was good weather for that: sleep was in the very atmosphere. The sun burned crimson in a gray-blue sky through a delicate Indian-summer haze, as beautiful as a day-dream in paradise. If one had been given to moralizing one might have found material a-plenty for homilies in the contrast between that peaceful autumn afternoon and the bloody business that it had in hand. If any good chaplain failed to "improve the occasion" let us hope that he lived to lament in sack-cloth-of-gold and ashes-of-roses his intellectual unthrift.

The putting of that army into battle shape — its change from columns into lines — could not have occupied more than an hour or two, yet it seemed an eternity. Its leisurely evolutions were irritating, but at last it moved forward with atoning rapidity and the fight was on. First, the storm struck Wagner's isolated brigades, which, vanishing in fire and smoke, instantly reappeared as a confused mass of fugitives inextricably intermingled with their pursuers. They had not stayed the advance a moment, and as might have been foreseen were now a peril to the main line, which could protect itself only by the slaughter of its friends. To the right and left, however, our guns got into play, and simultaneously a furious infantry fire broke out along the entire front, the paralyzed center excepted. But nothing could stay those gallant rebels from a hand-to-hand encounter with bayonet and butt, and it was accorded to them with hearty good-will.

Meantime Wagner's conquerors were pouring across the breastwork like water over a dam. The guns that had spared the fugitives had now no time to fire; their infantry supports gave way and for a space of more than two hundred yards in the very center of our line the assailants, mad with exultation, had everything their own way. From the right and the left their gray masses converged into the gap, pushed through, and then, spreading, turned our men out of the works so hardly held against the attack in their front. From our viewpoint on the bluff we could mark the constant widening of the gap, the steady encroachment of that blazing and smoking mass against its disordered opposition.

"It is all up with us," said Captain Dawson, of Wood's staff; "I am going to have a quiet smoke."

I do not doubt that he supposed himself to have borne the heat and burden of the strife. In the midst of his preparations for a smoke he paused and looked again — a new tumult of musketry had broken loose. Colonel Emerson Opdycke had rushed his reserve brigade into the *mêlée* and was bitterly disputing the Confederate advantage. Other fresh regiments joined in the countercharge, commanderless groups of retreating men returned to their work, and there ensued a hand-to-hand contest of incredible fury. Two long, irregular, mutable, and tumultuous blurs of color were consuming each other's edge along the line of contact. Such devil's work does not last long, and we had the great joy to see it ending, not as it began, but "more nearly to the heart's desire." Slowly the mobile blur moved away from the town, and presently the gray half of it dissolved into its elemental units, all in slow recession. The retaken guns in the embrasures pushed up towering clouds of white smoke; to east and to west along the reoccupied parapet ran a line of misty red till the spitfire crest was without a break from flank to flank. Probably there was some Yankee cheering, as doubtless there had been the “rebel yell,” but my memory recalls neither. There are many battles in a war, and many incidents in a battle: one does not recollect everything. Possibly I have not a retentive ear.

While this lively work had been doing in the center, there had been no lack of diligence elsewhere, and now all were as busy as bees. I have read of many “successive attacks”—”charge after charge” — but I think the only assaults after the first were those of the second Confederate lines and possibly some of the reserves; certainly there were no visible abatement and renewal of effort anywhere except where the men who had been pushed out of the works backward tried to reenter. And all the time there was fighting.

After resetting their line the victors could not clear their front, for the baffled assailants would not desist. All over the open country in their rear, clear back to the base of the hills, drifted the wreck of battle, the wounded that were able to walk; and through the receding throng pushed forward, here and there, horsemen with orders and footmen whom we knew to be bearing ammunition. There were no wagons, no caissons: the enemy was not using, and could not use, his artillery. Along the line of fire we could see, dimly in the smoke, mounted officers, singly and in small groups, attempting to force their horses across the slight parapet, but all went down. Of this devoted band was the gallant General Adams, whose body was found upon the slope, and whose animal’s forefeet were actually inside the crest. General Cleburne lay a few paces farther out, and five or six other general officers sprawled elsewhere. It was a great day for Confederates in the line of promotion.

For many minutes at a time broad spaces of battle were veiled in smoke. Of what might be occurring there conjecture gave a terrifying report. In a visible peril observation is a kind of defense; against the unseen we lift a trembling hand. Always from these regions of obscurity we expected the worst, but always the lifted cloud revealed an unaltered situation.

The assailants began to give way. There was no general retreat; at many points the fight continued, with lessening ferocity and lengthening range, well into the night. It became an affair of twinkling musketry and broad flares of artillery; then it sank to silence in the dark.

Under orders to continue his retreat, Schofield could now do so unmolested: Hood had suffered so terrible a loss in life and *morale* that he was in no condition for effective pursuit. As at Spring Hill, daybreak found us on the road with all our impedimenta except some of our wounded, and that night we encamped under the protecting guns of Thomas, at Nashville. Our gallant enemy audaciously followed, and fortified himself within rifle-reach, where he remained for two weeks without firing a gun and was then destroyed.

Way Down in Alabam

At the break-up of the great Rebellion I found myself at Selma, Alabama, still in the service of the United States, and although my duties were now purely civil my treatment was not uniformly so, and I am not surprised that it was not. I was a minor official in the Treasury Department, engaged in performance of duties exceedingly disagreeable not only to the people of the vicinity, but to myself as well. They consisted in the collection and custody of "captured and abandoned property." The Treasury had covered pretty nearly the entire area of "the States lately in rebellion" with a hierarchy of officials, consisting, as nearly as memory serves, of one supervising agent and a multitude of special agents. Each special agent held dominion over a collection district and was allowed an "agency aide" to assist him in his purposeful activity, besides such clerks, laborers and so forth as he could persuade himself to need. My humble position was that of agency aide. When the special agent was present for duty I was his chief executive officer; in his absence I represented him (with greater or less fidelity to the original and to my conscience) and was invested with his powers. In the Selma agency the property that we were expected to seize and defend as best we might was mostly plantations (whose owners had disappeared; some were dead, others in hiding) and cotton. The country was full of cotton which had been sold to the Confederate Government, but not removed from the plantations to take its chance of export through the blockade. It had been decided that it now belonged to the United States. It was worth about five hundred dollars a bale — say one dollar a pound. The world agreed that that was a pretty good price for cotton.

Naturally the original owners, having received nothing for their product but Confederate money which the result of the war had made worthless, manifested an unamiable reluctance to give it up, for if they could market it for themselves it would more than recoup them for all their losses in the war. They had therefore exercised a considerable ingenuity in effacing all record of its transfer to the Confederate Government, obliterating the marks on the bales, and hiding these away in swamps and other inconspicuous places, fortifying their claims to private ownership with appalling affidavits and "covering their tracks" in an infinite variety of ways generally.

In effecting their purpose they encountered many difficulties. Cotton in bales is not very portable property; it requires for movement and concealment a good deal of coöperation by persons having no interest in keeping the secret and easily accessible to the blandishments of those interested in tracing it. The negroes, by whom the work was necessarily done, were zealous to pay for emancipation by fidelity to the new *régime*, and many poor devils among them forfeited their lives by services performed with more loyalty than discretion. Railways — even those having a more than nominal equipment of rails and rolling stock — were unavailable for secret conveyance of the cotton. Navigating the Alabama and Tombigbee rivers were a few small steamboats, the half-dozen pilots familiar with these streams exacting one hundred dollars a day for their services; but our agents, backed by military authority, were at all the principal shipping points and no boat could leave without their consent. The port of Mobile was in our hands and the lower waters were patrolled by gunboats. Cotton might, indeed, be dumped down a "slide" by night at some private landing and fall upon the deck of a steamer idling innocently below. It might even arrive at Mobile, but secretly to transfer it to a deep-water vessel and get it out of the country — that was a dream.

On the movement of private cotton we put no restrictions; and such were the freight rates that it was possible to purchase a steamboat at Mobile, go up the river in ballast, bring down a cargo of cotton and make a handsome profit, after deducting the cost of the boat and all expenses of the venture, including the wage of the pilot. With no great knowledge of "business" I venture to think that in Alabama in the latter part of the year of grace 1865 commercial conditions were hardly normal.

Nor were social conditions what I trust they have now become. There was no law in the country except of the unsatisfactory sort known as "martial," and that was effective only within areas covered by the guns of isolated forts and the physical activities of their small garrisons. True, there were the immemorial laws of self-preservation and retaliation, both of which were liberally interpreted. The latter was faithfully administered, mostly against straggling Federal soldiers and too zealous government officials. When my chief had been ordered to Selma he had arrived just in time to act as sole mourner at the funeral of his predecessor — who had had the bad luck to interpret his instructions in a sense that was disagreeable to a gentleman whose interests were affected by the interpretation. Early one pleasant morning shortly afterward two United States marshals were observed by the roadside in a suburb of the town. They looked comfortable enough there in the sunshine, but each

had that across his throat
Which you had hardly cared to see.

When dispatched on business of a delicate nature men in the service of the agency had a significant trick of disappearing — they were of "the unreturning brave.” Really the mortality among the unacclimated in the Selma district at that time was excessive. When my chief and I parted at dinner time (our palates were not in harmony) we commonly shook hands and tried to say something memorable that was worthy to serve as “last words.” We had been in the army together and had many a time gone into battle without having taken that precaution in the interest of history.

Of course the better class of the people were not accountable for this state of affairs, and I do not remember that I greatly blamed the others. The country was full of the “elements of combustion.” The people were impoverished and smarting with a sense of defeat. Organized resistance was no longer possible, but many men trained to the use of arms did not consider themselves included in the surrender and conscientiously believed it both right and expedient to prolong the struggle by private enterprise. Many, no doubt, made the easy and natural transition from soldiering to assassination by insensible degrees, unconscious of the moral difference, such as it is. Selma was little better than a ruin; in the concluding period of the war General Wilson’s cavalry had raided it and nearly destroyed it, and the work begun by the battery had been completed by the torch. The conflagration was generally attributed to the negroes, who certainly augmented it, for a number of those suspected of the crime were flung into the flames by the maddened populace. None the less were the Yankee invaders held responsible.

Every Northern man represented some form or phase of an authority which these luckless people horribly hated, and to which they submitted only because, and in so far as, they had to. Fancy such a community, utterly without the restraints of law and with no means of ascertaining public opinion — for newspapers were not — denied even the moral advantage of the pulpit! Considering what human nature has the misfortune to be, it is wonderful that there was so little of violence and crime.

As the carcass invites the vulture, this prostrate land drew adventurers from all points of the compass. Many, I am sorry to say, were in the service of the United States Government. Truth to tell, the special agents of the Treasury were themselves, as a body, not altogether spotless. I could name some of them, and some of their assistants, who made large fortunes by their opportunities. The special agents were allowed one-fourth of the value of the confiscated cotton for expenses of collection — none too much, considering the arduous and perilous character of the service; but the plan opened up such possibilities of fraud as have seldom been accorded by any system of conducting the public business, and never without disastrous results to official morality. Against bribery no provision could have provided an adequate safeguard; the magnitude of the interests involved was too great, the administration of the trust too loose and irresponsible. The system as it was, hastily devised in the storm and stress of a closing war, broke down in the end, and it is doubtful if the Government might not more profitably have let the “captured and abandoned property” alone.

As an instance of the temptations to which we were exposed, and of our tactical dispositions in resistance, I venture to relate a single experience of my own. During an absence of my chief I got upon the trail of a lot of cotton — seven hundred bales, as nearly as I now recollect — which had been hidden with so exceptional ingenuity that I was unable to trace it. One day there came to my office two well-dressed and mannerly fellows who suffered me to infer that they knew all about this cotton and controlled it. When our conference on the subject ended it was past dinner time and they civilly invited me to dine with them, which, in hope of eliciting information over the wine, I did. I knew well enough that they indulged a similar selfish hope, so I had no scruples about using their hospitality to their disadvantage if I could. The subject, however, was not mentioned at table, and we were all singularly abstemious in the matter of champagne — so much so that as we rose from a rather long session at the board we disclosed our sense of the ludicrousness of the situation by laughing outright. Nevertheless, neither party would accept defeat, and for the next few weeks the war of hospitality was fast and furious. We dined together nearly every day, sometimes at my expense, sometimes at theirs. We drove, rode, walked, played at billiards and made many a night of it; but youth and temperance (in drink) pulled me through without serious inroads on my health. We had early come to an understanding and a deadlock. Failing to get the slenderest clew to the location of the cotton I offered them one-fourth if they would surrender it or disclose its hiding-place; they offered me one-fourth if I would sign a permit for its shipment as private property.

All things have an end, and this amusing contest finally closed. Over the remains of a farewell dinner, unusually luxurious, as befitted the occasion, we parted with expressions of mutual esteem — not, I hope, altogether insincere, and the ultimate fate of the cotton is to me unknown. Up to the date of my departure from the agency not a bale of it had either come into possession of the Government or found an outlet. I am sometimes disloyal enough to indulge myself in the hope that they baffled my successors as skilfully as they did me. One cannot help feeling a certain tenderness for men who know and value a good dinner.

Another corrupt proposal that I had the good fortune to be afraid to entertain came, as it were, from within. There was a dare-devil fellow whom, as I know him to be dead, I feel justified in naming Jack Harris. He was engaged in all manner of speculative ventures on his own account, but the special agent had so frequently employed him in “enterprises of great pith and moment” that he was in a certain sense and to a certain extent one of us. He seemed to me at the time unique, but shortly afterward I had learned to classify him as a type of the Californian adventurer with whose peculiarities of manner, speech and disposition most of us are to-day familiar enough. He never spoke of his past, having doubtless good reasons for reticence, but any one learned in Western slang — a knowledge then denied me — would have catalogued him with infallible accuracy. He was a rather large, strong fellow, swarthy, black-bearded, black-eyed, black-hearted and entertaining, no end; ignorant with an ignorance whose frankness redeemed it from offensiveness, vulgar with a vulgarity that expressed itself in such metaphors and similes as would have made its peace with the most implacable refinement. He drank hard, gambled high, swore like a parrot, scoffed at everything, was openly and proudly a rascal, did not know the meaning of fear, borrowed money abundantly, and squandered it with royal disregard. Desiring one day to go to Mobile, but reluctant to leave Montgomery and its pleasures — unwilling to quit certainty for hope — he persuaded the captain of a loaded steamboat to wait four days for him at an expense of $400 a day; and lest time should hang too heavy on the obliging skipper’s hands, Jack permitted him to share the orgies gratis. But that is not my story.

One day Jack came to me with a rather more sinful proposal than he had heretofore done me the honor to submit. He knew of about a thousand bales of cotton, some of it private property, some of it confiscable, stored at various points on the banks of the Alabama. He had a steamboat in readiness, “with a gallant, gallant crew,” and he proposed to drop quietly down to the various landings by night, seize the cotton, load it on his boat and make off down the river. What he wanted from me, and was willing to pay for, was only my official signature to some blank shipping permits; or if I would accompany the expedition and share its fortunes no papers would be necessary. In declining this truly generous offer I felt that I owed it to Jack to give him a reason that he was capable of understanding, so I explained to him the arrangements at Mobile, which would prevent him from transferring his cargo to a ship and getting the necessary papers permitting her to sail. He was astonished and, I think, pained by my simplicity. Did I think him a fool? He did not purpose — not he — to tranship at all: the perfected plan was to dispense with all hampering formality by slipping through Mobile Bay in the black of the night and navigating his laden river craft across the Gulf to Havana! The rascal was in dead earnest, and that natural timidity of disposition which compelled me to withhold my coöperation greatly lowered me in his esteem, I fear.

It was in Cuba, by the way, that Jack came to grief some years later. He was one of the crew of the filibustering vessel *Virginius*, and was captured and shot along with the others. Something in his demeanor as he knelt in the line to receive the fatal fusillade prompted a priest to inquire his religion. “I am an atheist, by God!” said Jack, and with this quiet profession of faith that gentle spirit winged its way to other tropics.

Having expounded with some particularity the precarious tenure by which I held my office and my life in those “thrilling regions” where my duties lay, I ought to explain by what unhappy chance I am still able to afflict the reader. There lived in Selma a certain once wealthy and still influential citizen, whose two sons, of about my own age, had served as officers in the Confederate Army. I will designate them simply as Charles and Frank. They were types of a class now, I fear, almost extinct. Born and bred in luxury and knowing nothing of the seamy side of life — except, indeed, what they had learned in the war — well educated, brave, generous, sensitive to points of honor, and of engaging manners, these brothers were by all respected, by many loved and by some feared. For they had quick fingers upon the pistol-trigger withal, and would rather fight a duel than eat — nay, drink. Nor were they over-particular about the combat taking the form of a duel — almost any form was good enough. I made their acquaintance by chance and cultivated it for the pleasure it gave me. It was long afterward that I gave a thought to its advantages; but from the time that I became generally known as their friend my safety was assured through all that region; an army with banners could not have given me the same immunity from danger, obstruction or even insult in the performance of my disagreeable duties. What glorious fellows they were, to be sure — these my late antagonists of the dark days when, God forgive us, we were trying to cut one another’s throat. To this day I feel a sense of regret when I think of my instrumentality, however small, in depriving the world of many such men in the criminal insanity that we call battle.

Life in Selma became worth living even as the chance of living it augmented. With my new friends and a friend of theirs, whose name — the more shame to me — I cannot now recall, but should not write here if I could, I passed most of my leisure hours. At the houses of themselves and their friends I did most of my dining; and, heaven be praised! there was no necessity for moderation in wine. In their society I committed my sins, and together beneath that noble orb unknown to colder skies, the Southern moon, we atoned for them by acts of devotion performed with song and lute beneath the shrine window of many a local divinity.

One night we had an adventure. We were out late — so late that it was night only astronomically. The streets were “deserted and drear,” and, of course, unlighted — the late Confederacy had no gas and no oil. Nevertheless, we saw that we were followed. A man keeping at a fixed distance behind turned as we turned, paused as we paused, and pursued as we moved on. We stopped, went back and remonstrated; asked his intentions in, I dare say, no gentle words. He gave us no reply, but as we left him he followed. Again we stopped, and I felt my pistol plucked out of my pocket. Frank had unceremoniously possessed himself of it and was advancing on the enemy. I do not remember if I had any wish to interpose a protest — anyhow there was no time. Frank fired and the man fell. In a moment all the chamber-windows in the street were thrown open with a head visible (and audible) in each. We told Frank to go home, which to our surprise he did; the rest of us, assisted by somebody’s private policeman — who afterward apprised us that we were in arrest — carried the man to a hotel. It was found that his leg was broken above the knee, and the next day it was amputated. We paid his surgeon and his hotel bill, and when he had sufficiently recovered sent him to an address which he gave us in Mobile; but not a word could anybody get out of him as to who he had the misfortune to be, or why he had persisted, against the light, in following a quartet of stray revelers.

On the morning of the shooting, when everything possible had been done for the comfort of the victim, we three accomplices were released on our own recognizance by an old gentleman of severe aspect, who had resumed his function of justice of the peace where he had laid it down during the war. I did not then know that he had no more legal authority than I had myself, and I was somewhat disturbed in mind as I reflected on the possibilities of the situation. The opportunity to get rid of an offensive Federal official must of course be very tempting, and after all the shooting was a trifle hasty and not altogether justifiable.

On the day appointed for our preliminary examination, all of us except Frank were released and put on the witness-stand. We gave a true and congruent history of the affair. The holdover justice listened to it all very patiently and then, with commendable brevity and directness of action, fined Frank five dollars and costs for disorderly conduct. There was no appeal.

There were queer characters in Alabama in those days, as you shall see. Once upon a time the special agent and I started down the Tombigbee River with a steamboat load of government cotton — some six hundred bales. At one of the military stations we took on a guard of a dozen or fifteen soldiers under command of a non-commissioned officer. One evening, just before dusk, as we were rounding a bend where the current set strongly against the left bank of the stream and the channel lay close to that shore, we were suddenly saluted with a volley of bullets and buckshot from that direction. The din of the firing, the rattle and crash of the missiles splintering the woodwork and the jingle of broken glass made a very rude arousing from the tranquil indolence of a warm afternoon on the sluggish Tombigbee. The left bank, which at this point was a trifle higher than the hurricane deck of a steamer, was now swarming with men who, almost near enough to jump aboard, looked unreasonably large and active as they sprang about from cover to cover, pouring in their fire. At the first volley the pilot had deserted his wheel, as well he might, and the boat, drifting in to the bank under the boughs of a tree, was helpless. Her jackstaff and yawl were carried away, her guards broken in, and her deck-load of cotton was tumbling into the stream a dozen bales at once. The captain was nowhere to be seen, the engineer had evidently abandoned his post and the special agent had gone to hunt up the soldiers. I happened to be on the hurricane deck, armed with a revolver, which I fired as rapidly as I could, listening all the time for the fire of the soldiers — and listening in vain. It transpired later that they had not a cartridge among them; and of all helpless mortals a soldier without a cartridge is the most imbecile. But all this time the continuous rattle of the enemy’s guns and the petulant pop of my own pocket firearm were punctuated, as it were, by pretty regularly recurring loud explosions, as of a small cannon. They came from somewhere forward — I supposed from the opposition, as I knew we had no artillery on board.

The failure of our military guard made the situation somewhat grave. For two of us, at least, capture meant hanging out of hand. I had never been hanged in all my life and was not enamored of the prospect. Fortunately for us the bandits had selected their point of attack without military foresight. Immediately below them a bayou, impassable to them, let into the river. The moment we had drifted below it we were safe from boarding and capture. The captain was found in hiding and an empty pistol at his ear persuaded him to resume command of his vessel; the engineer and pilot were encouraged to go back to their posts and after some remarkably long minutes, during which we were under an increasingly long-range fire, we got under way. A few cotton bales piled about the pilot-house made us tolerably safe from that sort of thing in the future and then we took account of our damages. Nobody had been killed and only a few were wounded. This gratifying result was attributable to the fact that, being unarmed, nearly everybody had dived below at the first fire and taken cover among the cotton bales. While issuing a multitude of needless commands from the front of the hurricane-deck I looked below, and there, stretched out at full length on his stomach, lay a long, ungainly person, clad in faded butternut, bare-headed, his long, lank hair falling down each side of his neck, his coat-tails similarly parted, and his enormous feet spreading their soles to the blue sky. He had an old-fashioned horse-pistol, some two feet long, which he was in the act of sighting across his left palm for a parting shot at the now distant assailants. A more ludicrous figure I never saw; I laughed outright; but when his weapon went off it was matter for gratitude to be above it instead of before it. It was the “cannon” whose note I had marked all through the unequal fray.

The fellow was a returned Confederate whom we had taken on at one of the upper landings as our only passenger; we were dead-heading him to Mobile. He was undoubtedly in hearty sympathy with the enemy, and I at first suspected him of collusion, but circumstances not necessary to detail here rendered this impossible. Moreover, I had distinctly seen one of the “guerrillas” fall and remain down after my own weapon was empty, and no man else on board except the passenger had fired a shot or had a shot to fire. When everything had been made snug again, and we were gliding along under the stars, without apprehension; when I had counted fifty-odd bullet holes through the pilot-house (which had not received the attention that by its prominence and importance it was justly entitled to) and everybody was variously boasting his prowess, I approached my butternut comrade-in-arms and thanked him for his kindly aid. “But,” said I, “how the devil does it happen that *you* fight *that* crowd?”

“Wal, Cap,” he drawled, as he rubbed the powder grime from his antique artillery, “I allowed it was mouty clever in you-all to take me on, seein’ I hadn’t ary cent, so I thought I’d jist kinder work my passage.”

Working for an Empress

In the spring of 1874 I was living in the pretty English town of Leamington, a place that will be remembered by most Americans who have visited the grave of Shakespeare at Stratford-on-Avon, or by personal inspection of the ruins of Kenilworth Castle have verified their knowledge of English history derived from Scott's incomparable romance. I was at that time connected with several London newspapers, among them the *Figaro*, a small weekly publication, semi-humorous, semi-theatrical, with a remarkable aptitude for managing the political affairs of France in the interest of the Imperialists. This last peculiarity it owed to the personal sympathies of its editor and proprietor, Mr. James Mortimer, a gentleman who for some twenty years before the overthrow of the Empire had lived in Paris. Mr. Mortimer had been a personal friend of the Emperor and Empress, and on the flight of the latter to England had rendered her important service; and after the release of the Emperor from captivity among the Germans Mr. Mortimer was a frequent visitor to the imperial exiles at Chiselhurst.

One day at Leamington my London mail brought a letter from Mr. Mortimer, informing me that he intended to publish a new satirical journal, which he wished me to write. I was to do all the writing, he the editing; and it would not be necessary for me to come up to London; I could send manuscript by mail. The new journal was not to appear at stated periods, but "occasionally." Would I submit to him a list of suitable titles for it, from which he could make a selection?

With some surprise at what seemed to me the singularly whimsical and unbusiness-like features of the enterprise I wrote him earnestly advising him either to abandon it or materially to modify his plan. I represented to him that such a journal, so conducted, could not in my judgment succeed; but he was obdurate and after a good deal of correspondence I consented to do all the writing if he was willing to do all the losing money. I submitted a number of names which I thought suitable for the paper, but all were rejected, and he finally wrote that he had decided to call the new journal *The Lantern*. This decision elicited from me another energetic protest. The title was not original, but obviously borrowed from M. Rochefort's famous journal, *La Lanterne*. True, that publication was dead, and its audacious editor deported to New Caledonia with his Communistic following; but the name could hardly be agreeable to Mr. Mortimer's Imperialist friends, particularly the Empress — the Emperor was then dead. To my surprise Mr. Mortimer not only adhered to his resolution but suggested the propriety of my taking M. Rochefort's late lamented journal as a model for our own. This I flatly declined to do and carried my point; I was delighted to promise, however, that the new paper should resemble the old in one particular: it should be irritatingly disrespectful of existing institutions and exalted personages.

On the 18th of May, 1874, there was published at the corner of St. Bride Street and Shoe Lane, E.C., London, the first number of "*The Lantern* — Appearing Occasionally. Illuminated by Faustin. Price, sixpence." It was a twelve-page paper with four pages of superb illustrations in six colors. I winced when I contemplated its artistic and mechanical excellence, for I knew at what a price that quality had been obtained. A gold mine would be required to maintain that journal, and that journal could by no means ever be itself a gold mine. A copy lies before me as I write and noting it critically I cannot help thinking that the illuminated title-page of this pioneer in the field of chromatic journalism is the finest thing of the kind that ever came from a press.

Of the literary contents I am less qualified for judgment, inasmuch as I wrote every line in the paper. It may perhaps be said without immodesty that the new "candidate for popular favor" was not distinguished by servile flattery of the British character and meek subservience to the British Government, as might perhaps be inferred from the following extract from an article on General Sir Garnet Wolseley, who had just received the thanks of his Sovereign and a munificent reward from Parliament for his successful plundering expedition through Ashantee:

"We feel a comfortable sense of satisfaction in the thought that *The Lantern* will never fail to shed the light of its loyal approval upon any unworthy act by which our country shall secure an adequate and permanent advantage. When the great heart of England is stirred by quick cupidity to profitable crime, far be it from us to lift our palms in deprecation. In the wrangle for existence nations, equally with individuals, work by diverse means to a common end — the spoiling of the weak; and when by whatever of outrage we have pushed a feeble competitor to the wall, in Heaven's name let us pin him fast and relieve his pockets of the material good to which, in bestowing it upon him, the bountiful Lord has invited our thieving hand. But these Ashantee women were not worth garroting. Their fal-lals, precious to them, are worthless to us; the entire loot fetched only £11,000 — of which sum the man who brought home the trinkets took a little more than four halves. We submit that with practiced agents in every corner of the world and a watchful government at home this great commercial nation might dispose of its honor to better advantage."

With the candor of repentance it may now be confessed that, however unscrupulous it may be abroad, a government which tolerates this kind of criticism cannot rightly be charged with tyranny at home.

By way (as I supposed) of gratitude to M. Rochefort for the use of the title of his defunct journal it had been suggested by Mr. Mortimer that he be given a little wholesome admonition here and there in the paper and I had cheerfully complied. M. Rochefort had escaped from New Caledonia some months before. A disagreeable cartoon was devised for his discomfort and he received a number of such delicate attentions as that following, which in the issue of July 15th greeted him on his arrival in England along with his distinguished compatriot, M. Pascal Grousset:

"M. Rochefort is a gentleman who has lost his standing. There have been greater falls than his. Kings before now have become servitors, honest men bandits, thieves communists. Insignificant in his fortunes as in his abilities, M. Rochefort, who was never very high, is not now very low — he has avoided the falsehood of extremes: never quite a count, he is now but half a convict. Having missed the eminence that would have given him calumniation, he is also denied the obscurity that would bring misconstruction. He is not even a *miserable*; he is a person. It is curious to note how persistently this man has perverted his gifts. With talents that might have corrupted panegyric, he preferred to refine detraction; fitted to disgrace the *salon*, he has elected to adorn the cell; the qualities that would have endeared him to a blackguard he has wasted upon Pascal Grousset.

"As we write, it is reported that this person is in England. It is further affirmed that it is his intention to proceed to Belgium or Switzerland to fight certain journalists who have not had the courtesy to suppress the truth about him, though he never told it of them. We presume, however, this rumor is false; M. Rochefort must retain enough of the knowledge he acquired when he was esteemed a gentleman to be aware that a meeting between him and a journalist is now impossible. This is the more to be regretted, because M. Paul de Cassagnac would have much pleasure in taking M. Rochefort's life and we in lamenting his fall.

"M. Rochefort, we believe, is already suffering from an unhealed wound. It is his mouth."

There was a good deal of such "scurril jesting" in the paper, especially in a department called "Prattle." There were verses on all manner of subjects — mostly the nobility and their works and ways, from the viewpoint of disapproval — and epigrams, generally ill-humorous, like the following, headed "*Novum Organum*":

“In Bacon see the culminating prime
Of British intellect and British crime.
He died, and Nature, settling his affairs,
Parted his powers among us, his heirs:
To each a pinch of common-sense, for seed,
And, to develop it, a pinch of greed.
Each frugal heir, to make the gift suffice,
Buries the talent to manure the vice.”

When the first issue of *The Lantern* appeared I wrote to Mr. Mortimer, again urging him to modify his plans and alter the character of the journal. He replied that it suited him as it was and he would let me know when to prepare “copy” for the second number. That eventually appeared on July 15th. I never was instructed to prepare any more copy, and there has been, I believe, no further issue of that interesting sheet as yet.

Taking a retrospective view of this singular venture in journalism, one day, the explanation of the whole matter came to my understanding in the light of a revelation, and was confirmed later by Mr. Mortimer.

In the days when Napoleon III was at the zenith of his glory and power there was a thorn in his side. It was the pen of M. Henri Rochefort, le Comte de Luçay, journalist and communard. Despite fines, “suppressions,” and imprisonments, this gifted writer and unscrupulous blackguard had, as every one knows, made incessant war upon the Empire and all its *personnel*. The bitter and unfair attacks of his paper, *La Lanterne*, made life at the Tuilleries exceedingly uncomfortable. His rancor against the Empress was something horrible, and went to the length of denying the legitimacy of the Prince Imperial. His existence was a menace and a terror to the illustrious lady, even when she was in exile at Chiselhurst and he in confinement on the distant island of New Caledonia. When the news of his escape from that penal colony arrived at Chiselhurst the widowed Empress was in despair; and when, on his way to England, he announced his intention of reviving *La Lanterne* in London (of course he dared not cross the borders of France) she was utterly prostrated by the fear of his pitiless animosity. But what could she do? Not prevent the revival of his dreadful newspaper, certainly, but — well, she could send for Mr. Mortimer. That ingenious gentleman was not long at a loss for an expedient that would accomplish what was possible. He shut Rochefort out of London by forestalling him. At the very time when Mortimer was asking me to suggest a suitable name for the new satirical journal he had already registered at Stationers’ Hall — that is to say, copyrighted — the title of *The Lantern*, a precaution which M. Rochefort’s French friends had neglected to take, although they had expended thousands of pounds in a plant for their venture. Mr. Mortimer cruelly permitted them to go on with their costly preparations, and the first intimation they had that the field was occupied came from the newsdealers selling *The Lantern*. After some futile attempts at relief and redress, M. Rochefort took himself off and set up his paper in Belgium.

The expenses of *The Lantern* — including a generous *douceur* to myself — were all defrayed by the Empress. She was the sole owner of it and, I was gratified to learn, took so lively an interest in her venture that a special French edition was printed for her private reading. I was told that she especially enjoyed the articles on M. le Comte de Luçay, though I dare say some of the delicate subtleties of their literary style were lost in translation.

Being in London later in the year, I received through Mortimer an invitation to visit the poor lady, *en famille*, at Chiselhurst; but as the iron rules of imperial etiquette, even in exile, required that the hospitable request be made in the form of a “command,” my republican independence took alarm and I had the incivility to disobey; and I still think it a sufficient distinction to be probably the only American journalist who was ever employed by an Empress in so congenial a pursuit as the pursuit of another journalist.

Across the Plains

That noted pioneer, General John Bidwell, of California, once made a longish step up the western slope of our American Parnassus by an account of his journey "across the plains" seven years before the lamented Mr. Marshall had found the least and worst of all possible reasons for making the "trek." General Bidwell had not the distinction to be a great writer, but in order to command admiration and respect in that province of the Republic of Letters which lies in the Sacramento Valley above the mouth of the Yuba the gift of writing greatly is a needless endowment. Nevertheless I read his narrative with an interest which on analysis turns out to be a by-product of personal experience: among my youthful indiscretions was a journey over much of the same ground, which I took in much the same way — as did many thousands before and after.

It was a far cry from 1841 to 1866, yet the country between the Missouri River and the Sierra Nevada had not greatly improved: civilization had halted at the river, awaiting transportation. A railroad had set out from Omaha westward, and another at Sacramento was solemnly considering the impossible suggestion of going eastward to meet it. There were lunatics in those days, as there are in these. I left the one road a few miles out of the Nebraskan village and met the other at Dutch Flat, in California.

Waste no compassion on the loneliness of my journey: a thriving colony of Mormons had planted itself in the valley of Salt Lake and there were "forts" at a few points along the way, where ambitious young army officers passed the best years of their lives guarding live stock and teaching the mysteries of Hardee's tactics to that alien patriot, the American regular. There was a dusty wagon road, bordered with bones — not always those of animals — with an occasional mound, sometimes dignified with a warped and rotting head-board bearing an illegible inscription. (One inscription not entirely illegible is said to have concluded with this touching tribute to the worth of the departed: "He was a good egg." Another was: "He done his damnedest") In other particulars the "Great American Desert" of our fathers was very like what it was when General Bidwell's party traversed it with that hereditary instinct, that delicacy of spiritual nose which served the Western man of that day in place of a map and guide-book. Westward the course of empire had taken its way, but excepting these poor vestiges it had for some fifteen hundred miles left no trace of its march. The Indian of the plains had as yet seen little to unsettle his assurance of everlasting dominion. Of the slender lines of metal creeping slowly toward him from East and West he knew little; and had he known more, how could he have foreseen their momentous effect upon his “ancient solitary reign”?

I remember very well, as so many must, some of the marked features of the route that General Bidwell mentions. One of the most imposing of these is Court House Rock, near the North Platte. Surely no object of such dignity ever had a more belittling name — given it in good faith no doubt by some untraveled wight whose county court-house was the most “reverend pile” of which he had any conception. It should have been called the Titan’s Castle. What a gracious memory I have of the pomp and splendor of its aspect, with the crimson glories of the setting sun fringing its outlines, illuminating its western walls like the glow of Mammon’s fires for the witches’ revel in the Hartz, and flung like banners from its crest!

I suppose Court House Rock is familiar enough and commonplace enough to the dwellers in that land (riparian tribes once infesting the low lands of Ohio and Indiana and the flats of Iowa), but to me, tipsy with youth, full-fed on Mayne Reid’s romances, and now first entering the enchanted region that he so charmingly lied about, it was a revelation and a dream. I wish that anything in the heavens, on the earth, or in the waters under the earth would give me now such an emotion as I experienced in the shadow of that “great rock in a weary land.”

I was not a pilgrim, but an engineer *attaché* to an expedition through Dakota and Montana, to inspect some new military posts. The expedition consisted, where the Indians preserved the peace, of the late General W.B. Hazen, myself, a cook and a teamster; elsewhere we had an escort of cavalry. My duty, as I was given to understand it, was to amuse the general and other large game, make myself as comfortable as possible without too much discomfort to others, and when in an unknown country survey and map our route for the benefit of those who might come after. The posts which the general was to inspect had recently been established along a military road, one end of which was at the North Platte and the other — there was no other end; up about Fort C.F. Smith at the foot of the Big-Horn Mountains the road became a buffalo trail and was lost in the weeds. But it was a useful road, for by leaving it before going too far one could reach a place near the headwaters of the Yellowstone, where the National Park is now.

By a master stroke of military humor we were ordered to return (to Washington) via Salt Lake City, San Francisco and Panama. I obeyed until I got as far as San Francisco, where, finding myself appointed to a second lieutenancy in the Regular Army, ingratitude, more strong than traitors’ arms, quite vanquished me: I resigned, parted from Hazen more in sorrow than in anger and remained in California.

I have thought since that this may have been a youthful error: the Government probably meant no harm, and if I had served long enough I might have become a captain. In time, if I lived, I should naturally have become the senior captain of the Army; and then if there were another war and any of the field officers did me the favor to paunch a bullet I should become the junior major, certain of another step upward as soon as a number of my superiors equal to the whole number of majors should be killed, resign or die of old age — enchanting prospect! But I am getting a long way off the trail.

It was near Fort C.F. Smith that we found our first buffaloes, and abundant they were. We had to guard our camp at night with fire and sword to keep them from biting us as they grazed. Actually one of them half-scalped a teamster as he lay dreaming of home with his long fair hair commingled with the toothsome grass. His utterances as the well-meaning beast lifted him from the ground and tried to shake the earth from his roots were neither wise nor sweet, but they made a profound impression on the herd, which, arching its multitude of tails, absented itself to pastures new like an army with banners.

At Fort C.F. Smith we parted with our *impedimenta*, and with an escort of about two dozen cavalrymen and a few pack animals struck out on horseback through an unexplored country northwest for old Fort Benton, on the upper Missouri. The journey was not without its perils. Our only guide was my compass; we knew nothing of the natural obstacles that we must encounter; the Indians were on the warpath, and our course led us through the very heart of their country. Luckily for us they were gathering their clans into one great army for a descent upon the posts that we had left behind; a little later some three thousand of them moved upon Fort Phil Kearney, lured a force of ninety men and officers outside and slaughtered them to the last man. This was one of the posts that we had inspected, and the officers killed had hospitably entertained us.

In that lively and interesting book, “Indian Fights and Fighters,” Dr. Cyrus Townsend Brady says of this “outpost of civilization”:

“The most careful watchfulness was necessary at all hours of the day and night. The wood trains to fetch logs to the sawmills were heavily guarded. There was fighting all the time. Casualties among the men were by no means rare. At first it was difficult to keep men within the limits of the camp; but stragglers who failed to return, and some who had been cut off, scalped and left for dead, but who had crawled back to die, convinced every one of the wisdom of the commanding officer’s repeated orders and cautions. To chronicle the constant succession of petty skirmishes would be wearisome; yet they often resulted in torture and loss of life on the part of the soldiers, although the Indians in most instances suffered the more severely."

In a footnote the author relates this characteristic instance of the Government's inability to understand: "Just when the alarms were most frequent a messenger came to the headquarters, announcing that a train *en route* from Fort Laramie, with special messengers from that post, was corraled by Indians, and demanded immediate help. An entire company of infantry in wagons, with a mountain howitzer and several rounds of grapeshot, was hastened to their relief. It proved to be a train with mail from the Laramie Commission, announcing the confirmation of a 'satisfactory treaty of peace with all the Indians of the Northwest,' and assuring the district commander of the fact. The messenger was brought in in safety, and *peace* lasted until his message was delivered. So much was gained — that the messenger did not lose his scalp."

Through this interesting environment our expeditionary force of four men had moved to the relief of the beleaguered post, but finding it impossible to "raise the siege" had — with a score of troopers — pushed on to Fort C.F. Smith, and thence into the Unknown.

The first part of this new journey was well enough; there were game and water. Where we swam the Yellowstone we had an abundance of both, for the entire river valley, two or three miles wide, was dotted with elk. There were hundreds. As we advanced they became scarce; buffalo became scarce; bear, deer, rabbits, sage-hens, even prairie dogs gave out, and we were near starving. Water gave out too, and starvation was a welcome state: our hunger was so much less disagreeable than our thirst that it was a real treat.

However, we got to Benton, Heaven knows how and why, but we were a sorry-looking lot, though our scalps were intact. If in all that region there is a mountain that I have not climbed, a river that I have not swum, an alkali pool that I have not thrust my muzzle into, or an Indian that I have not shuddered to think about, I am ready to go back in a Pullman sleeper and do my duty.

From Fort Benton we came down through Helena and Virginia City, Montana — then new mining camps — to Salt Lake, thence westward to California. Our last bivouac was on the old camp of the Donner party, where, in the flickering lights and dancing shadows made by our camp-fire, I first heard the story of that awful winter, and in the fragrance of the meat upon the coals fancied I could detect something significantly uncanny. The meat which the Donner party had cooked at that spot was not quite like ours. Pardon: I mean it was not like that which we cooked.

The Mirage

Since the overland railways have long been carrying many thousands of persons across the elevated plateaus of the continent the mirage in many of its customary aspects has become pretty well known to great numbers of persons all over the Union, and the tales of early observers who came “der blains agross” are received with a less frigid inhospitality than they formerly were by incredulous pioneers who had come “der Horn aroundt,” as the illustrious Hans Breitmann phrases it; but in its rarer and more marvelous manifestations, the mirage is still a rock upon which many a reputation for veracity is wrecked remediless. With an ambition intrepidly to brave this disaster, and possibly share it with the hundreds of devoted souls whose disregard of the injunction never to tell an incredible truth has branded them as hardy and impenitent liars, I purpose to note here a few of the more remarkable illusions by which my own sense of sight has been befooled by the freaks of the enchanter.

It is apart from my purpose to explain the mirage scientifically, and not altogether in my power. Every schoolboy can do so, I suppose, to the satisfaction of his teacher if the teacher has not himself seen the phenomenon, or has seen it only in the broken, feeble and evanescent phases familiar to the overland passenger; but for my part I am unable to understand how the simple causes affirmed in the text-books sufficiently account for the infinite variety and complexity of some of the effects said to be produced by them. But of this the reader shall judge for himself.

One summer morning in the upper North Platte country I rose from my blankets, performed the pious acts of sun-worship by yawning toward the east, kicked together the parted embers of my camp-fire, and bethought me of water for my ablutions. We had gone into bivouac late in the night on the open plain, and without any clear notion of where we were. There were a half-dozen of us, our chief on a tour of inspection of the new military posts in Wyoming. I accompanied the expedition as surveyor. Having an aspiration for water I naturally looked about to see what might be the prospect of obtaining it, and to my surprise and delight saw a long line of willows, apparently some three hundred yards away. Willows implied water, and snatching up a camp-kettle I started forward without taking the trouble to put on my coat and hat. For the first mile or two I preserved a certain cheerful hopefulness; but when the sun had risen farther toward the meridian and began to affect my bare head most uncomfortably, and the picketed horses at the camp were hull down on the horizon in the rear, and the willows in front increased their pace out of all proportion to mine, I began to grow discouraged and sat down on a stone to wish myself back. Perceiving that the willows also had halted for breath I determined to make a dash at them, leaving the camp-kettle behind to make its way back to camp as best it could. I was now traveling “flying light,” and had no doubt of my ability to overtake the enemy, which had, however, disappeared over the crest of a low sandhill. Ascending this I was treated to a surprise. Right ahead of me lay a barren waste of sand extending to the right and left as far as I could see. Its width in the direction that I was going I judged to be about twenty miles. On its farther border the cactus plain began again, sloping gradually upward to the horizon, along which was a fringe of cedar trees — the willows of my vision! In that country a cedar will not grow within thirty miles of water if it knows it.

On my return journey I coldly ignored the appeals of the camp-kettle, and when I met the rescuing party which had been for some hours trailing me made no allusion to the real purpose of my excursion. When the chief asked if I purposed to enter a plea of temporary insanity I replied that I would reserve my defense for the present; and in fact I never did disclose it until now.

I had afterward the satisfaction of seeing the chief, an experienced plainsman, consume a full hour, rifle in hand, working round to the leeward of a dead coyote in the sure and certain hope of bagging a sleeping buffalo. Mirage or no mirage, you must not too implicitly trust your eyes in the fantastic atmosphere of the high plains.

I remember that one forenoon I looked forward to the base of the Big Horn Mountains and selected a most engaging nook for the night’s camp. My good opinion of it was confirmed when we reached it three days later. The deception in this instance was due to nothing but the marvelous lucidity of the atmosphere and the absence of objects of known dimensions, and these sources of error are sometimes sufficient of themselves to produce the most incredible illusions. When they are in alliance with the mirage the combination’s pranks are bewildering.

One of the most grotesque and least comfortable of my experiences with the magicians of the air occurred near the forks of the Platte. There had been a tremendous thunder-storm, lasting all night. In the morning my party set forward over the soaken prairie under a cloudless sky intensely blue. I was riding in advance, absorbed in thought, when I was suddenly roused to a sense of material things by exclamations of astonishment and apprehension from the men behind. Looking forward, I beheld a truly terrifying spectacle. Immediately in front, at a distance, apparently, of not more than a quarter-mile, was a long line of the most formidable looking monsters that the imagination ever conceived. They were taller than trees. In them the elements of nature seemed so fantastically and discordantly confused and blended, compounded, too, with architectural and mechanical details, that they partook of the triple character of animals, houses and machines. Legs they had, that an army of elephants could have marched among; bodies that ships might have sailed beneath; heads about which eagles might have delighted to soar, and ears — they were singularly well gifted with ears. But wheels also they were endowed with, and vast sides of blank wall; the wheels as large as the ring of a circus, the walls white and high as cliffs of chalk along an English coast. Among them, on them, beneath, in and a part of them, were figures and fragments of figures of gigantic men. All were inextricably interblended and superposed — a man's head and shoulders blazoned on the side of an animal; a wheel with legs for spokes rolling along the creature's back; a vast section of wall, having no contact with the earth, but (with a tail hanging from its rear, like a note of admiration) moving along the line, obscuring here an anatomical horror and disclosing there a mechanical nightmare. In short, this appalling procession, which was crossing our road with astonishing rapidity, seemed made up of unassigned and unassorted units, out of which some imaginative god might be about to create a world of giants, ready supplied with some of the appliances of a high civilization. Yet the whole apparition had so shadowy and spectral a look that the terror it inspired was itself vague and indefinite, like the terror of a dream. It affected our horses as well as ourselves; they extended their necks and threw forward their ears. For some moments we sat in our saddles surveying the hideous and extravagant spectacle without a word, and our tongues were loosened only when it began rapidly to diminish and recede, and at last was resolved into a train of mules and wagons, barely visible on the horizon. They were miles away and outlined against the blue sky.

I then remembered what my astonishment had not permitted me closely to note — that this pageant had appeared to move along parallel to the foot of a slope extending upward and backward to an immense height, intersected with rivers and presenting all the features of a prairie landscape. The mirage had in effect contracted the entire space between us and the train to a pistol-shot in breadth, and had made a background for its horrible picture by lifting into view Heaven knows how great an extent of country below our horizon. Does refraction account for all this? To this day I cannot without vexation remember the childish astonishment that prevented me from observing the really interesting features of the spectacle and kept my eyes fixed with a foolish distension on a lot of distorted mules, teamsters and wagons.

One of the commonest and best known tricks of the mirage is that of overlaying a dry landscape with ponds and lakes, and by a truly interesting and appropriate coincidence one or more travelers perishing of thirst seem always to be present, properly to appreciate the humor of the deception; but when a gentleman whose narrative suggested this article averred that he had seen these illusory lakes navigated by phantom boats filled with visionary persons he was, I daresay, thought to be drawing the long bow, even by many miragists in good standing. For aught I know he may have been. I can only attest the entirely credible character of the statement.

Away up at the headwaters of the Missouri, near the British possessions, I found myself one afternoon rather unexpectedly on the shore of an ocean. At less than a gunshot from where I stood was as plainly defined a seabeach as one could wish to see. The eye could follow it in either direction, with all its bays, inlets and promontories, to the horizon. The sea was studded with islands, and these with tall trees of many kinds, both islands and trees being reflected in the water with absolute fidelity. On many of the islands were houses, showing white beneath the trees, and on one which lay farthest out seaward was a considerable city, with towers, domes and clusters of steeples. There were ships in the offing whose sails glistened in the sunlight and, closer in, several boats of novel but graceful design, crowded with human figures, moved smoothly among the lesser islands, impelled by some power invisible from my point of view, each boat attended by its inverted reflection “crowding up beneath the keel.” It must be admitted that the voyagers were habited after a somewhat uncommon fashion — almost unearthly, I may say — and were so grouped that at my distance I could not clearly distinguish their individual limbs and attitudes. Their features were, of course, entirely invisible. None the less, they were plainly human beings — what other creatures would be boating? Of the other features of the scene — the coast, islands, trees, houses, city and ships hull-down in the offing — I distinctly affirm an absolute identity of visible aspect with those to which we are accustomed in the realm of reality; imagination had simply nothing to do with the matter. True, I had not recently had the advantage of seeing any such objects, except trees, and these had been mighty poor specimens, but, like Macduff, I “could not but remember such things were,” nor had I forgotten how they looked.

Of course I was not for an instant deceived by all this: I knew that under it all lay a particularly forbidding and inhospitable expanse of sagebrush and cactus, peopled with nothing more nearly akin to me than prairie dogs, ground owls and jackass rabbits — that with these exceptions the desert was as desolate as the environment of Ozymandias’ “vast and trunkless legs of stone.” But as a show it was surely the most enchanting that human eyes had ever looked on, and after more years than I care to count it remains one of memory’s most precious possessions. The one thing which always somewhat impairs the illusion in such instances — the absence of the horizon water-line — did not greatly abate the *vraisemblance* in this, for the large island in the distance nearly closed the view seaward, and the ships occupied most of the remaining space. I had but to fancy a slight haze on the farther water, and all was right and regular. For more than a half-hour this charming picture remained intact; then ugly patches of plain began to show through, the islands with their palms and temples slowly dissolved, the boats foundered with every soul on board, the sea drifted over the headlands in a most unwaterlike way, and inside the hour since,

like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific, and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise,
Silent upon a peak in Darien,

I had discovered this unknown sea all this insubstantial pageant had faded like the baseless fabric of the vision that it was and left not a rack behind.

In some of its minor manifestations the mirage is sometimes seen on the western coast of our continent, in the bay of San Francisco, for example, causing no small surprise to the untraveled and unread observer, and no small pain to the spirits of purer fire who are fated to be caught within earshot and hear him pronounce it a “mirridge.” I have seen Goat Island without visible means of support and Red Rock suspended in mid-air like the coffin of the Prophet. Looking up toward Mare Island one most ungracious morning when a barbarous norther had purged the air of every stain and the human soul of every virtue, I saw San Pablo Bay margined with cliffs whose altitude must have exceeded considerably that from whose dizzy verge old eyeless Gloster, falling in a heap at his own feet, supposed himself to have sailed like a stone.

One more instance and “I’ve done, i’ faith.” Gliding along down the Hudson River one hot summer afternoon in a steamboat, I went out on the afterguard for a breath of fresh air, but there was none to be had. The surface of the river was like oil and the steamer’s hull slipped through it with surprisingly little disturbance. Her tremor was for once hardly perceptible; the beating of her paddles was subdued to an almost inaudible rhythm. The air seemed what we call “hollow” and had apparently hardly enough tenuity to convey sounds. Everywhere on the surface of the glassy stream were visible undulations of heat, and the light steam of evaporation lay along the sluggish water and hung like a veil between the eye and the bank. Seated in an armchair and overcome by the heat and the droning of some prosy passengers near by, I fell asleep. When I awoke the guards were crowded with passengers in a high state of excitement, pointing and craning shoreward. Looking in the same direction I saw, through the haze, the sharp outlines of a city in gray silhouette. Roofs, spires, pinnacles, chimneys, angles of wall — all were there, cleanly cut out against the air.

“What is it?” I cried, springing to my feet.

“That, sir,” replied a passenger stolidly, “is Poughkeepsie.”

It was.

A Sole Survivor

Among the arts and sciences, the art of Sole Surviving is one of the most interesting, as (to the artist) it is by far the most important. It is not altogether an art, perhaps, for success in it is largely due to accident. One may study how solely to survive, yet, having an imperfect natural aptitude, may fail of proficiency and be early cut off. To the contrary, one little skilled in its methods, and not even well grounded in its fundamental principles, may, by taking the trouble to have been born with a suitable constitution, attain to a considerable eminence in the art. Without undue immodesty, I think I may fairly claim some distinction in it myself, although I have not regularly acquired it as one acquires knowledge and skill in writing, painting and playing the flute. O yes, I am a notable Sole Survivor, and some of my work in that way attracts great attention, mostly my own.

You would naturally expect, then, to find in me one who has experienced all manner of disaster at sea and the several kinds of calamity incident to a life on dry land. It would seem a just inference from my Sole Survivorship that I am familiar with railroad wrecks, inundations (though these are hardly dry-land phenomena), pestilences, earthquakes, conflagrations and other forms of what the reporters delight to call “a holocaust.” This is not entirely true; I have never been shipwrecked, never assisted as “unfortunate sufferer” at a fire or railway collision, and know of the ravages of epidemics only by hearsay. The most destructive *temblor* of which I have had a personal experience decreased the population of San Francisco by fewer, probably, than ten thousand persons, of whom not more than a dozen were killed; the others moved out of town. It is true that I once followed the perilous trade of a soldier, but my eminence in Sole Surviving is of a later growth and not specially the product of the sword.

Opening the portfolio of memory, I draw out picture after picture—”figure-pieces” — groups of forms and faces whereof mine only now remains, somewhat the worse for wear.

Here are three young men lolling at ease on a grassy bank. One, a handsome, dark-eyed chap, with a forehead like that of a Grecian god, raises his body on his elbow, looks straight away to the horizon, where some black trees hold captive certain vestiges of sunset as if they had torn away the plumage of a flight of flamingoes, and says: “Fellows, I mean to be rich. I shall see every country worth seeing. I shall taste every pleasure worth having. When old, I shall become a hermit."

Said another slender youth, fair-haired: "I shall become President and execute a *coup d'etat* making myself an absolute monarch. I shall then issue a decree requiring that all hermits be put to death."

The third said nothing. Was he restrained by some prescient sense of the perishable nature of the material upon which he was expected to inscribe the record of his hopes? However it may have been, he flicked his shoe with a hazel switch and kept his own counsel. For twenty years he has been the Sole Survivor of the group.

The scene changes. Six men are on horseback on a hill — a general and his staff. Below, in the gray fog of a winter morning, an army, which has left its intrenchments, is moving upon those of the enemy — creeping silently into position. In an hour the whole wide valley for miles to left and right will be all aroar with musketry stricken to seeming silence now and again by thunder claps of big guns. In the meantime the risen sun has burned a way through the fog, splendoring a part of the beleaguered city.

"Look at that, General," says an aide; "it is like enchantment."

"Go and enchant Colonel Post," said the general, without taking his field-glass from his eyes, "and tell him to pitch in as soon as he hears Smith's guns."

All laughed. But to-day I laugh alone. I am the Sole Survivor.

It would be easy to fill many pages with instances of Sole Survival, from my own experience. I could mention extinct groups composed wholly (myself excepted) of the opposing sex, all of whom, with the same exception, have long ceased their opposition, their warfare accomplished, their pretty noses blue and chill under the daisies. They were good girls, too, mostly, Heaven rest them! There were Maud and Lizzie and Nanette (ah, Nanette, indeed; she is the deadest of the whole bright band) and Emeline and — but really this is not discreet; one should not survive and tell.

The flame of a camp-fire stands up tall and straight toward the black sky. We feed it constantly with sage brush. A circling wall of darkness closes us in; but turn your back to the fire and walk a little away and you shall see the serrated summit-line of snow-capped mountains, ghastly cold in the moonlight. They are in all directions; everywhere they efface the great gold stars near the horizon, leaving the little green ones of the mid-heaven trembling viciously, as bleak as steel. At irregular intervals we hear the distant howling of a wolf — now on this side and again on that. We check our talk to listen; we cast quick glances toward our weapons, our saddles, our picketed horses: the wolves may be of the variety known as Sioux, and there are but four of us.

"What would you do, Jim," said Hazen, "if we were surrounded by Indians?"

Jim Beckwourth was our guide — a life-long frontiersman, an old man "beated and chopped with tanned antiquity." He had at one time been a chief of the Crows.

"I'd spit on that fire," said Jim Beckwourth.

The old man has gone, I hope, where there is no fire to be quenched. And Hazen, and the chap with whom I shared my blanket that winter night on the plains — both gone. One might suppose that I would feel something of the natural exultation of a Sole Survivor; but as Byron found that

our thoughts take wildest flight
Even at the moment when they should array
Themselves in pensive order,

so I find that they sometimes array themselves in pensive order, even at the moment when they ought to be most hilarious.

Of reminiscences there is no end. I have a vast store of them laid up, wherewith to wile away the tedious years of my anecdotage — whenever it shall please Heaven to make me old. Some years that I passed in London as a working journalist are particularly rich in them. Ah! "we were a gallant company" in those days.

I am told that the English are heavy thinkers and dull talkers. My recollection is different; speaking from that, I should say they are no end clever with their tongues. Certainly I have not elsewhere heard such brilliant talk as among the artists and writers of London. Of course they were a picked lot; some of them had attained to some eminence in the world of intellect; others have achieved it since. But they were not all English by many. London draws the best brains of Ireland and Scotland, and there is always a small American contingent, mostly correspondents of the big New York journals.

The typical London journalist is a gentleman. He is usually a graduate of one or the other of the great universities. He is well paid and holds his position, whatever it may be, by a less precarious tenure than his American congener. He rather moves than "dabbles" in literature, and not uncommonly takes a hand at some of the many forms of art. On the whole, he is a good fellow, too, with a skeptical mind, a cynical tongue, and a warm heart. I found these men agreeable, hospitable, intelligent, amusing. We worked too hard, dined too well, frequented too many clubs, and went to bed too late in the forenoon. We were overmuch addicted to shedding the blood of the grape. In short, we diligently, conscientiously, and with a perverse satisfaction burned the candle of life at both ends and in the middle.

This was many a year ago. To-day a list of these men's names with a cross against that of each one whom I know to be dead would look like a Roman Catholic cemetery. I could dine all the survivors at the table on which I write, and I should like to do so. But the dead ones, I must say, were the best diners.

But about Sole Surviving. There was a London publisher named John Camden Hotten. Among American writers he had a pretty dark reputation as a "pirate." They accused him of republishing their books without their assent, which, in absence of international copyright, he had a legal, and it seems to me (a "sufferer") a moral right to do. Through sympathy with their foreign confrères British writers also held him in high disesteem.

I knew Hotten very well, and one day I stood by what purported to be his body, which afterward I assisted to bury in the cemetery at Highgate. I am sure that it was his body, for I was uncommonly careful in the matter of identification, for a very good reason, which you shall know.

Aside from his "piracy," Hotten had a wide renown as "a hard man to deal with." For several months before his death he had owed me one hundred pounds sterling, and he could not possibly have been more reluctant to part with anything but a larger sum. Even to this day in reviewing the intelligent methods — ranging from delicate finesse to frank effrontery — by which that good man kept me out of mine own I am prostrated with admiration and consumed with envy. Finally by a lucky chance I got him at a disadvantage and seeing my power he sent his manager — a fellow named Chatto, who as a member of the firm of Chatto & Windus afterward succeeded to his business and methods — to negotiate. I was the most implacable creditor in the United Kingdom, and after two mortal hours of me in my most acidulated mood Chatto pulled out a check for the full amount, ready signed by Hotten in anticipation of defeat. Before handing it to me Chatto said: "This check is dated next Saturday. Of course you will not present it until then."

To this I cheerfully consented.

"And now," said Chatto, rising to go, "as everything is satisfactory I hope you will go out to Hotten's house and have a friendly talk. It is his wish."

On Saturday morning I went. In pursuance, doubtless, of his design when he antedated that check he had died of a pork pie promptly on the stroke of twelve o'clock the night before — which invalidated the check! I have met American publishers who thought they knew something about the business of drinking champagne out of writers' skulls. If this narrative — which, upon my soul, is every word true — teaches them humility by showing that genuine commercial sagacity is not bounded by geographical lines it will have served its purpose.

Having assured myself that Mr. Hotten was really no more, I drove furiously bank-ward, hoping that the sad tidings had not preceded me — and they had not.

Alas! on the route was a certain tap-room greatly frequented by authors, artists, newspaper men and “gentlemen of wit and pleasure about town.”

Sitting about the customary table were a half-dozen or more choice spirits — George Augustus Sala, Henry Sampson, Tom Hood the younger, Captain Mayne Reid, and others less known to fame. I am sorry to say my somber news affected these sinners in a way that was shocking. Their levity was a thing to shudder at. As Sir Boyle Roche might have said, it grated harshly upon an ear that had a dubious check in its pocket. Having uttered their hilarious minds by word of mouth all they knew how, these hardy and impenitent offenders set about writing “appropriate epitaphs.” Thank Heaven, all but one of these have escaped my memory, one that I wrote myself. At the close of the rites, several hours later, I resumed my movement against the bank. Too late — the old, old story of the hare and the tortoise was told again. The “heavy news” had overtaken and passed me as I loitered by the wayside.

All attended the funeral — Sala, Sampson, Hood, Reid, and the undistinguished others, including this present Sole Survivor of the group. As each cast his handful of earth upon the coffin I am very sure that, like Lord Brougham on a somewhat similar occasion, we all felt more than we cared to express. On the death of a political antagonist whom he had not treated with much consideration his lordship was asked, rather rudely, “Have you no regrets now that he is gone?”

After a moment of thoughtful silence he replied, with gravity, “Yes; I favor his return.”

One night in the summer of 1880 I was driving in a light wagon through the wildest part of the Black Hills in South Dakota. I had left Deadwood and was well on my way to Rockerville with thirty thousand dollars on my person, belonging to a mining company of which I was the general manager. Naturally, I had taken the precaution to telegraph my secretary at Rockerville to meet me at Rapid City, then a small town, on another route; the telegram was intended to mislead the “gentlemen of the road” whom I knew to be watching my movements, and who might possibly have a confederate in the telegraph office. Beside me on the seat of the wagon sat Boone May.

Permit me to explain the situation. Several months before, it had been the custom to send a “treasure-coach” twice a week from Deadwood to Sidney, Nebraska. Also, it had been the custom to have this coach captured and plundered by “road agents.” So intolerable had this practice become — even iron-clad coaches loopholed for rifles proving a vain device — that the mine owners had adopted the more practicable plan of importing from California a half-dozen of the most famous "shotgun messengers" of Wells, Fargo & Co. — fearless and trusty fellows with an instinct for killing, a readiness of resource that was an intuition, and a sense of direction that put a shot where it would do the most good more accurately than the most careful aim. Their feats of marksmanship were so incredible that seeing was scarcely believing.

In a few weeks these chaps had put the road agents out of business and out of life, for they attacked them wherever found. One sunny Sunday morning two of them strolling down a street of Deadwood recognized five or six of the rascals, ran back to their hotel for their rifles, and returning killed them all!

Boone May was one of these avengers. When I employed him, as a messenger, he was under indictment for murder. He had trailed a "road agent" across, the Bad Lands for hundreds of miles, brought him back to within a few miles of Deadwood and picketed him out for the night. The desperate man, tied as he was, had attempted to escape, and May found it expedient to shoot and bury him. The grave by the roadside is perhaps still pointed out to the curious. May gave himself up, was formally charged with murder, released on his own recognizance, and I had to give him leave of absence to go to court and be acquitted. Some of the New York directors of my company having been good enough to signify their disapproval of my action in employing "such a man," I could do no less than make some recognition of their dissent, and thenceforth he was borne upon the pay-rolls as "Boone May, Murderer." Now let me get back to my story.

I knew the road fairly well, for I had previously traveled it by night, on horseback, my pockets bulging with currency and my free hand holding a cocked revolver the entire distance of fifty miles. To make the journey by wagon with a companion was luxury. Still, the drizzle of rain was uncomfortable. May sat hunched up beside me, a rubber poncho over his shoulders and a Winchester rifle in its leathern case between his knees. I thought him a trifle off his guard, but said nothing. The road, barely visible, was rocky, the wagon rattled, and alongside ran a roaring stream. Suddenly we heard through it all the clinking of a horse's shoes directly behind, and simultaneously the short, sharp words of authority: "Throw up your hands!"

With an involuntary jerk at the reins I brought my team to its haunches and reached for my revolver. Quite needless: with the quickest movement that I had ever seen in anything but a cat — almost before the words were out of the horseman's mouth — May had thrown himself backward across the back of the seat, face upward, and the muzzle of his rifle was within a yard of the fellow's breast! What further occurred among the three of us there in the gloom of the forest has, I fancy, never been accurately related.

Boone May is long dead of yellow fever in Brazil, and I am the Sole Survivor.

There was a famous *prima donna* with whom it was my good fortune to cross the Atlantic to New York. In truth I was charged by a friend of both with the agreeable duty of caring for her safety and comfort. Madame was gracious, clever, altogether charming, and before the voyage was two days old a half-dozen of the men aboard, whom she had permitted me to present, were heels over head in love with her, as I was myself.

Our competition for her favor did not make us enemies; on the contrary we were drawn together into something like an offensive and defensive alliance by a common sorrow — the successful rivalry of a singularly handsome Italian who sat next her at table. So assiduous was he in his attentions that my office as the lady's guide, philosopher and friend was nearly a sinecure, and as to the others, they had hardly one chance a day to prove their devotion: that enterprising son of Italy dominated the entire situation. By some diabolical prevision he anticipated Madame's every need and wish — placed her reclining-chair in the most sheltered spots on deck, smothered her in layer upon layer of wraps, and conducted himself, generally, in the most inconsiderate way. Worse still, Madame accepted his good offices with a shameless grace "which said as plain as whisper in the ear" that there was a perfect understanding between them. What made it harder to bear was the fellow's faulty civility to the rest of us; he seemed hardly aware of our existence.

Our indignation was not loud, but deep. Every day in the smoking-room we contrived the most ingenious and monstrous, plans for his undoing in this world and the next; the least cruel being a project to lure him to the upper deck on a dark night and send him unshriven to his account by way of the lee rail; but as none of us knew enough Italian to tell him the needful falsehood that scheme of justice came to nothing, as did all the others. At the wharf in New York we parted from Madame more in sorrow than in anger, and from her conquering cavalier with polite manifestations of the contempt we did not feel.

That evening I called on her at her hotel, facing Union Square. Soon after my arrival there was an audible commotion out in front: the populace, headed by a brass band and incited, doubtless, by pure love of art, had arrived to do honor to the great singer. There was music — a serenade — followed by shoutings of the lady's name. She seemed a trifle nervous, but I led her to the balcony, where she made a very pretty little speech, piquant with her most charming accent. When the tumult and shouting had died we re-entered her apartment to resume our conversation. Would it please monsieur to have a glass, of wine? It would. She left the room for a moment; then came the wine and glasses on a tray, borne by that impossible Italian! He had a napkin across his arm — he was a servant.

Barring some of the band and the populace, I am doubtless the Sole Survivor, for Madame has for a number of years had a permanent engagement Above, and my faith in Divine Justice does not permit me to think that the servile wretch who cast down the mighty from their seat among the Sons of Hope was suffered to live out the other half of his days.

A dinner of seven in an old London tavern — a good dinner, the memory whereof is not yet effaced from the tablets of the palate. A soup, a plate of white-bait be-lemoned and red-peppered with exactness, a huge joint of roast beef, from which we sliced at will, flanked by various bottles of old dry Sherry and crusty Port — such Port! (And we are expected to be patriots in a country where it cannot be procured! And the Portuguese are expected to love the country which, having it, sends it away!) That was the dinner — there was Stilton cheese; it were shameful not to mention the Stilton. Good, wholesome, and toothsome it was, rich and nutty. The Stilton that we get here, clouted in tin-foil, is monstrous poor stuff, hardly better than our American sort. After dinner there were walnuts and coffee and cigars. I cannot say much for the cigars; they are not over-good in England: too long at sea, I suppose.

On the whole, it was a memorable dinner. Even its non-essential features were satisfactory. The waiter was fascinatingly solemn, the floor snowily sanded, the company sufficiently distinguished in literature and art for me to keep track of them through the newspapers. They are dead — as dead as Queen Anne, every mother’s son of them! I am in my favorite rôle of Sole Survivor. It has become habitual to me; I rather like it.

Of the company were two eminent gastronomes — call them Messrs. Guttle and Swig — who so acridly hated each other that nothing but a good dinner could bring them under the same roof. (They had had a quarrel, I think, about the merit of a certain Amontillado — which, by the way, one insisted, despite Edgar Allan Poe, who certainly knew too much of whiskey to know much of wine, *is* a Sherry.) After the cloth had been removed and the coffee, walnuts and cigars brought in, the company stood, and to an air extemporaneously composed by Guttle, sang the following shocking and reprehensible song, which had been written during the proceedings by this present Sole Survivor. It will serve as fitly to conclude this feast of unreason as it did that:

THE SONG

Jack Satan’s the greatest of gods,
And Hell is the best of abodes.
‘Tis reached through the Valley of Clods
By seventy beautiful roads.
Hurrah for the Seventy Roads!
Hurrah for the clods that resound
With a hollow, thundering sound!
Hurrah for the Best of Abodes!
We’ll serve him as long as we’ve breath —
Jack Satan, the greatest of gods.
To all of his enemies, death! —
A home in the Valley of Clods.
Hurrah for the thunder of clods
That smother the souls of his foes!
Hurrah for the spirit that goes
To dwell with the Greatest of Gods!

MISCELLANEOUS ARTICLES AND REVIEWS

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THE OPINIONATOR

THE NOVEL

THOSE who read no books but new ones have this much to say for themselves in mitigation of censure: they do not read all the new ones. They can not; with the utmost diligence and devotion — never weary in ill doing — they can not hope to get through one in a hundred. This, I should suppose, must make them unhappy. They probably feel as a small boy of limited capacity would in a country with all the springs running treacle and all the trees loaded with preserved fruits.

The annual output of books in this country alone is something terrible — not fewer, I am told, than from seven thousand to nine thousand. This should be enough to gratify the patriot who "points with pride" to the fact that Americans are a reading people, but does not point with anything to the quality of what they read. There are apparently more novels than anything else, and these have incomparably the largest sales. The "best seller" is always a novel and a bad one.

In my poor judgment there have not been published in any one quarter-century a half dozen novels that posterity will take the trouble to read. It is not to be denied that some are worth reading, for some have been written by great writers; and whatever is written by a great writer is likely to merit attention. But between that which is worth reading and that which was worth writing there is a distinction. For a man who can do great work, to do work that is less great than the best that he can do is not worthwhile, and novel-writing, I hold, does not bring out the best that is in him.

The novel bears the same relation to literature that the panorama bears to painting. With whatever skill and feeling the panorama is painted, it must lack that basic quality in all art, unity, totality of effect. As it can not all be seen at once, its parts must be seen successively, each effacing the one seen before; and at the last there remains no coherent and harmonious memory of the work. It is the same with a story too long to be read with a virgin attention at a single sitting.

A novel is a diluted story — a story cumbered with trivialities and nonessentials. I have never seen one that could not be bettered by cutting out a half or three-quarters of it.

The novel is a snow plant; it has no root in the permanent soil of literature, and does not long hold its place. It is of the lowest form of imagination — imagination chained to the perch of probability. What wonder that in this unnatural captivity it pines and dies? The novelist is, after all, but a reporter of a larger growth. True, he invents his facts (which the reporter of the newspaper is known never to do) and his characters; but, having them in hand, what can he do? His chains are heavier than himself. The line that bounds his little Dutch garden of probability, separating it from the golden realm of art — the sun and shadow land of fancy — is to him a dead-line. Let him transgress it at his peril.

In England and America the art of novel-writing ‘(in so far as it is an art) is as dead as Queen Anne; in America as dead as Queen Ameresia. (There never was a Queen Ameresia — that is why I choose her for the comparison.) As a literary method it never had any other element of vitality than the quality from which it has its name. Having no legitimate place in the scheme of letters, its end was inevitable.

When Richardson and Fielding set the novel going, hardly more than a century-and-a-half ago, it charmed a generation to which it was new. From their day to ours, with a lessening charm, it has taken the attention of the multitude, and grieved the judicious, but, its impulse exhausted, it stops by its inherent inertia. Its dead body we shall have with us, doubtless, for many years, but its soul “is with the saints, I trust.”

This is true, not only locally but generally. So far as I am able to judge, no good novels are now “made in Germany,” nor in France, nor in any European country except Russia. The Russians are writing novels which so far as one may venture to judge (dimly discerning their quality through the opacity of translation, for one does not read Russian) are, in their way, admirable; full of fire and light, like an opal. Tourgenieff, Pushkin, Gogol and the early Tolstoi — these be big names. In their hands the novel grew great (as it did in those of Richardson and Fielding, and as it would have done in those of Thackeray and Pater if greatness in that form of fiction had been longer possible in England) because, first, they were great men, and second, the novel was a new form of expression in a world of new thought and life. In Russia the soil is not exhausted: it produces without fertilizers. There we find simple, primitive conditions, and the novel holds something of the elemental passions of the race, unsophisticated by introspection, analysis of motive, problemism, dissection of character, and the other “odious subtleties” that go before a fall. But the blight is upon it even there, with an encroachment visible in the compass of a single lifetime. Compare Tolstoy’s *The Cossacks* with his latest work in fiction, and you will see an individual decadence prefiguring a national; just as one was seen in the interval between *Adam Bede* and *Daniel Deronda.* When the storyteller is ambitious to be a philosopher there is an end to good storytelling. Novelists are now all philosophers — excepting those who have “stumbled to eternal mock” as reformers.

With the romance — which in form so resembles the novel that many otherwise worthy persons are but dimly aware of the essential distinction — matters are somewhat otherwise. The romancist has not to encounter at a disadvantage the formidable competition of his reader’s personal experience. He can represent life, not as it is, but as it might be; character, not as he finds it, but as he wants it. His plot knows no law but that of its own artistic development; his incidents do not require the authenticating hand and seal of any censorship but that of taste. The vitality of his art is eternal; it is perpetually young. He taps the great permanent mother-lode of human interest. His materials are infinite in abundance and cosmic in distribution. Nothing that can be known, or thought, or felt, or dreamed, but is available if he can manage it. He is lord of two worlds and may select his characters from both. In the altitudes where his imagination waves her joyous wing there are no bars for her to beat her breast against; the universe is hers, and unlike the sacred bird Simurgh, which is omnipotent on condition of never exerting its power, she may do as she will. And so it comes about that while the novel is accidental and transient, the romance is essential and permanent. The novelist, whatever his ability, writes in the shifting sand; the only age that understands his work is that which has not forgotten the social conditions environing his characters — namely, their own period; but the romancist has cut his work into the living rock. Richardson and Fielding already seem absurd. We are beginning to quarrel with Thackeray, and Dickens needs a glossary. Thirty years ago I saw a list of scores of words used by Dickens that had become obsolete. They were mostly the names of homely household objects no longer in use; he had named them in giving “local color” and the sense of “reality.” Contemporary novels are read by none but the reviewers and the multitude — which will read anything if it is long, untrue and new enough. Men of sane judgment and taste still illuminate their minds and warm their hearts in Scott’s suffusing glow; the strange, heatless glimmer of Hawthorne fascinates more and more; the Thousand-and-One Nights holds its captaincy of tale-telling. Whatever a great man does he is likely to do greatly, but had Hugo set the powers of his giant intellect to the making of mere novels his superiority to the greatest of those who have worked in that barren art might have seemed somewhat less measureless than it is 1897

ON LITERARY CRITICISM

I

THE saddest thing about the trade of writing is that the writer can never know, nor hope to know, if he is a good workman. In literary criticism there are no criteria, no accepted standards of excellence by which to test the work. Sainte-Beuve says that the art of criticism consists in saying the first thing that comes into one's head. Doubtless he was thinking of his own head, a fairly good one. There is a difference between the first thing that comes into one head and the first thing that comes into another; and it is not always the best kind of head that concerns itself with literary criticism.

Having no standards, criticism is an erring guide. Its pronouncements are more interesting than valuable, and interesting chiefly from the insight that they give into the mind, not of the writer criticised, but of the writer criticising. Hence the greater interest that they have when delivered by one of whom the reader already knows something. So the newspapers are not altogether unwise when asking an eminent merchant to pass judgment on a new poet, or a distinguished soldier to "sit" in the case of a rising young novelist. We learn something about the merchant or the soldier, and that may amuse. As a guide to literary excellence even the most accomplished critic's judgment on his contemporaries is of little value. Posterity more frequently reverses than affirms it.

The reason is not far to seek. An author's work is usually the product of his environment. He collaborates with his era; his coworkers are time and place. All his neighbors and all the conditions in which they live have a hand in the work. His own individuality, unless uncommonly powerful and original, is "subdued to what it works in." But this is true, too, of his critic, whose limitations are drawn by the same iron authority. Subject to the same influences, good and bad, following the same literary fashions, the critic who is contemporary with his author holds his court in the market-place and polls a fortuitous jury. In diagnosing the disorder of a person suspected of hydrophobia the physician ought not to have been bitten by the same dog.

The taste of the many being notoriously bad and that of the few dubious, what is the author to do for judgment on his work? He is to wait. In a few centuries, more or less, may arise a critic that we call Posterity. This fellow will have as many limitations, probably, as the other had — will bow the knee to as many literary Baals and err as widely from the paths leading to the light. But his false gods will not be those of to-day, whose hideousness will disclose itself to his undevout vision, and in his deviations from the true trail he will cross and chart our tracks. Better than all, he will know and care little about the lives and characters, the personalities, of those of us whose work has lasted till his time. On that coign of vantage he will stand and deliver a juster judgment. It will enable him to judge our work with impartiality, as if it had fallen from the skies or sprung up from the ground without human agency.

One can hardly overrate the advantage to the critic of ignorance of his author. Biographies of men of action are well enough; the lives that such men live are all there is of them except themselves. But men of thought — that is different. You can not narrate thought, nor describe it, yet it is the only relevant thing in the life of an author. Anything else darkens counsel. We go to biography for side lights on an author's work; to his work for side lights on his character. The result is confusion and disability, for personal character and literary character have little to say to each other, despite the fact that so tremendous a chap as Taine builded an entire and most unearthly biography of Shakspeare on no firmer foundation than the "internal evidence" of the plays and sonnets. Of all the influences that make for incapable criticism the biographer of authors is the most pernicious. One needs not be a friend to organized labor to wish that the fellow's working hours might be reduced from twenty-four to eight.

Neither the judgment of the populace nor that of the critics being of value to an author concerned about his rank in the hierarchy of letters, and that of posterity being a trifle slow, he seems to be reduced to the expedient of taking his own word for it. And his opinion of himself may not be so far out of the way. Read Goethe's conversations with Eckermann and see how accurately the great man appraised himself.

When scratched in a newspaper Heine said: "I am to be judged in the assizes of literature. I know who I am."

About the shrine of every famous author awaits a cloud of critics to pay an orderly and decorous homage to his genius. There is no crowding: if one of them sees that he can not perform his prostration until after his saint shall have been forgotten along with the intellectual miracles he wrought, that patient worshiper turns aside to level his shins at another shrine. There are shrines enough for all, God knows!

The most mischievous, because the ablest, of all this sycophantic crew is Mr. Howells, who finds every month, and reads, two or three books — always novels

— of high literary merit. As no man who has anything else to do can critically read more than two or three books in a month — and I will say for Mr. Howells that he is a conscientious reader — and as some hundreds are published in the same period, one is curious to know how many books of high literary merit he would find if he could read them all. But Mr. Howells is no ordinary sycophant — not he. True, having by mischance read a book divinely bad, even when judged according to his own test, and having resolved to condemn nothing except in a general way — as the artillerists in the early days of the Civil War used to "shell the woods" — he does not purpose to lose his labor, and therefore commends the book along with the others; but as a rule he distributes the distinctions that he has to confer according to a system — to those, namely, whose work in fiction most nearly resembles his own. That is his way of propagating the Realistic faith which his poverty of imagination has compelled him to adopt and his necessities to defend. "Ah, yes, a beautiful animal," said the camel of the horse—"if he only had a hump!"

To show what literary criticism has accomplished in education of the public taste I beg to refer the reader to any number of almost any magazine. Here is one, for instance, containing a paper by one Bowker on contemporary English novelists — he novelists and she novelists — to the number of about forty. And only the "eminent" ones are mentioned. To most American readers some of the books of most of these authors are more or less familiar, and nine in ten of these readers will indubitably accept Mr. Bowker's high estimate of the genius of the authors themselves. These have one good quality — they are industrious: most of them have published ten to forty novels each, the latter number being the favorite at this date and eliciting Mr. Bowker's lively admiration. The customary rate of production is one a year, though two are not unusual, there being nothing in the law forbidding. Mr. Bowker has the goodness to tell us all he knows about these persons' methods of work; that is to say, all that they have told him. The amount of patient research, profound thought and systematic planning that go to the making of one of their books is (naturally) astonishing. Unfortunately it falls just short of the amount that kills.

Add to the forty eminent English novelists another forty American, equally eminent — at least in their own country — and similarly industrious. We have then an average annual output of, say, eighty novels which have the right to expect to be widely read and enthusiastically reviewed. This in two countries, in one of which the art of novel writing is dead, in the other of which it has not been born. Truly this is an age of growing literary activity; our novelists are as lively and diligent as maggots in the carcass of a horse. There is a revival of baseball, too.

If our critics were wiser than their dupes could this mass of insufferable stuff be dumped upon the land? Could the little men and foolish women who write it command the persevering admiration of their fellow-creatures, who think it a difficult thing to do? I make no account here of the mere book-reporters of the newspapers, whose purpose and ambition are, not to guide the public taste but to follow it, and who are therefore in no sense critics. The persons whom I am considering are those ingenious gentlemen who in the magazines and reviews are expected to, and do, write of books with entire independence of their own market. Are there anywhere more than one, two or three like Percival Pollard, with “Gifford’s heavy hand” to “crush without remorse” the intolerable rout of commonplace men and women swarming innumerous upon the vacant seats of the dead giants and covering the slopes of Parnassus like a flock of crows?

Your critic of widest vogue and chief authority among us is he who is best skilled in reading between the lines; in interpreting an author’s purpose; in endowing him with a “problem” and noting his degree of skill in its solution. The author — stupid fellow! — did not write between the lines, had no purpose but to entertain, was unaware of a problem. So much the worse for him; so much the better for his expounder. Interlinear cipher, purpose, problem, are all the critic’s own, and he derives a lively satisfaction in his creation — looks upon it and pronounces it good. Nothing is more certain than that if a writer of genius should “bring to his task” of writing a book the purposes which the critics would surely trace in the completed work the book would remain forever unwritten, to the unspeakble advantage of letters and morals.

In illustration of these remarks and suggesting them, take these book reviews in a single number of *The Atlantic.* There we learn, concerning Mr. Cable, that his controlling purpose in *The Grandissimes* was that of “presenting the problem of the reorganization of Southern society” — that “the book was in effect a parable”; that in *Dr. Sevier* he “essayed to work out through personal relations certain problems [always a problem or two] which vexed him regarding poverty and labor”; that in *Bonaventure* he “sets himself another task,” which is “to work out [always something to (work out’] the regeneration of man through knowledge” — a truly formidable “task.” Of the author of *Queen Money,* we are told by the same expounder that she has “set herself no task beyond her power,” but “had it in mind to trace the influence of the greed for wealth upon a section of contemporaneous society.” Of Mr. Bellamy, author of *Looking Backward* (the heroine of which is not Mrs. Lot) we are confidently assured in ailing metaphor that “he feels intensely the bitter inequalities of the present order” of things and “thinks he sees a remedy,” — our old friends again: the “problem” and the “solution” — both afterthoughts of Mr. Bellamy. The “task” which in *Marzio’s*

Crucifix Marion Crawford "sets himself" is admirably simple — by a "characteristic outwardness" to protect us against "a too intimate and subtle corrosive of life." As a savior of the world against this awful peril Crawford may justly have claimed a vote of thanks; but possibly he was content with that humbler advantage, the profit from the sale of his book. But (it may be protested) the critic who is to live by his trade must say *something.* True, but is it necessary that he live by his trade?

Carlyle's prophecy of a time when all literature should be one vast review is in process of fulfilment. Aubrey de Vere has written a critical analysis of poetry, chiefly that of Spenser and Wordsworth. An *Atlantic* man writes a critical analysis of Aubrey de Vere's critical analysis. Shall I not write a critical analysis of the *Atlantic* man's critical analysis of Aubrey de Vere's critical analysis of poetry? I can do so adequately in three words: It is nonsense.

Spenser, also, it appears, "set himself a task," had his "problem," "worked it out."

"The figures of his embroidered poem," we are told, "are conceived and used in accordance with a comprehensive doctrine of the nature of humanity, which Spenser undoubtedly meant to enforce through the medium of his imagination." That is to say, the author of *The Faerie Queene* did not "sing because he could not choose but sing," but because he was burdened with a doctrine. He had a nut to crack and, faith! he must crack it or he would be sick. "Resolved into its moral elements" (whether by Aubrey de Vere or the *Atlantic* man I can only guess without reading de Vere's work in two volumes, which God forbid!) the glowing work of Spenser is a sermon which "teaches specifically how to attain self-control and how to meet attacks from without; or rather how to seek those many forms of error which do mischief in the world, and to overcome them for the world's welfare." Precisely: the animal is a pig and a bird; or rather it is a fish. So much for Spenser, whom his lovers may reread if they like in the new light of this person's critical analysis. It is rather hard that, being dead, he can not have the advantage of going over his work with so intelligent a guide as Aubrey de Vere. He would be astonished by his own profundity.

How literary reviewing may be acceptably done in Boston may be judged by the following passage from the Boston *Literary Review:*

"When Miss Emma Frances Dawson wrote *An Itinerant House* she was plainly possessed of a desire to emulate Poe and turn out a collection of stories which, once read, the mention of them would make the blood curdle. There is no need to say that Poe's position is still secure, but Miss Dawson has succeeded in writing some very creditable stories of their kind."

The reviewer that can discern in Miss Dawson's work "a desire to emulate

Poe," or can find in it even a faint suggestion of Poe, may justly boast himself accessible to any folly that comes his way. There is no more similarity between the work of the two writers than there is between that of Dickens and that of Macaulay, or that of Addison and that of Carlyle. Poe in his prose tales deals sometimes with the supernatural; Miss Dawson always. But hundreds of writers do the same; if that constitutes similarity and suggests intentional "emulation" what shall be said of those tales which resemble one another in that element's omission? The truth probably is that the solemn gentleman who wrote that judgment had not read Poe since childhood, and did not read Miss Dawson at all. Moreover, no excellence in her work would have saved it from his disparaging comparison if he had read it. "Poe's position" would still have been "secure," for to such minds as his it is unthinkable that an established fame (no matter how, when or where established) should not signify an unapproachable merit. If he had lived in Poe's time how he would have sneered at that writer's attempt to emulate Walpole! And had he been a contemporary of Walpole that ambitious person would have incurred a stinging rap on the head for aspiring to displace the immortal Gormley Hobb.

The fellow goes on:

"To one steeped in the gruesome weirdness of a master of the gentle art of blood-curdling the stories are not too impressive, but he who picks up the book fresh from a fairy tale is apt to become somewhat nervous in the reading. The tales allow Miss Dawson to weave in some very pretty verse."

The implication that Miss Dawson's tales are intended to be "gruesome," "blood-curdling," and so forth, is a foolish implication. Their supernaturalism is not of that kind. The blood that they could curdle is diseased blood which it would be at once a kindly office and a high delight to shed. And fancy this inexpressible creature calling Miss Dawson's verse "pretty"! — the *ballade* of "The Sea of Sleep." "pretty"! My compliments to him:

Dull spirit, few among us be your days,
The bright to damn, the fatuous to praise;
And God deny, your flesh when you unload,
Your prayer to live as tenant of a toad,
With powers direr than your present sort:
Able the wights you jump on to bewart.

The latest author of "uncanny" tales to suffer from the ready reckoner's short cut to the solution of the problem of literary merit, the ever-serviceable comparison with Edgar Allan Poe, is Mr. W. C. Morrow. Doubtless he had hoped that this cup might pass by him — had implored the rosy goddess Psora, who enjoys the critic's person and inspires his pen, to go off duty, but it was not to be; that diligent deity is never weary of ill doing and her devotees, pursuing the evil tenor of their way, have sounded the Scotch fiddle to the customary effect. Mr. Morrow's admirable book, *The Ape, the Idiot and Other People*, is gravely ascribed to the paternity of Poe, as was Miss Dawson's before it, and some of mine before that. And until Gabriel, with one foot upon the sea and the other upon the neck of the last living critic, shall swear that the time for doing this thing is up, every writer of stories a little out of the common must suffer the same sickening indignity. To the ordinary microcephalous bibliopomps — the book-butchers of the newspapers — criticism is merely a process of marking upon the supposed stature of an old writer the supposed stature of a new, without ever having taken the trouble to measure that of the old; they accept hearsay evidence for that. Does one write "gruesome stories"? — they invoke Poe; essays? — they out with their Addison; satirical verse? — they have at him with Pope — and so on, through the entire category of literary forms. Each has its dominant great name, learned usually in the district school, easily carried in memory and obedient to the call of need. And because these strabismic ataxiates, who fondly fancy themselves shepherding auctorial flocks upon the slopes of Parnassus, are unable to write of one writer without thinking of another, they naturally assume that the writer of whom they write is affected with the same disability and has always in mind as a model the standard name dominating his chosen field — the impeccant hegemon of the province.

II

Mr. Hamlin Garland, writing with the corn-fed enthusiasm of the prairies, "hails the dawn of a new era" in literature — an era which is to be distinguished by dominance of the Western man. That a great new literature is to "come out of the West" because of broad prairies and wide rivers and big mountains and infrequent boundary lines — that is a conviction dear indeed to the Western mind which has discovered that marks can be made on paper with a pen. A few years ago the Eastern mind was waiting wide-eyed to "hail the dawn" of a literature that was to be "distinctively American," for the Eastern mind in those days claimed a share in the broad prairies, the wide rivers and the big mountains, with all the competencies, suggestions, inspirations and other appurtenances thereunto belonging — a heritage which now Mr. Garland austerely denies to any one born and "raised" on the morning side of the Alleghanies. The "distinctively American literature" has not materialized, excepting in the works of Americans distinctively illiterate; and there are no visible signs of a distinctively Western one. Even the Californian sort, so long heralded by prophets blushing with conscious modesty in the foretelling, seems loth to leave off its damnable faces and begin. The best Californian, the best Western, the best American books have the least of geographical "distinctiveness," and most closely conform to the universal and immutable laws of the art, as known to Aristotle and Longinus.

The effect of physical-geographical environment on literary production is mostly nil; racial and educational considerations only are of controlling importance. Despite Madame de Staël's engaging dictum that "every Englishman is an island," the natives of that scanty plot have produced a literature which in breadth of thought and largeness of method we sons of a continent, brothers to the broad prairies, wide rivers and big mountains, have not matched and give no promise of matching. It is all very fine to be a child o' natur' with a home in the settin' sun, but when the child o' natur' with a knack at scribbling pays rent to Phoebus by renouncing the incomparable advantage of strict subjection to literary law he pays too dearly.

Nothing new is to be learned in any of the great arts — the ancients looted the whole field. Nor do first-rate minds seek anything new. They are assured of primacy under the conditions of their art as they find it — under any conditions. It is the lower order of intelligence that is ingenious, inventive, alert for original methods and new forms. Napoleon added nothing to the art of war, in either strategy or tactics. Shakspeare tried no new meters, did nothing that had not been done before — merely did better what had been done. In the Parthenon was no new architectural device, and in the Sistine Madonna all the effects were got by methods as familiar as speech. The only way in which it is worth while to differ from others is in point of superior excellence. Be "original," ambitious Westerner — always as original as you please. But know, or if you already know remember, that originality strikes and dazzles only when displayed within the limiting lines of form. Above all, remember that the most ineffective thing in literature is that quality, whatever in any case it may be, which is best designated in terms of geographical classification. The work of whose form and methods one naturally thinks as — not "English"; that is a racial word, but—" American" or "Australian" or (in this country) "Eastern,"

"Mid-Western,"

"Southern" or "Californian" is worthless. The writer who knows no better than to make or try to make his work "racy of the soil" knows nothing of his art worth knowing.

III

Charles A. Dana held that California could not rightly claim the glory of such literature as she had, for none of her writers of distinction — such distinction as they had — was born there. We were austerely reminded that “even the sheen of gold is less attractive than the lustre of intellectual genius.”

“California!” cried this severe but not uncompassionate critic—”California! how musical is the word. And again we cry out, California! Give us the letters of high thought: give us philosophy and romance and poetry and art. Give us the soul!”

How many men and women who scorn delights and live laborious days to glorify our metropolis with “ the letters of high thought” are on Fame’s muster-roll as natives of Manhattan island? Doubtless the state of New York, as also the city of that name, can make an honorable showing in the matter of native authors, but it has certain considerable advantages that California lacks. In the first place, there are many more births in New York, supplying a strong numerical presumption that more geniuses will turn up there. Second, it has (I hope) enjoyed that advantage for many, many years; whereas California was “settled” (and by the non-genius-bearing sex) a good deal later. In this competition the native Californian author is handicapped by the onerous condition that in order to have his nose counted he must have been born in the pre-Woman period or acquired enough of reputation for the rumor of his merit to have reached New York’s ears, and for the noise of it to have roused her from the contemplation of herself, before he has arrived at middle age. This is not an “impossible” condition; it is only an exceedingly hard one. How hard it is a little reflection on facts will show. The rule is, the world over, that the literary army of the “metropolis” is recruited in the “provinces,” or, more accurately, *from* the provinces. The difference denoted by the prepositions is important: for every provincial writer who, like Bret Harte, achieves at home enough distinction to be sought out and lured to a “literary metropolis,” ten unknown ones go there of their own motion, like Rudyard Kipling, and become distinguished afterward. They wrote equally well where they were, but they might have continued to write there until dead of age, and but for some lucky accident or fortuitous concurrence of favoring circumstances they would never have been heard of in the “ literary metropolis.”

We may call it so, but New York is not a literary metropolis, nor is London, nor is Paris. In letters there is no metropolis. The literary capital is not a mother-city, founding colonies; it is the creature of its geographical environment, giving out nothing, taking in everything. If not constantly fed with fresh brains from beyond and about, its chance of primacy and domination would be merely proportional to its population. This centripetal tendency — this converging movement of provincial writers upon the literary capital, is itself the strongest possible testimony to the disadvantages which they suffer at home; for in nearly every instance it is made — commonly at a great sacrifice — in pursuit of recognition. The motive may not be a very creditable one; I think myself it is ridiculous, as is all ambition, not to excel, but to be known to excel; but such is the motive. If the provincial writer could as easily obtain recognition at home he would stay there.

For my part, I freely admit that “the Golden State can not ‘boast’ of any native literary celebrities of the first rank,” for I do not consider the incident of a literary celebrity of the first rank having been born in one place instead of another a thing to boast of. If there is an idler and more barren work than the rating of writers according to merit it is their classification according to birthplace. A racial classification is interesting because it corresponds to something in nature, but among authors of the same race — and that race the restless Americans, who are about as likely to be born in a railway car as anywhere, and whose first instinct is to get away from home — this classification is without meaning. If it is ever otherwise than capitally impudent in the people of a political or geographical division to be proud of a great writer (as George the Third was of an abundant harvest) it is least impudent in those of the one in which he did his worthiest work, most so in those of the one in which he was born.

STAGE ILLUSION

SUCH to-day is the condition of the drama that the “scenic artist” and the carpenter are its hope and its pride. They are the props and pillars of the theatre, without which the edifice would fall to pieces. But there are “some of us fellows,” as a Bishop of Lincoln used to say to his brother prelates, who consider scenery an impertinence and its painter a creature for whose existence there is no warrant of art nor justification of taste.

I am no *laudator temporis acti,* but I submit that in this matter of the drama the wisdom of the centuries is better than the caprice of the moment. For some thousands of years, dramatists, actors and audiences got on very well without recourse to the mechanical devices that we esteem necessary to the art of stage representation. Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Shakspeare — what did they know of scenery and machinery? You may say that the Greeks knew little of painting, so could have no scenery. They had something better — imagination. Why did they not use pulleys, and trap-doors, and real water, and live horses? — they had *them;* and Ben Jonson and Shakspeare could have had painters enow, God knows. Why, in their time the stage was lighted with naked and unashamed candles and strewn with rushes, and favored ones of the audience—” gentlemen of wit and pleasure about town” — occupied seats upon it! If the action was supposed to be taking place in a street in Verona did not the playbill so explain? A word to the wise was sufficient: the gentlemen of wit and pleasure went to the play to watch the actor’s face, observe his gestures, critically note his elocution. They would have resented with their handy hangers an attempt to obtrude upon their attention the triumphs of the “scenic artist,” the machinist and the property-man. As for the “groundlings,” they were there by sufferance only, and might comprehend or not, as it might or might not please their Maker to work a miracle in their stupid nowls.

Now it is all for the groundlings; the stage has no longer “patrons,” and “His Majesty’s Players” are the servants of the masses, to whom the author’s text must be presented with explanatory notes by those learned commentators, Messrs. Daub and Toggle — whom may the good devil besmear with yellows and make mad with a tin moon!

What! shall I go to the theatre to be pleased with colored canvas, affrighted with a storm that is half dried peas and t’other half sheet-iron? Shall I take any part of my evening’s pleasure from the dirty hands of an untidy anarchist who shakes a blue rag to represent the Atlantic Ocean, while another sandlot orator navigates a cloth-yard three-decker across the middle distance? Am I to be interested in the personal appearance of a centre-table and the adventures of half a dozen chairs — albeit they are better than the one given me to sit on?

Shall makers of fine furniture aspire
To scorn my lower needs and feed my higher?
And vile upholsterers be taught to slight
My body's comfort for my mind's delight?

Where is the sense of all these devices for producing an "illusion?" Illusion, indeed! When you look at art do you wish to persuade yourself that it is only nature? Take the Laocoôn — would it be pleasant or instructive to forget, for even a moment, that it is a group of inanimate figures, and think yourself gazing on a living man and two living children in the folds of two living snakes? When you stand before a "nativity" by some old master, do you fancy yourself a real ass at a real manger? Deception is no part of art, for only in its non-essentials is art a true copy of nature. If it is anything more, why, then the Shah of Persia was a judicious critic. Shown a picture of a donkey by Landseer and told that it was worth five hundred pounds, he contemptuously replied that for five pounds he could buy the donkey. The man who holds that art should be a certified copy of nature, and produce an illusion in the mind, has no right to smile at this anecdote. It is his business in this life not to laugh, but to be laughed at.

Seeing that stage illusion is neither desirable nor attainable, the determined efforts to achieve it that have been making during these last few decades seem very melancholy indeed. It is as if a dog should spin himself sick in pursuit of his tail, which he neither can catch nor could profit by if he caught it.

Failure displeases in proportion to the effort, and it would be judicious to stop a little short of real water, and live horses, and trains of cars that will work. Nay, why should we have streets and drawing-rooms (with mantel-clocks and coal scuttles complete) and castles with battlements? Or if the play is so vilely constructed as to require them, why must the street have numbered house-doors, the drawing-room an adjoining library and conservatory, and the battlements a growth of ivy? Of course no sane mind would justify poor Boucicault's wall that sinks to represent the ascent of the man "climbing it" by standing on the ground and working his legs, but we are only a trifle less ridiculous when we have any scenic effects at all. The difference is one of degree, and if we are to have representations of inanimate objects it is hard to say at what we should stick. Our intellectual gorge may now rise at the spectacle of a battered and blood-stained

“Nancy” dragging her wrecked carcass along the stage to escape the club of a “Sykes,” for it is as new as once were the horrible death-agonies constituting the charm of the acting of a Croizette; but the line of distinction is arbitrary, and no one can say how soon we shall expect to see the blood of “Cæsar” spouting from his wound instead of being content with “Antony’s” rather graphic description of it. It is of the nature of realism never to stop till it gets to the bottom.

Inasmuch as the actor must wear something — a necessity from which the actress is largely free — he may as well wear the costume appropriate to his part. But this is about as far as art permits him to go in the way of “illusion”; another step and he is on the “unsteadfast footing” of popular caprice and vulgar fashion. Of course if the playwright has chosen to make a window, a coach, a horse, church spire, or whale one of his *dramatis personæ* we must have it in some form, offensive as it is; the mistake which was his in so constructing the play is ours when we go to see it. In the old playbooks the “Scene — a Bridge in Venice,”

“Scene — a Cottage in the Black Forest,”

“Scene — a Battle Field,” etc., were not intended as instructions to the manager, but to the spectator. The author did not expect these things to be shown on the stage, but imagined in the auditorium. They were mere hints and helps to the imagination, which, as an artist, it was his business to stimulate and guide, and the modern playwright, as a fool, decrees it his duty to discourage and repress. The play should require as few accessories as possible, and to those actually required the manager should confine himself. We may grant Shakspeare his open grave in *Hamlet*, but the impertinence of real earth in it we should resent; while the obtrusion of adjacent tombs and headstones at large is a capital crime. If we endure a play in which a man is pitched out of a window we must perforce endure the window; but the cornice, curtains and tassels; the three or four similar windows with nobody pitched out of them; the ancestral portrait on the wall and the suit of armor in the niche; what have these to do with the matter? We can see them anywhere at any time; we wish to know how not to see them. They are of the vulgarities. They distract attention from the actor, and under cover of the diversion he plays badly. Is it any wonder that he does not care to compete with a gilt cornice and a rep sofa?

On the Athenian stage, a faulty gesture, a sin in rhetoric, a false quantity or accent — these were visited with the dire displeasure of an audience in whom the art-sense was sweeter than honey and stronger than a lion; an audience that went to the play to see the play, to discriminate, compare, mark the conformity of individual practice to universal principle: in a word, to criticise. They enjoyed that rarest and ripest of all pleasures, the use of trained imagination. There was the naked majesty of art, there the severe simplicity of taste. And there came not the carpenter with his machines, the upholsterer with his stuffs, nor the painter with blotches of impertinent color, crazing the eye and grieving the heart.

THE MATTER OF MANNER

I HAVE sometimes fancied that a musical instrument retains among its capabilities and potentialities something of the character, some hint of the soul, some waiting echo from the life of each who has played upon it: that the violin which Paganini had touched was not altogether the same afterward as before, nor had quite so fine a fibre after some coarser spirit had stirred its strings. Our language is a less delicate instrument: it is not susceptible to a debasing contagion; it receives no permanent and essential impress but from the hand of skill. You may fill it with false notes, and these will speak discordant when invoked by a clumsy hand; but when the master plays they are all unheard — silent in the quickened harmonies of masters who have played before.

My design is to show in the lucidest way that I can the supreme importance of words, their domination of thought, their mastery of character. Had the Scriptures been trans lated, as literally as now, into the colloquial speech of the unlearned, and had the originals been thereafter inaccessible, only direct interposition of the Divine Power could have saved the whole edifice of Christianity from tumbling to ruin. —

Max Muller distilled the results of a lifetime of study, into two lines:

No Language without Reason.
No Reason without Language.

The person with a copious and obedient vocabulary and the will and power to apply it with precision thinks great thoughts. The mere glib talker — who may have a meagre vocabulary and no sense of discrimination in the use of words — is another kind of creature. A nation whose language is strong and rich and flexible and sweet — such as English was just before the devil invented dictionaries — has a noble literature and, compared with contemporary nations barren in speech, a superior morality. A word is a crystallized thought; good words are precious possessions, which nevertheless, like gold, may be mischievously used. The introduction of a bad word, its preservation, the customary misuse of a good one — these are sins affecting the public welfare. The fight against faulty diction is a fight against insurgent barbarism — a fight for high thinking and right living — for art, science, power — in a word, civilization. A motor without mechanism; an impulse without a medium of transmission; a vitalizing thought with no means to impart it; a fertile mind with a barren vocabulary — than these nothing could be more impotent. Happily they are impossible. They are not even conceivable.

Conduct is of character, character is of thought, and thought is unspoken speech. We think in words; we can not think without them. Shallowness or obscurity of speech means shallowness or obscurity of thought. Barring a physical infirmity, an erring tongue denotes an erring brain. When I stumble in my speech I stumble in my thought. Those who have naturally the richest and most obedient vocabulary are also the wisest thinkers; there is little worth knowing but what they have thought. The most brutish savage is he who is most meagrely equipped with words; fill him with words to the top of his gift and you would make him as wise as he is able to become.

The man who can neither write well nor talk well would have us believe that, like the taciturn parrot of the anecdote, he is “a devil to think.” It is not so. Though such a man had read the Alexandrian library he would remain ignorant; though he had sat at the feet of Plato he would be still unwise. The gift of expression is the measure of mental capacity; its degree of cultivation is the exponent of intellectual power. One may choose not to utter one’s mind — that is another matter; but if he choose he can. He can utter it all. His mind, not his heart; his thought, not his emotion. And if he do not sometimes choose to utter he will eventually cease to think. A mind without utterance is like a lake without an outlet: though fed with mountain springs and unfailing rivers, its waters do not long keep sweet.

Human speech is an imperfect instrument — imperfect by reason of its redundancy, imperfect by reason of its poverty. We have too many words for our meaning, too many meanings for our words. The effect is so confusing and embarrassing that the ability to express our thoughts with force and accuracy is extremely rare. It is not a gift, but a gift and an accomplishment. If comes not altogether by nature, but is achieved by hard, technical study.

In illustration of the poverty of speech take the English word “literature.” It means the art of writing and it means the things written — preferably in the former sense by him who has made it a study, almost universally in the latter by those who know nothing about it. Indeed, the most of these are unaware that it has another meaning, because unaware of the existence of the thing which in that sense it means. Tell them that literature, like painting, sculpture, music and architecture, is an art — the most difficult of arts — and you must expect an emphatic dissent. The denial not infrequently comes from persons of wide reading, even wide writing, for the popular writer commonly utters his ideas as, if he pursued the vocation for which he is better fitted, he would dump another kind of rubbish from another kind of cart — pull out the tailboard and let it go. The immortals have a different method.

Among the minor trials of one who has a knowledge of the art of literature is the book of one who has not. It is a light affliction, for he need not read it. The worthy bungler's conversation about the books of others is a sharper disaster, for it can not always be evaded and must be courteously endured; and, goodness gracious! how comprehensively he does not know! How eagerly he points out the bottomless abyss of his ignorance and leaps into it! The *censor literarum* is perhaps the most widely distributed species known to zoology.

The ignorance of the reading public and the writing public concerning literary art is the eighth wonder of the world. Even its rudiments are to these two great classes a thing that is not. From neither the talk of the one nor the writing of the other would a student from Mars ever learn, for illustration, that a romance is not a novel; that poetry is a thing apart from the metrical form in which it is most acceptable; that an epigram is not a truth tersely stated — is, in fact, not altogether true; that fable is neither story nor anecdote; that the speech of an illiterate doing the best he knows how is another thing than dialect; that prose has its prosody no less exacting than verse. The ready-made critic and the ready-made writer are two of a kind and each is good enough for the other. To both, writing is writing, and that is all there is of it. If we had two words for the two things now covered by the one word "literature" perhaps the benighted could be taught to distinguish between, not only the art and the product, but, eventually, the different kinds of the product itself. As it is, they are in much the same state of darkness as that of the Southern young woman before she went North and learned, to her astonishment, that the term "damned Yankee" was two words — she had never heard either without the other.

In literature, as in all art, manner is everything and matter nothing; I mean that matter, however important, has nothing to do with the *art* of literature; that is a thing apart. In literature it makes very little difference what you say, but a great deal how you say it. It is precisely this thing called style which determines and fixes the place of any written discourse; the thoughts may be the most interesting, the statements the most important, that it is possible to conceive; yet if they be not cast in the literary mold, the world can not be persuaded to accept the work as literature. What could be more important and striking than the matter of Darwin's books, or Spencer's? Does anyone think of Darwin and Spencer as men of letters? Their manner, too, is admirable for its purpose — to convince. Conviction, though, is not a literary purpose. What can depose Sterne from literature? Yet who says less than Sterne, or says it better?

It is so in painting. One man makes a great painting of a sheepcote; another, a bad one of Niagara. The difference is not in the subject — in that the Niagara man has all the advantage; it is in the style. Art — literary, graphic, or what you will — is not a matter of matter, but a matter of manner. It is not the What but the How. The master enchants when writing of a pebble on the beach; the bungler wearies us with a storm at sea. Let the dullard look to his theme and thought; the artist sets down what comes. He pickles it sweet with a salt savor of verbal felicity, and it charms like Apollo’s lute.

ON READING NEW BOOKS

IT is hereby confessed too — nay, affirmed — that this our time is as likely to produce great literary work as any of the ages that have gone before. There is no reason to suppose that the modern mind is any whit inferior in creative power to the ancient, albeit the moderns have not, as the ancients had, “the first rifling of the beauties of nature.” For our images, our metaphors, our similes and what not we must go a bit further afield than Homer had to go. We can no longer — at least we no longer should, though many there be who do — say “as red as blood,”

“as white as snow,” and so forth. Our predecessors harvested that crop and threshed it out before we had the bad luck to be born. But much that was closed to them is open to us, for still creation widens to man’s view.

No; the *laudatores temporis acti* are not to be trusted when they say that the days of great literature are past. At any time a supreme genius may rise anywhere on the literary horizon and, flaming in the sky, splendor the world with a new glory. But the readers of new books need not put on colored spectacles to protect their eyes. It is not they that will recognize him. They will not be able to distinguish him from the little luminaries whose advent they are always “hailing” as the dawn of a new and wonderful day. It is unlikely, indeed, that he will be recognized at all in his own day for what he is. It may be that when he “swims into our ken” we shall none of us eye the blue vault and bless the useful light, but swear that it is a malign and baleful beam. Nay, worse, he may never be recognized by posterity. Great work in letters has no inherent quality, no innate vitality, that will necessarily preserve it long enough to demand judgment from those qualified by time to consider it without such distractions as the circumstances and conditions under which it was produced. And only so can a true judgment be given. It is likely that more great writers have died and been forever forgotten than have had their fame bruited about the world. Ah, well, they must take their chances. I, for my part, am not going to read dozens of the very newest books annually lest I overlook a genius now and then. Dozens are large numbers when it is books that one is talking about. Probably not so many worth reading were written in either half of the Nineteenth Century.

The reader of new books is in the position of one who, having at hand a mine of precious metals, easy of working and by his utmost diligence inexhaustible, suffers it to lie untouched and goes prospecting on the chance of finding another as good. He may find one, though the odds are a thousand to one that he will not. If he does, he will find also that he did not need to be in a hurry about it. Every book that is worth reading is founded on something permanent in human nature or the constitution of things, and constructed on principles of art which are themselves eternal. Whether it is read in one decade or another — even in one century or another — is of no importance; its value and charm are unchanging and unchangeable. Reverting to my simile of the mine, a good book is located on the great mother-lode of human interest; whereas the work that immediately prospers in the praise of the multitude commonly taps some “pocket” in the country rock and the accidental deposit is soon exhausted.

The world is full of great books in lettered languages. If any one has lived long enough, and read with sufficient assiduity, to have possessed his mind of all the literary treasures accessible to him; if he has mastered all the tongues in which are any masterworks of genius yet untranslated; if the ages have nothing more to offer him; if he has availed himself of the utmost advantages that he can derive from the infallible censorship of time and advice of the posterity which he calls his ancestors — let him commit himself to the blind guidance of chance, stand at the tail end of a modern press and devour as much of its daily output as he can. That will, at least, enable him to shine in a conversation; and the social *illuminati* whose achievements in that way are most admired will themselves assure you that such are the purpose and advantage of “literary culture.” And of all drawing-room authorities, he or she is most reverently esteemed who can most readily and accurately say what dullard wrote the latest and stupidest novel, but can not say why.

ALPHABETES AND BORDER RUFFIANS

I

IT is hoped that Divine Justice may find some suitable affliction for the malefactors who invent variations upon the letters of the alphabet of our fathers — our Roman fathers. Within the past thirty years our current literature has become a spectacle for the gods. The type-founder, worthy mechanic, has asserted himself with an overshadowing individuality, defacing with his monstrous creations and revivals every publication in the land. Everywhere secret, black and midnight wags are diligently studying the alphabet to see how many of the letters are susceptible to mutation into something new and strange. Some of the letters are more tractable than others: the O, for example, can be made as little as you please and set as far above the line as desired, with or without a flyspeck in the center or a dash (straight or curved) below. Why should one think that O looks better when thrown out of relation to the other letters when Heaven has given him eyes to see that it does not?

Then there is the M — the poor M, who for his distinction as the biggest toad in the alphabetical puddle is subjected to so dreadful though necessary indignity in typoscript — the wanton barbarity of his treatment by the type-founders makes one blush for civilization, or at least wish for it. There are two schools of Masters; when their warfare is accomplished we shall know whether that letter is to figure henceforth as two sides of a triangle or three sides of a square. In A the ruffians have an easy victim; they can put his cross-bar up or down at will; it does not matter, so that it is put where it was not. For it must be understood that all these alterations are made with no thought of beauty: the sole purpose of the ruffians is to make the letters, as many as possible of them, different from what they were before. That is true generally, but not universally: in the titles of books and weekly newspapers, and on the covers of magazines, there is frequently an obvious revival, not merely of archaic forms, but of crude and primitive printing, as if from wooden blocks. Doubtless it is beautiful, but it does not look so. In our time the reversionaries have so far prevailed against common sense that in several periodicals the long-waisted is restored, and we have a renewal of the scandalous relations between the c and the t.

The most fantastic and grotesque of these reversions (happily it has not yet affected the text of our daily reading) is the restoration of the ancient form of U, which is now made a V again. This would seem to be bad enough, but it appears that it has not sated the passion for change; so the V also has again become a U! What advantage is got by the transposition those who make it have not condescended to explain. Altogether the unhappy man who conceives himself obliged to read the literature of the day — especially the part that shouts and screams in titles and catalogues, headlines, and so forth — may justly claim remission of punishment in the next world, so poignant are his sufferings in this.

II

Coincidently in point of time with these indisposing pranks, came in, and has remained in, a companion-fad of the artists who illustrate newspapers, magazines and books. These probably well-meaning but most undesirable persons, who could be spared by even the most unsparing critic, are affected with a weakness for borders to pictures. By means of borders — borders rectangular, borders triangular, borders circular, borders omniform and nulliform they can put pictures into pictures, like cards in a loose pack, stick pictures through pictures, and so confuse, distract and bewilder the attention that it turns its back upon the display, occupying itself with the noble simplicity and naturalness of the wish that all artists were at the devil. Nor are they satisfied with all that: they must make pictures of pictures by showing an irrelevant background outside their insupportable borders; by representing their pictures as depending from hooks; nailed upon the walls; spitted on pins, and variously served right. And still they are not happy: the picture must, upon occasion, transgress its border — a mast, a steeple, or a tree thrust through and rejoicing in its escape; an ocean spilling over and taking to its heels as hard as ever it can hook it. The taste that accepts this fantastic nonsense is creature to the taste that supplies it; in an age and country having any sense of the seriousness of art the taste could not exist long enough to outlast its victim’s examination on a charge of lunacy.

No picture should have a border; that has no use, no meaning, and whatever beauty is given to it the picture pays for through the nose. It is what may be called a contemporary survival: it stands for the frame of a detached picture — a picture on a wall. The frame is necessary for support and protection; but an illustration, like the female of the period, needs neither protection nor support, and the border would give none if it were needed. It is an impertinence without a mandate; its existence is due to unceasing suggestions flowing from the frames into heads where there is plenty of room.

III

Apropos of illustrations and illustrators, I should like to ask what is the merit or meaning of that peculiar interpretation of nature which consists in representing men and women with white clothing and black faces and hands. I do not say that it is not sufficiently realistic — that it is too conventional; I only “want to know.” I should like to know, too, if in illustrating, say, a football match in Ujiji the gentlemen addicted to that method here would show the players in black clothing, with white faces and hands? Or in default of clothing would they be shown white all over? If anybody can endarken my lightness on this subject I shall be glad to hear from him. I am groping in a noonday of doubt and plunged in a gulf of white despair.

Possibly these pictures are called silhouettes — I have heard them called so. Possibly if they were silhouettes they would be acceptable, for the genius of a Kanewka may lift the spectator above such considerations as right and left in the matter of legs and arms. But they are not silhouettes; the faces and hands are in shadow, the clothing in light. The figures are like Tennyson’s lotus eaters: “between the sun and moon”; the former has power upon the skin only, the latter upon the apparel. The spectator is supposed to be upon the same side as the moon. That is where the artist is. He draws the figures, the moon draws him, and I draw a veil over the affecting scene.

TO TRAIN A WRITER

THERE is a good deal of popular ignorance about writing; it is commonly thought that good writing comes of a natural gift and that without the gift the trick can not be turned. This is true of great writing, but not of good. Any one with good natural intelligence and a fair education can be taught to write well, as he can be taught to draw well, or play billiards well, or shoot a rifle well, and so forth; but to do any of these things greatly is another matter. If one can not do great work it is worth while to do good work and think it great.

I have had some small experience in teaching English composition, and some of my pupils are good enough to permit me to be rather proud of them. Some I have been able only to encourage, and a few will recall my efforts to profit them by dissuasion. I should not now think it worth while to teach a pupil to write merely well, but given one capable of writing greatly, and five years in which to train him, I should not permit him to put pen to paper for at least two of them — except to make notes. Those two years should be given to broadening and strengthening his mind, teaching him how to think and giving him something to think about — to sharpening his faculties of observation, dispelling his illusions and destroying his ideals. That would hurt: he would sometimes rebel, doubtless, and have to be subdued by a diet of bread and water and a poem on the return of our heroes from Santiago.

If I caught him reading a newly published book, save by way of penance, it would go hard with him. Of our modern education he should have enough to read the ancients: Plato, Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius, Seneca and that lot — custodians of most of what is worth knowing. He might retain what he could of the higher mathematics if he had been so prodigal of his time as to acquire any, and might learn enough of science to make him prefer poetry; but to learn from Euclid that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, yet not to learn from Epictetus how to be a worthy guest at the table of the gods, would be accounted a breach of contract.

But chiefly this fortunate youth with the brilliant future should learn to take comprehensive views, hold large convictions and make wide generalizations. He should, for example, forget that he is an American and remember that he is a Man. He should be neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Buddhist, nor Mahometan, nor Snake Worshiper. To local standards of right and wrong he should be civilly indifferent. In the virtues, so-called, he should discern only the rough notes of a general expediency; in fixed moral principles only time-saving predecisions of cases not yet before the court of conscience. Happiness should disclose itself to his enlarging intelligence as the end and purpose of life; art and love as the only means to happiness. He should free himself of all doctrines, theories, etiquettes, politics, simplifying his life and mind, attaining clarity with breadth and unity with height. To him a continent should not seem wide, nor a century long. And it would be needful that he know and have an ever present consciousness that this is a world of fools and rogues, blind with superstition, tormented with envy, consumed with vanity, selfish, false, cruel, cursed with illusions — frothing mad!

We learn in suffering what we teach in song — and prose. I should pray that my young pupil would occasionally go wrong, experiencing the educational advantages of remorse; that he would dally with some of the more biting vices. I should be greatly obliged if Fortune would lay upon him, now and then, a heavy affliction. A bereavement or two, for example, would be welcome, although I should not care to have a hand in it. He must have joy, too — O, a measureless exuberance of joy; and hate, and fear, hope, despair and love — love inexhaustible, a permanent provision. He must be a sinner and in turn a saint, a hero, a wretch. Experiences and emotions — these are necessaries of the literary life. To the great writer they are as indispensable as sun and air to the rose, or good, fat, edible vapors to toads. When my pupil should have had two years of this he would be permitted to try his ‘prentice hand at a pig story in words of one syllable. And I should think it very kind and friendly if Mr. George Sylvester Vierick would consent to be the pig.

1899.

AS TO CARTOONING

I

I WISH that the American artists whose lot is cast in the pleasant domain of caricature would learn something of the charm of moderation and the strength of restraint. Their “cartoons” yell; one looks at them with one’s fingers in one’s ears.

Did you ever observe and consider the dragon in Chinese art? With what an awful ferocity it is endowed by its creator — the expanded mouth with its furniture of curling tongue and impossible teeth, its big, fiery eyes, scaly body, huge claws and spiny back! All the horrible qualities the artist knows he lavishes upon this pet of his imagination. The result is an animal which one rather wishes to meet and would not hesitate to cuff. Unrestricted exaggeration has defeated its own purpose and made ludicrous what was meant to be terrible. That is, the artist has lacked the strength of restraint. A true artist could so represent the common domestic bear, or the snake of the field, as to smite the spectator with a nameless dread. He could do so by merely giving to the creature’s eye an expression of malevolence which would need no assistance from claw, fang or posture.

The American newspaper cartoonist errs in an infantile way similar to that of the Chinese; by intemperate exaggeration he fails of his effect. His men are not men at all, so it is impossible either to respect or detest them, or to feel toward them any sentiment whatever. As well try to evoke a feeling for or against a wooden Indian, a butcher’s-block, or a young lady’s favorite character in fiction. His deformed and distorted creations are entirely outside the range of human sympathy, antipathy, or interest. They are not even amusing. They are disgusting and, as in the case of foul names, the object of the disgust which they inspire is not the person vilified, but the person vilifying.

Perhaps I am not the average reader, but it is a fact that I frequently read an entire newspaper page of which one of these cartoons is the most conspicuous object, without once glancing at the picture’s title or observing what it is all about. I have the same unconscious reluctance to see it that I have to see anything else offensive.

I once sat reading a Republican newspaper. The whole upper half of the page consisted of a cartoon by a well-known artist. It represented Mr. Bryan, the Democratic candidate for the Presidency, standing on his head in a crowd (which

I think he would do if it would make him President, and I don't know that it would not) but I did not then observe it. The artist himself sat near by, narrowly watching me, which I did observe. A little while after I had laid down the paper he said carelessly: "O, by the way, what do you think of my cartoon of Bryan with his heels in the air?" And — Heaven help me! — I replied that I had been a week out of town and had not seen the newspapers!

A peculiarity of American caricature is that few of its "masters" know how to draw. They are like our great "humorists," who are nearly all men of little education and meagre reading. As soon as they have prospered, got a little polish and some knowledge of books, they cease to be "humorists."

One of the most popular of the "cartoonists" knows so little of anatomy that in most of his work the human arm is a fourth too short, and seems to be rapidly dwindling to a pimple; and so little of perspective that in a certain cartoon one of his figures was leaning indolently against a column about ten feet from where he stood.

A fashion has recently come in among the comic artists of getting great fun out of the lower forms of life. They have discovered and developed a mine of humor in the beasts and the birds, the reptiles, fishes and insects. Some of the things they make them say and do are really amusing. But here is where they all go wrong and spoil their work: they put upon these creatures some article of human attire — boots, a coat or a hat. They make them carry umbrellas and walking-sticks. They put a lightning rod on a bird's nest, a latch on a squirrel-hole in a tree, and supply a beehive with a stovepipe. Why? They don't know why; they have a vague feeling that incongruity is witty, or that to outfit an animal with human appurtenances brings it, somehow, closer to one's bosom and business. The effect is otherwise.

When you have drawn your cow with a skirt she has not become a woman, and is no longer a cow. She is nothing that a sane taste can feel an interest in. An animal, or any living thing, in its natural state — is always interesting. Some animals we know to have the sense of humor and all probably have language; so in making them do and say funny things, even if their speech has to be translated into ours, there is nothing unnatural, incongruous or offensive. But a cat in a shirtwaist, a rabbit with a gun — ah, me!

Obviously it is futile to say anything to those "dragons of the prime" who draw the combination map-and-picture — the map whereon cities are represented by clusters of buildings, each cluster extending half way to the next. It would be useless to protest that these horrible things are neither useful as maps nor pleasing as pictures. They are — well, to put it quite plainly, they sicken. Sometimes the savages who draw them sketch-in a regiment or so of soldiers —

this in “war-maps” of course — whose height is about five miles each, except that of the commander, which is ten. And if there is a bit of sea the villain who draws it will show us a ship two hundred miles long, commonly sailing up hill or down. It is useless to remonstrate against this kind of thing. The men guilty of it are little further advanced intellectually than the worthy cave-dweller who has left us his masterpieces scratched on rocks and the shoulder blades of victims of his appetite — the illustrious inventor of the six-legged mammoth and the feathered pig.

II

When in the course of human events I shall have been duly instated as head of the art department of an American newspaper, a decent respect for the principles of my trade will compel me to convene my cartoonists and utter the hortatory remarks here following:

“Gentlemen, you will be pleased to understand some of the limitations of your art, for therein lies the secret of efficiency. To know and respect one’s limitations, not seeking to transcend them, but ever to occupy the entire area of activity which they bound — that is to accomplish all that it is given to man to do. Your limitations are of two kinds: those inconsiderable ones imposed by nature, and the less negligible ones for which you will have to thank the tyrant that has the honor to address you.

“Your first and highest duty, of course, is to afflict the Eminent Unworthy. To the service of that high purpose I invite you with effusion, but shall limit you to a single method — ridicule. You may not do more than make them absurd. Happily that is the sharpest affliction that Heaven has given them the sensibility to feel. When one is conscious of being ridiculous one experiences an incomparable and immedicable woe. Ridicule is the capital punishment of the unwritten law.

“I shall not raise the question of your natural ability to make an offender hateful, but only say that it is not permitted to you to do so in this paper. The reason should be obvious: you can not make him hateful without making a hateful picture, and a paper with hateful pictures is a hateful paper. Some of you, I am desolated to point out, have at times sinned so grievously as to make the victim — or attempt to make him — not only hateful but offensive, not only offensive but loathsome. Result: hateful, offensive, loathsome cartoons, imparting their unpleasant character to the paper containing them; for the contents of a paper are the paper.

“And, after all, this folly fails of its purpose — does not make its subject offensive. An eminently unworthy person — a political ‘boss,’ a ‘ king of finance,’ or a ‘gray wolf of the Senate’ — is a man of normal appearance; his face, his figure, his postures, are those of the ordinary human being. In the attempt to make him offensive the caricaturist’s art of exaggeration is carried to such an extreme as to remove the victim from the domain of human interest. The loathing inspired by; the impossible creation is not transferred to the person so candidly misrepresented; the picture is made offensive, but its subject is untouched. As well try to hate a faulty triangle, a house upside down, a vacuum, or an abracadabra. Let there be surcease of so mischievous work; it is not desired that this paper shall be prosperous in spite of its artists, but partly because of them.

“True, to make a man ridiculous you must make a ridiculous picture, but a ridiculous picture is not displeasing. If well done, with only the needful, that is to say artistic, exaggeration, it is pleasing. We like to laugh, but we do not like — pardon me — to retch. The only person pleased by an offensive cartoon is its author; the only person pained by a ridiculous one is its victim.”

1900.

THE S. P. W.

WILL not some Christian gentleman of leisure have the benevolence to organize The Society for the Protection of Writers? Its work will be mainly educational; not much permanent good can be done, I fear, by assassination, though as an auxiliary means, that may be worthy of consideration. The public must be led to understand, each individual in his own way, that some part of a writer's time belongs to himself and has a certain value to him. If the experience of other writers equally ill known is the same as mine the sum of our wrongs is something solemn. Everybody, it would seem, feels at liberty to request a writer to do whatever the wild and wanton requester may wish to have done — to criticise (commend) a manuscript; send his photograph, or a copy of his latest book; write poetry in an album forwarded for the purpose and already well filled with unearthly sentiments by demons of the pit; set down a few rules for writing well, and so forth. It is God's truth that compliance with one-half of the "requests" made of me would leave me no time for my meals, and no meals for my time.

Of course I speak of strangers — persons without the shadow of a claim to my time and attention, and with very little to those of their heavenly Father. Indeed, they belong, as a rule, to a class that is more profited by escaping divine attention than by courting it: nothing should so fill them with consternation as a glance from the All-seeing Eye — though some of the finer and freer spirits of their bright band would think nothing of inviting the Recording Angel to forsake his accounts and scratch an appropriate sentiment on "the enclosed headstone."

When Mr. Rudyard Kipling once visited Montreal he gave orders at his hotel that he was not to be disturbed — whereby many worthy persons who called to "pay their respects" were sadly disappointed. One "prominent merchant," a "great admirer," took the trouble to introduce himself, and had the infelicitous fate to be informed by Mr. Kipling that he did not wish any new acquaintances — and sorrow perched upon that man's prominent soul. To a club of "literary" folk and "artists" who "tendered him a reception" he did not deign a reply; and those whose hope construed his silence as assent were made acquainted with the taste of their own teeth. In short, Mr. Kipling seems to have acted in Montreal very much like a modest gentleman desiring to be let alone and having a gentleman's fine scorn of vulgarity and intrusion.

When, I wonder, will Americans — Canadian Americans and United States Americans — learn that their admiration of a man's work in letters or art gives them no right to occupy his time and lengthen the always intolerably long muster-roll of his acquaintance? One would think that so wholesome a lesson in manners as Dickens gave us during his first visit, and later in the *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*, would suffice, and that for lack of students he would have no successor in the Chair of Deportment. But sycophancy, like hope, springs eternal in the human breast, and, crushed to earth, impudence like truth, will rise again, inviting a fresh humiliation. Well, as the homely proverb hath it, there is no great loss without some small gain — albeit the same usually accrues to the author of the loss. Montreal's Pen and Pencil Club having passed through the fire and been purified of its own respect, is now, by that privation and the affining stress of a common sorrow, fitted to affiliate with the Bohemian Club of San Francisco, which also knows the lift of the Kipling superior lip, and how he kipples.

Mr. Kipling's explanation that he did not desire any new acquaintances goes pretty nearly to the root of the matter. What man of sense does? — unless he is so ghastly unfortunate as to need them in his business. A man of brains has commonly a better use for his head than to make it serve as a rogues' gallery for an interminable succession of mental portraits, each of which he must be prepared to outfit with its appropriate name on demand. One can not, of course, and none but a fool would wish to, go through life without now and again making an acquaintance, even a friendship, as circumstances, civility and character may determine. Even chance may without absolutely uniform disaster play a part in such matters, though, as a rule, persons in whose lives accidental meetings entail lasting social relations are not particularly agreeable to meet. Your man of sense cares to know those whom he daily meets under such circumstances as would make it awkward if he did not know them; and he is accessible to all good souls whose wish to know him is supplemented by the frankness to ask an introduction and the civility to obtain his assent. It is thus that he will himself approach those whom he wishes to know, and in some cases those whom he merely suspects of the wish to know him. As to that invention of the devil, the purposeless and meaningless "chance introduction," it is the hatefulest thing in all the wild welter of social irritants. As a claim to acquaintance it has about the same validity as had, in the case of Kipling, the fact that Montreal's "prominent merchant" was a "great admirer."

If a man, like a red worm, could be multiplied by section he might perhaps undertake to know all whom the irritating freedom of American manners permits to be introduced to him, and, if he is a distinguished writer, all who "greatly admire" him. At least if they were properly brigaded he might undertake to commit to his multiplied memory the names or numerals of the several brigades. Even then it should be understood that failure through preoccupation with his own affairs should not be counted against him as proof of pride and an evil disposition. Some allowance should be made, too, for the probability that a man of letters may be unfitted for prodigious feats of recollection by the necessity of preserving some part of his time for use in — well, for example, in letters. As to "receptions,"

"banquets," and so forth, "tendered" him, and "calls."

"paid" him by strangers not of his profession, unless he is a literary impostor he will not accept the hospitality, nor, unless he is a social coward, submit to the intrusion. He knows that beneath these dreary and dispiriting "attentions" are motives transcending in ugliness a tangle of snakes under a warm rock.

There are other reasons why men of letters are not usually hot to make acquaintances. A good writer is a man of thought, for good writing, whatever else it may be, is, first of all, clear thinking. However much or little of his actual opinions he may choose to put into his work, he necessarily, as a man of thought, has convictions not commonly entertained by "persons whom one meets" — when one must. He is likely to be a dissenter from the established order of things — to hold in scant esteem the institutions, faiths, laws, customs, habits, morals and manners that are the natural outgrowth and expression of our barbarous race; the enactments of God's governing majority, the rogues and fools. To utter his views in conversation with Philistines and Prudes is to smite them sick with dismay and fill them topful of resentment and antagonism; to incite a contention in which the appurtenant stalled ox itself is imperiled in the bones of it. Yet in making the acquaintance of even a fairly educated person not a vulgarian and having no outward and visible signs of an inner disgrace the chances are ten to one that you are meeting a Philistine and prude by whom natural conduct and rational convictions are accounted immoral, and with whom conversation outside the worn ways of commonplace and platitude is impossible. If it is a woman she will probably insult you, all unconsciously, in a thousand and fifty ways by savage scruples inherited from a long line of pithecan ancestresses eared to hear in the rustle of every leaf the tonguefall of the arboreal Mrs. Grundy. If it is a man there should be no needless delay in insulting *him*.

Another imminent peril to him who travels the hard road of letters lies in the mad desire and iron resolution of his new acquaintances to talk about his work, with, of course, imperfect knowledge, understanding and discretion. This if he will not permit he is accounted proud; if he will, vain. Poor Hawthorne's experience with the worthy person who thought it the proper thing to make a graceful reference to his book, “The Red Letter A,” is typical and the record of that dreadful encounter comes home to every author’s bosom and business with a peculiar personal interest.

PORTRAITS OF ELDERLY AUTHORS

IF by good or much writing a modest old man have the misfortune to incur the curiosity of the public regarding his personal appearance, how shall he gratify it — and gratified it will somehow be — with the least distress to himself? Every public writer is familiar with the demand, from editor or publisher, "Please send photograph." Of course he may easily decline, but also, alas! editor or publisher may easily decline the work for embellishment or advertisement of which the photograph was sought. So what can the poor man do? And what photograph shall he send — that of yesteryear, or that of a decade or two ago? Concerning this singularly solemn matter I venture to quote from a letter of one who conducts an editorium:

"One sees the printed counterfeit of a dashing young chap whom all know as the distinguished author of 'The Bean Pot,' which, it is true, appeared twenty years ago. But the portrait is the familiar one always used by publishers to herald later books by the same author. One day the author himself calls. You have always thought of him as having a smooth, high brow topped with a fine cluster of coal-black curls, and the devil in his eyes. When this wrinkled, bald, and squeaky old man tells you that he is the author of 'The Bean Pot' you suffer a shock. All your selfrestraint is invoked to inhibit contumelious word and inhospitable act."

True, O king, but there is more to the matter. Every writer that is fore and fit cherishes a natural expectation of being known to posterity. If that hope is fulfilled he will be known to posterity by his last portrait. Who knows Bryant, Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes or Whitman as other than a venerable ruin? Who has in mind a middle-aged Hugo, or a young Goethe? It is with an effort that we grasp the fact that all these excellent gentlemen of letters were not born old. They were merely indiscreet; they sat for their portraits when they could no longer stand. By the happy mischance of early death, Byron, Shelley, Keats and Poe escaped the caricaturing of the years, and can snap their finger-bones at Age, the merciless cartoonist.

The portrait of twenty years ago no more faultily represents the old man as he is than that of yesterday represents him as he was. Either is false to some period of his life, and he may reasonably enough prefer that posterity shall know how he looked in his prime, rather than that his contemporaries shall know how he looked in his decay. It may be that it was in his prime that he did the characteristic work that begot the desire to know him.

With what portrait, then, shall one well stricken in years meet the contemporary demand? Perhaps it is best, and not unfair, to supply it with one made in one’s prime, conscientiously and conspicuously inscribed with its date — and that is what I have usually done myself. But I grieve to observe that the date is, as a rule, ingeniously effaced in the reproduction. But what does posterity find that is peculiarly pleasing in the portrait of a patient in the last stage of his fatal disorder?

WIT AND HUMOR

IF without the faculty of observation one could acquire a thorough knowledge of literature, the *art* of literature, one would be astonished to learn "by report divine" how few professional writers can distinguish between one kind of writing and another. The difference between description and narration, that between a thought and a feeling, between poetry and verse, and so forth — all this is commonly imperfectly understood, even by most of those who work fairly well by intuition.

The ignorance of this sort that is most general is that of the distinction between wit and humor, albeit a thousand times expounded by impartial observers having neither. Now, it will be found that, as a rule, a shoemaker knows calfskin from sole-leather and a blacksmith can tell you wherein forging a clevis differs from shoeing a horse. He will tell you that it is his business to know such things, so he knows them. Equally and manifestly it is a writer's business to know the difference between one kind of writing and another kind, but to writers generally that advantage seems to be denied: they deny it to themselves.

I was once asked by a rather famous author why we laugh at wit. I replied: "We don't — at least those of us who understand it do not." Wit may make us smile, or make us wince, but laughter — that is the cheaper price that we pay for an inferior entertainment, namely, humor. There are persons who will laugh at anything at which they think they are expected to laugh. Having been taught that anything funny is witty, these benighted persons naturally think that anything witty is funny.

Who but a clown would laugh at the maxims of Rochefoucauld, which are as witty as anything written? Take, for example, this hackneyed epigram: "There is something in the misfortunes of our friends which we find not entirely displeasing" — I translate from memory. It is an indictment of the whole human race; not altogether true and therefore not altogether dull, with just enough of audacity to startle and just enough of paradox to charm, profoundly wise, as bleak as steel — a piece of ideal wit, as admirable as a well cut grave or the headsman's precision of stroke, and about as funny.

Take Rabelais' saying that an empty stomach has no ears. How pitilessly it displays the primitive beast alurk in us all and moved to activity by our elemental disorders, such as the daily stress of hunger! Who could laugh at the horrible disclosure, yet who forbear to smile approval of the deftness with which the animal is unjungled?

In a matter of this kind it is easier to illustrate than to define. Humor [(which is not inconsistent with pathos, so nearly allied are laughter and tears) is Charles Dickens; wit is Alexander Pope. Humor is Dogberry; wit is Mercutio. Humor is "Artemus Ward," "John Phoenix," "Josh Billings," "Petroleum V. Nasby," "Orpheus C. 'Kerr," "Bill" Nye, "Mark Twain" — their name is legion; for wit we must brave the perils of the deep: it is "made in France" and hardly bears transportation. Nearly all Americans are humorous; if any are born witty, Heaven help them to emigrate! You shall not meet an American and talk with him two minutes but he will say something humorous; in ten days he will say nothing witty; and if he did, your own, O most witty of all possible readers, would be the only ear that would give it recognition. Humor is tolerant, tender; its ridicule caresses. Wit stabs, begs pardon — and turns the weapon in the wound. Humor is a sweet wine, wit a dry; we know which is preferred by the connoisseur. They may be mixed, forming an acceptable blend. Even Dickens could on rare occasions blend them, as when he says of some solemn ass that his ears have reached a rumor.

My conviction is that while wit is a universal tongue (which few, however, can speak) humor is everywhere a *patois* not "understanded of the people" over the province border. The best part of it — its "essential spirit and uncarnate self," is indigenous, and will not flourish in a foreign soil. The humor of one race is in some degree unintelligible to another race, and even in transit between two branches of the same race loses something of its flavor. To the American mind, for example, nothing can be more dreary and dejecting than an English comic paper; yet there is no reason to doubt that *Punch* and *Judy* and the rest of them have done much to dispel the gloom of the Englishman's brumous environment and make him realize his relationship to Man.

It may be urged that the great English humorists are as much read in this country as in their own; that Dickens, for example, has long "ruled as his demesne" the country which had the unhappiness to kindle the fires of contempt in him and Rudyard Kipling; that "the excellent Mr. Twain" has a large following beyond the Atlantic. This is true enough, but I am convinced that while the American enjoys his Dickens with sincerity, the gladness of his soul is a tempered emotion compared with that which riots in the immortal part of John Bull when that singular instrument feels the touch of the same master. That a jest of Mark Twain ever got itself all inside the four corners of an English understanding is a proposition not lightly to be accepted without hearing counsel.

1903.

WORD CHANGES AND SLANG

THAT respectable words lose caste, becoming the yellow dogs and very lepers of language, is a familiar fact hospitable to abundant illustration. One of these words has just fallen from my pen; fifty or a hundred years from now it will be impossible, probably, for any writer having a decent regard to the value of words to use the word “respectable” of anything truly meriting respect. For the past half-century it has been taking on a new and opprobrious character. Already the type of the “respectable” man, for example, is the prosperous, wool-witted Philistine, who complacently interlocks his fat fingers under the overhang of his stomach, and surveying the world from the eminence of his own esteem, tries vainly to imagine what it would be without him.

The word “respectable” is indubitably doomed: etymology can not save it, any more than it could save the word “miscreant,” which means by derivation, as at one time it meant actually, infidel, unbeliever. In its present abasement we may hear a faint, far whisper of the old, old days of religious intolerance. It stands in modern speech a verbal monument to the *odium theologicum* reposing beneath in the sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection.

A half-century ago the word “ awful” was plumped into the mire of slang, where it has weltered ever since, without actual immersion, but apparently with no hope of extrication. The writer who would use it to-day in a serious sense has need to be well assured of his hold upon the reader’s mood. It may perchance whisk that person away from the sublime to the ridiculous, with the neathanded nimbleness of Satan snatching a soul from the straight and narrow way, to send it spinning aslant into the red-and-black billows of everlasting damnation!

There are transformations of a contrary sort — promotions and elevations of words, as from slang to poetry. Between the extremes of speech which are the extremes of thought, for speech is thought — between the upper and the lower deep, the heaven and the earth, is a Jacob’s-ladder which these winged messengers of mind ascend and descend.

Grave advocacy of slang is not lacking: Professor Manley, of Harvard, is afield in defence of it. Some slang, he justly says, is “strong and poetical.” It is “strong” because graphic and vivid, “poetical” because metaphorical; for the life and soul of poetry is metaphor.

Professor Manley thinks that the story of the Prodigal Son could have been better told this way:

The world gave him the marble heart, but his father extended the glad hand.

Yes, if those phrases had then been first used professors of literature might, as he suggests, be now expatiating on the beautiful simplicity of the diction and bewailing the inferiority of modern speech. But that is no defence of slang. It would not have been slang, any more than avowed or manifest quotations from the Scriptures as we have them are slang.

Professor Manley is especially charmed with the phrase "bats in his belfry," and would indubitably substitute it for "possessed of a devil," the Scriptural diagnosis of insanity. I don't think the good man meant to be irreverent, but I should not care for his Revised Edition.

Somewhat more than a generation ago John Camden Hotten, of London, a publisher of "rare and curious books," put out a slang dictionary. Its editor-in-chief was that accomplished scholar, George Augustus Sala. It was afterward revised by Henry Sampson, famous later as an authority in matters of sport, to whom I gave such assistance as my little learning and no sportsmanship permitted. The volume was a thick one, but contained little that in this country and period we know (and suffer) as "slang." Slang, as the word was then used, is defined in the *Century Dictionary* thus: "The cant words or jargon used by thieves, peddlers, beggars, and the vagabond classes generally."

To-day we mean by it something different and more offensive. It is no longer the *argot* of criminals and semi-criminals, "whom one does not meet," and whose distance — when they keep it — lends a certain enchantment to the ear, but the intolerable diction of more or less worthy persons who obey all laws but those of taste. In its present generally accepted meaning the word is thus defined by the authority already quoted: "Colloquial words and phrases which have originated in the cant or rude speech of the vagabond or unlettered classes, or, belonging in form to standard speech, have acquired or have had given them restricted, capricious, or extravagantly metaphorical meanings, and are regarded as vulgar or inelegant."

It is not altogether comprehensible how a sane intelligence can choose to utter itself in that kind of speech, yet speech of that kind seems almost to be driving good English out of popular use. Among large classes of our countrymen, it is held in so high esteem that whole books of it are put upon the market with profit to author and publisher. One of the most successful of these, reprinted from many of our leading newspapers, is called, I think, *Fables in Slang* — containing, by the way, nothing that resembles a fable. This unspeakable stuff made its author rich, and naturally he "syndicated" a second series of the same.

Another was entitled *Love Sonnets of a Hoodlum,* and contained not a line of clean English. And it is hardly an exaggeration to say that in this country the writing of humorous and satirical verse is a lost art; slang has taken the place of wit; the jest that smacks not of the slum finds no prosperity in any ear.

Slang has as many hateful qualities as a dog bad habits, but its essential vice is its hideous lack of originality; for until a word or phrase is common property it is not slang. Wherein, then, is the sense or humor of repeating it? The dullest dunce in the world may have an alert and obedient memory for current locutions. For skill in the use of slang no other mental equipment is required. However apt and picturesque a particular expression may be, the wit of it is his only who invented and first used it: in all others its use is forbidden by the commandment “Thou shalt not steal.” A self-respecting writer would no more parrot a felicitous saying of unknown origin and popular currency than he would plagiarize a lively sentiment from Catullus or an epigram from Pope.

THE RAVAGES OF SHAKSPEARITIS

A FAMOUS author says that there is some kind of immoral emanation from the horse, and that it affects the character of every one who has much to do with the animal. I suppose it is something like that which suspires from the earth that is thrown out in digging a canal. Perhaps it is possible to construct a short and shallow waterway without stirring up enough of this badness to corrupt "all those in authority" along the line of it, but if the enterprise is of magnitude, like the Suez or the Panama project, results most disastrous to the morals of all engaged in the work, excepting those who do it, will certainly ensue, as we may soon have the happiness to observe.

A similar phenomenon is seen in the case of Shakspeare, whose resemblance to a horse and a canal has not, I flatter myself, been heretofore pointed out. The subtle suspiration from the work of the great dramatist, however, attacks, not the morals, but the intellect. It does not prostrate the sense of right and wrong, except in so far as this is dependent on mental health; it simply lays waste the judgment by dispersing the faculties, as the shadow of a hawk squanders a flock of feeding pigeons. Some time we shall perhaps have an English-speaking critic who will be immune to Shakspearitis, but as yet Heaven has not seen fit to "raise him up." And when we have him his inaccessibility to the infection will do him no good, for we shall indubitably put him to death.

The temptation to these reflections is supplied by looking into Mr. Arlo Bates's book, *Talks on Writing English,* where I find this passage quoted from Jeffrey:

> "Everything in him (Shakspeare) is in unmeasured abundance and unequaled perfection — but everything so balanced and kept in subordination as not to jostle or disturb or take the place of another. The most exquisite poetical conceptions, images and descriptions are given with such brevity and introduced with such skill as merely to adorn without loading the sense they accompany.... All his excellences, like those of Nature herself, are thrown out together; and, instead of interfering with, support and recommend each other."

This is so fine as to be mostly false. It is true that Shakspeare throws out his excellences in unmeasured abundance and all together; and nothing else in this passage is true. His poetical conceptions, images and descriptions are not “given” at all; they are “turned loose.” They came from his brain like a swarm of bees. They race out, as shouting children from a country school. They distract, stun, confuse. So disorderly an imagination has never itself been imagined. Shakspeare had no sense of proportion, no care for the strength of restraint, no art of saying just enough, no art of any kind. He flung about him his enormous and incalculable wealth of jewels with the prodigal profusion of a drunken youth mad with the lust of spending. Only the magnificence and value of the jewels could blind us to the barbarian method of distribution. They dazzle the mind and confound all the criteria of the judgment. Small wonder that the incomparable Voltaire, French, artistic in every fiber and trained in the severe dignities of Grecian art, called this lawless and irresponsible spendthrift a drunken savage.

Of no cultivated Frenchman is the judgment on Shakspeare much milder; the man’s “art,” his “precision,” his “perfection” — these are creations of our Teutonic imaginations, heritages of the time when in the rush-strewn baronial hall our ancestors surfeited themselves on oxen roasted whole and drank to insensibility out of wooden flagons holding a gallon each.

In literature, as in all else — in work, in love, in trade, in every kind of action or acquisition the Germanic nations are gluttons and drunkards. We want everything, as we want our food and drink, in savage profusion. And, by the same token, we rule the world.

1903.

ENGLAND’S LAUREATE

DOUBTLESS there are competent critics of poetry in this country, but it is Mr. Alfred Austin’s luck not to have drawn their attention. Mr. Austin is not a great poet, but he is a poet. The head and front of his offending seems to be that he is a lesser poet than his predecessor — his immediate predecessor — for his austerest critic will hardly affirm his inferiority to the illustrious Nahum Tate. Nor is Mr. Austin the equal by much of Mr. Swinburne, who as Poet Laureate was impossible — or at least highly improbable. If he had been offered the honor Mr. Swinburne would very likely have knocked off the Prime Minister’s hat and jumped upon it. He is of a singularly facetious turn of mind, is Mr. Swinburne, and has to be approached with an orange in each hand. —

Below Swinburne the differences in mental stature among British poets are inconsiderable; none is much taller than another, though Henley only could have written the great lines beginning,

Out of the dark that covers me, —
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul —

and he is not likely to do anything like that again; on that proposition
You your existence might put to the hazard and turn of a wager.

I wonder how many of the merry gentlemen who find a pleasure in making mouths at Mr. Austin for what he does and doesn’t do have ever read, or reading, have understood, his sonnet on

LOVE’S BLINDNESS.

Now do I know that Love is blind, for I
Can see no beauty on this beauteous earth,
No life, no light, no hopefulness, no mirth,
Pleasure nor purpose, when thou art not nigh.
Thy absence exiles sunshine from the sky,
Seres Spring’s maturity, checks Summer’s birth,
Leaves linnet’s pipe as sad as plover’s cry,

And makes me in abundance find but dearth.

But when thy feet flutter the dark, and thou
With orient eyes dawnest on my distress,
Suddenly sings a bird on every bough,
The heavens expand, the earth grows less and less,
The ground is buoyant as the ether now,
And all looks lovely in thy loveliness.

The influence of Shakspeare is altogether too apparent in this, and it has as many faults as merits; but it is admirable work, nevertheless. To a poet only come such conceptions as “orient eyes” and feet that “flutter the dark.”

Here is another sonnet in which the thought, quite as natural, is less obvious. In some of his best work Mr. Austin runs rather to love (a great fault, madam) and this is called

LOVE’S WISDOM.

Now on the summit of Love’s topmost peak
Kiss we and part; no further can we go;
And better death than we from high to low
Should dwindle, and decline from strong to weak.
We have found all, there is no more to seek;
All we have proved, no more is there to know;
And Time can only tutor us to eke
Out rapture’s warmth with custom’s afterglow.
We cannot keep at such a height as this;
For even straining souls like ours inhale
But once in life so rarefied a bliss.
What if we lingered till love’s breath should fail!
Heaven of my earth! one more celestial kiss,
Then down by separate pathways to the vale.

Will the merry Pikes of the Lower Mississippi littoral and the gamboling whale-backers of the Duluth hinterland be pleased to say what is laughable in all this?

It is not to be denied that Mr. Austin has written a good deal of “mighty poor stuff,” but I humbly submit that a writer is not to be judged by his poorest work, but by his best, — as an athlete is rated, not by the least weight that he has lifted, but by the greatest — not by his nearest cast of the discus, but by his farthest.

Surely a poet, as well as a racehorse, is entitled to the benefit of his “record performance.”

1903.

HALL CAINE ON HALL CAINING

MR. HALL CAINE once took the trouble to explain that he put in three years of hard work on his novel, *The Christian,* rewriting it many times and submitting the several and various parts of the work to experts. One kind of expert he failed to consult — a person having some knowledge of the English language. Amongst other insupportable characteristics the very first sentence in the book contains twelve prepositions and several clashing relatives and concludes with a sequence of four dactyls! The first sentence is as far as I have gone into the book, of which I know only that the manuscript was sold for a considerable fortune and that by many thousands of my fellow-creatures it is regarded as a distinctly immortaler work than the immortalest work of the week immediately preceding the date of its publication. Of Mr. Caine himself I know a little more: for example, that if he were cast away on an island never before seen by a white man, in a few months every native would have a brand-new novel and Mr. Caine all the cowry-shells in the island.

Following a well-established precedent, he was good enough also to impart the secret of his success as a writer of “best-selling” books — novels, of course. The secret is genius That seems simple enough and easy enough, but I submit that it was known before. Every author of a popular novel has been entirely conscious of his genius and the reviewers have known it as well as he. Nevertheless, it is always pleasing to find a workman who not only does not quarrel with his tools, but exhibits them with pride and affection, for we know then that he is a good workman, or — which means much the same thing — gets a good price for his product. Mr. Caine gets as good a price as any and is therefore as fit as any to expound his methods to the curious.

For it should be said that Mr. Caine does not hold that genius — even such genius as his — will produce so great work as his without some assistance from industry; one must take the trouble to write or dictate the great thoughts that genius inspires. One can not do this without some degree of application to the homely task. Indeed, Mr. Caine explains that he writes his novels twice before he permits us to read them once. One is glad to know that; it shows that, like the country editor, whose burning office attracted a large and intelligent class of spectators, he “strives to please.” He took fourteen months to write *The Eternal City.* That was most commendable, for with him time is money, but his patient diligence was equaled by that of a man that I know, who took fourteen months to read it.

Not only does Mr. Caine work slowly and surely; he advises lesser mortals to do so. “Write only when in the humor,” he says. This is good advice to any man, of whatever degree of genius, who is ambitious to turn out a “best seller,” but better advice would be: Don’t write at all. There are less fame in that, less profit and less taking of one’s self seriously; but there must be a feeling of greater security regarding the next world; for the author of a “best seller” is so conspicuous a figure in this world that he may be very sure that God sees him.

“Some people,” says Mr. Caine, meaning some persons, doubtless — he writes in Bestsellerese—” say that they can work best when they hurry most, but it is not the case with me, and I feel that inspiration does not come to the hurried mind so readily as it does when one is able to ponder deeply and shape one’s thoughts into some truly perfected form.” That is an impressive picture. One can almost see Mr. Caine, sitting at his table, head in hand, pondering profoundly on his inspiration and shaping his thoughts into that truly perfected form demanded by his exacting market. This really great man, with chestnuts in his lap, arointing the designing witch of spontaneity who would abstract them, is a spectacle that will linger long in his own memory. It is one of the most pleasing revelations of self that can be found in the literature of how to do it. Probably it will have the distinction of surviving all Mr. Caine’s other work by as much as six months. If done into bronze by a competent sculptor it may outlast even Mr. Caine himself, delighting and instructing an entire generation of Indiana novelists, the best in the world. Of course it is “on the cards” that he who has given us this solemn picture of himself in the veritable act of literary parturition may “whack up” something even better.

He is not so very old, and in the years remaining to him (may they be many and prosperous) he may produce something so incomparably popular that even the greatest of his previous work will be, in the luminous French of John Phoenix, *“frappé parfaitment froid!”* Indeed, Mr. Caine himself discerns that possibility very clearly. He says: “I do not believe I have yet produced my best work” — best selling work—” by any means.” It is to be hoped that he has not: yet it is also to be regretted that he has had the cruelty to add a new terror to death by saying so. To one engaged in dying, the thought of what he may be missing by leaving this vale of tears before Mr. Caine has written his *Eternalest City* must generate the wrench and stress of an added pang. It would have been kinder to make that forecast to his publisher only. Even *in articulo mortis* (if he have the bad luck to die first) that gentleman’s tantalizing vision of an unattainable earthly joy will come with enough of healing in its wings partly to salve the smart: coupled with the thought of what he will miss will come the consciousness of what he will not have to pay for it.

VISIONS OF THE NIGHT

I HOLD the belief that the Gift of Dreams is a valuable literary endowment — that if by some art not now understood the elusive fancies that it supplies could be caught and fixed and made to serve we should have a literature "exceeding fair." In captivity and domestication the gift could doubtless be wonderfully improved, as animals bred to service acquire new capacities and powers. By taming our dreams we shall double our working hours and our most fruitful labor will be done in sleep. Even as matters are, Dreamland is a tributary province, as witness "Kubla Khan."

What is a dream? A loose and lawless collocation of memories — a disorderly succession of matters once present in the waking consciousness. It is a resurrection of the dead, pell-mell — ancient and modern, the just and the unjust — springing from their cracked tombs, each "in his habit as he lived," pressing forward confusedly to have an audience of the Master of the Revel, and snatching one another's garments as they run. Master? No; he has abdicated his authority and they have their will of him; his own is dead and does not rise with the rest. His judgment, too, is gone, and with it the capacity to be surprised. Pained he may be and pleased, terrified and charmed, but wonder he can not feel. The monstrous, the preposterous, the unnatural — these all are simple, right and reasonable. The ludicrous does not amuse, nor the impossible amaze. The dreamer is your only true poet; he is "of imagination all compact."

Imagination is merely memory. Try to imagine something that you have never observed, experienced, heard of or read about. Try to conceive an animal, for example, without body, head, limbs or tail — a house without walls or roof. But, when awake, having assistance of will and judgment, we can somewhat control and direct; we can pick and choose from memory's store, taking that which serves, excluding, though sometimes with difficulty, what is not to the purpose; asleep, our fancies "inherit us." They come so grouped, so blended and compounded the one with another, so wrought of one another's elements, that the whole seems new; but the old familiar units of conception are there, and none beside. Waking or sleeping, we get from imagination nothing new but new adjustments: "the stuff that dreams are made on" has been gathered by the physical senses and stored in memory, as squirrels hoard nuts. But one, at least, of the senses contributes nothing to the fabric of the dream: no one ever dreamed an odor. Sight, hearing, feeling, possibly taste, are all workers, making provision for our nightly entertainment; but Sleep is without a nose. It surprises that those keen observers, the ancient poets, did not so describe the drowsy god, and that their obedient servants, the ancient sculptors, did not so represent him. Perhaps these latter worthies, working for posterity, reasoned that time and mischance would inevitably revise their work in this regard, conforming it to the facts of nature.

Who can so relate a dream that it shall seem one? No poet has so light a touch. As well try to write the music of an Æolian harp. There is a familiar species of the genus Bore *(Penetrator intolerabilis*) who having read a story — perhaps by some master of style — is at the pains elaborately to expound its plot for your edification and delight; then thinks, good soul, that now you need not read it. “Under substantially similar circumstances and conditions” (as the interstate commerce law hath it) I should not be guilty of the like offence; but I purpose herein to set forth the plots of certain dreams of my own, the “circumstances and conditions” being, as I conceive, dissimilar in this, that the dreams themselves are not accessible to the reader. In endeavoring to make record of their poorer part I do not indulge the hope of a higher success. I have no salt to put upon the tail of a dream’s elusive spirit.

I was walking at dusk through a great forest of unfamiliar trees. Whence and whither I did not know. I had a sense of the vast extent of the wood, a consciousness that I was the only living thing in it. I was obsessed by some awful spell in expiation of a forgotten crime committed, as I vaguely surmised, against the sunrise. Mechanically and without hope, I moved under the arms of the giant trees along a narrow trail penetrating the haunted solitudes of the forest. I came at length to a brook that flowed darkly and sluggishly across my path, and saw that it was blood. Turning to the right, I followed it up a considerable distance, and soon came to a small circular opening in the forest, filled with a dim, unreal light, by which I saw in the center of the opening a deep tank of white marble. It was filled with blood, and the stream that I had followed up was its outlet. All round the tank, between it and the enclosing forest — a space of perhaps ten feet in breadth, paved with immense slabs of marble — were dead bodies of men — a score; though I did not count them I knew that the number had some significant and portentous relation to my crime. Possibly they marked the time, in centuries, since I had committed it. I only recognized the fitness of the number, and knew it without counting. The bodies were naked and arranged symmetrically around the central tank, radiating from it like spokes of a wheel. The feet were outward, the heads hanging over the edge of the tank. Each lay upon its back, its throat cut, blood slowly dripping from the wound. I looked on all this unmoved. It was a natural and necessary result of my offence, and did not affect me; but there was something that filled me with apprehension and terror — a monstrous pulsation, beating with a slow, inevitable recurrence. I do not know which of the senses it addressed, or if it made its way to the consciousness through some avenue unknown to science and experience. The pitiless regularity of this vast rhythm was maddening. I was conscious that it pervaded the entire forest, and was a manifestation of some gigantic and implacable malevolence.

Of this dream I have no further recollection. Probably, overcome by a terror which doubtless had its origin in the discomfort of an impeded circulation, I cried out and was awakened by the sound of my own voice.

The dream whose skeleton I shall now present occurred in my early youth. I could not have been more than sixteen. I am considerably more now, yet I recall the incidents as vividly as when the vision was "of an hour's age" and I lay cowering beneath the bed-covering and trembling with terror from the memory. —

I was alone on a boundless level in the night — in my bad dreams I am always alone and it is usually night. No trees were anywhere in sight, no habitations of men, no streams nor hills. The earth seemed to be covered with a short, coarse vegetation that was black and stubbly, as if the plain had been swept by fire. My way was broken here and there as I went forward with I know not what purpose by small pools of water occupying shallow depressions, as if the fire had been succeeded by rain. These pools were on every side, and kept vanishing and appearing again, as heavy dark clouds drove athwart those parts of the sky which they reflected, and passing on disclosed again the steely glitter of the stars, in whose cold light the waters shone with a black luster. My course lay toward the west, where low along the horizon burned a crimson light beneath long strips of cloud, giving that effect of measureless distance that I have since learned to look for in Doré's pictures, where every touch of his hand has laid a portent and a curse. As I moved I saw outlined against this uncanny background a silhouette of battlements and towers which, expanding with every mile of my journey, grew at last to an unthinkable height and breadth, till the building subtended a wide angle of vision, yet seemed no nearer than before. Heartless and hopeless I struggled on over the blasted and forbidding plain, and still the mighty structure grew until I could no longer compass it with a look, and its towers shut out the stars directly overhead; then I passed in at an open portal, between columns of cyclopean masonry whose single stones were larger than my father's house.

Within all was vacancy; everything was coated with the dust of desertion. A dim light — the lawless light of dreams, sufficient unto itself — enabled me to pass from corridor to corridor, and from room to room, every door yielding to my hand. In the rooms it was a long walk from wall to wall; of no corridor did I ever reach an end. My footfalls gave out that strange, hollow sound that is never heard but in abandoned dwellings and tenanted tombs. For hours I wandered in this awful solitude, conscious of a seeking purpose, yet knowing not what I sought. At last, in what I conceived to be an extreme angle of the building, I entered a room of the ordinary dimensions, having a single window. Through this I saw the same crimson light still lying along the horizon in the measureless reaches of the west, like a visible doom, and knew it for the lingering fire of eternity. Looking upon the red menace of its sullen and sinister glare, there came to me the dreadful truth which years later as an extravagant fancy I endeavored to express in verse:

Man is long ages dead in every zone,
The angels all are gone to graves unknown;
The devils, too, are cold enough at last,
And God lies dead before the great white throne!

The light was powerless to dispel the obscurity of the room, and it was some time before I discovered in the farthest angle the outlines of a bed, and approached it with a prescience of ill. I felt that here somehow the bad business of my adventure was to end with some horrible climax, yet could not resist the spell that urged me to the fulfilment. Upon the bed, partly clothed, lay the dead body of a human being. It lay upon its back, the arms straight along the sides. By bending over it, which I did with loathing but no fear, I could see that it was dreadfully decomposed. The ribs protruded from the leathern flesh; through the skin of the sunken belly could be seen the protuberances of the spine. The face was black and shriveled and the lips, drawn away from the yellow teeth, cursed it with a ghastly grin. A fulness under the closed lids seemed to indicate that the eyes had survived the general wreck; and this was true, for as I bent above them they slowly opened and gazed into mine with a tranquil, steady regard. Imagine my horror how you can — no words of mine can assist the conception; the eyes were my own! That vestigial fragment of a vanished race — that unspeakable thing which neither time nor eternity had wholly effaced — that hateful and abhorrent scrap of mortality, still sentient after death of God and the angels, was I!

There are dreams that repeat themselves. Of this class is one of my own, which seems sufficiently singular to justify its narration, though truly I fear the reader will think the realms of sleep are anything but a happy hunting-ground for my night-wandering soul. This is not true; the greater number of my incursions into dreamland, and I suppose those of most others, are attended with the happiest results. My imagination returns to the body like a bee to the hive, loaded with spoil which, reason assisting, is transmuted to honey and stored away in the cells of memory to be a joy forever. But the dream which I am about to relate has a double character; it is strangely dreadful in the experience, but the horror it inspires is so ludicrously disproportionate to the one incident producing it, that in retrospection the fantasy amuses.

I am passing through an open glade in a thinly wooded country. Through the belt of scattered trees that bound the irregular space there are glimpses of cultivated fields and the homes of strange intelligences. It must be near daybreak, for the moon, nearly at full, is low in the west, showing blood-red through the mists with which the landscape is fantastically freaked. The grass about my feet is heavy with dew, and the whole scene is that of a morning in early summer, glimmering in the unfamiliar light of a setting full moon. Near my path is a horse, visibly and audibly cropping the herbage. It lifts its head as I am about to pass, regards me motionless for a moment, then walks toward me. It is milk-white, mild of mien and amiable in look. I say to myself: “This horse is a gentle soul,” and pause to caress it. It keeps its eyes fixed upon my own, approaches and speaks to me in a human voice, with human words. This does not surprise, but terrifies, and instantly I return to this our world.

The horse always speaks my own tongue, but I never know what it says. I suppose I vanish from the land of dreams before it finishes expressing what it has in mind, leaving it, no doubt, as greatly terrified by my sudden disappearance as I by its manner of accosting me. I would give value to know the purport of its communication.

Perhaps some morning I shall understand — and return no more to this our world.

THE REVIEWER

EDWIN MARKHAM'S POEMS

IN Edwin Markham's book, *The. Man With the Hoe and Other. Poems,* many of the "other poems" are excellent, some are great. If asked to name the most poetic — not, if you please, the "loftiest" or most "purposeful" — I think I should choose "The Wharf of Dreams." I venture to quote it:

Strange wares are handled on the wharves of sleep;
Shadows of shadows pass, and many; a light
Flashes a signal fire across the night;
Barges depart whose voiceless steersmen keep
Their way without a star upon the deep;
And from lost ships, homing with ghostly crews,
Come cries of incommunicable news,
While cargoes pile the piers a moon-white heap —
Budgets of dream-dust, merchandise of song,
Wreckage of hope and packs of ancient wrong,
Nepenthes gathered from a secret strand,
Fardels of heartache, burdens of old sins,
Luggage sent down from dim ancestral inns,
And bales of fantasy from No-Man's Land

Really, one does not every year meet with a finer blending of imagination and fancy than this; and I know not where to put a finger on two better lines in recent work than these:

And from lost ships, homing with ghostly crews,
Come cries of incommunicable news.

The reader to whom these strange lines do not give an actual physical thrill may rightly boast himself impregnable to poetic emotion and indocible to the meaning of it. Mr. Markham has said of Poetry — and said greatly:

She comes like the hush and beauty of the night,
And sees too deep for laughter;
Her touch is a vibration and a light

From worlds before and after.

But she comes not always so. Sometimes she comes with a burst of music, sometimes with a roll of thunder, a clash of weapons, a roar of winds or a beating of billow against the rock. Sometimes with a noise of revelry, and again with the wailing of a dirge. Like Nature, she "speaks a various language." Mr. Markham, no longer content, as once he seemed to be, with interpreting her fluting and warbling and "sweet jargoning," learned to heed her profounder notes, which stir the stones of the temple like the bass of a great organ.

In his "Ode to a Grecian Urn" Keats has supplied the greatest — almost the only truly great instance of a genuine poetic inspiration derived from art instead of nature. In his poems on pictures Mr. Markham shows an increasingly desperate determination to achieve success, coupled with a lessening ability to merit it. It is all very melancholy, the perversion of this man's high powers to the service of a foolish dream by artificial and impossible means. Each effort is more ineffectual than the one that went before. Unless he can be persuaded to desist — to cease interpreting art and again interpret nature, and turn also from the murmurs of "Labor" to the music of the spheres — the "surge and thunder" of the universe — the end of his good literary repute is in sight. He knows — does he know? — the bitter truth which he might have learned otherwise than by experience: that the plaudits of "industrial discontent," even when strengthened by scholars' commendations of a few great lines in the poem that evoked it, are not fame. He should know, and if he live long will know, that when one begins to be a "labor leader" one ceases to be a poet.

In saying to Mr. Markham, "Thou ailest here and here," Mrs. Atherton has shown herself better at diagnosis than he is himself in telling us what is the matter with the rich. "Why," she asks him, "waste a beautiful gift in groveling for popularity with the mob?... Striving to please the common mind has a fatal commonizing effect on the writing faculty." It is even so — nothing truer could be said, and Mr. Markham is the best proof of its truth. His early work, when he was known to only a small circle of admirers, was so good that I predicted for him the foremost place among contemporaneous American poets. He sang because he "could not choose but sing," and his singing grew greater and greater. Every year he took wider outlooks from "the peaks of song" — had already got well above the fools' paradise of flowers and song-birds and bees and women and had invaded the "thrilling region" of the cliff, the eagle and the cloud, whence one looks down upon man and out upon the world. Then he had the mischance to publish "The Man with the Hoe," a poem with some noble lines, but an ignoble poem. In the first place, it is, in structure, stiff, inelastic, monotonous. One line is very like another. The cæsural pauses fall almost uniformly in the same places; the full stops always at the finals. Comparison of the versification with Milton's blank will reveal the difference of method in all its significance. It is a difference analogous to that between painting on ivory and painting on canvas — between the dead, flat tints of the one and the lively, changing ones due to inequalities of surface in the other. If it seem a little exacting to compare Mr. Markham's blank with that of the only poet who has ever mastered that medium in English, I can only say that the noble simplicity and elevation of Mr. Markham's work are such as hardly to justify his admeasurement by any standard lower than the highest that we have.

My chief objection relates to the sentiment of the piece, the thought that the work carries; for although thought is no part of the poetry conveying it, and, indeed, is almost altogether absent from some of the most precious pieces (lyrical, of course) in our language, no elevated composition has the right to be called great if the message that it delivers is neither true nor just. All poets, even the little ones, are feelers, for poetry is emotional; but all the great poets are thinkers as well. Their sympathies are as broad as the race, but they do not echo the peasant's philosophies of the workshop and the field. In Mr. Markham's poem the thought is that of the labor union — even to the workworn threat of rising against the wicked well-to-do and taking it out of their hides.

> Who made him dead to rapture and despair,
> A thing that grieves not and that never hopes,
> Stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox?
> Who loosened and let down this brutal jaw?
> Whose was the hand that slanted back this brow?
> Whose breath blew out the light within this brain?

One is somehow reminded by these lines of Coleridge's questions in the Chamouni hymn, and one is tempted to answer them the same way: God. "The Man with the Hoe" is not a product of the "masters, lords and rulers in all lands": they are not, and no class of men is, accountable for him, his limitations and his woes, which are not of those "that kings or laws can cause or cure." The "masters, lords and rulers" are as helpless "in the fell clutch of circumstance" as he — which Mr. Markham would be speedily made to understand if appointed Dictator. The notion that the sorrows of the humble are due to the selfishness of the great is "natural," and can be made poetical, but it is silly. As a literary conception it has not the vitality of a sick fish. It will not carry a poem of whatever excellence through two generations. That a man of Mr. Markham's splendid endowments should be chained to the body of this literary death is no less than a public calamity.

For his better work in poetry Mr. Markham merits all the praise that he has received for “The Man with the Hoe,” and more. It is not likely that he is now under any illusion in the matter. He probably knows the real nature of his sudden flare of “popularity”; knows that to-morrow it will be “one with Nineveh and Tyre”; knows that its only service to him is to arrest attention of competent critics and scholars who would otherwise have overlooked him for a time. The “plaudits of the multitude” can not long be held by the poet, and are not worth holding. The multitude knows nothing of poetry and does not read it. The multitude will applaud you to-day, calumniate you to-morrow and thwack you athwart the mazzard the day after. He who builds upon the sea-sand of its favor holds possession by a precarious tenure; the wind veers and the wave

Lolls out his large tongue —
Licks the whole labor flat.

If the great have left the humble so wise that the philosophies of the factory and the plow-tail are true; if the sentiments and the taste of the mob are so just and elevated that its judgment of poetry is infallible and its approval a precious possession; *if* “the masses” have more than “a thin veneering of civilization,” and are not in peace as fickle as the weather and in anger as cruel as the sea; if these victims of an absolutely universal oppression “in *all* lands” are deep, discriminating, artistic, liberal, magnanimous — in brief, wise and good — it is difficult to see what they have to complain about. Mr. Markham, at least, is forbidden to weep for them, for he is a lover of Marcus Aurelius, of Seneca, of Epictetus. These taught, and taught truly — one from the throne of an empire, one writing at a gold table, and one in the intervals of service as a slave — the supreme value of wisdom and goodness, the vanity of power and wealth, the triviality of privation, discomfort and pain. Mr. Markham is a disciple of Jesus Christ, who from the waysides and the fields taught that poverty is not only a duty, but indispensable to salvation. So my *argumentum ad hominem* runs thus: The objects of our poet’s fierce invective and awful threats have suffered his *protégés* to remain rather better off than they are themselves — have appropriated and monopolized only what is not worth having. In view of this mitigating circumstance I feel justified in demanding in their behalf a lighter sentence. Let the portentous effigy of the French Revolution be forbidden to make faces at them.

I know of few literary phenomena more grotesque than some of those growing out of “The Man with the Hoe” — that sudden popularity being itself a thing which “goes neare to be fonny.” Mr. Markham, whom for many years those of us who modestly think ourselves *illuminati* considered a great poet whose greatness full surely was a-ripening, wrote many things far and away superior to “The Man,” but these brought him recognition from the judicious only, with which we would all have sworn that he was content. All at once he published a poem which, despite some of its splendid lines, is neither true in sentiment nor admirable in form — which is, in fact, addressed to peasant understandings and soured hearts. Instantly follow a blaze and thunder of notoriety, seen and heard over the entire continent; and even the coasts of Europe are “telling of the sound.” Straightway before the astonished vision of his friends the author stands transfigured! The charming poet has become a demagogue, a “labor leader” spreading that gospel of hate known as “industrial brotherhood,” a “walking delegate” diligently inciting a strike against God and clamoring for repeal of the laws of nature. Saddest of all, we find him conscientiously promoting his own vogue. He personally appears at meetings of cranks and incapables convened to shriek against the creed of law and order; speaks at meetings of sycophants eager to shine by his light; introduces lecturers to meetings of ninnies and femininnies convened to glorify themselves. When he is not waving the red flag of discontent and beating the big drum of revolution I presume he is resting — perched, St.-Simeon-Styliteswise, atop a lofty capital I, erected in the market place, diligently and rapturously contemplating his new identity. All of which is very sad to those of us who find it difficult to unlove him.

The trouble with Mr. Markham is that he has formed the habit of thinking of mankind as divided on the property line — as comprising only two classes, the rich and the poor. When a man has acquired that habit he is lost to sense and righteousness. Assassins sometimes reform, and with increasing education thieves renounce the error of theft to embrace the evangel of embezzlement; but a demagogue never gets again into shape unless he becomes wealthy. I hope Mr. Markham’s fame will so promote his pecuniary interest that it will convert him from the conviction that his birth was significantly coincident in point of time with the Second Advent. Only one thing is more disagreeable than a man with a mission, namely a woman with a mission, and the superior objectionableness of the latter is largely due to her trick of inspiring the former.

Mr. Markham seems now to look upon himself as the savior of society; to believe with entire sincerity that in his light and leading mankind can be guided out of the wilderness of Self into the promised land of Altruria; that he can alter the immemorial conditions of human existence; that a new Heaven and a new Earth can be created by the power of his song. Most melancholy of all, the song has lost its power and its charm. Since he became the Laureate of Demagogy he has written little that is poetry: in the smug prosperity that he reviles in others, his great gift “shrinks to its second cause and is no more.” That in the great white light of inevitable disillusion he will recover and repossess it, giving us again the flowers and fruits of a noble imagination in which the dream of an impossible and discreditable hegemony has no part, I should be sorry to disbelieve.

1899.

THE KREUTZER SONATA

I

NOTHING in this book directly discloses the author’s views of the marriage relation. The horrible story of Posdnyschew’s matrimonial experience — an experience which, barring its tragic finale, he affirms not to be an individual but a general one — is related by himself. There is no more in it to show directly what Tolstoi thinks of the matters in hand than there is in a play to show what the playwright thought. We are always citing the authority of Shakspeare by quotations from his plays — in which every sentiment is obviously conceived with a view to its fitness to the character of the imaginary person who utters it, and supplies no clew to the author’s convictions.

In *The Kreutzer Sonata*, however, the case is somewhat different. Whereas Shakspeare had in view an artistic (and commercial) result, Tolstoi’s intention is clearly moral: his aim is not entertainment, but instruction. To that end he foregoes the advantage of those literary effects which he so well knows how to produce, confining his exceptional powers to bald narrative, overlaid with disquisitions deriving their only vitality from the moral purpose everywhere visible.

A man marries a woman. They quarrel of course; their life is of course wretched beyond the power of words to express. Jealousy naturally ensuing, the man murders the woman. That is the “plot,” and it is without embellishment. Its amplification is accomplished by “preaching”; its episodes are sermons on subjects not closely related to the main current of thought. Clearly, the aim of a book so constructed, even by a skilful literary artist, is not an artistic aim. Tolstoi desires it to be thought that he entertains the convictions uttered by the lips of Posdnyschew. He has, indeed, distinctly avowed them elsewhere than in this book. Like other convictions, they must stand or fall according to the stability of their foundation upon the rock of truth; but the fact that they are held by a man of so gigantic powers as Tolstoi gives them an interest and importance which the world, strange to say, has been quick to recognize. —

Some of these convictions are peculiarly Tolstoi’s own; others he holds in common with all men and women gifted with that rarest of intellectual equipments, the faculty of observation, and blessed with opportunity for its use. Anybody can see, but observation is another thing. It is something more than discernment, yet may be something less than accurate understanding of the thing discerned. Such as it is, Tolstoi has it in the highest degree. Nothing escapes him: his penetration is astonishing: he searches the very soul of things, making record of his discoveries with a pitiless frankness which to feebler understandings is brutal and terrifying. To him nothing is a mere phenomenon; everything is a phenomenon *plus* a meaning connected with a group of meanings. The meanings he may, and in my poor judgment commonly does, misread, but the phenomenon, the naked fact, he will see. Nothing can hide it from him nor make it appear to him better than it is. It is this terrible power of discernment, with this unsparing illumination compelling the reluctant attention of others, which environs him with animosities and implacable resentments. His is the Mont Blanc of minds; about the base of his conspicuous, cold intelligence the Arve and Arvieron of ignorance and optimism rave ceaselessly. It is of the nature of a dunce to confound exposure with complicity. Point out to him the hatefulness of that which he has been accustomed to admire, and nothing shall thenceforward convince him that you have not had a guilty hand in making it hateful. Tolstoi, in intellect a giant and in heart a child, a man of blameless life, and spotless character, devout, righteous, spectacularly humble and aggressively humane, has had the distinction to be the most widely and sincerely detested man of two continents. He has had the courage to utter a truth of so supreme importance that one-half the civilized world has for centuries been engaged in a successful conspiracy to conceal it from the other half — the truth that the modern experiment of monogamie marriage by the dominant tribes of Europe and America is a dismal failure. He is not the first by many who has testified to that effect, but he is the first in our time whose testimony has arrested so wide and general attention — a result that is to be attributed partly to his tremendous reputation and partly to his method of giving witness. He does not in this book deal in argument, is no controversialist. He says the thing that is in him to say and we can take it or leave it.

The Kreutzer Sonata is not an obscene nor even an indelicate book: the mind that finds it so is an indelicate, an obscene mind. It is not, according to our popular notions, “a book for young girls.” Nevertheless, it is most desirable that young girls should know — preferably through their parents who can speak with authority of experience — the truth which it enforces: namely, that marriage, like wealth, offers no hope of lasting happiness. Despite the implication that “they lived happily ever after,” it is not for nothing that the conventional love story ends with the chime of wedding bells. As the Genius vanished when Mirza asked him what lay under the cloud beyond the rock of adamant, so the story teller prudently forestalls further investigation by taking himself off. He has an innate consciousness that the course of true love whose troubled current he has been tracing begins at marriage to assume something of the character of a raging torrent.

Tolstoi strikes hard: not one man nor woman a year married but must wince beneath his blows. They are all members of a dishonest conspiracy. They conceal their wounds and swear that all is right and well with them. They give their Hell a good character, but in their secret souls they chafe and groan under the weight and heat of their chains. They come out from among their corruption and dead men's bones only to give the sepulchre another coating of whitewash and call attention to its manifold advantages as a dwelling. They are like the members of some "ancient and honorable order," who gravely repeat to others falsehoods by which they were themselves cheated into membership. The minatory oath alone is lacking, its binding restraint supplied by the cowardice that dares not brave the resentment of coconspirators and the fury of their dupes.

No human institution is perfect, nor nearly perfect. None comes within a world's width of accomplishing the purpose for which it was devised, and all in time become so perverted as to serve a contrary one. But of all institutions, marriage as we have it here, and as they evidently have it in Russia, most lamentably falls short of its design. Nay, it is the one of them which is become most monstrously wrenched awry to the service of evil. To have observed this — to have had the intrepidity to affirm it in a world infested with fools and malevolents who can not understand how anything can be known except by the feeble and misleading light of personal experience — that is much. It marks Tolstoi in a signal way as one eminent above the cloud-region, with a mental and spiritual outlook unaffected by the ground-reek of darkened counsel and invulnerable to the slings and arrows of defamation. Nevertheless, while admiring his superb courage and attesting the clarity of his vision, I think he imperfectly discerns the underlying causes of the phenomena that he reports.

Schopenhauer explains the shamefacedness of lovers, their tendency to withdraw into nooks and corners to do their wooing, by the circumstance that they plan a crime — they conspire to bring a human soul into a world of woe. Tolstoi takes something of the same ground as to the nature of their offence. Marriage he thinks a sin, and being a religionist regards the resulting and inevitable wretchedness as its appointed punishment.

"Little did I think of her physical and intellectual life," says Posdnyschew, in explanation of conjugal antagonism. "I could not understand whence sprang our mutual hostility, but how clearly I see now! This hostility was nothing but the protest of human nature against the beast that threatened to devour it. I could not understand this hatred. And how could it have been different? This hostility was nothing else than the mutual hatred of two accessories in a crime — that of instigation, that of accomplishment."

Marriage being a sin, it follows that celibacy is a virtue and a duty. Tolstoi has the courage of his convictions in this as in other things. He is too sharp not to see where this leads him and too honest to stop short of its logical conclusion. Here he is truly magnificent! He perceives that his ideal, if attained, would be annihilation of the race. That, as he has elsewhere in effect pointed out, is no affair of his. He is not concerned for the perpetuity of the race, but for its happiness through freedom from the lusts of the flesh. What is it to him if the god whom, oddly enough, he worships has done his work so badly that his creatures can not be at the same time chaste, happy and alive? Every one to his business — God as creator and, if he please, preserver; Tolstoi as reformer.

For his views on the duty of celibacy, it is only fair to say, Tolstoi goes directly to the teaching of Jesus Christ, with what accuracy of interpretation, not being skilled in theology I am unwilling to say.

From his scorn of physicians it may be inferred that our author is imperfectly learned in their useful art, and therefore unfamiliar with whatever physiological side the question of celibacy may have. It is perhaps sufficient to say that in the present state of our knowledge the advantages of a life ordered after the Tolstoian philosophy seem rather spiritual than physical. Doubtless "they didn't know everything down in Judee," but St. Paul appears to have had a glimmering sense of this fact, if it is a fact.

To attribute the miseries which are inseparable from marriage as the modern Caucasian has the heroism to maintain it to any single and simple cause is most unphilosophical; our civilization is altogether too complex to admit of any such cheap and easy method. Doubtless there are many factors in the problem; a few, however, seem sufficiently obvious to any mind which, having an historical outlook wider than its immediate environment in time and space, with extensive view Surveys mankind from China to Peru.

The monogamous marriage ignores, for example, the truth that Man is a polygamous animal. Of all the men and women who have been born into this world, only one in many has ever even so much as heard of any other system than polygamy. To suppose that within a few brief centuries monogamy has been by law and by talking so firmly established as effectually to have stayed the momentum of the original instinct is to hold that the day of miracles is not only not past, but has really only recently arrived. It implies, too, and entails, a blank blindness to the most patent facts of easy observation. With admirable gravity the modern Caucasian has legislated himself into theoretical monogamy, but he has, as yet, not effected a repeal of the laws of nature, and has in truth shown very little disposition to disregard them and observe his own. The men of our time and race are in heart and life about as polygamous as their good ancestors were before them, and everybody knows it who knows anything worth knowing. But not she to whom the knowledge would have the greatest practical value; the person whom all the powers of modern society seem in league to cheat; the young girl.

Another cause of the wretchedness of the married state — but of this Tolstoi seems inadequately conscious — is that marriage confers rights deemed incalculably precious which there is no means whatever of confirming and enforcing. The consciousness that these rights are held by the precarious tenure of a "vow" which never had, to one of the parties, much more than a ceremonial significance, and a good faith liable, in the other, to suspension by resentment and the vicissitudes of vanity and caprice; the knowledge that these rights are exposed to secret invasion invincible to the most searching inquiry; the savage superstition that their invasion "dishonors" the one to whom it is most hateful, and who of all persons in the world is least an accomplice — all this begets an apprehension which grows to distrust, and from distrust to madness. The apprehension is natural because reasonable: its successive stages of development are what you will, but the culmination is disaster and the wreck of peace.

Of the sombre phenomena of the marriage relation observable by men like Tolstoi, with eyes in their heads, brains behind the eyes and not too much scruple in selecting points of view outside the obscurity and confusion of a personal experience, a hundred additional explanations might be adduced, all more valid, in my judgment, than that to which he pins his too ready faith; but those noted seem sufficient. With regard to any matter touching less nearly the unreasoning sensibilities of the human heart, they would, I think, be deemed more than sufficient.

What, then — rejecting Tolstoi's prescription — is the remedy? In view of the failure of our experiment should we revert to first principles, adopting polygamy with such modifications as would better adapt it to the altered situation? Ought we to try free love, requiring the state to keep off its clumsy hands and let men and women as individuals manage this affair, as they do their religions, their friendships and their diet?

For my part I know of no remedy, nor do I believe that one can be formulated. It is of the nature of the more gigantic evils to be irremediable — a truth against which poor humanity instinctively revolts, entailing the additional afflictions of augmented nonsense and wasted endeavor. Nevertheless something may be done in mitigation. The marriage relation that we have we shall probably continue to have, and its Dead Sea fruits will grow no riper and sweeter with time. But the lie that describes them as luscious and satisfying is needless. Let the young be taught, not celibacy, but fortitude. Point out to them the exact nature of the fool's paradise into which they will pretty certainly enter and perhaps ought to enter. Teach them that the purpose of marriage is whatever the teacher may conceive it to be, but *not* happiness. Mercifully reduce the terrible disproportion between expectation and result. In so far as *The Kreutzer Sonata* accomplishes this end, in so far as it teaches this lesson, it is a good book.

II

Tolstoi is a literary giant. He has a "giant's strength," and has unfortunately learned to "use it like a giant" — which, I take it, means not necessarily with conscious cruelty, but with stupidity. Excepting when he confines himself to pure romance, and to creation of works which, after the manner of Dr. Holmes, may be described as medicated fable — the man seems to write with the very faintest possible consciousness of anything good or even passably decent, in human nature. His characters are moved by motives which are redeemed from monstrous baseness only by being pettily base. In *War and Peace,* for example, — a book so crowded with characters, historical and imaginary, that the author himself can not carry them in his memory without dropping them all along his trail — there is but one person who is not either a small rascal or a great fool or both. Such a discreditable multitude of unpleasant persons no one but their maker — in whose image they are not made — ever collected between the covers of a single book. From Napoleon down to the ultimate mujik they go through life with heads full of confusion, hearts distended with selfishness and mouths running over with lies. If Tolstoi wrote as a satirist, with obvious cynicism, all this would be easily enough understood; but nothing, evidently, is further from his intention; he is essentially a preacher and honestly believes that his powerful caricatures are portraits from life; or rather — for that we may admit — that the total impression derived from a comprehensive view of them is a true picture of human character, charged in its every shadow (there are no lights) with instruction and edification. I can not say how it goes with others, but all that is left to me by this hideous "march past" of detestables; this sombre tableau of the intellectually dead; this fortuitous concourse of a random rascalry unlawfully begotten of an exuberant fancy and a pitiless observation—" all of it all" that remains with me is a taste in the mouth which I can only describe as pallid.

In his personal character Tolstoi seems to be the only living Christian, in the sense in which Christ was a Christian — whatever credit may inhere in that —

of whom we have any account; but in judging his books we have nothing to do with that. He has a superb imagination and must be master of a matchless style, for we get glimpses of it, even through the translations of men who are probably familiar enough with Russian and certainly altogether too familiar with English. The trouble with him is, as Mr. Matthew Arnold said of Byron, he doesn't know enough. He sees everything, but he has not freed his mind from the captivating absurdity, so dominant in the last generation, that human events occur without human agency, individual will counting for no more in the ordering of affairs than does a floating chip in determining the course of the river. The commander of an army is commanded by his men. Napoleon was pushed by his soldiers hither and thither all over Europe; they by some blind, occult impulse which Tolstoi can not understand. He goes so far as to affirm that an army takes one route instead of another by silent consent and understanding among its widely separated fractions; infantinely unaware that not one of them could move a mile without a dozen sets of detailed instructions to commanders, quartermasters, chiefs of ordnance, commissaries of subsistence, engineers and so forth. Tolstoi has entered the camp of History with a flag of truce and been blindfolded at the outpost.

When Tolstoi trusts to his imagination and doesn't need to know anything, he is inaccessible to censure. *The Cossacks,* one of his earlier works, is a prodigiously clever novel. About a half of the book, as I remember it, concerns itself with the killing of a single Circassian by a single Cossack. The shadow of that event is over it all, ominous, portentous; and I know of nothing finer nor more dramatic in its way than the narrative of the death of the dead man's avengers, knee to knee among the rain-pools of the steppe, chanting through their beards their last fierce defiance. What to this was the slaughter at Austerlitz, the conflagration at Moscow, flinging its black shadows over half a world, if we have not Hugo's eyes to see them through? Only the gods look large upon Olympus.

But do me the favor to compare Tolstoi at his worst with other popular writers at their best. It is eagle and hens. It is sun and tallow candles. From the heights where he sits conspicuous, they are visible as black beetles. Nay, they are slugs; their brilliant work is a shine of slime which dulls behind them even as they creep. When one of these godlets dies the first man to pass his grave will say: "Why has he no monument?" — the second: "What! a monument?" — the third: "Who the devil was he?"

1890.

EMMA FRANCES DAWSON

IN nearly all of Miss Dawson’s work that I have seen is an elusive something defying analysis, even description — something that is not in the words. I do not know how she gets it where it is; I never could either surprise her secret by swift strokes of attention, come upon it by patient still-hunting, nor in any way get at the trick of if. I can name it only in metaphor as a light behind the words; a light like that of Poe’s “red litten eves”; a light such as falls at sunset upon desolate marshes, tingeing the plumage of the tall heron and prophesying the joyless laugh of the loon. That selfsame light shines somewhere through and under Doré’s long parallel cloud-bands along his horizons, and I have seen it, with an added bleakness, backgrounding the tall rood in the Lone Mountain cemetery of San Francisco. I dare say it is all very easy; — to Miss Dawson: she simply writes and some “ remote, unfriended, melancholy” ancestor stands by to “do the rest.”

The publication of Miss Dawson’s *An Itinerant House and Other Stories* is an event, doubtless, which does not seem at present — at least not to that cave-bat, “the general reader” — to cut much of a figure, but I shall miss my guess if it do not hold attention when Father Time has much that the world admires snugly tucked away in his wallet—”alms for oblivion.” This is a guess only: I am not a believer in the doctrine that good literary work has some inherent quality compelling recognition and conferring vitality. Good literary work, like anything else, endures if the conditions favor, perishes if they do not; so my guess, upon examination, dwindles to a hope compounded of rather more desire than expectation.

Miss Dawson’s book is not to be judged as other books. It will help the reader to a just appreciation of this wonderful woman’s work in letters if he understand beforehand that the world she sees is not the world we see; that her men and women are as unearthly as their environment, making no demands whatever on our sympathies, our affections, our admiration. Indeed, she cares nothing for them herself, putting an end to their strange, unhuman existence when done with them as indifferently as a tired player removes the chessmen from board to box. This, for example, is how she disposes of a few that have become superfluous:

“Mrs. Anson proved a hard-faced, cold-hearted Cape Cod woman, a scold and drudge, who hated us as much as we disliked her. Homesick and unhappy, she soon went East and died. Within a year Anson was found dead where he had gone hunting in the Saucelito woods, supposed a suicide; Dering was hung by the Vigilantes and the rest were scattered on the four winds."

But when Miss Dawson's narrative flows with a loitering current you may commonly hear the sound of slow music and get glimpses of a darkened stage.

These stories have all a good deal of the supernatural and very little of the natural. The lover of "realism" (who is sometimes pleased to call himself a "veritist") may with great profit diligently let them alone; as may also the mere idler, who reads with a delinquent advertence, to pass the time. Miss Dawson is too true an artist to write for a slack attention: every page of her book is rich with significances underlying the narrative like gold in the bed of a stream. And this is especially true of the poems.

Those poems, by the way — how came they there? Why is there a poet in every story, whose verses have nothing to do with the action of the piece, though always in harmony with its spirit? I think I know the secret of this irrelevant feature of the work, and a pathetic one it is: Miss Dawson puts her poetry into her prose because she can not get it published otherwise — the more shame to our schools and public. Not all her verse is as good as the prose that carries it. Some of it is ungrammatical, and two whole pages of one piece have only the finals "ain" and "aining" — an insupportable performance. Much of it lacks ease, fluency; but all is worth reading and reading again; and in the "Ballade of the Sea of Sleep" are an elevation and largeness that no living poet has excelled.

The scene of all Miss Dawson's stories is San Francisco — her San Francisco — San Francisco as she sees it from her eyrie atop of "Russian Hill." To her it is a dream city — a city of wraiths and things forbidden to the senses — of half-heard whispers from tombs of men long dead and damned — of winds that sing dirges, clouds that are signs and portents, fogs peopled with fantastic existences pranking like mad, as is the habit of all sea-folk on shore leave — a city where it is never morning, where the birds never sing, where children are unknown, and where at night the street-lights at the summits of the hills "flare as if out of the sky," signaling mysterious messages from another world. In short, this sister to Hugo has breathed into the gross material San Francisco so strange a soul that to him who has read her book the name of the town must henceforth have a meaning that never before attached to any word of human speech. Wherefore I say of this book that it is a work of supreme genius; and I try to have faith to believe that whatever else may befall it, while the language in which it is written remains intelligible to men it will not fail to challenge the attention and engage the interest of the judicious.

To those who have feared the effect upon Miss Dawson's powers of time, sorrow, privation and hope deferred, it is a joy to note that her latest and longest story, “A Gracious Visitation” — the one written especially for this volume, the others being from twenty to thirty years old — is the best. It is indeed a marvelous creation, and I know of nothing in literature Having a sufficient resemblance to it to serve as a basis of comparison. In point of mere originality, I should say it is unsurpassed and unsurpassable; the ability to figure to oneself a story more novel and striking would, in a writer, imply the ability to write one — which I think the most capable writer would be slowest to claim. The best of the other stories is by no means the one that gives its title to the book. I shall not undertake to say which is best, but shall conclude by quoting the “envoy” of “The Ballade of the Sea of Sleep”;

Archangels, princes, thrones, dominions, powers,
Which of you dwarf the centuries to hours,
Or swell the moments into aeons’ sweep?
Is it the Prince of Darkness, then, who cowers
Below the dream-waves of the Sea of Sleep?

MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF

UPON the cover of the English translation of this young artist’s journal is displayed Gladstone’s judgment that it is “a book without a parallel.” That is not very high praise, certainly; it may be said of many books which the judicious would “willingly let die”; and in this case the judicious will hope that a parallel work may be long denied to the taste that craves it. The book from cover to cover is distinctly unwholesome. It has the merit of candor; its frankness is appalling. Yet one can not help suspecting the quality of that frankness. Did this young girl, who began at twelve, and for a dozen years — almost to the day of her death — poured into her journal her heterogenous and undigested thoughts, fancies and feelings with a view to publication and a hope of fame as a result of it — did she after all make as honest a record as she doubtless supposed herself to be doing? It will hardly seem so to one who has written much for publication.

Such a one may justly enough distrust, although he can not altogether reject, the evidences of the text, which are necessarily studied and interpreted in the light of the text itself; but knowing something of the conditions of literary composition he will be slow to believe that the young diarist could at the same time remember and forget that she was writing to be read. Nor will it seem to him that his doubt if she put down all that came into her head is too hardy an assumption of knowledge of how Russian young women think and feel. Something doubtless must be allowed for individual character and disposition in this case as in another, but then, too, one must be permitted to remember that even a Russian young woman of more or less consuming self-consciousness and sex-consciousness is merely human, belonging to the race which daily thanks its Maker for not putting windows in breasts. Even a Russian maiden with a private method of estimating her intellectual importance who should write *all* her thoughts would probably be invited to stay her steps toward the Temple of Fame long enough to make acquaintance of the police.

But if the diarist has not written down all her thoughts and feelings, how can the reader be quite sure that she has accurately reported those of them that she professes to give? — how that they are not afterthoughts, some of them, at least, evolved in the process of revision for the press? I do not know if upon this point there is any other than internal evidence and the probabilities; my reading in the somewhat raw and raucous literature of the subject has not been quite exhaustive. The internal evidence and the probabilities point pretty plainly to revision of the text, for which the reader might have been more grateful if it had been more thoroughly made. Much of the book, in truth, might advantageously have been revised out of existence — much of what is left, I mean.

Marie Bashkirtseff was born in 1860 and died of consumption in 1884. She was given a good education and knew some of the advantages of travel. Having a love of art — which she mistook for ability to produce works of art — she became a painter and by dint of study under the spur of vanity performed some fairly creditable work which, while the fashion of reading her journal was "on," commanded fair prices and brought gladness and sunshine into the homes of good Americans of long purses and short schooling. She was perhaps rather more than less successful in painting than in expounding the excellences of the paintings of others. In such criticism as she gives us in her journal one does not detect any understanding. "This is not art; it is Nature herself"; "the face is real; it is flesh and blood" — such judgments as these are sprinkled all through the book, recalling the dear old familiar jargon of the "dramatic critics" of the newspapers; "Jonesmith was no longer himself but Hamlet"; "Brown-Robinson completely identified himself with his role, and it was Julius Cæsar himself that we saw before our eyes." The crudest and most meaningless form of art criticism is to declare the representation the thing represented, and poor Marie Bashkirtseff seldom goes further in accounting for her adoration of the works of such masters as Bastien-Lepage, Corot and Duran.

There must have been something engaging in the girl, for she seems to have acquired the friendship of such men, and to have retained it. Her account of those last days when she and Bastien-Lepage — each with a leg in the grave, like a caught fox dragging its trap — caused themselves to be brought together to compare the ravages of their disorders in silence is pathetic with the pathos of the morgue. One would rather have been spared it. It leaves a bad taste in the memory and fitly concludes a book which is morbid, hysterical and unpleasant beyond anything of its kind in literature—" a book without a parallel." It enforces and illustrates a useful truth: that when suffering from internal disorders one can not afford to turn oneself inside out as an exercise in literary calisthenics.

1887.

A POET AND HIS POEM

(From "The Cosmopolitan" Magazine, September, 1907)

WHATEVER length of days may be accorded to this magazine, it is not likely to do anything more notable in literature that it accomplishes in this issue by publication of Mr. George Sterling's poem, "A Wine of Wizardry." Doubtless the full significance of this event will not be immediately apprehended by more than a select few, for understanding of poetry has at no time been a very general endowment of our countrymen. After a not inconsiderable acquaintance with American men of letters and men of affairs I find myself unable to name a dozen of whom I should be willing to affirm their possession of this precious gift — for a gift it indubitably is; and of these not all would, in my judgment, be able to discern the light of genius in a poem not authenticated by a name already famous, or credentialed by a general assent. It is not commonly permitted to even the luckiest of poets to "set the Thames on fire" with his first match; and I venture to add that the Hudson is less combustible than the Thames. Anybody can see, or can think that he sees, what has been pointed out, but original discovery is another matter. Carlyle, indeed, has noted that the first impression of a work of genius is disagreeable — which is unfortunate for its author if he is unknown, for upon editors and publishers a first impression is usually all that he is permitted to make.

From the discouraging operation of these uncongenial conditions Mr. Sterling is not exempt, as the biography of this poem would show; yet Mr. Sterling is not altogether unknown. His book, *The Testimony of the Suns, and Other Poems,* published in 1903, brought him recognition in the literary Nazareth beyond the Rocky Mountains, whose passes are so vigilantly guarded by cismontane criticism. Indeed, some sense of the might and majesty of the book's title poem succeeded in crossing the dead-line while watch-worn sentinels slept "at their insuperable posts." Of that work I have the temerity to think that in both subject and art it nicks the rock as high as anything of the generation of Tennyson, and a good deal higher than anything of the generation of Kipling; and this despite its absolute destitution of what contemporary taste insists on having — the "human interest." Naturally, a dramatist of the heavens, who takes the suns for his characters, the deeps of space for his stage, and eternity for his "historic period," does not "look into his heart and write" emotionally; but there is room in literature for more than emotion. In the “other poems” of the book the lower need is supplied without extravagance and with no admixture of sentimentality. But what we are here concerned with is “A Wine of Wizardry.”

In this remarkable poem the author proves his allegiance to the fundamental faith of the greatest of those “who claim the holy Muse as mate” — a faith which he has himself “confessed” thus:

Remiss the ministry they bear
Who serve her with divided heart;
She stands reluctant to impart
Her strength to purpose, end, or care.

Here, as in all his work, we shall look in vain for the “practical,” the “helpful.” The verses serve no cause, tell no story, point no moral. Their author has no “purpose, end, or care” other than the writing of poetry. His work is as devoid of motive as is the song of a skylark — it is merely poetry. No one knows what poetry is, but to the enlightened few who know what is poetry it is a rare and deep delight to find it in the form of virgin gold. “Gold,” says the miner “vext with odious subtlety” of the mineralogist with his theories of deposit—”gold is where you find it.” It is no less precious whether you have crushed it from the rock, or washed it from the gravel, but some of us care to be spared the labor of reduction, or sluicing. Mr. Sterling’s reader needs no outfit of mill and pan.

I am not of those who deem it a service to letters to “encourage” mediocrity — that is one of the many ways to starve genius. From the amiable judgment of the “friendly critic” with his heart in his head, otherwise unoccupied, and the *laudator literarum* who finds every month, or every week — according to his employment by magazine or newspaper — more great books than I have had the luck to find in a half-century, I dissent. My notion is that an age which produces a halfdozen good writers and twenty books worth reading is a memorable age. I think, too, that contemporary criticism is of small service, and popular acclaim of none at all, in enabling us to know who are the good authors and which the good books. Naturally, then, I am not overtrustful of my own judgment, nor hot in hope of its acceptance. Yet I steadfastly believe and hardily affirm that George Sterling is a very great poet — incomparably the greatest that we have on this side of the Atlantic. And of this particular poem I hold that not in a lifetime has our literature had any new thing of equal length containing so much poetry and so little else. It is as full of light and color and fire as any of the “ardent gems” that burn and sparkle in its lines. It has all the imagination of “Comus” and all the fancy of “The Faerie Queene.” If Leigh Hunt should return to earth to part and catalogue these two precious qualities he would find them in so confusing abundance and so inextricably interlaced that he would fly in despair from the impossible task.

Great lines are not all that go to the making of great poetry, but a poem with many great lines is a great poem? even if it have — as usually it has, and as “A Wine of Wizardry” has not — prosaic lines as well. To quote all the striking passages in Mr. Sterling’s poem would be to quote most of the poem, but I will ask the reader’s attention to some of the most graphic and memorable.

A cowled magician peering on the damned
Thro’ vials wherein a splendid poison burns.
‘Mid pulse of dungeoned forges down the stunned,
Undominated firmament.

It is not for me to say what may be meant here by “undominated,” any more than to explain what Shakspeare meant by

To lie In cold *obstruction* and to rot.

A poet makes His own words and his own definitions: it is for the rest of us to accept them and see to it that there is no interference by that feeble folk, the lexicographers:

a dell where some mad girl hath flung
A bracelet that the painted lizards fear —
Red pyres of muffled light!
Dull fires of dusty jewels that have bound
The brows of naked Ashtaroth.
she marks the seaward flight
Of homing dragons dark upon the West.

Where crafty gnomes with scarlet eyes conspire
To quench Aldebaran’s affronting fire.
Red-embered rubies smolder in the gloom,
Betrayed by lamps that nurse a sullen flame.
silent ghouls,
Whose king hath digged a sombre carcanet
And necklaces with fevered opals set.

Unresting hydras wrought of bloody light
Dip to the ocean's phosphorescent caves.

What other words could so vividly describe gleams of fire on a troubled sea? Who but a masterful poet could describe them at all?

There priestesses in purple robes hold each
A sultry garnet to the sea-linkt sun,
Or, just before the colored morning shakes
A splendor on the ruby-sanded beach,
Cry unto Betelgeuze a mystic word.

Faith! I would give value to know that word!
Where icy philters brim with scarlet foam.
Satan, yawning on his brazen seat,
Fondles a screaming thing his fiends have flayed.
A sick enchantress scans the dark to curse,
Beside a caldron vext with harlots' blood,
The stars of that red Sign which spells her doom.
In which dead Merlin's prowling ape hath spilt
A vial squat whose scarlet venom crawls
To ciphers bright and terrible.
ere the tomb-thrown echoings have ceased,
The blue-eyed vampire, sated at her feast,
Smiles bloodily against the leprous moon.

Of that last picture — ghastly enough, I grant you, to affect the spine of the Philistine with a chronic chill if he could understand it — I can only repeat here what I said elsewhere while the poem was in manuscript: that it seems to me not inferior in power upon the imagination to Coleridge's

A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted

By woman wailing for her demon lover, or Keats's magic casements, opening on the foam

Of perilous seas, in faerie lands forlorn —

passages which Rossetti pronounced the two Pillars of Hercules of human thought.

One of a poet’s most authenticating credentials may be found in his epithets. In them is the supreme ordeal to which he must come and from which is no appeal. The epithets of the versifier, the mere metrician, are either contained in their substantives or add nothing that is worth while to the meaning; those of the true poet are instinct with novel and felicitous significances. They personify, ennoble, exalt, spiritualize, endow with thought and feeling, touch to action like the spear of Ithuriel. The prosaic mind can no more evolve such than ditch-water in a champagne-glass can sparkle and effervesce, or cold iron give off coruscations when hammered. Have the patience to consider a few of Mr. Sterling’s epithets, besides those in the lines already quoted:

“Purpled” realm; “striving” billows; “wattled” monsters; “timid” sapphires of the snow; “lit” wastes; a “stainèd” twilight of the South; “tiny” twilight in the jacinth, and “wintry” orb of the moonstone; “winy” agate and “banded” onyx; “lustrous” rivers; “glowering” pyres of the burning-ghaut, and so forth.

Do such words come by taking thought? Do they come ever to the made poet? — to the “poet of the day” — poet by resolution of a “committee on literary exercises”? Fancy the poor pretender, conscious of his pretense and sternly determined to conceal it, laboring with a brave confusion of legs and a copious excretion of honest sweat to evolve felicities like these!

THE CONTROVERSIALIST

AN INSURRECTION OF THE PEASANTRY

(From “The Cosmopolitan” Magazine, December, 1907)

WHEN a man of genius who is not famous writes a notable poem he must expect one or two of three things: indifference, indignation, ridicule. In commending Mr. George Sterling’s “A Wine of Wizardry,” published in the September number of this magazine, I had this reception of his work in confident expectation and should have mistrusted my judgment if it had not followed. The promptitude of the chorus of denunciation and scorn has attested the superb character of the poet’s work and is most gratifying.

The reason for the inevitable note of dissent is not far to seek; it inheres in the constitution of the human mind, which is instinctively hostile to what is “out of the common” — and a work of genius is pretty sure to be that. It is by utterance of uncommon thoughts, opinions, sentiments and fancies that genius is known. All distinction is difference, unconformity. He who is as others are — whose mental processes and manner of expression follow the familiar order — is readily acceptable because easily intelligible to those whose narrow intelligence, barren imagination, and meager vocabulary he shares. “Why, that is great!” says that complacent dullard, “the average man,” smiling approval. “I have thought that a hundred times myself!” — thereby providing abundant evidence that it is not great, nor of any value whatever. To “the average man” what is new is inconceivable, and what he does not understand affronts him. And he is the first arbiter in letters and art. In this “fierce democracie” he dominates literature with a fat and heavy hand — a hand that is not always unfamiliar with the critic’s pen.

In returning here to the subject of Mr. Sterling’s poem I have no intention of expounding and explaining it to persons who know nothing of poetry and are inaccessible to instruction. Those who, in the amusing controversy which I unwittingly set raging round Mr. Sterling’s name, have spoken for them are in equal mental darkness and somewhat thicker moral, as it is my humble hope to show.

When the cause to be served is ignorance, the means of service is invariably misrepresentation. The champion of offended Dulness falsifies in statement and cheats in argument, for he serves a client without a conscience. A knowledge of right and wrong is not acquired to-day, as in the time of Adam and Eve, by eating an apple; and it is attained by only the highest intelligences.

But before undertaking the task of pointing out the moral unworth of my honorable opponents, it seems worth while to explain that the proponent of the controversy has had the misfortune to misunderstand the question at issue. He has repeatedly fallen into the error of affirming, with all the emphasis of shouting capitals, that “Ambrose Bierce says it [“A Wine of Wizardry”] is the greatest poem ever written in America,” and at least once has declared that I pronounced it “the only great poem ever written in America.” If the dispute had been prolonged I shudder to think that his disobedient understanding might have misled him to say that I swore it was the only great poem ever written, in all the world.

To those who know me it is hardly needful, I hope, to explain that I said none of the words so generously put into my mouth, for it is obvious that I have not seen, and could not have seen, all the poems that have been written in America. To have pronounced such a judgment without all the evidence would have been to resemble my opponents — which God forbid! In point of fact, I do not consider the poem the greatest ever written in America; Mr. Sterling himself, for example, has written a greater. Exposed to so hardy and impenitent misrepresentation I feel a need of the consolations of religion: I should like positively to know where my critics are going to when they die. From my present faltering faith in their future I derive an imperfect comfort.

Naturally, not all protagonists of the commonplace who have uttered their minds about this matter are entitled to notice. The Baseball Reporter who, says Mr. Brisbane, “like Mr. Sterling, is a poet,” the Sweet Singer of Slang, the Simian Lexicographer of Misinformation, and the Queen of Platitudinaria who has renounced the sin-and-sugar of youth for the milk-and-morality of age must try to forgive me if I leave them grinning through their respective horse-collars to a not unkind inattention.

But Deacon Harvey is a person of note and consequence. On a question of poetry, I am told, he controls nearly the entire Methodist vote. Moreover, he has a notable knack at mastery of the English language, which he handles with no small part of the ease and grace that may have distinguished the impenitent thief carrying his cross up the slope of Calvary. Let the following noble sentences attest the quality of his performance when he is at his best:

> A natural hesitation to undertake analysis of the unanalyzable, criticism of the uncriticizable, or, if we may go so far, mention of the unmentionable, yields to your own shrewd forging of the links of circumstance into a chain of duty. That the greatest poem ever written on this hemisphere, having forced its way out of a

comfortable lodgment in the brain of an unknown author, should be discovered and heralded by a connoisseur whose pre-eminence is yet to be established, is perhaps in itself not surprising, and yet we must admit that the mere rarity of such a happening would ordinarily preclude the necessity, which otherwise might exist, of searching inquiry as to the attributed transcendentalism of merit.

Surely a man who habitually writes such prose as that must be a good judge of poetry or he would not be a good judge of anything in literature. And what does this Prince Paramount of grace and clarity find to condemn in poor Mr. Sterling's poem? Listen with at least one ear each:

We are willing to admit at the outset that in the whole range of American, or, for that matter, English, poetry there is no example of a poem crowded with such startling imagery, ambitiously marshaled in lines of such lurid impressiveness, all of which at once arrest attention and would bewilder the esthetic sensibility of a Titan. The poem is made up of an unbroken series of sententious and striking passages, any one of which would have distinguished a whole canto of Dante or Keats, neither of whom would have ventured within that limit to use more than one — such was their niggardly economy.

Here is something "rich and strange" in criticism. Heretofore it has been thought that "wealth of imagery" was about the highest quality that poetry could have, but it seems not; that somewhat tiresome phrase is to be used henceforth to signify condemnation. Of the poem that we wish to commend we must say that it has an admirable poverty of imagination. Deacon Harvey's notion that poets like Dante and Keats deliberately refrained from using more than one "sententious and striking passage" to the canto "goes neare to be fonny." They used as many as occurred to them; no poet uses fewer than he can. If he has only one to a canto, that is not economy; it is indigence.

I observe that even so good a poet and so appreciative a reader of Mr. Sterling as Miss Ina Coolbrith has fallen into the same error as Deacon Harvey. Of "the many pictures presented in that wondrous 'Wine of Wizardry,'" this accomplished woman says: "I think it is a 'poem' — a great poem — but one which, in my humble estimate, might have been made even greater could its creator have permitted himself to drop a little of what some may deem a weakening superfluity of imagery and word-painting."

If one is to make " pictures" in poetry one must do so by word-painting. (I admit the hatefulness of the term "word-painting," through overuse of the name in praise of the prose that the thing defaces, but it seems that we must use it here.) Only in narrative and didactic poetry, and these are the lowest forms, can there be too much of imagery and word-painting; in a poem essentially graphic, like the one under consideration, they are the strength and soul of the work. “A Wine of Wizardry” is, and was intended to be, a series, a succession, of unrelated pictures, colored (mostly red, naturally) by what gave them birth and being — the reflection of a sunset in a cup of ruddy wine. To talk of too much imagery in a work of that kind is to be like Deacon Harvey.

Imagery, that is to say, imagination, is not only the life and soul of poetry; it is the poetry. That is what Poe had in mind doubtless, when he contended that there could be no such thing as a long poem. He had observed that what are called long poems consist of brief poetical passages connected by long passages of metrical prose — *recitativo* — of oases of green in deserts of gray. The highest flights of imagination have always been observed to be the briefest. George Sterling has created a new standard, another criterion. In “A Wine of Wizardry,” as in his longer and greater poem, “The Testimony of the Suns,” there is no *recitativo.* His imagination flies with a tireless wing. It never comes to earth for a new spring into the sky, but like the eagle and the albatross, sustains itself as long as he chooses that it shall. His passages of poetry are connected by passages of poetry. In all his work you will find no line of prose. Poets of the present and the future may well “view with alarm” as Statesman Harvey would say — the work that Sterling has cut out for them, the pace that he has set. Poetry must henceforth be not only qualitative but quantitative: it must be *all* poetry. If wise, the critic will note the new criterion that this bold challenge to the centuries has made mandatory. The “long poem” has been shown to be possible; let us see if it become customary.

In affirming Mr. Sterling’s primacy among living American poets I have no apology to offer to the many unfortunates who have written to me in the spirit of the man who once said of another: “What! that fellow a great man? Why, he was born right in my town!” It is humbly submitted, however, that unless the supply of great men is exhausted they must be born somewhere, and the fact that they are seen “close to” by their neighbors does not supply a reasonable presumption against their greatness. Shakspeare himself was once a local and contemporary poet, and even Homer is known to have been born in “seven Grecian cities” through which he “begged his bread.” Is Deacon Harvey altogether sure that he is immune to the popular inability to understand that the time and place of a poet’s nativity are not decisive as to his rating? He may find a difficulty in believing that a singer of supreme excellence was born right in *his* country and period, but in the words that I have quoted from him he has himself testified to the fact. To be able to write “an unbroken series of sententious and striking passages”; to crowd a poem, as no other in the whole range of our literature has done, with “startling imagery.” “inlines of impressiveness,” lurid or not; to “arrest attention”; to “bewilder the Titans,” Deacon Harvey at their head — that is about as much as the most ambitious poet could wish to accomplish at one sitting. The ordinary harpist harping on his Harpers’ would be a long time in doing so much. How any commentator, having in those words conceded my entire claim, could afterward have the hardihood to say, “The poem has no merit,” transcends the limits of human comprehension and passes into the dark domain of literary criticism.

Nine in ten of the poem’s critics complain of the fantastic, grotesque, or ghastly nature of its fancies. What would these good persons have on the subject of wizardry? — sweet and sunny pictures of rural life? — love scenes in urban drawing-rooms? — beautiful sentiments appropriate to young ladies’ albums? — high moral philosophy with an “appeal” to what is “likest God within the soul”? Deacon Harvey (O, I cannot get away from Deacon Harvey: he fascinates me!) would have “an interpretation of vital truth.” I do not know what that is, but we have his word for it that nothing else is poetry. And no less a personage than Mrs. Gertrude Atherton demands, instead of wizardry, an epic of prehistoric California, or an account of the great fire, preferably in prose, for, “this is not an age of poetry, anyway.” Alas, poor Sterling! — damned alike for what he wrote and what he didn’t write. Truly, there are persons whom one may not hope to please.

It should in fairness be said that Mrs. Atherton confesses herself no critic of poetry — the only person, apparently, who is not — but pronounces Mr. Sterling a “recluse” who “needs to see more and read less.” From a pretty long acquaintance with him I should say that this middle-aged man o’ the world is as little “reclusive” as any one that I know, and has seen rather more of life than is good for him. And I doubt if he would greatly gain in mental stature by unreading Mrs. Atherton’s excellent novels.

Sterling’s critics are not the only persons who seem a bit blinded by the light of his genius: Mr. Joaquin Miller, a born poet and as great-hearted a man as ever lived, is not quite able to “place” him. He says that this “titanic, magnificent” poem is “classic,” “in the Homeric, the Miltonic sense.”

“A Wine of Wizardry” is not “classic” in the sense in which scholars use that word. It is all color and fire and movement, with nothing of the cold simplicity and repose of the Grecian ideal. Nor is it Homeric, nor in the Miltonic vein. It is in no vein but the author’s own; in the entire work is only one line suggesting the manner of another poet — the last in this passage:

Who leads from hell his whitest queens, arrayed
In chains so heated at their master's fire
That one new-damned had thought their bright attire
Indeed were coral, till the dazzling dance
So terribly that brilliance shall enhance.

That line, the least admirable in the poem, is purely Byronic. Possibly Mr. Miller meant that Sterling's work is like Homer's and Milton's, not in manner, but in excellence; and it is.

Mr. Sterling's critics may at least claim credit for candor. For cause of action, as the lawyers say, they aver his use of strange, unfamiliar words. Now this is a charge that any man should be ashamed to make; first, because it is untrue; second, because it is a confession of ignorance. There are not a halfdozen words in the poem that are not in common use by good authors, and none that any man should not blush to say that he does not understand. The objection amounts to this: that the poet did not write down to the objector's educational level — did not adapt his work to "the meanest capacity." Under what obligation was he to do so? There are men whose vocabulary does not exceed a few hundreds of words; they know not the meaning of the others because they have not the thoughts that the others express. Shall these Toms, Dicks and Harrys of the slums and cornfields set up their meager acquirements as metes and bounds beyond which a writer shall not go? Let them stay upon their reservations. There are poets enough, great poets, too, whom they can partly understand; that is, they can understand the simple language, the rhymes, the meter — everything but the poetry. There are orders of poetry, as there are orders of architecture. Because a Grecian temple is beautiful shall there be no Gothic cathedrals? By the way, it is not without significance that Gothic architecture was first so called in derision, the Goths having no architecture. It was named by the Deacon Harveys of the period.

The passage that has provoked this class of critics to the most shameless feats of self-exposure is this:

Infernal rubrics, sung to Satan's might,
Or chanted to the Dragon in his gyre.

Upon this they have expended all the powers of ridicule belonging to those who respect nothing because they know nothing. A person of light and leading in their bright band says of it:

"We confess that we had never before heard of a 'gyre.' Looking it up in the dictionary, we find that it means a gyration, or a whirling round. Rubrics chanted to a dragon while he was whirling ought to be worth hearing.”

Now, whose fault is it that this distinguished journalist had never heard of a gyre? Certainly not the poet’s. And whose that in very sensibly looking it up he suffered himself to be so misled by the lexicographer as to think it a gyration, a whirling round? Gyre means, not a gyration, but the path of a gyration, an orbit. And has the poor man no knowledge of a dragon in the heavens? — the constellation Draco, to which, as to other stars, the magicians of old chanted incantations? A peasant is not to be censured for his ignorance, but when he glories in it and draws its limit as a dead line for his betters he is the least pleasing of all the beasts of the field.

An amusing instance of the commonplace mind’s inability to understand anything having a touch of imagination is found in a criticism of the now famous lines:

The blue-eyed vampire, sated at her feast,
Smiles bloodily against the leprous moon.

“Somehow,” says the critic, who, naturally, is a book-reviewer, “one does not associate blue eyes with a vampire.” Of course it did not occur to him that this was doubtless the very reason why the author chose the epithet — if he thought of anybody’s conception but his own. “Blue-eyed” connotes beauty and gentleness; the picture is that of a lovely, fairhaired woman with the telltale blood about her lips. Nothing could be less horrible; nothing more terrible. As vampires do not really exist, everyone is at liberty, I take it, to conceive them under what outward and visible aspect he will; but this gentleman, having standardized the vampire, naturally resents any departure from the type — his type. I fancy he requires goggle-eyes, emitting flame and perhaps smoke, a mouth well garnished with tusks — long claws, and all the other appurtenances that make the conventional Chinese dragon so awful that one naturally wishes to meet it and kick it.

Between my mind and the minds of those whom Mr. Sterling’s daring incursions into the realm of the unreal do not affect with a keen artistic delight there is nothing in common — except a part of my vocabulary. I cannot hope to convince nor persuade them. Nevertheless, it is no trouble to point out that their loud pretense of being “shocked” by some of his fancies is a singularly foolish one. We are not shocked by the tragic, the terrible, even the ghastly, in literature and art. We do not flee from the theater when a tragedy is enacting — the murder of Duncan and the sleeping grooms — the stabbing and poisoning in

"Hamlet." We listen without discomposure to the beating to death of Nancy Sykes behind the scenes. The Ancient Mariner's dead comrades rise and pull at the ropes without disturbing the reader; even the "slimy things." "crawl with legs upon a slimy sea" and we do not pitch the book into the fire. Dante's underworld, with all its ingenious horrors, page after page of them, are accounted pretty good reading — at least Dante is accounted a pretty good poet. No one stands forth to affirm his distress when Homer's hero declares that

Swarms of specters rose from deepest hell
With bloodless visage and with hideous yell.
They scream, they shriek; sad groans and dismal sounds
Stun my scared ears and pierce Hell's utmost bounds.

Literature is full of pictures of the terrible, the awful, the ghastly, if you please; hardly a great author but has given them to us in prose or verse. They shock nobody, for they produce no illusion, not even on the stage, or the canvases of Vereshchagin. If they did they would be without artistic value.

But it is the fashion to pretend to be horrified — when the terrible thing is new and by an unfamiliar hand. The Philistine who accepts without question the horrors of Dante's Hell professes himself greatly agitated when Sterling's

Satan, yawning on his brazen seat,
Fondles a screaming thing his fiends have flayed.

In point of fact, the poor Philistine himself yawns as he reads about it; he is not shocked at all. It is comprehensible how there may be such a thing as a mollycoddle, but how one can pretend to be a mollycoddle when one is not — that must be accepted as the most surprising hypocrisy that we have the happiness to know about.

Having affirmed the greatness of Mr. Sterling, I am austerely reminded by a half hundred commentators, some of whom profess admiration for "A Wine of Wizardry," that a single poem, of whatever excellence, does not establish the claim. Like nearly all the others, these gentlemen write without accuracy, from a general impression. They overlook the circumstance that I pointed out a book by Sterling, published several years ago, entitled *The Testimony of the Suns, and Other Poems*. What, then, becomes of the "single poem" sneer? To its performers nothing that they have not seen exists.

That book is dedicated to me — a fact that has been eagerly seized upon by still another class of critics to "explain" my good opinion of its author; for nothing is so welcome to our literary hill-tribes as a chance to cheat by ascription of a foul motive. But it happens, unhappily for the prosperity of their hope, that the dedication was made in gratitude for my having already set the crown of praise upon its author’s head. I will quote the first lines of the dedication, not only in proof of this, but to show the noble seriousness and sincerity with which a great poet regards his ministry at the altar of his art:

Ah! glad to thy decree I bow,
From whose unquestioned hand did fall,
Beyond a lesser to recall,
The solemn laurels on my brow.
I tremble with the splendid weight.

To my unworth ‘tis given to know
How dread the charge I undergo
Who claim the holy Muse as mate.

It is to be hoped that Mr. Sterling’s reverent attitude toward his art has suffered no abatement from his having been thrown to the swine for allegiance to an alien faith hateful to his countrymen.

MONTAGUES AND CAPULETS

I HAVE not the happiness to know if Mr. George Bernard Shaw has ever written as good a play as “As You Like It.” He says he has, and certainly he ought to be able to remember what plays he has written. I don’t know that blank verse is, as Mr. Shaw declares, “a thing that you could teach a cat if it had an ear.” My notion is that blank verse — good blank verse — is the most difficult of all metrical forms, and that among English poets Milton alone has mastered it. I don’t know that Mr. Shaw is right in his sweeping condemnation of the blank verse of that indubitable “master of tremendous prose,” Shakspeare. As a critic, Mr. Shaw ought to know that Shakspeare wrote very little blank verse, technically and properly so called, his plays being, naturally, mostly in what the prosodian knows, and what as a playwright Mr. Shaw might be expected to know, as dramatic blank, a very different thing.

But this I know, and know full well — that in ridiculing the blind, unreasoning adoration of Shakspeare as an infallible and impeccable god in whose greater glory all *dii minores* must hide their diminished heads and pale their uneffectual fires, Mr. Shaw does well and merits sympathetic attention. Without going so far as Voltaire, one may venture without irreverence to hold an opinion of one’s own as to the great Englishman’s barbarous exuberance of metaphor, pure and mixed, his poverty of invention in the matter of plots, his love of punning, his tireless pursuit of a quibble to the ultimate ramifications of its burrow, and a score of other faults which in others his thick-and-thin protagonists freely condemn. Many of these sins against art were doubtless the offspring of a giant indolence, and sole desire to draw the rabble of the streets into his theater. For literature he cared nothing, of literary ambition knew nothing — just made plays, played them and flung away the manuscript. Even the sonnets were left unsigned — which is fortunate, for his unearthly signature would have misled the compiler.

Whatever may be the other qualities of “As You Like It,” Mr. Shaw will perhaps admit that in point of mere decency it is pretty fair, which is more than any but a Shakspearolater will say of “Romeo and Juliet,” for example. Not greatly caring for the theater, I am not familiar with “acting versions,” but this play as it came from the hand of its author is, in a moral sense, detestable. All its men are blackguards, all its women worse, and worst of all is Juliet herself, who makes no secret of the nature of her passion for Romeo, but discloses it with all the candor of a moral idiot insensible to the distinction between propensity and sentiment. Her frankness is no less than hideous. Yet one may read page after page by reputable authors in praise of her as one of the sweetest of Shakspeare’s fascinating heroines. Babes are named for her and drawing-room walls adorned with ideal portraits of her, engraved from paintings of great artists. One has only to read Taine’s description of an Elizabethan theater audience to understand why dramatists of those “spacious times” did not need seriously to concern themselves with morality; but that Shakspeare’s wit, pathos and poetry can make such characters as those of this drama acceptable to modern playgoers and readers is the highest possible attestation of the man’s consummate genius.

A DEAD LION

I

IN the history of religious controversy it has sometimes occurred that a fool has risen and shouted out views so typical and representative as to justify a particular attention denied to his less absurd partisans. That was the situation relative to the logomachy that raged over the ashes of the late Col. Robert Ingersoll. Through the ramp and roar of the churches, the thunder of the theological captains and the shouting, rose the penetrating treble of a person so artlessly pious, so devoid of knowledge and innocent of sense, that his every utterance credentialed him as a child of candor, and arrested attention like the wanton shrilling of a noontide locust cutting through the cackle of a hundred hens. That he happened to be an editorial writer was irrelevant, for it was impossible to suspect so ingenuous a soul of designs upon what may be called the Christian vote; he simply poured out his heart with the unpremeditated sincerity of a wild ass uttering its view of the Scheme of Things. I take it the man was providentially "raised up," and spoke by inspiration of the Spirit of Religion.

"Robert G. Ingersoll," says this son of nature, "was not a great atheist, nor a great agnostic. Dissimilar though they are, he aspired in his published lectures and addresses to both distinctions." —

As it is no distinction to be either atheist or agnostic, this must mean that Col. Ingersoll "aspired" to be a *great* atheist and a *great* agnostic. Where is the evidence? May not a man state his religious or irreligious views with the same presumption of modesty and mere sincerity that attaches to other intellectual action? Because one publicly affirms the inveracity of Moses must one be charged with ambition, that meanest of all motives? By denying the sufficiency of the evidences of immortality is one self convicted of a desire to be accounted great?

Col. Ingersoll said the thing that he had to say, as I am saying this — as a clergyman preaches his sermon, as an historian writes his romance: partly for the exceeding great reward of expression, partly, it may be, for the lesser profit of payment. We all move along lines of least resistance; because a few of us find that this leads up to the temple of fame it does not follow that all are seeking that edifice with a conscious effort to achieve distinction. If any Americans have appraised at its true and contemptible value the applause of the people Robert

Ingersoll did. If there has been but one such American he was the man.

Now listen to what further this ineffable dolt had to say of him:

> His irreverence, however, his theory of deistical brutality, was a mere phantasy, unsustained by scholarship or by reason, and contradicted by every element of his personal character. His love for his wife and his children, his tenderness towards relatives and friends, would have been spurious and repulsive if in his heart he had not accepted what in speech he derided and contemned.

Here’s richness indeed! Whatever maybe said by scholarship and reason of a “theory of deistical brutality,” I do not think — I really have not the civility to admit — that it is contradicted by a blameless life. If it were really true that the god of the Christians is not a particularly “nice” god the love of a man for wife and child would not necessarily and because of that be spurious and repulsive. Indeed, in a world governed by such a god, and subject therefore to all the evils and perils of the divine caprice and malevolence, such affection would be even more useful and commendable than it is in this actual world of peace, happiness and security. As the stars burn brightest in a moonless night, so in the gloom of a wrath-ruled universe all human affections and virtues would have an added worth and tenderness. In order that life might be splendored with so noble and heroic sentiments as grow in the shadow of disaster and are nourished by the sense of a universal peril and sorrow, one could almost wish that some malign deity, omnipotent and therefore able to accomplish his purposes without sin and suffering for his children, had resisted the temptation to do so and had made this a Vale of Tears.

It is indubitably true that Ingersoll was inferior in scholarship to Strauss and Renan, and in that and genius to the incomparable Voltaire; but these deficiencies were not disabilities in the work that he undertook. He knew his limitations and did not transgress them. He was not self-tempted into barren fields of scholastic controversy where common sense is sacrificed to “odious subtlety.” In the work that he chose he had no use for the dry-as-dust erudition of the modern German school of Biblical criticism — learned, ingenious, profound, admirable and futile. He was accomplished in neither Hebrew nor Greek. Aramaic was to him an unknown tongue, and I dare say that if asked he would have replied that Jesus Christ, being a Jew, spoke Hebrew. The “text of the Pentateuch” was not “misapprehended” by him; he simply let it alone. What he criticised in “The Mistakes of Moses” is the English version. If that is not a true translation let those concerned to maintain its immunity from criticism amend it. They are not permitted to hold that it is good enough for belief and acceptance, but not good enough to justify an inexpert dissent. Ingersoll's limitations were the source of his power; at least they confined him to methods that are "understanded of the people"; and to be comprehended by the greatest number of men should be the wish of him who tries to destroy what he thinks a popular delusion. By the way, I observe everywhere the immemorial dog's-eared complaint that he could "tear down" (we Americans always prefer to say this when we mean pull down) but could not "build up." I am not aware that he ever tried to "build up." Believing that no religion was needful, he would have thought his work perfect if all religions had been effaced. The clamor of weak minds for something to replace the errors of which they may be deprived is one that the true iconoclast disregards. What he most endeavors to destroy is not idols, but idolatry. If in the place of the image that he breaks he set up another he would be like a physician who having cure3 his patient of a cramp should inoculate him with an itch. It is only just to say that the devout journalist whose holy utterance I am afflicting myself with the unhappiness of criticising nowhere makes the hoary accusation that Ingersoll could "tear down" but not "build up." He must have overlooked it.

What Ingersoll attacked was the Bible as we have it — the English Bible — not the Bible as it may, can, must, might, would or should be in Hebrew and Greek. He had no controversy with scholars — not only knew himself unable to meet them on their own ground (where is plenty of room for their lonely feet) but was not at all concerned with their faiths and convictions, nor with the bases of them. Hoping to remove or weaken a few popular errors, he naturally examined the book in which he believed them to be found — the book which has the assent and acceptance of those who hold them and derive them from it. He did not go behind the record as it reads — nobody does excepting its advocates when it has been successfully impugned. What has influenced (mischievously, Ingersoll believed) the thought and character of the Anglo-Saxon race is not the Hebrew Scriptures and the Greek Testament, but the English Bible. The fidelity of that to its originals, its self-sufficiency and independence of such evidences as only scholarship can bring to its exposition, these, as Aristotle would say, are matters for separate consideration. If God has really chosen to give his law to his children in tongues that only an infinitesimal fraction of them can hope to understand — has thrown it down amongst them for ignorant translators to misread, interested priesthoods to falsify and hardy and imaginative commentators to make ridiculous — has made no provision against all this debauching of the text and the spirit of it, this must be because he preferred it so;

for whatever occurs must occur because the Omniscience and Omnipotence permitting it wishes it to occur. Such are not the methods of our human legislators, who take the utmost care that the laws be unambiguous, printed in the language of those who are required to obey them and accessible to them in the original text. I'm not saying that this is the better and more sensible way; I only say that if the former is God's way the fact relieves us all of any obligation to "restore" the text before discussing it and to illuminate its obscurities with the side-lights of erudition. Ingersoll had all the scholarship needful to his work: he knew the meaning of English words.

Says the complacent simpleton again:

> It was idle for a man to deny the existence of God who confessed and proclaimed the principle of fraternity.... The hard conception of annihilation had no place in sentences that were infused with the heat of immortality.

As logic, this has all the charm inhering in the syllogism, All cows are quadrupeds; this is a quadruped; therefore, this is a cow. The author of that first sentence would express his thought, naturally, something like this: All men are brothers; God is their only father; therefore, there is a God. The other sentence is devoid of meaning, and is quoted only to show the view that this literary lunatic is pleased to think that he entertains of annihilation. It is to him a "hard conception"; that is to say, the state of unconsciousness which he voluntarily and even eagerly embraces every night of his life, and in which he remained without discomfort for countless centuries before his birth, is a most undesirable state. It is, indeed, so very unwelcome that it shall not come to him — he'll not have it so. Out of nothingness he came, but into nothingness he will not return — he'll die first! Life is a new and delightful toy and, faith! he means to keep it. If you'd ask him he would say that his immortality is proved by his yearning for it; but men of sense know that we yearn, not for what we have, but for what we have not, and most strongly for what we have not the shadow of a chance to get.

II

Mr. Harry Thurston Peck is different: he is a scholar, a professor of Latin in a leading college, an incisive if not very profound thinker, and a charming writer. He is a capable editor, too, and has conducted one of our foremost literary magazines, in which, as compelled by the nature of the business, he has commonly concerned himself mightily with the little men capering nimbly between yesterday the begetter and to-morrow the destroyer. Sometimes a larger figure strides into the field of his attention, but not for long, nor with any very notable accretion of clarity in the view. The lenses are not adjusted for large objects, which accordingly seem out of focus and give no true image. So the observer turns gladly to his ephemera, and we who read him are the gainers by his loyalty to his habit and to his public who fixed it upon him. But he so far transcended his limitations as to review in the late Col. Ingersoll's the work of a pretty large man. The result is, to many of Prof. Peck's admirers, of whom I am one, profoundly disappointing. In both spirit and method it suggests the question, Of what real use are the natural gifts, the acquirements and opportunities that do so little for the understanding? Surely one must sometimes dissent from the generally accepted appraisement of "the things we learn in college," when one observes a man like Prof. Peck (a collegian down to the bone tips) feeling and thinking after the fashion of a circuit-riding preacher in Southwestern Missouri. Let us examine some of his utterances about the great agnostic. Speaking of the purity of his personal character, this critic says:

> No one has questioned this; and even had it been so questioned the fact could not be pertinent to our discussion. Indeed, it is not easy to perceive just why his private virtues have been so breathlessly brought forward and detailed with so much strenuous insistence; for surely husbands who are faithful, fathers who are loving, and friends who are generous and sympathetic are not so rare in this our world as to make of them phenomena to be noted in the annals of the age.

It seems to me entirely obvious why Ingersoll's friends and supporters have persisted in putting testimony on these matters into the forefront of the discussion; and entirely relevant such testimony is. Churchmen and religionists in all ages and countries have affirmed the necessary and conspicuous immorality of the irreligious. No notable unbeliever has been safe from the slanders of the pulpit and the church press. And in this country to-day ninety-nine of every one hundred "professing Christians" hold that public and personal morality has no other basis than the Bible. In this they are both foolish and wise: foolish because it is so evidently untrue, and wise because to concede its untruth would be to abandon the defense of religion as a moral force. If men can be good without religion, and scorning religion, then it is not religion that makes men good; and if religion does not do this it is of no practical value and one may as well be without it as with it, so far as concerns one's relations with one's fellow men. We are told that Christianity is something more than a body of doctrine, that it is a system of ethics, having a divine origin; that it has a close and warm relation to conduct, generating elevated sentiments and urging to a noble and unselfish life. If in support of that view it is relevant to point to the blameless lives of its “Founder” and his followers it is equally relevant in contradiction to point to the blameless lives of its opponents. If Prof. Peck finds it “not easy to perceive” this he might profitably make some experiments in perception on a big, red Pennsylvanian barn.

Prof. Peck tries to be fair; he concedes the honesty of Ingersoll’s belief and acknowledges that

> It Is entitled to the same respect that we accord to the unshaken faith of other men. Indeed, for the purpose of the moment we may even go still further and assume that he was right; that Christianity is in truth a superstition and its history a fable; that it has no hold on reason; and that the book from which it draws in part its teaching and its inspiration is only an inconsistent chronicle of old-world myths. Let us assume all this and let us still inquire what final judgment should be passed upon the man who held these views and strove so hard to make them universal.

Prof. Peck is not called upon to make any such concessions and assumptions. As counsel for the defense, I am as willing to make admissions as he, and “for the sake of argument,” as the meaningless saying goes, to confess that the religion attacked by my client is indubitably true. His justification depends in no degree upon the accuracy of his judgment, but upon his honest confidence in it; and that is unquestioned; that is no assumption; it is not conceded but affirmed. If he believed that in these matters he was right and a certain small minority of mankind, including a considerable majority of his living countrymen, wrong it was merely his duty as a gentleman to speak his views and to strive, as occasion offered or opportunity served, to “make them universal.” In our personal affairs there is such a thing as righteous suppression of the truth — even such another thing as commendable falsehood. In certain circumstances avowal of convictions is as baleful and mischievous as in other circumstances dissimulation is. But in all the large matters of the mind — in philosophy, religion, science, art and the like, a lesser service to the race than utterance of the truth as he thinks he sees it, leaving the result to whatever powers may be, a man has no right to be content with having performed, for it is only so that truth is established. It was only so that Prof. Peck’s religion was enthroned upon the ruins of others — among them one so beautiful that after centuries of effacement its myths and memories stir with a wonderful power the hearts of scholars and artists of the later and conquering faith. Of that religion it might once have been said in deprecation of St. Paul, as, in deprecation of Ingersoll, Prof. Peck now says of religion in general:

Its roots strike down into the very depths of human consciousness. They touch the heart, the sympathies and the emotions. They lay strong hold on life itself, and they are the chords to which all being can be made to vibrate with a passionate intensity which nothing else could call to life.

I have said that Prof. Peck tries to be fair; if he had altogether succeeded he would have pointed out, not only that Ingersoll sincerely believed the Christian religion false, but that he believed it mischievous, and that he was persuaded that its devotees would be better off with no religion than with any. Had Prof. Peck done that he could have spared himself the trouble of writing, and many of his admirers the pain of reading, his variants of the ancient and discreditable indictment of the wicked incapable who can "tear down," but not "build up." Agnosticism may be more than a mere negation. It may be, as in Ingersoll it was, a passionate devotion to Truth, a consecration of self to her service. Of such a one as he it is incredibly false to say that he can only "destroy" and "has naught to give." As well and as truthfully could that be said of one who knocks away the chains of a slave and goes his way, imposing no others. One may err in doing so. There are as many breeds of men as of dogs and horses; and as a cur can not be taught to retrieve nor herd sheep, nor a roadster to hunt, so there are human tribes unfit for liberty. One's zeal in liberation may be greater than one's wisdom, but faith in all mankind is at least an honorable error, even when manifested by hammering at the shackles of the mind. What Ingersoll thought he had to "give" was Freedom — and that, I take it, is quite as positive and real as bondage. The reproach of "tearing down" without "building up" is valid against nobody but an idolatrous iconoclast. Ingersoll was different.

Prof. Peck has a deal to say against Ingersoll's methods; he does not think them sufficiently serious, not to say reverent. This objection may be met as Voltaire met it — by authorizing his critic to disregard the wit and answer the argument. But Prof. Peck will not admit that Ingersoll was witty. He sees nothing in his sallies but "buffoonery," a word meaning wit directed against one's self or something that one respects. This amazing judgment from the mouth of one so witty himself could, but for one thing, be interpreted no otherwise than as evidence that he has not read the works that he condemns. That one thing is religious bigotry which, abundantly manifest everywhere in the article under review, is nowhere so conspicuous as in the intemperate, not to say low, language in which the charge of "buffoonery" is made. Who that has an open mind would think that it was written of Robert Ingersoll that he "burst into the sacred silence of their devotion with the raucous bellowing of an itinerant stump-speaker and the clowning of a vulgar mountebank"? To those who really know the character of Robert Ingersoll’s wit — keen, bright and clean as an Arab’s scimetar; to those who know the clear and penetrating mental insight of which such wit is the expression and the proof; to those who know how much of gold and how little of mud clung to the pebbles that he slung at the Goliaths of authority and superstition; to those who have noted the astonishing richness of his work in elevated sentiments fitly expressed, his opulence of memorable aphorism and his fertility of felicitous phrase — to these it will not seem credible that such a man can be compared to one who, knowing the infidelity of a friend’s wife, would “slap his friend upon the back and tell the story with a snicker, in the coarsest language of the brothel, interspersed with Rabelaisian jokes.” It is of the nature of wit mercifully to veil its splendors from the eyes of its victim. The taken thief sees in his captor an unheroic figure. The prisoner at the bar is not a good judge of the prosecution. But it is difficult distinctly to conceive a scholar, a wit, a critic, an accomplished editor of a literary magazine, committing himself to such judgments as these upon work accessible to examination and familiar to memory. To paraphrase Pope,

Who would not laugh if such a man there be?
Who would not weep if Harry Peck were he?

Another “point” that Prof. Peck is not ashamed to make is that Ingersoll lectured on religion for money—” in the character of a paid public entertainer, for his own personal profit.” And in what character, pray, does anybody lecture where there is a charge for admittance? In what character have some of the world’s greatest authors, scientists, artists and masters of crafts generally lectured when engaged to do so by “lyceums,”

“bureaus,” or individual “managers”? In what character does Prof. Peck conduct his valuable and entertaining magazine for instruction and amusement of those willing to pay for it? In what character, indeed, does the Defender of the Faith put upon the market his austere sense of Ingersoll’s cupidity?

Obviously the agnostic’s offence was not lecturing for pay. It was not lecturing on religion. It was not sarcasm. It was that, lecturing for pay on religion, his sarcasm took a direction disagreeable to Prof. Peck, instead of disagreeable to Prof. Peck’s opponents. As a ridiculer of infidels and agnostics Ingersoll might have made a great fame and not one of his present critics would have tried to dim its lustre with a breath, nor “with polluted finger tarnish it.”

Religions are human institutions; at least those so hold who belong to none of “the two-and-seventy jarring sects.” Religious faiths, like political and social, are entitled to no immunity from examination and criticism; all the methods and weapons that are legitimate against other institutions and beliefs are legitimate against them. Their devotees have not the right to shield themselves behind some imaginary special privilege, to exact an exceptional exemption. A religion of divine origin would have a right to such exemption; its devotees might with some reason assist God to punish the crime of *lèse majesté;* but the divinity of the religion's origin is the very point in dispute, and in holding that it shall be settled his way as an assurance of peace its protagonist is guilty of a hardy and impenitent impudence. Blasphemy has been defined as speaking disrespectfully of *my* phemy; one does not observe among the followers of one faith any disposition to accord immunity from ridicule to the followers of another faith. The devoutest Christian can throw mud at Buddha without affecting his own good standing with the brethren; and if Mahomet were hanged in effigy from the cross of St. Paul's, Protestant Christianity would condemn the act merely as desecration of a sacred edifice.

Here is one more quotation from Prof. Peck, the concluding passage of his paper:

> Robert Ingersoll is dead. Death came to him with swiftness and without a warning. Whether he was even conscious of his end no man can say. It may be that before the spark grew quite extinct there was for him a moment of perception — that one appalling moment when, within a space of time too brief for human contemplation, the affrighted mind, as it reels upon the brink, flashes its vivid thought through all the years of Its existence and perceives the final meaning of them all. If such a moment came to him, and as the light of day grew dim before his dying eyes his mind looked backward through the past, there can have been small consolation in the thought, that in all the utterances of his public teaching, and in all the phrases of his fervid eloquence, there was nothing that could help to make the life of a man on earth more noble, or more spiritual, or more truly worth living.

This of a man who taught all the virtues as a duty and a delight! — who stood, as no other man among his countrymen has stood, for liberty, for honor, for good will toward men, for truth as it was given to him to see it, for love! — who by personal example taught patience under falsehood and silence under vilification! — who when slandered in debate answered not back, but addressed himself to the argument! — whose entire life was an inspiration to high thought and noble deed, and whose errors, if errors they are, the world can not afford to lose for the light and reason that are in them!

The passage quoted is not without eloquence and that literary distinction which its author gives to so much of what he writes. Withal it is infinitely discreditable. There is in it a distinct undertone of malice — of the same spirit which, among bigots of less civility; and franker speech, affirms of an irreligious person’s sudden death that it was “a judgment of Heaven,” and which gloats upon the possibility that he suffered the pangs of a penitence that came, thank God! too late to command salvation. It is in the same spirit that conceived and keeps in currency the ten-thousand-times-disproved tales of the deathbed remorse of Thomas Paine, Voltaire and all the great infidels. Indubitably posterity will enjoy the advantage of believing the same thing of Ingersoll; and I can not help thinking that in suggesting his remorse as only a possibility, instead of relating it as a fact attested by piteous appeals for divine mercy, Prof. Peck has committed a sin of omission for which on his own deathbed he will himself suffer the keenest regret.

1899.

THE SHORT STORY

“THE short story is always distinctly a sketch. It can not express what is the one greatest thing in all literature — intercommunion of human characters, their juxtapositions, their contrasts.... It is not a high form of art, and its present extreme popularity bespeaks decadence far more than advance.”

So said Edgar Fawcett, an author of no small note and consequence in his day. The one-greatest-things-in-all-literature are as plentiful and obvious, apparently, as the sole causes of the decline of the Roman power, yet new ones being continually discovered, it is a fair presumption that the supply is inexhaustible; and Fawcett, an ingenious man, could hardly have failed to find one and catalogue it. The one that he would discover was pretty sure to be as good as another and to abound in his own work — and Fawcett did not write short stories, but exceedingly long ones. So “the intercommunion of human characters,” and so forth, stands. Nevertheless, one fairly great thing in all literature is the power to interest the reader. Perhaps the author having the other thing can afford to forego that one, but its presence is observable, somehow, in much of the work that is devoid of that polyonymous element noted by Messrs. Fawcett, Thomas, Richard and Henry. Having that fact in mind, and the added fact that in his own admirable sonnets (for example) the intercommunion is an absent factor, I am disposed to think that Edgar was facetious.

The short story, quoth ‘a, “is not a high form of art”; and inferably the long story — the novel — is. Let us see about that. As all the arts are essentially one, addressing the same sensibilities, quickening the same emotions and subject to the same law and limitations of human attention, it may be helpful to consider some of the arts other than literary and see what we can educe from the comparison. It will be admitted, I hope, that even in its exterior aspect St. Peter’s Church is a work of high art. But is Rome a work of high art? Was it ever, or could it by rebuilding be made such? Certainly not, and the reason is that it can not all take attention at once. We may know that the several parts are coordinated and interrelated, but we do not discern and feel the coordination and interrelation. An opera, or an oratorio, that can be heard at a sitting may be artistic, but if in the manner of a Chinese play it were extended through the evenings of a week or a month what would it be? The only way to get unity of impression from a novel is to shut it up and look at the covers.

Not only is the novel, for the reason given, and for others, a faulty form of art, but because of its faultiness it has no permanent place in literature. In England it flourished less than a century and a half, beginning with Richardson and ending with Thackeray, since whose death no novels, probably, have been written that are worth attention; though as to this, one can not positively say, for of the incalculable multitude written only a few have been read by competent judges, and of these judges few indeed have uttered judgment that is of record. Novels are still produced in suspicious abundance and read with fatal acclaim but the novel of to-day has no art broader and better than that of its individual sentences — the art of style. That would serve if it had style.

Among the other reasons why the novel is both inartistic and impermanent is this — it is mere reporting. True, the reporter creates his plot, incidents and characters, but that itself is a fault, putting the work on a plane distinctly inferior to that of history. Attention is not long engaged by what could, but did not, occur to individuals; and it is a canon of the trade that nothing is to go into the novel that might not have occurred. “Probability” — which is but another name for the commonplace — is its keynote. When that is transgressed, as in the fiction of Scott and the greater fiction of Hugo, the work is romance, another and superior thing, addressed to higher faculties with a more imperious insistence. The singular inability to distinguish between the novel and the romance is one of criticism’s capital ineptitudes. It is like that of a naturalist who should make a single species of the squirrels and the larks. Equally with the novel, the short story may drag at each remove a lengthening chain of probability, but there are fewer removes. The short story does not, at least, cloy attention, confuse with overlaid impressions and efface its own effect.

Great work has been done in novels. That is only to say that great writers have written them. But great writers may err in their choice of literary media, or may choose them wilfully for something else than their artistic possibilities. It may occur that an author of genius is more concerned for gain than excellence — for the nimble popularity that comes of following a literary fashion than for the sacred credentials to a slow renown. The acclamation of the multitude may be sweet in his ear, the clink of coins, heard in its pauses, grateful to his purse. To their gift of genius the gods add no security against its misdirection. I wish they did. I wish they would enjoin its diffusion in the novel, as for so many centuries they did by forbidding the novel to be. And what more than they gave might we not have had from Virgil, Dante, Tasso, Camoëns and Milton if they had not found the epic poem ready to their misguided hands? May there be in Elysium no beds of asphodel and moly for its hardy inventor, whether he was Homer or “another man of the same name.”

The art of writing short stories for the magazines of the period can not be acquired. Success depends upon a kind of inability that must be “ born into” one — it does not come at call. The torch must be passed down the line by the thumbless hands of an illustrious line of prognathous ancestors unacquainted with fire. For the torch has neither light nor heat — is, in truth, fireproof. It radiates darkness and all shadows fall toward it. The magazine story must relate nothing: like Dr. Hern’s “holes” in the luminiferous ether, it is something in which nothing can occur. True, if the thing is written in a “dialect” so abominable that no one of sense will read, or so unintelligible that none who reads will understand, it may relate something that only the writer’s kindred spirits care to know; but if told in any human tongue action and incident are fatal to it. It must provoke neither thought nor emotion; it must only stir up from the shallows of its readers’ understandings the sediment which they are pleased to call sentiment, murking all their mental pool and effacing the reflected images of their natural environment.

The master of this school of literature is Mr. Howells. Destitute of that supreme and almost sufficient literary endowment, imagination, he does, not what he would, but what he can — takes notes with his eyes and ears and “writes them up” as does any other reporter. He can tell nothing but something like what he has seen or heard, and in his personal progress through the rectangular streets and between the trim hedges of Philistia, with the lettered old maids of his acquaintance curtseying from the doorways, he has seen and heard nothing worth telling. Yet tell it he must and, having told, defend. For years he conducted a department of criticism with a purpose single to expounding the after-thought theories and principles which are the offspring of his own limitations.

Illustrations of these theories and principles he interpreted with tireless insistence as proofs that the art of fiction is to-day a finer art than that known to our benighted fathers. What did Scott, what did even Thackeray know of the subtle psychology of the dear old New England maidens?

I want to be fair: Mr. Howells has considerable abilities. He is insufferable only in fiction and when, in criticism, he is making fiction’s laws with one eye upon his paper and the other upon a catalogue of his own novels. When not carrying that heavy load, himself, he has a manly enough mental stride. He is not upon very intimate terms with the English language, but on many subjects, and when you least expect it of him, he thinks with such precision as momentarily to subdue a disobedient vocabulary and keep out the wrong word. Now and then he catches an accidental glimpse of his subject in a sidelight and tells with capital vivacity what it is not. The one thing that he never sees is the question that he has raised *by* inadvertence, deciding it by implication against his convictions. If

Mr. Howells had never written fiction his criticism of novels would entertain, but the imagination which can conceive him as writing a good story under any circumstances would be a precious literary possession, enabling its owner to write a better one.

In point of fiction, all the magazines are as like as one vacuum to another, and every month they are the same as they were the month before, excepting that in their holiday numbers at the last of the year their vacuity is a trifle intensified by that essence of all dulness, the "Christmas story." To so infamous a stupidity has popular fiction fallen to so low a taste is it addressed, that I verily believe it is read by those who write it!

As certain editors of newspapers appear to think that a trivial incident has investiture of dignity and importance by being telegraphed across the continent, so these story-writers of the Reporter School hold that what is not interesting in life becomes interesting in letters — the acts, thoughts, feelings of commonplace people, the lives and loves of noodles, nobodies, ignoramuses and millionaires; of the village vulgarian, the rural maiden whose spiritual grace is not incompatible with the habit of falling over her own feet, the somnolent nigger, the clay-eating "Cracker" of the North Carolinian hills, the society person and the inhabitant of southwestern Missouri. Even when the writers commit infractions of their own literary Decalogue by making their creations and creationesses do something picturesque, or say something worth while, they becloud the miracle with such a multitude of insupportable descriptive details that the reader, like a tourist visiting an artificial waterfall at a New England summer place of last resort, pays through the nose at every step of His way to the Eighth Wonder. Are we given dialogue? It is not enough to report what was said, but the record must be authenticated by enumeration of the inanimate objects — commonly articles of furniture — which were privileged to be present at the conversation. And each dialogian must make certain or uncertain movements of the limbs or eyes before and after saying his say. All this in such prodigal excess of the slender allusions required, when required at all, for *vraisemblance* as abundantly to prove its insertion for its own sake. Yet the inanimate surroundings are precisely like those whose presence bores us our whole lives through, and the movements are those which every human being makes every moment in which he has the misfortune to be awake. One would suppose that to these gentry and ladry everything in the world except what is really remarkable is "rich and strange." They only think themselves able to make it so by the sea-change that it will suffer by being thrown into the duck-pond of an artificial imagination and thrown out again.

Amongst the laws which Cato Howells has given his little senate, and which his little senators would impose upon the rest of us, is an inhibitory statute against a breach of this “probability”’ — and to them nothing is probable outside the narrow domain of the commonplace man’s most commonplace experience. It is not known to them that all men and women sometimes, many men and women frequently, and some men and women habitually, act from impenetrable motives and in a way that is consonant with nothing in their lives, characters and conditions. It is known to them that “truth is stranger than fiction,” but not that this has any practical meaning or value in letters. It is to him of widest knowledge, of deepest feeling, of sharpest observation and insight, that life is most crowded with figures of heroic stature, with spirits of dream, with demons of the pit, with graves that yawn in pathways leading to the light, with existences not of earth, both malign and benign — ministers of grace and ministers of doom. The truest eye is that which discerns the shadow and the portent, the dead hands reaching, the light that is the heart of the darkness, the sky “with dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms.” The truest ear is that which hears

Celestial voices to the midnight air,
Sole, or responsive each to the other’s note,
Singing —

not “their great Creator,” but not a negro melody, either; no, nor the latest favorite of the drawing-room. In short, he to whom life is not picturesque, enchanting, astonishing, terrible, is denied the gift and faculty divine, and being no poet can write no prose. He can tell nothing because he knows nothing. He has not a speaking acquaintance with Nature (by which he means, in a vague general way, the vegetable kingdom) and can no more find

Her secret meaning in her deeds than he can discern and expound the immutable law underlying coincidence.

Let us suppose that I have written a novel — which God forbid that I should do. In the last chapter my assistant hero learns that the hero-in-chief has supplanted him in the affections of the hero. He roams aimless about the streets of the sleeping city and follows his toes into a silent public square. There after appropriate mental agonies he resolves in the nobility of his soul to remove himself forever from a world where his presence can not fail to be disagreeable to the lady’s conscience. He flings up his hands in mad disquietude and rushes down to the bay, where there is water enough to drown all such as he. Does he throw himself in? Not he — no, indeed. He finds a tug lying there with steam up and, going aboard, descends to the fire-hold. Opening one of the iron doors of the furnace, which discloses an aperture just wide enough to admit him, he wriggles in upon the glowing coals and there, with never a cry, dies a cherry-red death of unquestionable ingenuity. With that the story ends and the critics begin.

It is easy to imagine what they say: “This is too much”; “it insults the reader’s intelligence”; “it is hardly more shocking for its atrocity than disgusting for its cold-blooded and unnatural defiance of probability”; “art should have some traceable relation to the facts of human experience.”

Well, that is exactly what occurred once in the stoke-hold of a tug lying at a wharf in San Francisco. *Only* the man had not been disappointed in love, nor disappointed at all. He was a cheerful sort of person, indubitably sane, ceremoniously civil and considerate enough (evidence of a good heart) to spare whom it might concern any written explanation defining his deed as “a rash act.”

Probability? Nothing is so improbable as what is true. It is the unexpected that occurs; but that is not saying enough; it is also the unlikely — one might almost say the impossible. John, for example, meets and marries Jane. John was born in Bombay of poor but detestable parents; Jane, the daughter of a gorgeous hidalgo, on a ship bound from Vladivostok to Buenos Ayres. Will some gentleman who has written a realistic novel in which something so nearly out of the common as a wedding was permitted to occur have the goodness to figure out what, at their birth, were the chances that John would meet and marry Jane? Not one in a thousand — not one in a million — not one in a million million! Considered from a view-point a little anterior in time, it was almost infinitely unlikely that any event which has occurred would occur — any event worth telling in a story. Everything being so unearthly improbable, I wonder that novelists of the Howells school have the audacity to relate anything at all. And right heartily do I wish they had not.

Fiction has nothing to say to probability; the capable writer gives it not a moment’s attention, except to make what is related *seem* probable in the reading — *seem* true. Suppose he relates the impossible; what then? Why, he has but passed over the line into the realm of romance, the kingdom of Scott, Defoe, Hawthorne, Beckford and the authors of the *Arabian Nights* — the land of the poets, the home of all that is good and lasting in the literature of the imagination. Do these little fellows, the so-called realists, ever think of the goodly company which they deny themselves by confining themselves to their clumsy feet and pursuing their stupid noses through the barren hitherland, while just beyond the Delectable Mountains lies in light the Valley of Dreams, with its tall immortals, poppy-crowned? Why, the society of the historians alone would be a distinction and a glory!

1897.

WHO ARE GREAT?

THE question having been asked whether Abraham Lincoln was the greatest man this country ever produced, a contemporary writer signifies his own view of the matter thus:

"Abraham Lincoln was a great man, but I am inclined to believe that history will reckon George Washington a greater."

But that is an appeal to, an incompetent arbiter. History has always elevated to primacy in greatness that kind of men — men of action, statesmen and soldiers. In my judgment neither of the men mentioned is entitled to the distinction. I should say that the greatest American that we know about, if not George Sterling, was Edgar Allan Poe. I should say that the greatest man is the man capable of doing the most exalted, the most lasting and most beneficial intellectual work — and the highest, ripest, richest fruit of the human intellect is indubitably great poetry. The great poet is the king of men; compared with him, any other man is a peasant; compared with his, any other man's work is a joke. What is it likely that remote ages will think of the comparative greatness of Shakspeare and the most eminent of all Britain's warriors or statesmen? Nothing, for knowledge of the latter's work will have perished. Who was the greatest of Grecians before Homer? Because you are unable to mention offhand the names of illustrious conquerors or empire-builders of the period do you suppose there were none? Their work has perished, that is all — as will perish the work of Washington and Lincoln. But the *Iliad* is with us.

Their work has perished and our knowledge of it. Why? Because no greater man made a record of it. If Homer had celebrated their deeds instead of those of his dubious Agamemnon and impossible Achilles, we should know about them — all that he chose to tell. For a comparison between their greatness and his the data would be supplied by himself. Men of action owe their fame to men of thought. The glory of the ruler, the conqueror or the statesman belongs to the historian or the poet who made it. He can make it big or little, at his pleasure; he upon whom it is bestowed is as powerless in the matter as is any bystander. If there were no writers how would you know that there was a Washington or a Lincoln? How would you know that there is a Joseph Choate, who was American Ambassador to Great Britain, or a Nelson Miles, sometime Commander of our army? Suppose the writers of this country had in 1896 agreed never again to mention the name of William J. Bryan; where would have been his greatness?

Great writers make great men or unmake them — or can if they like. They kindle a glory where they please, or quench it where it has begun to shine. History's final judgment of Washington and Lincoln will depend upon the will of the immortal author who chooses to write of them. Their deeds, although a thousand times more distinguished, their popularity, though a thousand times greater, can not save from oblivion even so much as their names. And nothing that they built will abide. Of the "topless towers" of empire that the one assisted to erect, and the other to buttress, not a vestige will remain. But what can efface "The Testimony of the Suns"? Who can unwrite "To Helen"?

If there had been no Washington, American independence would nevertheless have been won and the American republic established. But suppose that he alone had taken up arms. He was neither indispensable nor sufficient. Without Lincoln the great rebellion would have been subdued and negro slavery abolished. What kind of greatness is that — to do what another could have done, what was bound to be done anyhow? I call it pretty cheap work. Great statesmen and great soldiers are as common as flies; the world is lousy with them. We recognize their abundance in the saying that the hour brings the man. We do not say that of a literary emergency. There the demand is always calling for the supply, and usually calling in vain. Once or twice in a century, it may be, the great man of thought comes, unforeseen and unrecognized, and makes the age and the glory thereof all his own by saying what none but he could say — delivering a message which none but he could bear. All round him swarm the little great men of action, laying sturdily about them with mace and sword, changing boundaries which are afterward changed back again, serving fascinating principles from which posterity turns away, building states that vanish like castles of cloud, founding thrones and dynasties with which Time plays at pitch-and-toss. But through it all, and after it all, the mighty thought of the man of words flows on and on with the resistless sweep of "the great river where De Soto lies" — an unchanging and unchangeable current of eternal good.

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep;
And Bahram, that great Hunter — the wild ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but can not break his sleep.

But the courts that Omar reared still stand, perfect as when he "hewed the shaft and laid the architrave." Not the lion and the lizard — we ourselves keep them and glory in them and drink deep in them, as did he. O'er his head, too;

that good man and considerable poet, Mr. Edgar Fawcett, stamped in vain; but a touch on a book, and lo! old Omar is broad awake and with him wakens Israfel, “whose heart-strings are a lute.”

Art and literature are the only things of permanent interest in this world. Kings and conquerors rise and fall; armies move across the stage of history and disappear in the wings; mighty empires are evolved and dissolved; religions, political systems, civilizations flourish, die and, except in so far as gifted authors may choose to perpetuate their memory, are forgotten and all is as before. But the thought of a great writer passes from civilization to civilization and is not lost, although his known work, his very name, may perish. You can not unthink a thought of Homer, but the deeds of Agamemnon are long undone, and the only value that he has, the only interest, is that he serves as material for poets. Of Cæsar’s work only that of the pen survives. If a statue by Phidias, or a manuscript by Catullus, were discovered today the nations of Europe would be bidding against one another for its possession to-morrow — as one day the nations of Africa may bid for a newly discovered manuscript of some one now long dead and forgotten. Literature and art are about all that the world really cares for in the end; those who make them are not without justification in regarding themselves as masters in the House of Life and all others as their servitors. In the babble and clamor, the pranks and antics of its countless incapables, the tremendous dignity of the profession of letters is overlooked; but when, casting a retrospective eye into “the dark backward and abysm of time” to where beyond these voices is the peace of desolation, we note the majesty of the few immortals and compare them with the pigmy figures of their contemporary kings, warriors and men of action’ generally — when across the silent battle fields and hushed *fora* where the dull destinies of nations were determined, nobody cares how, we hear, like ocean on a western beach,

The surge and thunder of the Odyssey —

then we appraise literature at its true value; and how little worth while seems all else with which Man is pleased to occupy his fussy soul and futile hands!

1901.

POETRY AND VERSE

LOVE of poetry is universal, but this is not saying much; for men in general love it not as poetry, but as verse — the form in which it commonly finds utterance, and in which its utterance is most acceptable. Not that verse is essential to poetry; on the contrary, some of the finest poetry extant (some of the passages of the Book of Job, in the English version, for familiar examples) is neither metric nor rhythmic. I am not quite sure, indeed, but the best test of poetry yet discovered might not be its persistence or disappearance when clad in the garb of prose. In this opinion I differ, though with considerable reluctance, with General Lucius Foote, who asserts that “every feature which makes poetry to differ from prose is the result of expression.” This dictum he has fortified by but a single example: he puts a stanza of Tennyson’s “Charge of the Light Brigade” into very good prose. Now, for one who has at times come so perilously near to writing genuine poetry as has General Foote, this is a little too bad. Surely no man of so competent literary judgment ever before affected to believe that Tennyson’s resonant patriotic lines were poetry, in any sense. They are, however, a little less distant from it in General Foote’s prose version—”There were some cannons on the right, and some on the left, and some in front, and they fired with a great noise” — than they are in the original. And I have the hardihood to add that as a rule the “old favorites” of the lyceum — the ringing and rhetorical curled darlings of the public — the “Address to the American Flag,”

“The Bells,” the “Curfew Must Not Ring To-night,” and all the ghastly lot of them, are very rubbishy stuff, indeed. There are exceptions, unfortunately, but to a cultivated taste — the taste of a mind that not only knows what it likes, but knows and can definitely state why it likes it — nine in ten of them are offencive. I say it is unfortunate that there are exceptions. It is unfortunate as impairing the beauty and symmetry of the rule, and unfortunate for the authors of the exceptional poems, who must endure through life the consciousness that their popularity is a cruel injustice.

Far be it from me to underrate the value of the delicate and difficult art of managing words. It is to poetry what color is to painting. The thought is the outline drawing, which, if it be great, no dauber who stops short of actually painting it out can make wholly mean, but to which the true artist with his pigments can add a higher glory and a new significance. No one who has studied style as a science and endeavored to practice it as an art; no one who knows how to select with subtle skill the word for the place; who balances one part of his sentence against another; who has an alert ear for the harmony of stops, cadences and inflections, orderly succession of accented syllables and recurrence of related sounds — no one, in short, who knows how to write prose can hold in light esteem an art so nearly allied to his own as that of poetic expression, including as it does the intricate one of versification, which itself embraces such a multitude of dainty wisdoms. But expression is not all; while, on the one hand, it can no more make a poetic idea prosaic than it can make falsehood of truth, so, on the other, it is unable to elevate and beautify a sentiment essentially vulgar or base. The experienced miner will no more surely detect the presence of gold in the rough ore than a trained judgment the noble sentiment in the crude or ludicrous verbiage in which ignorance or humor may have cast it; and the terrier will with no keener nose penetrate the disguise of the rat that has rolled in a bed of camomile than the practiced intelligence detect the pauper thought masquerading in fine words. The mind that does not derive a quiet gratification from the bald statement that the course of the divine river Alph was through caves of unknown extent, whence it fell into a dark ocean, will hardly experience a thrill of delight when told by Coleridge that

Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man,
Down to a sunless sea.

Nor would one who is capable of physically feeling the lines,
Full many a glorious morning have I seen

Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye, have disdained to be told by some lesser Shakspeare that he had observed mornings so fine that the mountains blushed with pleasure to be noticed by them. Poetry is too multiform and many-sided for anyone to dogmatize upon single aspects and phases of it as if they were the whole; it has as many shapes as Proteus, and as many voices as a violin. It sometimes thunders and sometimes it prattles; it shouts and exults, but on occasion it can whisper. Crude and harsh at one time, the voice of the muse is at another smooth, soft, exquisite, luxurious; and again scholarly and polite. There is ornate poetry, like the façade of a Gothic cathedral, and there is poetry like a Doric temple. Poems there are which blaze like a parterre of all brilliant flowers, and others as chaste and pallid as the white lily. It is all good (though I hasten to explain with some alarm that I do not think all verse is good) but the best minds are best agreed in awarding the palm to poetry that is most severely simple in diction — in which are fewest “inversions” — from which words of new coinage and compounding are rigorously excluded, and the old are used in their familiar sense; poetry, that is to say, that differs least in expression from the best prose. A truly poetic line — a line that I never tire of repeating to myself — is this from Byron:

And the big rain comes dancing to the earth.

It is from the description of a storm in the Alps, in “Childe Harold.” I will quote the whole stanza in order that the reader may be reminded how much of the excellence of this line depends upon its context:

And this is in the night — most glorious night!
Thou wert not sent for slumber! let me be
A sharer in thy fierce and far delight —

A portion of the tempest and of thee!
How the lit lake shines, a phosphoric sea,
And the big rain comes dancing to the earth!
And now again ‘tis black — and now the glee
Of the loud hills shakes with its mountain-mirth,
As if they did rejoice o’er a young earthquake’s birth.

It would not be difficult, were it worth while, to point out in this stanza almost as many faults as it has lines; after the “lit lake” the “phosphoric sea” — a simile that repeats the image and debauches it — is singularly execrable, and the “young earthquake’s birth” is almost as bad; but all the imperfections of the stanza count for nothing, for they are redeemed by its merits, and particularly by that one splendid line. Yet how could the thought it holds be more baldly stated? I only stipulate that the rain shall be “big,” and “dancing” seem to be the manner of its approach. With these not very hard, and perfectly fair, conditions let ingenuity do its malevolent worst to vulgarize that thought. These few instances prove, I hope, that poetry, whatever it is, is something more than “words, words, words” — that there is such a thing as poetry of the thought.

But let us take a different kind of example. If poetry is all in the manner, as General Foote avers, expression must be able to create poetry out of anything; at least, no line has been drawn between the prosaic ideas upon which expression can work its miracle and those upon which it can not. I am, therefore, justified by a familiar law of logic in assuming that it is meant that expression, by the mere magic of method, can make *any* idea poetical. Now, I beg most respectfully to submit the following problems to be “worked out” by believers in that dictum: Make poetry of the thought that —

(1) Glue is made from the hoofs of cattle, and (2) silk purses by macerating the ears of sows in currant jelly.

If anyone will build a superstructure of poetry upon either of those “ideas” as a foundation I will be first and loudest in calling attention to the glory of the edifice.

I have said that men in general do not love poetry as poetry, but as verse. They are pleased with verse, but if the verse contain poetry they like it none the better for that. To the vast majority of the readers of even the higher class newspapers, verse and poetry are terms strictly synonymous. The pleasure they get from metre and rhyme is merely physical or sensual. It is much the same kind of pleasure as that derived from the clatter of a drum and the rhythmic clash of cymbals, and altogether inferior to the delight that the other instruments of a band produce. Emerson, I believe, accounts for our delight in metrical composition by supposing metre to have some close relation to the rhythmical recurrences within our physical organization — respiration, the pulse-beat, *etc.* No doubt he is right, and if so we need not take the trouble to deride the easy-going intellect that is satisfied with sound for sentiment whenever the sound is in harmony with the physical nature that perceives it, for in such sounds is a natural charm. The old lady who found so much Christian comfort in pronouncing the word “Mesopotamia” was nobody’s fool; the word consists of two pure dactyls.

For an example of the satisfaction the ordinary mind takes in mere metre there is nothing better than the senseless refrains of popular songs — things which make not even the pretense of containing ideas. From the “hey ding a ding” of Shakspeare and the “luddy, fuddy,” etc., of Mr. Lester Wallaces famous thieves’ song in “Rosedale,” to the “whack fol-de-rol” of inferior and less original composers, they are all alike in appealing to nothing in the world but the sense of time. And in this they differ in no essential particular from the verses in the newspapers; for such ideas as these contain — and God knows they are harmless; — are probably never perfectly grasped by the reader, who, when he has finished his “poem,” is very sure to be unable to tell you what it is all about.

I have proved this by repeated experiments, and I believe I am not far wrong on the side of immoderation in saying that of every one hundred adults who can read and write with ease, there are ninety and nine to whom poetry is a sealed book — who not only do not recognize it when read, but do not understand it when pointed out. There is hardly any subject on which the ignorance of educated persons is more deep, dark and universal. And in one sense it is hopeless. By no set instruction can a knowledge of poetry be gained. It is (to those having the capacity) a result of general refinement — the fruit of a taste and judgment that come of culture. The difficulty of imparting it is immensely enhanced by the want of a definition. If one have gift and knowledge it is easy enough to say what is poetry, but not so easy to say what poetry is.

Hunters have a saying that a deer is safe from the man that never misses. Likewise it may be said that the faultless poet gets no readers; for, as the hunter can never miss only by never firing, so the poet can avoid faults only by not writing. There is no such thing in art or letters as attainable perfection; the utmost that any man can hope to do is to make the sum and importance of his excellences so exceed the sum and importance of his faults that the general impression shall seem faultless — that the good shall divert attention from the bad in the contemplation and efface it in the recollection. In considering the character of a particular work and assigning it to its true place amongst works of similar scope and design, we must, indeed, balance merits against demerits, endeavoring in such a general way as the nature of the problem permits, to say which preponderate, and to what extent, making allowance in censure and modification in praise. But the author of the work is to be rightly judged by a different method, and he who has done great work is great, despite the number and magnitude of his failures and imperfections. These may serve to point a moral or illustrate a principle by its violation, but they do not and can not dim the glory of the better performance. Is he not a strong man who can lift a thousand pounds, notwithstanding that in acquiring the ability he failed a hundred times to lift the half of it? Who was the strongest man in the world — he who once lifted the greatest weight, or he who twice lifted the second greatest? The author of “Paradise Lost” wrote afterward “Paradise Regained.” He who wrote a poem called “In Memoriam” wrote a thing called “The Northern Farmer.” Of what significance is that? Shall we count also a man’s washing-list against him? Suppose that Byron had not written the “Hours of Idleness” — would that have enhanced the value of “Childe Harold”? Is our hoard of Shakspearean pure gold the smaller because from the mine whence it came came also some of the base metal of “Titus Andronicus”? Surely it does not matter whether the hand that at one time wrote the lines “To Helen” was at another time writing “The Bells” or whittling a pine shingle. Literature is not like a game of billiards, in which the player is rated according to his average. In estimating the relative altitudes of mountain peaks we look no lower than their summits.

In judging men by this broader method than that which we apply to their work we do but practice that method whereby posterity arrives at judgments so just and true that in their prediction consists the whole science of criticism. To anticipate the verdict of posterity — that is all the most daring critic aspires to do, and to do that he should strive to exclude the evidence that posterity will not hear. Posterity is a tribunal in which there will be no testimony for the prosecution except what is inseparable from the strongest testimony for the defence. It will consider no man’s bad work, for none will be extant. Nay, it will not even attend to the palliating or aggravating circumstances of his life and surroundings, for these too will have been forgotten; if not lost from the records they will be whelmed under mountains of similar or more important matter — Pelion upon Ossa of accumulated “literary materials.” These are points to which the critics do not sufficiently attend — do not, indeed, attend at all. They endeavor to anticipate the judgment of posterity by a method as unlike posterity’s as their judgment and ingenuity can make it. They attentively study their poet’s private life and his relation to the time and its events in which he lived. They go to his work for the key to his character, and return to his character for the key to his work, then ransack his correspondence for side-lights on both. They paw dusty records and forgotten archives; they thumb and dog’s-ear the libraries; and he who can turn up an original document or hitherto unnoted fact exults in the possession of an advantage over his fellows that will justify the publication of another volume to befog the question. Then comes posterity, calmly overlooks the entire mass of ingenious irrelevance, fixes a tranquil eye upon those lines which the poet has inscribed the highest, and determines his mental stature as simply, as surely and with as little assistance as Daniel discerning the hand of God in the letters blazing upon the palace wall.

II

The world is nearly all discovered, mapped and described. In the hot hearts of two continents, and the “thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice” about the poles, uncertainty still holds sway over a lessening domain, and there Fancy waves her joyous wing unclipped by knowledge. As in the material world, so in the world of mind. The daring incursions of conjecture have been followed and discredited by the encroachments of science, whereby the limits of the unknown have been narrowed to such mean dimensions that imagination has lost her free, exultant stride, and moves with mincing step and hesitating heart.

I do not mean to say that to-day knows much more that is worth knowing than did yesterday, but that with regard to poetry’s materials — the visible and audible without us, and the emotional within — we have compelled a revelation of Nature’s secrets, and found them uninteresting to the last degree. To the modern “instructed understanding” she has something of the air of a detected impostor, and her worshipers have neither the sincerity that comes from faith, nor the enthusiasm that is the speech of sincerity. The ancients not only had, as Dr. Johnson said, “the first rifling of the beauties of Nature”; they had the immensely greater art advantage of ignorance of her dull, vulgar and hideous processes, her elaborate movements tending nowhither, and the aimless monotony of her mutations. The telescope had not pursued her to the heights, nor the microscope dragged her from her ambush. The meteorologists had not analyzed her temper, nor constructed mathematical formulae to forecast her smiles and frowns. Mr. Edison had not arrived to show that the divine gift of speech (about the only thing that distinguishes men, parrots, and magpies from the brutes) is also an attribute of metal. In the youth of the world they had, in short, none of the disillusionizing sciences with which a critical age, delving curiously about the roots of things, has sapped the substructure of religion and art alike. I do not regret the substitution of knowledge for conjecture, and doubt for faith; I only say that it has its disadvantages, and among them we reckon the decay of poesy. In an enlightened age, Macaulay says,

> Men will judge and compare; but they will not create. They will talk about the old poets, and comment on them, and to a certain extent enjoy them. But they will scarcely be able to conceive the effect which poetry produced on their ruder ancestors, the agony, the ecstasy, the plenitude of belief. The Greek rhapsodists, according to Plato, could scarce recite Homer without falling into convulsions. The Mohawk hardly feels the scalping-knife while he shouts his death-song. The power which the ancient bards of Wales and Germany exercised over their auditors seems to modern readers almost miraculous. Such feelings are very rare in a civilized community, and most rare among those who participate most in its improvements. They linger among the peasantry.

While it is true in a large sense that the world’s greatest poets have lived in rude ages, when their races were not long emerged from the night of barbarism — like birds the poets sing best at sunrise — it must not be supposed that similarly favorable conditions are supplied to a rude individual intelligence in an age of polish. With a barbarous age that had recently set its face to the dawn a Joaquin Miller would have been in full sympathy, and might have interpreted its spirit in songs of exceeding splendor. But the very qualities that would have made him *en rapport* with such an era make him an isolated voice in ours; while Tennyson, the man of culture, full of the disposition of his time — albeit the same is of less adequate vitality — touches with a valid hand the harp which the other beats in vain. The altar is growing cold, the temple itself becoming a ruin; the divine mandate comes with so feeble and faltering a voice that the priest has need of a trained and practiced ear to catch it and the gift of tongues to impart its meaning to a generation concerned with the unholy things whose voice is prose. As a poetical mental attitude, that of doubt is meaner than that of faith, that of speculation less commanding than that of emotion; yet the poet of to-day must assume them, and "In Memoriam" attests the wisdom of him who "stoops to conquer" — loyally accepting the hard conditions of his epoch, and bending his corrigible genius in unquestioning assent to the three thousand and thirty-nine articles of doubt.

As inspiration grows weak and acceptance disobedient, form of delivery becomes of greater moment; in so far as it can, the munificence of manner must mitigate the poverty of matter; so it occurs that the poets of later life excel their predecessors in the delicate and difficult arts and artifices of versification as much as they fall below them in imagination and power.

1878.

THOUGHT AND FEELING

“‘WHAT is his idea? — what thought does he express?” asks — rather loftily — a distinguished critic and professor of English literature to whom I submitted a brief poem of Mr. Loveman. I had not known that Mr. Loveman (of whom, by the way, I have not heard so much as I expect to) had tried to express a thought; I had supposed that his aim was to produce an emotion, a feeling. That is all that a poet — as a poet — can do. He may be philosopher as well as poet — may have a thought, as profound a thought as you please, but if he do not express it so as to produce an emotion in an emotional mind he has not spoken as a poet speaks. It is the philosopher’s trade to make us think, the poet’s to make us feel. If he is so fortunate as to have his thought, well and good; he can make us feel, with it as well as without — and without it as well as with.

One would not care to give up the philosophy that underruns so much of Shakspeare’s work, but how little its occasional absence affects our delight is shown by the reading of such “nonsense verses” as the song in “As You Like It,” beginning:

It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino.

One does not need the music; the lines sing themselves, and are full of the very spirit of poetry. What the dickens they may chance to mean is quite another matter. What is poetry, anyhow, but “glorious nonsense”? But how very glorious the nonsense happens to be! What “thought” did Ariel try to express in his songs ill “The Tempest”? There is hardly the tenth part of a thought in them; yet who that has a rudimentary, or even a vestigial, susceptibility to sentiment and feeling, can read them without the thrill that is stubborn to the summoning of the profoundest reflections of Hamlet in his inkiest cloak?

Poetry may be conjoined with thought. In the great poets it commonly is — that is to say, we award the palm to him who is great in more than one direction. But the poetry is a thing apart from the thought and demanding a separate consideration. The two have no more essential connection than the temple and its granite, the statue and its bronze. Is the sculptor’s work less great in the clay than it becomes in the hands of the foundry man?

No one, not the greatest poet nor the dullest critic, knows what poetry is. No man, from Milton down to the acutest and most pernicious lexicographer, has been able to define its name. To catch that butterfly the critic’s net is not fine enough by much. Like electricity, it is felt, not known. If it could be known, if the secret were accessible to analysis, why, one could be taught to write poetry without having been “born unto singing.”

So it happens that the most penetrating criticism must leave eternally unsaid the thing that is most worth saying. We can say of a poem as of a picture, an Ionic column, or any work of art: “It is charming!” But why and how it charms — there we are dumb, its creator no less than another.

What is it in art before which all but the unconscious peasant and the impenitent critic confess the futility of speech? Why does a certain disposition of words affect us deeply when if differently arranged to mean the same thing they stir no emotion whatever? He who can answer that has surprised the secret of the Sphinx, and after him shall be no more poetry forever I Expound who is able the charm of these lines from “Kubla Khan:”

‘A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw.
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.

There is no “thought” here — nothing but the baldest narrative in common words arranged in their natural order; but upon whose heart-strings does not that maiden play? — and who does not adore her?

Like the entire poem of which they are a part, and like the entire product of which the poem is a part, the lines are all imagination and emotion. They address, not the intellect, but the heart. Let the analyst of poetry wrestle with them if he is eager to be thrown.

1903.

THE TIMOROUS REPORTER

THE PASSING OF SATIRE

“YOUNG man,” said the Melancholy Author, “I do not commonly permit myself to be’ interviewed’; what paper do you represent?”

The Timorous Reporter spoke the name of the great journal that was connected with him. —

“I never have heard of it,” said the Melancholy Author. “I trust that it is devoted to the interests of Literature.”

Assurance was given that it had a Poets’ Corner and that among its regular contributors it numbered both Aurora Angelina Aylmer and Plantagenet Binks, the satirist.

“Indeed,” said the great man, “you surprise me! I had supposed that satire, once so large and wholesome an element in English letters, was long dead and d — pardon me — buried. You must bear with me if I do not concede the existence of Mr. Binks. Satire cannot co-exist with so foolish sentiments as ‘the brotherhood of man,’

‘the trusteeship of wealth,’ moral irresponsibility, tolerance, Socialism and the rest of it. Who can ‘lash the rascals naked through the world’ in an age that holds crime to be a disease, and converts the prison into a sanitarium?”

The Timorous Reporter ventured to ask if he considered crime a symptom of mental health. By way of fortifying himself for a reply, the melancholy one visited the sideboard and toped a merciless quantity of something imperfectly known to his visitor from the arid South.

“Crime, sir,” said he, partly recovering, “is merely a high degree of selfishness directed by a low degree of intelligence. If selfishness is a disease none of us is altogether well. We are all selfish, or we should not be living, but most of us have the discernment to see that our permanent advantage does not lie in gratification of our malevolence by murder, nor in augmenting our possessions by theft. Those of us who think otherwise should be assisted to a saner view by punishment. It is sad, so sad, to reflect that many of us escape it.”

“But it is agreed,” said the journalist, “by all our illustrious sociologists — Brand Whitlock, Clarence Darrow, Eugene Debs and Emma Goldman — that punishment is useless, that it does not deter; and they prove it by the number of convictions recorded against individual criminals. Will you kindly say if they are right?”

“They know that punishment deters — not perfectly, for nothing is perfect, but it deters. If every human institution that lamentably fails to accomplish its full purpose is to be abolished none will remain.”

The Timorous Reporter begged to be considered worthy to know what, apart from its great wisdom and interest, all this had to do with satire.

“Satire,” said the Melancholy Author, “is punishment. As such it has fallen into public disfavor through disbelief in its justice and efficacy. So the rascals go unlashed. Instead of ridicule we have solemn reprobation; for wit we have humor’ — with a slang word in the first line, two in the second and three in the third. Why, sir, the American reading public hardly knows that there ever was a distinctive kind of writing known, technically, as satire — that it was once not only a glory to literature but, incidentally, a terror to all manner of civic and personal unworth. If we had to-day an Aristophanes, a Jonathan Swift or an Alexander Pope, he would indubitably be put into a comfortable prison with all sanitary advantages, fed upon yellow legged pullets and ensainted by the Little Brothers of the Bad. For they would think him a thief. In the same error, the churches would pray for him and the women compete for his hand in marriage.”

The thought of so great a perversion of justice overcame the creator of the vision and he sank into a chair already occupied by the cat — a contested seat. —

SOME DISADVANTAGES OF GENIUS

"MY CHILD," said the Melancholy Author, "the sharpest affliction besetting a man of genius is genius."

The Timorous Reporter ventured to explain that he had been taught otherwise.

"In the first place," continued the Melancholy Author, inattentive to dissent, "the man of genius cannot hope to be understood by his contemporaries. The more they concede his genius, the less will they comprehend any particular manifestation of it. Carlyle has said that the first impression of a work of genius is disagreeable. There are magazines and publishing houses that say they receive as many as twenty-five thousand manuscripts a year. Of course, as Dr. Holmes pointed out, one does not have to eat an entire cheese to know if he likes it — it is needless to read all manuscripts through to the bitter end. But how if in those that are really great the apparently bitter end is the beginning? If the first impression is disagreeable — to one who is *not* a genius, just an editor — what chance of acceptance has the work?" Not daring to affirm his steadfast conviction that all editors are men of genius, the interviewer suffered in (and from) silence, and the great man went on:

"Furthermore, the work of a man of genius is necessarily different from that of all others; by that difference, indeed, it is credentialed — to posterity — as a work of genius. But the editor, or the publisher's reader — will he feel sure of his ground when dealing with that to which he is unaccustomed? — of whose acceptability to the public he is without the *criteria* to judge? With an abiding though secret sense of his own fallibility, will he not think it expedient to take the safe side and reject the work? That will at least entail no possible 'difference of opinion' with his employer. Dead manuscripts tell no tales. Sir, in the noble profession of letters it is the rule, attested by a thousand familiar instances, that the man of genius is starved by those whose successors in the seats of authority pay enormous prices for any scrap of his work that may survive him. Consider the case of Poe, of Lafcadio Hearn — who confessed that in the last dozen years of his life his average annual earnings by his pen did not exceed five hundred dollars. And I am no millionaire myself."

As the Melancholy Author paused to celebrate his poverty at the sideboard his auditor cautiously advanced the view that several living writers of indubitable genius were pretty prosperous.

"Despite their genius," said the great man, drying his lips with his coat-sleeve, “and because of something else. One of them may have the good fortune to take the attention of some distinguished person having the world’s ear at his tongue’s end, and the habit of loquacity — a person like Colonel Roosevelt, or the late Mr. Gladstone. Did not the latter, by a few words of commendation, provide for life for Mrs. Humphry Ward and for eternity for Marie Bashkirtseff? True, the one is impenitently dull and the other was a shrilling lunatic; but by accident he *might* have praised an author of consummate ability. Another really great writer may be prosperous — that is to say, popular — because of some engaging mannerism or artifice; as Mr. Kipling bends from his Olympian omniscience to flatter his readers with colloquial familiarity. Another, like Dickens, may have the good luck to be an amusing vulgarian, or, like Mr. Riley, be willing to write lyrics of the pumpkin-field in the ‘ dialect’ of those who eat pumpkins. It may happen, too, although in point of fact it never does happen, that a man of genius is at the little end of a long, brass trumpet — I mean, is editor of Our Leading Magazine. Even conceding your entire claim for these fortunate persons (which I do not) it is clear that their genius has had nothing to do with their success. You are a hebetudinous futilitarian!”

The Timorous Reporter “shrank to his second cause and was no more.” On reviving, he humbly submitted that he had affirmed nothing of the authors named, nor even mentioned them.

“Genius has been a thousand times defined,” resumed the oracle, regardless; “nevertheless we know fairly well what, partly, it is. *Inter alia,* it is the faculty of knowing things without having to learn them. When Hugo wrote his immortal narrative of Waterloo he had never seen a battle; nor was Dickens ever in solitary confinement in the Pennsylvania penitentiary. But will the possessor of this miraculous faculty profit by it, or even be able rightly to use it in the service of another’s gain? No; in his dealings with his fellow men, editors and publishers included, he will find them unaware, and unable to perceive, that he knows any more than they do. He will encounter, indeed, the most insuperable distrust, even from those who concede his genius; for genius is almost universally held to be a particular kind of brilliant disability. The story of Homer instructing the sandal-maker how to make footgear is, of course, apocryphal, but no more credence is given to the authentic instance of Lord Brougham showing the brewer how to make beer. Even those who assent to the best definition of genius ever made—’ great general ability directed into a particular channel’ — will unconsciously assume that it is confined to that channel, and will assist in keeping it there. Its most distinguishing feature — versatility — the power to do many kinds of work equally well — will get no contemporary recognition. Having a reputation for writing great stories (for example) you will write equally great essays, satires and what not, all in vain. It is only to mediocrity that ‘ great general ability’ is conceded. That is why the late William Sharp, turning to another kind of work than that in which he had distinguished himself, took a feminine name, and, secure from disparaging comparison with himself, was accessible to commendation. As the work of William Sharp, that of ‘Fiona McLeod’ would have evoked a chorus of deprecation as evidence of failing power. In literature, a single specialty is all that contemporary criticism is willing to allow to genius. Posterity tells a juster tale, albeit disposed to go to the other extreme, seeing something of the fire divine in even the paste jewels wherewith the great lapidary pelted the wolf from his door.”

“Then you would advise the writer of distinction to stick to his — latest?”

“That will not save him. The criticism that will not concede versatility will deny stability. After a few years, the man of genius, however he may confine himself to the kind of work in which, despite its excellence, he has been successful, must face the inevitable and solemn judgment that he has ‘ exhausted the vein,” fallen down,’

‘gone stale.’ It matters not if practice and years have ripened his imagination, broadened his knowledge and refined his taste — for great minds do not decay with age; his contemporaries will have it that he is ‘ written out,’ for he is no longer a new thing under the sun.”

The Melancholy Author himself looks hardly more than seventy-five.

“‘Written out, written out’ — England said so of Dickens and Tennyson; America said so of Bret Harte; both have for five years been saying so of Kipling. The great writer is likely, by the way, to share that view himself, as Thackeray, reading over some of his early work, exclaimed: ‘What a giant I was in those ‘days!’

“Another lion in the path of genius is its own success — the low kind of success that is called popularity, for which some sons of the gods, with their bellies sticking to their backs, really do strive. Let one of them achieve a result of this kind and he will find it all the harder to achieve another. Read Stockton’s story of ‘My Wife’s Deceased Sister.’ The narrator tells how, having published a popular tale with that title, he was ever thereafter what is called in the slang to which your detestable profession is addicted, ‘ a dead one.’ Editors would take nothing that he offered, but always begged for something like ‘My Wife’s Deceased Sister.’ Sir, I know how it feels to go up against that invincible competitor, oneself. After publication of my famous story, ‘ The Maiden Pirate,’ my greater (and even longer) work, ‘A Treatise on the Chaldean Dative Case,’ was rejected by twenty editors! Let the man of genius beware of popularity; one slip of that kind and a brilliant future is behind him. But it does not greatly matter, for even without incurring the mischance of a ‘hit,’ the great writer is, as I said, foredoomed to the charge of degeneracy.”

The Timorous Reporter humbly murmured the names of Hall Caine, Henry James, the late F. Marion Crawford, Mrs. Mary Wilkins Freeman, Miss Mary Murfree, Miss Mary Edward Bok, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Ella Wheeler Sylvester Vierick, and the venerable Hildegarde Hawthorne — then edged himself softly toward an open door. With unforeseen resourcefulness, the sad eyed deprecator of dissent seized a convenient missile, but it happened to be a decanter of Medford rum, and the situation was saved. With fortified solemnity the father of the maiden pirate again took up his parable:

“Certain literary domains are posted with warnings to the trespasser, and against men of genius the inhibition is fiercely enforced. Irruptions of mediocrity entail no penalty because unobserved by the constabulary. The supposed proprietors of these guarded estates are long dead, leaving no heirs; the ‘notices’ are put up without authority, for the land is really a common. One of these closed areas is that of Jonathan Swift, who dispossessed some of the successors of Lucian. Whom Lucian dispossessed we do not know, all evidences of an earlier occupancy than his having been effaced by the burning of the great library at Alexandria. All, doubtless, incurred ‘the penalty of the law,’ each in his turn, from the dunces of his day. The ‘penalty’ is execration as an imitator. Long before Swift, and probably long before Lucian, an accepted method of satire was comparison of actual with imaginary civilizations, through tales of fictitious travelers in unreal regions. But since Swift, woe to the writer having the hardihood to adopt the method, however candidly avowed, and however different the manner! It is as if guardians of Homer’s fame had chased Dante and Camoëns out of the field of the epic, and had put up the bars against Milton. Nay, it is as if an engineer platting a survey were accused of imitating Euclid. True, Virgil, who did imitate Homer most shamelessly, escapes censure. I fancy the Proponents-Militant of Originality have not heard of him.

“In our own day Bret Harte wrote charming sketches of life and character in Californian mining camps. Many others had done so before him, but for many years after his first work in that field none could enter it without incurring austere denunciation as imitator and plagiarist; and even to-day one having the experience to observe or the genius to imagine the life of a Californian mining camp, or any interesting feature of it, delivers his tidings, like the heralds of old, at his peril.

“Another of these posted preserves is that of satire in iambic pentameter verse. This mode of expression is supposed to belong by right divine to Alexander Pope, who made the most constant and cleverest use of it. With its concomitants of epigram and antithesis, it was old before Pope was young. He was himself a ‘trespasser’; he was roundly reviled for imitating Dryden. The form was used by other Queen Anne’s men, acceptably by Johnson and by many a later; but of this the patrolmen and gatekeepers of the Pope reservation in our day have not been apprised by ‘report divine’ — the only way that they can be made to know anything, for read, the devil a bit do they. In the literary landscape they see only the highest peaks of the Delectable Mountains. They know only the large, familiar figures, and these only by their most characteristic work. To their indurated understandings each individual of this bright band stands for a particular field of composition. His title to exclusive possession is *res adjudicata*. If anybody set foot across the sacred boundary — little fellows excepted — he will find himself the fundamental element in a cone of pummeling custodians. Young man, in your report of this interview you will be good enough to quote me as deprecating that situation.”

The interviewer pledged his life, his sacred fortune and his honor to the performance of that duty, and the great man resumed:

“Of all these inhibiting *censores literarum*, the most austere and implacable are those guarding the sovereignty of Poe. They have made his area of activity a veritable *mare clausam* — as if he were the first that ever burst

Into that silent sea.

The Timorous Reporter signified his sense of the speaker’s fertility of metaphor: there had been an inundation (of words) and the “estate” had become a “sea.” He whistled softly “A Life on the Ocean Wave.”

“It was not an unknown sea; it was crisscrossed by the wakes of a thousand ships and charted to the last reef. Tales of the tragic and the supernatural are the earliest utterances in every literature. When the savage begins to talk he begins to tell wonder tales of death and mystery — of terror and the occult. Tapping, as they do, two of the three great mother-lodes of human interest, these tales are a constant phenomenon — the most permanent, because the most fascinating, element in letters. Great Scott! has the patrol never heard of *The Thousand and One Nights*, of *The Three Spaniards*, of Horace Walpole, of ‘Monk’ Lewis, of De Quincey, of Maturin, Ingemann, Blicher, Balzac, Hoffmann, Fitz James O’Brien?”

The reporter summoned the boldness to say that the charge of imitation had not been made against De Maupassant, who certainly was not an unobserved “little fellow,” and was contemporary with the offending critics. “Why, sir,” said the Melancholy Author, “you forget — he wrote in French. Translations? Dear me, have there been translations? How sad!

“As to ‘originality,’ that is merely a matter of manner. The ancients exhausted the possibilities of method. In respect of that, one cannot hope to do much that is both new and worth doing, but there are as many styles = — that is, ways of doing — as writers. One can no more help having some individuality in manner than one can help looking somewhat different from anybody else, although hopeless of being much of a giant, or unique as to number and distribution of arms, legs and head. But, sir, this demand for ‘originality’ is a call for third-rate men, who alone supply such a semblance of it as is still possible. The writer of sane understanding and wholesome ambition is content to meet his great predecessors on their own ground. He enters the public stadium, and although perversely handicapped because of his no record and mocked by the *claque;* and although the spectators are sure to declare him beaten, that ultimate umpire, Posterity, will figure the matter out, and may announce a different result.”

The reporter has reason to think that much more was said, but He Had the misfortune to fall asleep; and when wakened by the sound of a closing door he was alone. “My!” he said; “I have Had a narrow escape; if the man that once proclaimed me a genius had not happened to be a fool I know not what evils might have befallen me,”

1909.

OUR SACROSANCT ORTHOGRAPHY

"NO," said the Melancholy Author, "I do not understand British criticism of American attempts at spelling reform. The claim of our insular cousins to a special ownership and particular custody of our language is impudent. English is not a benefaction that we owe to living Englishmen, nor a loan to be enjoyed, under conditions prescribed by the creditors. When our ancestors 'came over' they did not sign away any rights of revision of their own speech; and if a man come not honestly by his mother-tongue I know not what he may be said legitimately to own. I am not addicted to intemperate words, and harsh retaliation does not engage my assent, but when I see an Englishman reaching ' hands across the sea' to punish what he chooses to call an infraction of the laws of *his* language, I am tempted to slap his wrist." In the presence of this portentous incarnation of justice the Timorous Reporter trembled appropriately and was silent in all the dialects of his native land and Kansas.

"What would they have," continued the great, sad man—"these 'conservatives'? A language immune to change? That would be a dead language and we should have to evolve a successor. Ours has never been a changeless tongue; nothing is more mutable, even in its orthography. As it existed a few centuries ago it is now unintelligible except to a few specialists, yet every change has encountered as fierce hostility as any that is now proposed. Compare a page of ' Beowulf' with a page of the London *Times* or *The Spectator* and see what incalculable quantities of 'crow' the luckless 'guardians of our noble tongue' have had to swallow. Do you wonder, young man, that they are a dyspeptic folk? And did not Dr. Samuel Johnson formulate a great truth in the dictum that * every sick man is a scoundrel'?"

"Surely," ventured the Timorous Reporter, "you would not apply so harsh a word to the great English reviewers, nor to our own beloved Professor Harry Thurston Peck!"

"To be consistent these gentlemen should not demand that the spelling remain as it is, for its present condition is the result of innumerable defeats of themselves and their predecessors by hardy 'corruptors.' It is pusillanimous of them not only to accept a situation that has been forced upon them but to proclaim it sacred and fight for its eternal maintenance. They should be making heroic efforts to restore at least the spelling of Hakluyt and Sir John Mandeville. It is not so very long since a few timid innovators began (as secretly as the nature of the rebellious act would permit) to leave off the ‘k’ in such words as ‘musick” publick’ and so forth. Instantly

The wonted roar was up amid the woods,
And filled the air with barbarous dissonance —

the self-appointed ‘guardians of our noble tongue’ rose as one old lady and swore that rather than submit they would run away! That sacred ‘k’ is no more, but they are with us yet, untaught by failure and unstilled by shame. It is the nature of a fool to hate a thing when it is new, adore it when it is current, and despise it when it is obsolete.” Pleased with his epigram, the Melancholy Author so accentuated the sadness of his countenance as to invite a sincere compassion.

“We hear much from the scholar-folk about the importance of preserving the derivation of words, not only as a guide to their meaning, but because from the genealogy and biography of words we get instructive sidelights on the history and customs of nations. That is all true: philology is a useful and fascinating study. Read *The Queen’s English* of the late Dean Alford if you think it is not. (Incidentally, I may mention my own humble volumes on *The Genesis and Evolution of ‘Puss’ as the Vocative Form of ‘Cat.’)* But derivation is really not a very sure guide to signification. For example, what do I learn of the meaning of ‘ desultory’ by knowing that it is from the Latin ‘desultor,’ a circus performer that leaps from horse to horse? In many instances the origin of a word is misleading, as in ‘miscreant,’ which, etymologically, means nothing worse than “unbeliever.’ Of course it is interesting to hear in it a lingering echo of an ecclesiastic damning in a time when nothing worse than an unbeliever was thought to exist.

“But, as the late Prof. Scheie de Vere pointed out, the roots of words are better disclosed in their sound than in their spelling. By phonetic spelling only can their pronunciation be made nearly uniform — if that is an advantage. If this is not obvious, human intelligence is a shut clam.”

The creator of this beautiful figure celebrated it at the sideboard and resumed his illuminating discourse.

“To those who deem it worth while to be happy, the study of derivations is, indeed, a perpetual banquet of delights, but it is important to remember that language is not merely, nor chiefly, a plaything for scholars, but a thing of utility in the conduct of life and affairs. To its service in that character all obstruent considerations should, and eventually do, give way. It may please, and to some extent profit, to know that ‘ phthisis’ comes from the Greek ‘phthio’ — to waste away — but if in order that one may see this, as well as hear it, I must so spell it as to deny to certain letters of the alphabet their customary and established powers I protest against the desecration. Our orthography has no greater sanctity than have the vested rights of the vowels and consonants by which we achieve it. Why do not' the whiskered pandours and the fierce hussars' of conservatism stand forth as champions of that noble Roman, the English alphabet?

“Yes, I concede the importance of being able to trace the origin of words, for words are thoughts, and their history is a record of intellectual progress, but in very few of them would a simplified, even a consistently phonetic, spelling tend to obscure the trail by which they came into the language. And as to these few, why not learn their origin from the dictionaries once for all and have done with it? The labor would be incomparably less than that of learning to spell as we do.”

Impressed but not silenced, the thirsty soul at the fountain of wisdom cautiously advanced the view that the reformed spelling is uncouth to the eye.

“It is most dispiriting,” said the oracle, in the low, sad tones that served to distinguish him from the bagpipes of Skibo castle, “to hear from the beardless lips of youth a folly so appropriate to age and experience. To the unobservant, any change in the familiar looks disagreeable. The newest fashion in silk hats looks ridiculous; a little later the old style looks worse. To me nothing is uncouth: the most refined and elevated sentiment loses nothing by its expression in as nearly phonetic spelling as our inadequate alphabet will permit. For my reading you may spell like Josh Billings if you will not write like him.”

“From all that you have been kind enough to say,” said the Timorous Reporter, with a sudden access of courage that alarmed him, “I infer that in your forthcoming great work, *The Tyrant Preposition,* you will employ the Skibonese philanthropography.”

“Not I. Courage is an excellent thing in man: the soldier is useful; but each to his trade. Mine, sir,” he concluded, with a note of pride underrunning the grave, sweet monotony of his discourse, “is writing.”

THE AUTHOR AS AN OPPORTUNITY

“TO the literary man,” said the Melancholy Author, “life is not all ‘beer and skittles’by much. He is in a peculiar sense the custodian of troubles; of His own.’ Of these, one of the most insupportable grows out of the fact that almost every man, woman or child thinks himself, herself or itself an expert in literature, and the literary man a; Heaven-sent Opportunity. No Hawk ever watched a plump pullet detaching itself from the flock, with a more possessing delight than burns in the bosom of the average human being when a defenceless author; swims into his ken.’ Lord, Lord, with what alacrity He swoops down upon the incautious wight and holds him with his glittering eye to ‘talk books’ at him!

“He knows it all, the good assailant — knows all about books, particularly ‘ the English classics’ and the newest novel. This knowledge — consisting, at the best, in whatever is current in popular criticism of the newspaper and magazine sort — he has quite persuaded himself is knowledge of Literature. It never occurs to the good creature that books are not literature; that he might have read every book in the world yet know no more of literature than a horned toad. Naturally, you do not care to explain to him that literature is an art — the art of which books are merely a result. He sees the result, but of the art behind them he knows not even so much as its existence.

“He thinks that good writing is done as naturally, instinctively and with as little training as a bird sings in a tree, or a pig in a gate. He would be willing to admit that good painting cannot be done, good music executed, a good plea made in court, or good medical attendance given to the sick, without a deal of hard study of principles and methods. But writing — why, writing is merely setting down what you think; everybody writes.

“Even the literary critic — may hornets afflict him! — cannot be intelligently objectionable without a technical knowledge of his business. A great poet has said:

A man must serve his time at every trade,
Save censure; critics all are ready made.

“And ‘censure’ here, you will have the goodness to observe, means not condemnation, as in our common speech, but the passing of judgment of any kind on the work of another.

"Suppose you were a famous electrician, and all other persons, eager to show you that they, too, know a thing or two and solemnly persuaded of the necessity of regaling you with scraps from your own table, should gravely define electricity as a ' mysterious force,' express to you the belief that it is destined to 'revolutionize the world' and declare their admiration of Benjamin Franklin's gigantic achievement in drawing it from a cloud. Suppose you could turn away from one tormentor only to fall into the hands of another and another, all uttering the same infantile babble — the same shallow platitudes, the same false judgment. That would be no more than we authors have to endure, and smile in the endurance. Nay, not so much, for not only do we have to suffer all this talk of the 'shop' — our shop — with all its irritating idiocy, but if we open our mouths to say something worth while, God help us! — we've a 'fight' on hand forthwith. For it is of the nature of ignorance to be disputatious, contentious, cantankerous. The more a man does not know, the more aggressive his manner of not knowing it. Venture to rack one of his ugly literary idols by so much as the breadth of a finger and — !"

Unable to suppress his emotion, the Melancholy Author rose and strode three paces toward an open door, then turned and, striding back again, dropped into his seat and tried to look unconcerned.

"The very persons who seek your society because they honestly admire your intellect will resent every manifestation of it. Whatever they do not understand, whatever is unfamiliar to them, is bad — false and immoral and insincere. Why, I remember a woman who came four hundred miles to see me — to sit at my feet, she was kind enough to say, and partake of my wisdom. In less than ten minutes she was angrily affirming the unworth of my opinions and attempting to inoculate me with her own. What did I do? My friend, what could I do, but wait until the storm had subsided and then express my admiration of the pink bow that she wore at her throat. Alas, I had sailed into a zone of storms, for it was cherry, and away went she!

"Now, I am willing to talk of literature — it is one of the delights of my life to do so. I am even willing to talk books.' But it must be with my equals, or with those who show some sense of the fact that a lifetime passed in the study of my art, and in its practice counts for something. Few things are more agreeable than imparting knowledge to those who in good faith and decent humility seek it; and such there are. I know some of them, and in their service find enough to do to keep me awake nearly all day. But the other sort: readers of brand-new books and reviews thereof; persons who think the ancients were barbarians; philosophers by birth and critics by inspiration who know it all without having learned any part of it — may Heaven," concluded the Melancholy Author, with a fine flourish of his right hand, “bestow them as friends upon my enemies.”

ON POSTHUMOUS RENOWN

“NO,” said the Melancholy Author, “I do not expect my name to be shouted in brass on the frieze of Miss Helen Gould’s ‘ Temple of Fame.’”

The Timorous Reporter ventured to inquire if that was because he had the misfortune to be alive.

“That is a disqualification that time will remove,” answered the Melancholy Author. “The ground of my hope is different: I shall cause to be inscribed upon my tombstone the lines following:

Good friends, for Jesus’ sake forbear
To grieve the soul that’s gone to — where?
Blest be the man that spares my fame,
And curst be he that flaunts nay name!

“The lines are admirable and extremely original,” said the Timorous Reporter. “May I ask if your reluctance to have your name emblazoned in the Temple is due to disesteem of the methods and results of selection, or to that innate modesty which serves to distinguish you from the violet?”

“To neither. It is due to my consciousness of the futility of all attempts to perpetuate an individual fame. When I die my fame will die with me. It is mine no longer than I live to bear it. When there is no nominative there can be no possessive.

“For illustration, you speak of Shakspeare’s fame. But there is no Shakspeare. The fame that you speak of is not ‘his’; it is ours — yours, mine and John Smith’s. To call it his’ — why, sir, that is as if one should concede the ownership of property to a vacuum. The dead are poor — they have nothing. Our mental confusion in this matter is no doubt largely due to our imperfect grammar: we have not enough cases in our declension; or, rather, there are not enough names for the cases that we have. In the phrase ‘ a horse’s tail’ we say rightly that ‘ horse’s’ is in the possessive case: the animal really possesses — owns — the tail. But in the phrase ‘a horse’s price’ there is no possessive, for the horse does not own the price: there should be another name for the case. When dead, the horse does not own even the tail. It is the same with ‘Shakspeare’s fame’: while he lived the phrase contained a possessive case; now it is something different — merely what the Latin calls a genitive. Our name for it misleads the unenlightened and makes them think of a dead man as owning things. One of my ambitions, I may add, is to bring English grammar into conformity with fact, promoting thereby every moral, intellectual and material interest of the race!"

The Timorous Reporter summoned the courage to rouse him from ecstatic contemplation of the glory of his great reform by directing his disobedient attention to the fact that the Latin grammar, also, is defective, in that its genitive case is not supplemented by a possessive; yet the Romans appear to have had a pretty definite conception of "mine" and "thine," albeit the latter was less lucidly apprehended than the former, and held a humbler place in the national conscience. Deigning to ignore the argument, the Melancholy Author resumed his discourse:

"Posthumous fame being what it is — if nothing can be said to be something — the desire to attain it is comic. It seems the invention of a humorist, this ambition to attach to your name (and equally to that of every person bearing it, or to bear it hereafter) something that you will not know that you have attached to it. You labor for a result which you are to be forever unaware that you have brought about — for a personal gratification which you know that you are eternally forbidden to enjoy: if the gods ever laugh, do they not laugh at that?"

To signify his sense of the humor of the situation, the Melancholy Author fashioned the visage of him to so poignant a degree of visible dejection as might have affected an open tomb with envy and despair.

"Some time," he continued, "the earth, her spinning retarded by the sun's tidal action, will turn on her axis only once a year, presenting always the same side to the sun, as Venus does now, and as the moon does to the earth. That side will be unthinkably hot; the other, dark and unthinkably cold. Of man and his works nothing will remain. Later, the sun's light and fire exhausted, he and all his attendant planets and their satellites will whirl, as dead invisible bulks, through the black reaches of space to some inconceivable doom. Suppose that then a man who died to-day — or yesterday in Assyria — should be miraculously revived. He would think that he had waked from a sleep of an instant's duration. What to him would seem to have been the advantage of what he once knew as' fame' — sometimes as' immortality'? Would he not smile to learn that his name had once evoked sentiments of admiration and respect — that it had been carved in stone or cast in metal to adorn a Temple of Fame?, And when again, and finally, put to death for nothing, would not his last squeak and gurgle carry an aborted jest?

"My boy," continued the Melancholy Author, suffering a look of compassion to defile the dread solemnity of his aspect, "I perceive that I have put the matter too strongly for you. You are not at home in the fields of space; you are disconcerted by the dirge of the spheres. Let us get back to earth as we have the happiness to know it. I will read you the concluding lines of a poem by an obscure pessimist, on the brevity of time and the futility of memorial structures:

Then build your mausoleum if you must,
And creep into it with a perfect trust;
But in the twinkling of an eye the plow
Shall pass without obstruction through your dust.

Another movement of the pendulum
And, lo! the desert-haunting wolf shall come
And, seated on the spot, howl all the night
O'er rotting cities, desolate and dumb."

Delighted with his ruse of binding an unresisting auditor by passing off his own poetry as that of another, the Melancholy Author fell into a sea-green stupor, and the Timorous Reporter, edging himself quietly through the door of opportunity, departed that life.

THE CRIME OF INATTENTION

“WHEN the germ of egotism is discovered,” said the Curmudgeon Philosopher, “it will be readily recognized. The cholera germ is sometimes called the ‘ comma bacillus’ from its resemblance to the printer’s comma; the bacillus of egotism does not look like a capital I, as you would naturally suppose, but like the note of admiration. In order to discover it you have only to shed the gore of the first man you meet (who is sure to be a bore and deserve it) and put a drop under the microscope. True, you may have defective eyesight from long contemplation of your dazzling self, and so miss it, but it is there as plain as the nose on an elephant’s face.”

The Timorous Reporter ventured to suggest that when the note of admiration was named, to admire meant, not to esteem, but to wonder — that Milton so uses it in relating the meeting of Satan and Death at the gates of Hell. There was no reason, he said, why the germ of egotism or self-esteem should have the shape of that point.

“Having discovered and isolated the germ of egotism,” continued the Curmudgeon Philosopher, apparently addressing some exalted intelligence behind the Timorous Reporter, “the physicians will naturally cast about for a serum that will be powerful enough to beat it.”

The Curmudgeon Philosopher had the condescension to darken his environment with a smile.

“I should suppose that this might be made from the blood of a whale, a rhinoceros, a tiger and an anaconda, all, of course, duly inoculated with the germ till silly. If a few gallons of this mighty medicament were injected into the veins of a patient not more than two years of age it might so check his self-esteem that on growing up he would emblazon the violet on his coat of arms.”

The Curmudgeon Philosopher manifested his sense of his own distinction as a wit by a gesture singularly and appropriately elephantine. He had the goodness to continue: “A few years ago, before a just appreciation of the dignity of my position as a philosopher had compelled my withdrawal from the clubs and taverns, I used to observe that of a halfdozen men sitting about a table and engaged in the characteristic industry of smoking and drinking, four were commonly talking of themselves, one, with an impediment in his enterprise, was endeavoring to ‘get the floor’ in order to talk about himself, and the other (I trust it is needless to name him) was vainly asking attention to matters of interest and importance.

“It was customary among these gentlemen to interrupt one another in the middle of a sentence by ordering drinks or entering into a colloquy with the waiter, or addressing a trivial question to another of the party. Habitually the person speaking had the mortification to see his interlocutor turn squarely away from him and himself begin a monologue, only to be disregarded in his turn. There is something singularly pathetic in the spectacle of a man with an unfinished discourse turning to the only one of the party that has the civility to hear him out. It is one of the minor tragedies of social life, demanding an infinite compassion. Sometimes the sufferer would signify a just resentment by abruptly rising and leaving the table, but the rebuke was never even observed.

“Not the monologist alone was ignored in this unmannerly way; the nimble epigrammatist fared no better. The brightest sallies of wit, the oddest ventures in paradox, the most delicious bits of humor and the finest turns of wisdom — all met the same fate, all alike fell upon the stony soil of inattention. Remember that I speak, not of ordinary dullards, but of the so-called choice spirits of clubland, gentlemen of wit and pleasure about town.’”

With a sidewise movement toward the door the Timorous Reporter cautiously advanced the notion that possibly something in the quality of the Curmudgeon Philosopher’s wit may not have had the good fortune to commend itself to his auditors.

“Selected from Apuleius, from Rabelais, Pascal, Rochefoucauld, Pope, and boldly worked into the conversation, they always passed without recognition of either their source or their wit. The company was simply unaware that anything out of the common had been said. Egotism has a bale of cotton in each ear.”

The Curmudgeon Philosopher paused to note the effect of his epigram. Seeing that safety meant either applause or absence the Timorous Reporter deemed it expedient to withdraw by way of an open window.

FETISHISM

“WE are wiser in many ways than our savage ancestors; we are wiser than the savages of today,” said the Curmudgeon Philosopher, with the air of one making a great concession; “yet for every folly or vice of uncivilized man I can show you a corresponding one among ourselves. In the matter of religions, for example, and of religious rites and observances, we have, mixed in with our better faiths, vestiges of all the primitive superstitions that have marked the childhood of the race. Vestiges, did I say? Why, sir, in many instances we have the veritable thing itself in all the vigor of its perennial prime.” The Reporter ventured to express a conviction that a crude and primitive religion could have no devotees among so enlightened and cultivated a people as ours.

“Sir,” thundered the Adversary of Presumption, turning a delicate purple, “races are like individuals; along with the vices and virtues of maturity they have those of infancy. No people ever is sufficiently civilized and enlightened to have laid aside any of its early superstitions and absurdities. To these it adds better things. It overwrites its primitive ideas with ideas less crude and reasonless; but nothing has been effaced. The latest text of the palimpsest is most in evidence, but all is there and, to a keen enough observation, legible. Did you never see a whole concourse of moderns uncover to a flag?”

The Reporter confessed that those whom he had seen performing this religious rite were mostly moderns.

“They will say when detected,” continued the oracle, “that what they uncover to is not the flag, but the sentiment that it represents. If ingenious enough, the idolater would make the same defence. So would the shagpated chap that prostrates himself before the sacred moogoo tree.

“What’s that — a flag is a symbol? Why, yes, ‘symbol’ is the name we choose to give to objects which we know to have no real sanctity, yet, either from hereditary instinct or other unreasoning impulse, cannot forbear to revere. The word is also used to denote a mere ‘survival,’ an object that once had a useful purpose, but now exists only because of our habit of having it. Be pleased to look down into that burial place.”

The Curmudgeon Philosopher’s dwelling had characteristically been chosen because of its contiguity to a cemetery.

“Note the number of ‘dummy’ urns surmounting the monuments. Centuries ago, when cremation was the rule, as it seems likely to be again, those would have been true urns, holding ashes of the dead. We have inherited the tendency to have them, but as they have now no utility we spare ourselves the trouble of accounting for them by saying they are symbolic — whereby the fashion is exalted to a high dignity.

"I assume your familiarity with the word 'fetish.' It is spelled two ways and pronounced four; I pronounce it as I was taught at my mother's knee."

By way of accentuating the fact that he had had a mother he affected a rudimentary tenderness of tone and expression which in a case of doubtful identity would have assisted in distinguishing him as a pirate of the Spanish Main.

The Reporter asked what fetish worship might have the hardihood to be.

"Fetish worship," replied the Curmudgeon Philosopher, "is the most primitive of religions. It is the form that belief in the supernatural takes in our lowest stage of intellectual development — the adoration of material objects. A stone or a tree supposed to possess supernatural powers of good or evil, or to have some peculiar sanctity, is a fetish. Idolatry and the worship of living things are not uncommonly confounded with fetish worship, but in reality are another and higher form of religion, belonging to a more advanced culture.

"You have seen the proposal to transport Plymouth Rock about the country for a show? It is in the morning papers, one of which I had the back luck to pick up while at breakfast. Hate the morning papers!"

The Timorous Reporter signified his regret.

"I hope it will not be done," continued the Curmudgeon Philosopher, ignoring the apology. "In the first place, the Rock is devoid of authenticity. It is indubitably a rock, and it is at Plymouth, but its connection with the landing of the Pilgrims was supplied by imagination. That is all right; by imagination we demonstrate our superiority to the novelists. Historians and scientists are credentialed by imagination; through imagination the philosopher attains to a knowledge of the meaning and message of things. Without imagination we should be as the magazine poets that perish."

With obvious satisfaction in his character of cynic the Curmudgeon Philosopher again mitigated the austerity of his countenance — this time by something that may have been honestly intended as a smile.

"We have seen bands of children taught to march about a cracked bell, throw flowers upon it, sing hymns to it. When it stopped in the several cities that it was carried through on a triumphal car the populace turned out to worship it. It was supplied with a ' guard of honor.' Bands played appropriate music before it, and mayors 'delivered eulogies.' No popular hero or august sovereign could be accorded a more obsequious homage than this lifeless piece of cracked metal —

nay, its progress is more like that of a Grecian god. This was fetishism, pure and undefiled.

“If this new project is carried out the people that worshiped a bell will worship a stone. True, the stone weighs several tons.”

Proud of his generosity in making so great a concession, the Curmudgeon Philosopher looked over the top of his spectacles for the applause that came not to his hope.

“Sir,” he concluded, his great fist falling like a thunderbolt upon the table at which he stood, “we are Pottawattomies!”

OUR AUDIBLE SISTERS

"NO," said the Curmudgeon Phillosopher, "I am no believer in 'the elevating influence of woman.' We have had women a long time, now; the influence is obvious, but the elevation — we are still waiting for that. Perhaps it was different in the old days when they had no connection with public affairs and could devote their entire attention to the business of giving men 'a leg up,' but to-day they are so busy assisting us to conduct the world's large activities that they overlook our dissatisfaction with the low moral plane that we occupy.

"I think, sir, that old Sir William Devereux was wrong when he said that the best way to keep the dear creatures from playing the devil was to encourage them in playing the fool. We have been for more than a generation encouraging them to play the fool in a thousand and fifty ways, and they play the devil as never before.

"These dreadful creatures — I mean these dear, delightful darlings — care for nothing but abstract ideas having no practical application to actual conditions in a faulty world. In the councils of Them Loud nobody cares for anything but principles and Principle. Every Mere Male who anywhere ventures to lift up his voice in behalf of an imperfect but practicable reform is outfitted by; them with a set of motives that would disgrace a pirate. To the she colonels of uplift, nothing is so fascinating as Abstract Reform; they roll it as a sweet morsel under and over their tireless tongues. At every session of Congress you shall hear again the clank of the female saber in the corridors and committee rooms of the Capitol, intimidating the poltroon lawmaker. You shall hear the war whoop of the Sexless Impracticables, acclaiming the Sufficient Abstraction and denouncing the coarse expedients of the Erring Male. May the devil shepherd them in a barren place!"

Overcome by his emotions, the Curmudgeon Philosopher cruelly kicked the house dog (which "answered not with a caress") and snorted at vacancy.

"What good does it all do, anyhow — this irruption of women into the domain of public affairs? The advantages that Lively, Woman promised even herself in becoming New and Audible are illusory; those that she renounced were real. For one thing, we no longer love her. Why, sir, I remember the time when I myself would have taken trouble to serve and honor women. I may say that I felt for them a special esteem. How is it to-day? They pass me by as the idle wind, unobserved, and — most significant of all — unobserving.

“Love, sir, ‘romantic love,’ as Tolstoi calls it, is a purely artificial thing. Many nations know it not. The ancient Greeks knew it not; the Japanese of yesterday did not at all comprehend it. There have been no other really civilized nations. We love those who are helpless and dependent on us. That is why we love our children and our pets.

“In demanding equal rights before the law woman renounces her claim to exceptional tenderness; in granting the demand, man accepts the renunciation in good faith. If the rest of you are going to look out for my wife, sir, I am left free to look out for myself. Have I really a wife? God forbid — I’m supposing one.

“When in the history of our civilization was romantic love at high noon? Why, sir, ‘when knighthood was in flower’; when woman was a chattel; when a gentleman could divorce himself with a word. It was then that woman was set upon a pedestal and adored. Men consecrated their lives to the service of the sex — fought for woman, sang of her with a sincerity that is sadly lacking in the imitation troubadours of our time. Why, sir, even I, in my youth, composed some verses.”

The Curmudgeon Philosopher educed a manuscript from his breast-pocket and the Timorous Reporter began to withdraw from the Presence.

“O, very well — I’ll not force them on you; but permit me to remark, sir, that the decay of courtesy toward women is not unattended with a certain growing coarseness of manners in general. Those who have caught the base infection are not gentlemen, and you may go to the devil!”

THE NEW PENOLOGY

“TRUE science,” said the Curmudgeon Philosopher, “began with publication, in 1620, of Lord St.

Albans’ *Novum Organum,* Why not Lord Bacon’s? Because, my benighted friend, there was no ‘Lord Bacon.’ He was Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam, and, later, Viscount St. Albans. When you hear a man speak of ‘Lord Bacon’ fly from that man.

“The *Novum Organum,* or new method, has overthrown the *Organum* of Aristotle and released men’s minds from thraldom to the belief that truth could be got by mere reasoning, unaided by observation and experiment. This faith in the all-sufficiency of Logic had persisted for more than two thousand years, an intellectual paralysis invulnerable to treatment; and all the while the world thought itself enjoying robust mental health.

“Belief in the sufficiency of Deduction was not the only delusion that dominated and shackled the human mind, and some of the others are with us to-day, to comfort and inspire! We think that if we did not have them we should be sick.”

Pleased with his wit, the Curmudgeon Philosopher executed the great convulsion of nature which he knew as a smile.

“One of the most mischievous of these false and futile faiths is known as the Reformation of Criminals. With no result, we have been embracing it with a devout fervor since the dawning of time. Our mistake is not so much that we have neglected to get the consent of the criminals as that we think ourselves able to reform them without it.

“Each habitual criminal is the hither end of an interminable line of criminal ancestors. He can reform no more than he can fly: his character is as immutable as the shape of his head or the texture of the muscle that he calls his heart. Our efforts in his behalf recall the story of the physician who, after examining a patient afflicted with a disorder of the skin, said: ‘This is hereditary; we must begin at the beginning. Go home and tell your father to take a sulphur bath.’ Our criminals are in worse case than that patient; he had an accessible father for the treatment.

“What have I to propose? What is the ‘New Method’ that I favor? What would I substitute for ‘reformation’ of the unworthy? Their destruction — I would kill them.”

With obvious pride in this humane suggestion, he stroked his ragged beard with both hands and adored his reflection in the mirror opposite his pedestal.

"It sounds harsh, I dare say, to one unfamiliar with the thought, and I might have said 'remove' if that would seem less alarming; but 'kill' is an honest word, and I'll stand to it.

"Think of it! The New Method would give us in two generations a nation without habitual criminals! What other will do that? Think of the lessened misery, the security of life and property, the lighter burden of taxation to maintain the machinery of justice, the no police — all that the besotted proponents of 'Reformation' hope and hope again and hope in vain to accomplish brought about in the lifetime of one man!

"And by means that are merciful to the criminals themselves. Can there be a doubt that if in him the love of life were not the mere brute instinct of a perverted soul the habitual criminal would prefer death? What does life hold that is worth anything to such as he, devoid of self-respect and the respect of others, victim alike of justice and injustice, denied the delights that come of refined sensibilities, hunted from pillar to post and ever cowering in fear of the law? Nothing is more cruel than to let him live. And at last he dies anyhow.

"But suppose that the painless putting to death of all criminals were as deep a misfortune as it would be to — to philosophers, for example? Yet in the long run it would vastly lessen the total of human unhappiness, even of public executions. The earth was not made yesterday: for thousands, probably hundreds of thousands of years, men have been putting other men to death for crime.

"Even under the mild laws of to-day in civilized countries the number executed will in the course of the ages enormously exceed to-day's total criminal population. Moreover, it would not be necessary to kill them all: most of them, if confronted by a law for their killing, would take themselves out of the country, quarter themselves upon foolish nations still willing to stand their nonsense — nations still enamored of that ancient delusion, Reformation of Criminals.

"That would serve *your* purpose as well as anything, but as a citizen of the world, owing my first allegiance to Mankind," concluded the Curmudgeon Philosopher, with a gesture appropriate to some noble ancestral sentiment, "I should deem it my duty to endeavor to prevent their escape by writs of *ne exeat regno."*

THE NATURE OF WAR

THE Bald Campaigner was looking over the tops of his spectacle lenses, silent, obviously wise, a thing of beauty.

"Do you approve the punishment of General Jacob Smith, who was dismissed from the army; for barbarism?" asked the Timorous Reporter. "Doubtless you remember the incident."

"My approval," said the great soldier, "is needless and of no significance. I have long been on the retired list myself, and am not the reviewing officer in this case. I think General Smith's punishment just, if that's what you want to know. He committed a serious indiscretion. As a commander of troops in the island of Samar he gave to a subordinate the following oral instructions:

"' I want no prisoners. I wish you to kill and burn; the more you kill and burn the better you will please me.' He said, further, that he wanted all persons killed who were capable of bearing arms and were in actual hostilities against the United States — I am quoting the Secretary of War — and, in reply to a question by his subordinate, asking for an age limit, designated it as ten years.

"All this was highly improper and unmilitary. It is customary in matters of so great importance for the commander to give his instructions in the form of written orders — a good commander is without a tongue.

"I am no great literary genius, but in the matter of military orders I know a hawk from a handsaw by the handsaw's teeth. Suppose General Smith's orders (written orders) had read like this:

"'It is thought that it will be to the advantage of the expedition in point of celerity of movement, and will simplify the problem of supply, if the column be not encumbered with prisoners. The commander of the expedition will not be unmindful of the military advantages that flow from the infliction of as many casualties upon the enemy as is practicable with the small force that he commands and the evasive character of the enemy; nor will he overlook the need of removing by fire such structures and supplies as are incompatible with the interests of the United States, or inconsistent with professions of amity on the part of the island's inhabitants, or conducive to the prosperity of those in rebellion. No person engaged in hostilities against the United States will, of course, be suffered to plead sex or age in mitigation of such mischances as the fortunes of war may entail, provided, however, that no non-combatants of either sex under the age of ten years shall under any circumstances be put to death without authority from these headquarters; the traditional benevolence of the American army must not be impaired.’

“Sir, if General Smith had issued an order like that he would to-day be a popular hero and an ornament to the active list of the army.”

Waving his remaining arm with a gesture singularly cogent and convincing, the Bald Campaigner ceased and marched against a hostile bottle near by. After study of the suppositious “order” in his stenographic notes, the reporter ventured the opinion that the difference between it and the oral instructions actually given was mainly one of expression. The Bald Campaigner said in reply:

“Expression is everything. An army officer should be a master of expression, as a baseball pitcher should be a master of delivery. The straight throw and the curved throw carry the ball to the same spot, but consider the different effect upon the fortunes of the pitcher. What General Smith lacked was not heart, but style. He was not cruel, but clumsy. His words were destitute of charm. His blundering tongue had succeeded only in signifying his fitness to be thrown to the civilian lions.”

The reporter hazarded a belief that the General’s instruction to make Samar “a howling wilderness” was brutal exceedingly.

“Certainly it was,” assented the Bald Campaigner, “an officer of refinement and taste would have said: ‘It will be found expedient to operate against the enemy’s material resources.’ There is never a military necessity for coarse speech.

“As to devastation — did you mention devastation? — that is the purpose of war. War is made, not against the bodies of adult males, but against the means of subsistence of a people. The fighting is incident to the devastation: we kill the soldiers because they protect their material resources — get between us and the fields that feed them, the factories that clothe them, the arsenals that arm them. We cannot hope to kill a great proportion of them at best; the humane thing is to overcome them by means of hunger and nakedness. The earlier we can do so, the less effusion of blood. Leave the enemy his resources and he will fight forever. He will beget soldiers faster than you can destroy them.

“Do you cherish the delusion that in our great civil war, for example, the South was subdued by killing her able-bodied males who could bear arms? Look at the statistics and learn, to your astonishment, how small a proportion of them we really did kill, even before I lost my arm.

“The killing was an incident. I speak of the latter part of the conflict, when we had learned how to conduct military operations. As long as our main purpose was bloodshed we made little progress. Our armies actually guarded the homes and property of the men they were sent to conquer — the very men that were fighting them, and who, therefore, assured of the comfort and safety of their families, continued fighting with cheerful alacrity. If we had continued that rose-water policy they might have fought us to this day."

The reporter involuntarily glanced at a calendar on the wall, and the war oracle continued:

"Wisdom came of experience: we adopted the more effective and more humane policy of devastation. With Sherman desolating the country from Atlanta to Goldsborough and Sheridan so wasting the Shenandoah Valley that he boasted the impossibility of a crow passing over it without carrying rations, the hopes of Confederate success went up in smoke.

"And," concluded the hairless veteran, rising and opening the door as a delicate intimation that there was nothing more to say, "I beg leave to think that the essential character of the *Ultima Ratio* is not permanently obscurable by the sentimental vagaries of blithering civilians such as you have the lack of distinction to be."

The Timorous Reporter retired to his base of operations and the war-drum throbbed no longer in his ear.

HOW TO GROW GREAT

"I DO not overlook the disadvantages of defeat in a war with some foreign power," said the Bald Campaigner; "I only say that in the resulting humiliation would be a balance of advantage. It does a nation good to 'eat the leek.' The great Napoleon thrust that tonic vegetable into the mouths of Prussia and the other German states. They took a bellyful each, and the result of that penitential feast is the splendid German empire of to-day. Before their racial health was entirely restored the Germans passed the unwelcome comestible to the ailing dominion of Napoleon the Stuffed, and France has so thriven on the diet that she no longer fears the hand that wrote the *menu*. Alone among modern states, Great Britain has grown powerful without having had to cry for mercy. In the voice of supplication is heard the prophecy of power."

The Timorous Reporter cautiously named our own country as one that has risen to greatness without suffering defeat and humiliation.

"Sir, you are in error," said the Bald Campaigner loftily. "We were defeated in the War of 1812. Wherever our raw volunteers met the trained veterans of Great Britain (except at New Orleans, when the war was over) we were beaten off the field. Our attempts to invade Canada were all repelled, our capital was taken and sacked, and when we sued for peace it was granted in a treaty in which the grievance for which we had taken up arms was contemptuously ignored.

"Remember that for this conflict we enlisted and equipped more than a half-million men, while Great Britain had at no time more than sixteen thousand opposing us.

"As historians of the conflict we have done heroic work, as have Southern historians of our civil war and French historians of the struggle with the Germans — as all beaten peoples naturally do. Sir, do you know that the great body of the Spanish people believe, and will always believe, that Spain brought us to our knees in 1898? The Russian who does not think that the armies of the Czar wrung the most humiliating terms from the Japanese is an exceptionally intelligent Russian — he knows enough to disbelieve the 'popular histories' in the Russian tongue and the official falsehoods of his government."

The Timorous Reporter inquired how a second beating would profit us, seeing that we got no good out of the other.

"The other was not bad enough," the great man explained. "Having Napoleon on her hands, Great Britain did not, until he had been got rid of, make an aggressive war. When she began to we cried for mercy. What we need is a beating that neither our vanity can deny nor our ingenuity excuse — one which, in the slang of your pestilent trade, ‘will not come off.’”

“And then?”

“Then, sir, we shall give ourselves an army strong enough to repel invasion from the north, or, if something should happen to our navy, from the east or west. Then, sir, we shall get our soldiers by conscription, and the man who is drawn will serve. The words ‘ volunteer,” recruiting,’ ‘bounty,’ ‘substitute’ will disappear from our military vocabulary, with all the inefficiency, waste, and shame that they connote. In brief, we shall recognize the truth, obvious to reason, that a citizen owes his country military service in the same way that he owes it pecuniary support. (If taxpaying had always been optional what an expostulation would meet the proposal to make it compulsory!) We shall then not need to concern ourselves with ‘ the problem of desertion,’ the effect on the army of high wage-rates in civil employment,’ and the rest of it. There will be no problem of desertion: the discernment that recognizes a citizen’s military obligation will find an effective method preventing him from running away from if. All this will come after we have been sorely defeated by some power, or combination of powers, that has not only a navy but an army.”

The Timorous Reporter hesitatingly advanced the view that a large standing army might seriously imperil the subordination of the military to the civil power.

“Young man,” said the hairless veteran, austerely, “you talk like a Founder of this Republic!”

A WAR IN THE ORIENT

“CONSIDERING your pro-Russian sympathies,” said the Timorous Reporter, “the results of some of the fighting in the Japanese and Russian war must have been deeply disagreeable to you — that of the great naval engagement in the Sea of Japan, for example.”

“Yes,” replied the Bald Campaigner, “the escape of two or three Russian ships affected me most unpleasantly.”

The reporter professed himself unable to understand.

“I had confidently expected Togo to destroy them all. He is disappointing — Togo.”

“Please pardon me,” said the man of letters; “I thought that you had favored the Russian cause.”

“So I did, sir, so I did, and do. But something is due to the art and science of war. As a soldier I stand for them, deprecating any laxity in the application of the eternal principles of strategy and tactics by land or sea. Admiral Togo should have been dismissed for permitting those ships to escape.”

The reporter suggested the possibility that in the uproar and obscurity of battle the ships that got away were overlooked.

“Nothing should be overlooked,” said the Bald Campaigner. “The commander in battle should know everything that is going on — or going away. With the light that we have, I am unable to explain the Japanese admiral’s lamentable failure; I can only deplore it.”

“Had he, then, so overwhelming an advantage?” the reporter asked. “It is thought the fleets were pretty evenly matched.”

“Sir,” said the Bald Campaigner, loftily, “it was a fight between an inland people and an insular. If Rojestvensky had had a hundred battleships he would have been overmatched and defeated. Ships and guns do not make a navy, and landsmen are not transmuted into sailors by sending them to sea. The Russians are not a seagoing people. Their country has no open ports — that is what they are always fighting to get. They have no foreign commerce; they have no fisheries. Why, sir, it reminds me of the reply made by a Scotch carter to an angry soldier who had challenged him to fight. ‘Fecht wi’ ye? Na, na, fechtin’s yer trade. But I’ll drive a cart wi’ ye.’ If command of the ocean were a matter of planting potatoes, Russia would be a great sea power.

“The born sailor is a being of an order different from ourselves — as different as a gull from a grouse, a seal from a cat. What, to a landsman, is a matter of study, memory and calculation, is to him a matter of intuition. An unstable plane is his natural, normal and helpful footing. As a gun-pointer he sights his piece not only consciously with his instruments and his eye, but unconsciously with that better instrument, the sense of direction — as one plays billiards. The rolling and pitching of the ships do not spoil his aim; he allows for them automatically — *feels* the auspicious instant with the sure instinct of an expert rifleman breaking bottles in the air. It is impossible to impart this subtle sense to a farmer's boy, or to a salesman in a shop, no matter how young you catch him; he cannot be made to understand it — cannot even be made to understand that it can be. For that matter, nobody does understand it.

"I am not unaware, sir, of the ' modern' methods of sea-fighting — keeping at a safe distance from the enemy and pointing the guns by means of range-finders and other instruments and machines, but nothing that can be invented can eliminate the 'personal equation' in sea-fighting, any more than in land-fighting parapets, casemates, turrets and other defensive works can profitably replace the breasts of the soldiers, or arms of precision take the place of their natural aptitude for battle with both feet on the ground. I am not unmindful of the time when the Romans improvised a fleet (constructed on the model of a wrecked Carthaginian galley) and manning it with landsmen destroyed the sea-power of Carthage in a single engagement. That exception tests the rule *(probat regulam)* but the rule stands. Landsmen for soldiers, sailors for the sea and to the devil with military machinery!

"Before our civil war we had a merchant marine second only to that of Great Britain. American sails whitened every sea, the stars and stripes glowed in every port. We were a nation of sailors. Even so long ago as the war of 1812 we held our own with Great Britain on the ocean, though beaten everywhere on land by inferior numbers with superior training. To-day we could not hold our own against any maritime people, even if we fought with full coal-bunkers near our own shores. The American behind the gun is no longer a born sailor with the salt of the sea in every globule of the blood of him. Our fate in encountering a seagoing people, sailors and fishermen and the sons of sailors and fishermen, with sea legs, sea eyes and sea souls, would be that which has befallen inlanders against islanders, from Salamis to Tsu Shima. The sea would be strewn with a wreckage of American ' magnificent fighting-machines.'"

The Timorous Reporter murmured the words "Manila Bay" and "Santiago de Cuba," then diffidently lifted his eyes, with a question mark in each, to the face of his distinguished interlocutor — which darkened with a smile.

"With regard to Manila," he said, "I am told that Dewey's famous command, ‘You may fire when you are ready, Gridley,’ was not accurately reported. According to my informant, the Spanish ships were ingeniously wound with ropes to keep them from falling apart. What Dewey actually said was this: ‘When you are ready, Gridley, you may fire at those ropes.’ Anybody can cut a rope with a cannon if not molested. At Santiago, the Spanish Admiral was ordered not to give battle, but to escape, and ships cannot run away and fight at the same time.

“Sir, two naval victories in which the victors lost one man killed do not supply a reasonable presumption of invincibility. Manila and Santiago were slaughters, not battles. They are without value.”

The reporter said he thought that they were not altogether worthless as “horrors of war,” and visibly shuddered. The superior intelligence flamed and thundered!

“That is all nonsense about ‘the horrors of war/ in so far as the detestable phrase implies that they are worse than those of peace; they are more striking and impressive, that is all. As to the loss of life, I submit that civilians mostly die some time, and are mourned, too, quite as feelingly as soldiers; and the kind of death that is inflicted by war-weapons is distinctly less objectionable than that resulting from disease. Wars are expensive, doubtless, but somebody gets the money; it is not thrown into the sea. In point of fact, modern nations are never so prosperous as in the years immediately succeeding a great war. I favor anything that will quicken our minds, elevate our sentiments and stop our secreting selfishness, as, according to that eminent naturalist, the late William Shakspeare, toads get venom by sleeping under cold stones. A quarter-century of peace will make a nation of blockheads and scoundrels. Patriotism is a vice, but it is a larger vice, and a nobler, than the million petty ones which it promotes in peace to swallow up in war. In the thunder of guns it becomes respectable. I favor war, famine, pestilence — anything that will stop the people from cheating and confine that practice to contractors and statesmen.

“To return to Russia—”

“Which,” said the reporter, *sotto voce*, “many Russians abroad do not care to do.”

“You said, I think, that she does not seem to be much of a power on either sea or land. She was a power in the time of the first Napoleon. She held out a long time at Sevastopol against the English, the French, the Turks and the Sardinians. She defeated the Turks at Shipka Pass and Plevna, and the Turks are the best soldiers in Europe. True, in the war with Japan, she lost every battle. That was to be expected, for she was all unready and her armies were outnumbered two to one from the beginning. No one outside Russia, and few inside, has ever come within a quarter million of a correct estimate of the Japanese strength. There were not fewer than seven hundred thousand of these cantankerous little devils in front of Gunshu Pass.”

“Then they are — in a military sense—’ cantankerous,’”said the reporter. “That is about the same as saying that they; are good soldiers, is it not?”

“Oh, they fight well enough. Why shouldn’t they? They have something to fight for; the pride of an honorable history; a government that does not rob them; a civilization that is to them new and fascinating, reared, as the superstructure of a glittering temple, upon an elder one, whose stones were hewn and laid and wrought into beauty by their forefathers, while ours were chasing one another through marshes with flint spears. Best of all, they had a sovereign whom they adore as a deity and love with a passionate personal attachment. What can you do against such a people as that? — a people in whom patriotism is a religion — a nation of poets, artists and philosophers, like the ancient Greeks; of statesmen and warriors, like those of early Rome?”

“If the Japanese are all that you think them,” said the reporter, “how do you justify your pro-Russian sympathies?”

“It is not the business of a student of military affairs to have sympathies,” replied the Bald Campaigner, coldly; “but it is precisely because they are that kind of people that their overthrow is, to America, a military necessity. They are dangerous neighbors to so feeble barbarians as we, with a government which all extol and none respects — a loose unity and no illusions — a slack allegiance and no consciousness of national life — a bickering aggregation of individuals, man against man and class against class — a motley crowd of lawless, turbulent and avaricious ungovernables!”

He paused from exhaustion and mopped his shining pow with his handkerchief.

“Maybe Americans are like that,” assented the reporter, “but it is said that we fight pretty well on occasion — in a civil war, for example.”

“Certainly, all Caucasians fight ‘pretty well’ compared with other Caucasians. The Japs are another breed.”

The Inquiring Mind was convinced, but not silenced. “Suppose,” said he, “that a collision ever occurs between an American and a Japanese fleet or army on equal terms, what, in your honest judgment as a military expert, will be the result?”

“Damn them!” shouted the man of no sympathies, “we’ll wipe them off the face of the earth!”

A JUST DECISION

"AH, I have long hoped for this," said the Sentimental Bachelor.

"It is a good while now — I think it must be ever since Adam — that Tyrant Man has had to pay all too dearly for the favor — and favors — of the unfair sex. Of course, there is a difference in the value of the advantages enjoyed. For illustration, there is the good will of Celeste, of Babette, of Clarisse — best of all, of the incomparable Clorinda! I say good will, for I speak of that which I myself have had the supreme distinction to enjoy; and no gentleman, sir, will ever so far forget himself as to call a lady's preference for him by a stronger name. Discretion, sir, discretion — that is what every man of sense and feeling goes in for."

The Timorous Reporter signified such approval as was consistent with the public interest and the prosperity of the press.

"As I was saying, the good will of the admirable Nanette, the most excellent Lucia — excellent no longer, alas, for she is dead — of the superb Héloise, and I might, perhaps, add to the list one or two others, is above price and beyond appraisement. Yet it was not to be had for nothing; the gods are not so kind. I have suffered, sir, I have paid, believe me.

"What am I coming to? Why, this, my lad, this. The supreme court of one of our States has decided that, in proving an intention of marriage on the part of a male defendant, what the lady plaintiff may have said to others about it is not competent evidence. 'Hearsay evidence'? Why, yes; the honorable court was polite enough to call it so, but, doubtless, if, with all due respect for the ladies mentioned — Herminia, Adèle, Demetria and the others — I may venture to say so, the real ground of exclusion of such evidence is its incredibility. I trust to your discretion not to report me as uttering that opinion; not for the world would I wound the sensibilities of the adorable Miranda, most veracious of her sex."

The speaker paused, gazing pensively at vacancy as if communing with the day before yesterday. The reporter endeavored to reveal by his manner a policy of expectation.

"My dear boy," resumed the Sentimental Bachelor, "if you aspire to the good will of a woman, and are marriageable, you should be prepared and willing to have it believed by all her friends that your intentions are honorable — yes, sir; you must submit to be placed in that false position: it is a part of the price. True, you may swear the lady to secrecy; and Congreve says that no one is so good as a woman to keep a secret, for, although she is sure to tell it, yet nobody will believe her. Alas! he underestimated human credulity, which is the eighth wonder of the world. Beware of human credulity; it is always ready to believe the worst.

"What's that? You have had sweethearts that did not say you wanted to marry them; women friends that did not say you were in love with them? Fortunate man! But consider how young you are. It is a just inference that they too are young. Youth is the season of veracity; wait. As these excellent young ladies (whom Heaven bless) grow older — as they miss more and more the attentions of men — as they dwell more and more upon joys of the irrevocable past, they will have a different story to tell, and right mercifully is it decreed that they shall believe it themselves. Why, even the once charming Doretta finds, I am told, a consolation for the horrors of age and whist in the dream of repeated proposals from me — Meeee! Ah, well, it were inhuman to deny to one to whom I gave so much the happiness of stating the amount of the benefaction. Far be it from me to bring down her gray hairs in sorrow to the truth.

"But, suppose, my dear young friend, that I were wealthy enough to be sued for breach of promise of marriage — which Heaven forbid! You see how this righteous decision of that supreme court would remove from me the temptation and necessity of contradicting a lady. Oh, it is a great decision! It marks a notable advance in the apprehension of the underlying motives of human action. For they are human — except Iphigenia, who is divine. Not so beautiful as Perdita; not so intelligent as Lorena; not so devoted as Janette; so young as Marie; so faithful as Theodora — peerless Theodora! But Iphigenia — she has the cleverness to be so very new! It makes a difference."

Remarking that Bulwer was a most admirable writer, the Timorous Reporter took his leave.

THE LION'S DEN

"I CAN NOT accept the view," said the Sentimental Bachelor, looking up from his piano stool, "that because one has a houseful of books and pictures one is necessarily a lover of literature and art. I have a few myself — not many; but you will observe that my book-cases have not glass doors; on the contrary (if you understand the significance of that phrase), they are beautiful examples of the cabinetmaker's craft, harmonizing well with the architectural and color schemes of the rooms containing them. But the devil a book can you see in them without opening them.

"Why is that? Because, in the first place, books are not beautiful — at least none of those within the means of any but a millionaire. Even the most costly and sumptuous of them are angular, blocklike objects, displeasing to the eye. Unless bound with special reference to the room in which they are to turn their backs on you, most of them will be out of harmony with their environment and with one another.

"Yes, you see here scattered about, mostly on the floor, a few books" (the Sentimental Bachelor indicated them by a graceful gesture of his right hand) "that are as unlovely, as any. But these are volumes having for me a peculiar value from pleasant or tender association — just as any article might have — just, in fact, as that rug has, upon which the divine Janette has deigned to set her little feet. Ah, Janette the adorable! — Melissa being dead.

"You dare to think, no doubt, that with glass doors to my book-cases I should be better able to find readily any particular volume that I might want. Pardon me, but it is unworthy of you to impute to me so deep and dark an ignorance. I should be sorry if ever I failed to put my hand on any desired book in the darkest night. Believe me, my friend, it is not the book-lover who displays his books in a show-case.

"As to pictures, if I were so unfortunate as to own all the treasures of the Dresden galleries, you would see no more than one painting in a room. That is the Japanese way, and the Japanese are the only civilized people in our modern world; they are born artists all, though some neglect their mental heritage and go out as cooks. Think of it! — a people among whom the arranging of three cut flowers in a vase (they know not the dreadful ' bouquet') is an art having its principles and laws, its learned professors to expound them, its honorable place in the curriculum of public and private education!

"Trust the Japanese to be always right in a matter of art. His instinct is as infallible as that of the ancient Greek; and our European 'schools' of painting are already greatly indebted to him. It is a silly new picture in which the Japanese influence can not be traced. I'm ordering my dependent young brother from Paris to Tokio to study art — the little rascal!

"One painting in a room fixes attention; two divide it; more than two disperse it. Than a wall plastered with bad canvases I know of nothing more distracting and confusing except a wall plastered with good ones. It is like a swarm of pretty girls, or a table d'hote dinner in a country hotel, where all you are to eat is brought in at once and arranged round your plate. It kills the appetite.

"Why does one do that sort of thing? To impress one's visitors — to show off. No, no; it is not because one is fond of paintings and never tires of them. Be pleased to exercise your faculty of observation. I passed a few weeks recently at the country house of a friend. Before I had been half an hour in the place he had taken me through all the rooms and shown me a hundred of his ' art treasures' — paintings by famous 'masters.' (Maybe I had my own opinion as to that.) For my pleasure? Why, no; he allowed me less than a half minute to each. Gadzooks! can a fellow digest a painting that he has *bolted?*. No, sir; 'twas for gratification of his vanity of possession. During the weeks that I remained in his house I never once caught him, nor any member of his family, standing before any one of all those pictures, silently 'taking it in.' The purpose of the pictures was to supply an opportunity for his visitors' envy and compel their tongues to the service of his ears.

"You observe on my walls here," the veteran virtuoso continued, revolving slowly on his pivot, "one water-color and a lot of trifles — photographs, pen-and-ink drawings, and so forth — most of them rather bad. The painting itself is none too good; I should not like to have my taste in such things judged by it. But observe: it is the work of a young friend, and into every inch of it he has put something of his heart, for it was done in the hope of pleasing me. The carved oak frame, too, is one of his own creation, the mat (of copper) — all. Would the costliest and ugliest of old masters give me as much pleasure? You, yes; but, dear fellow, you are not considered.

"See that pen-and-ink head — there are better. But it is a first attempt, done by the uninstructed young girl whose photograph you see alongside. She is to be a great artist some day, but none of her work will have to me the interest and value of that.

"Ah, those faded and soiled little photographs — Mary, Hélène, Katy, the divine Josie and the rest — you need not look at them; they are merely little soft spots for *my* eyes to fall upon and rest. Why, sir, there's not the most trifling object in this room but has a hundred tender recollections clinging to it like bats to a stalactite — swarming about it like bees about Hymettus. Should I replace them with ‘works of art’ bought in the shops and damnably authenticated?

“This room is for me. I live here, read here, write here, smoke here. Wherever my eye falls, it rests upon something that starts a train of thought and emotion infinitely more agreeable, and I believe more profitable, than any suggested by the work of a hand that I never grasped, guided by however sure an eye that never looked into mine. Don’t, I pray you, take the trouble to appear to be interested in these things, such as a country maiden might decorate her sleeping room withal. (Ah, happy country maiden, untaught in the black art of showing off!) Don’t, I beg, give anything here a second glance: ‘there was no thought of pleasing thee’ when it was put here.

“Come,” concluded the Sentimental Bachelor, taking his hat and stick, “let us go to the Park. I want to show you the fine Rembrandt that I presented to the Art Gallery. Célestine adored it.”

THE MARCH HARE

A FLOURISHING INDUSTRY

THE infant industry of buying worthless cattle, inoculating them with pleuro-pneumonia and tuberculosis, and collecting the indemnity when they are officially put to death to prevent the spread of the contagion, is assuming something of the importance and dignity of a national pursuit. The proprietors of one of the largest contageries on Long Island report that the outlook is most encouraging; they begin each fiscal year with a large surplus in their treasury. Some of the Western companies, too, have been highly prosperous and intend to mark their gratification by an immediate issue of new shares as a bonus.

The effect of this industry upon pastoral pursuits is wholesome. The stock ranges of Texas, Wyoming and Montana thrill with a new life, and it is estimated that their enlargement during the next few years will bring not less than five million acres of public land into the service of man and beast. The advantage to manufacturers of barbed-wire fencing is obvious, while the indirect benefit to agriculture through the enhanced price of this now indispensable material will supply the protectionist with a new argument and a peculiar happiness. Cattle-growing has hitherto been attended with great waste. A large percentage of the “stock on hand” was unsalable. Failure of the cactus crop, destitution of water and prevalence of blizzards, together with such natural ills as cattle flesh is heir to, have frequently so reduced the physical condition of the herds that not more than a half would be acceptable to the buyer. The ailing remainder were of little use. A few of the larger animals could be utilized by preparing them as skeletons of buffaloes for Eastern museums of natural history, but the demand was limited: nine in ten were suffered to expire and become a dead loss. These are now eagerly sought by agents of the contageries, purchased at good prices, driven by easy stages to the railways and, arriving at their final destination, duly infected. They are said to require less infection than they would if they were in good condition, with what the life insurance companies are pleased to call a fair “expectation of life.” Some of the breeders prefer to isolate these failures and do their own infecting; but the tendency in the cattle trade, as in all others, is toward division of labor. The regular infectionaries possess superior facilities of inoculation, and government inspectors prefer to do business at a few great pleuro-pneumoniacal and tubercular centers rather than make tedious journeys to distant ranges. The trend of the age is, in fact, toward centralization.

The effect of the new industry upon commerce cannot be accurately foreseen, but it is natural to suppose that it will largely increase the importation of lowgrade cattle from South. America. Hitherto it has not been profitable to import any that were unfit for beef. But if the *Bos inedibilis*, the milkless crowbait and other varieties “not too good for human nature’s daily food” — in fact not good enough — can be laid down in New York or New Orleans at a cost of not more than thirty dollars each, including the purchase price of ten cents, and inoculated before they have eaten their heads off, there would seem to be a reasonable margin of profit in the traffic. If not, the legal allowance for their condemnation and slaughter can be easily increased by legislative action. If Congress will do nothing to encourage capital in that direction the

States most benefited by this extension of American commerce can respond to the demand of the hour with a judicious system of bounties. Importation of cheap foreign cattle eligible to pleuro-pneumonia and the junior disorder will provide employment to a great number of persons who, without apt appropriation’s artful aid, might languish on farms and in workshops, a burden to the community and a sore trial to themselves.

THE RURAL PRESS

THERE will be joy in the household of the country editor what time the rural mind shall no longer crave the unwholesome stimuli provided by composing accounts of corpulent beetroots, bloated pumpkins, dropsical melons, aspiring maize, and precocious cabbages. Then the bucolic journalist shall have surcease of toil, and may go out upon the meads to frisk with kindred lambs, frolic familiarly with loose-jointed colts and exchange grave gambolings with solemn cows. Then shall the voice of the press, no longer attuned to praise of the vegetable kingdom, find a more humble but not less useful employment in calling the animal kingdom to the evening meal beneath the sanctum window.

To the overworked editor life will have a fresh zest, a new and quickening significance. The hills shall seem to hump more greenly up to a bluer sky, the fields to blush with a tenderer sunshine. He will go forth at dawn executing countless flip-flaps of gymnastic joy; and when the white sun shall redden with the blood of dying day, and the pigs shall set up a fine evening hymn of supplication to the Giver of All Swill he will be jubilant in the editorial feet, blissfully conscious that the editorial intellect is a-ripening for the morrow's work.

The rural newspaper! We sit with it in hand, running our fingers over the big, staring letters, as over the black and white keys of a piano, drumming out of them a mild melody of perfect repose. With what delight one disports him in the deep void of its nothingness, as who should swim in air! Here is nothing to startle, nothing to wound. The very atmosphere is suffused and saturated with "the spirit of the rural press;" and even one's dog sits by, slowly; dropping the lids over its great eyes; then lifting them with a jerk, tries to look as if it were not sleepy in the least degree. A fragrance of plowed fields comes to one like a benediction. The tinkle of ghostly cowbells falls drowsily upon the ear. Airy figures of prize esculents float before the half-shut eyes and vanish before perfect vision can attain to them. Above and about are the drone of bees and the muffled thunder of milk-streams shooting into the foaming bucket. The gabble of distant geese is faintly marked off by the barking of a distant dog. The city, with all its noises, sinks away, as from one in a balloon, and our senses swim in the "intense inane" of country languor. We slumber.

God bless the man who invented the country newspaper! — though Sancho Panza blessed him long ago.

TO ELEVATE THE STAGE

THE existence of a theatrical company, composed entirely of Cambridge and Harvard *alumni* who have been in jail strikes the imagination with a peculiar force. In the theatrical world the ideal condition conceived by certain social philosophers is being rapidly realized and reduced to practice. “It does not matter,” say these superior persons, “what one does; it is only important what one is.” The theater folk have long been taking that view of things, as is amply attested by the histrionic careers (for examples)’ of Mrs. Lily Langtry and Mr. John L. Sullivan. Managers — and, we may add, the public — do not consider it of the least importance what Mrs. Langtry *does* on the stage, nor how she does it, so long as she *is* a former favorite of a Prince and a tolerably fair counterpart of a Jersey cow. And who cares what Mr. Sullivan’s pronunciation of the word “mother” may be, or what degree of sobriety he may strive to simulate? — in seeing his performance we derive all our delight from the consciousness of the great and godlike thing that he has the goodness to *be.*

It is needless to recall other instances; every playgoer’s memory is richly stored with them; but this troupe of convicted collegians is the frankest application of the principle to which we have yet been treated. At the same time, it opens up “vistas” of possibilities extending far-and-away beyond what was but yesterday the longest reach of conjecture. Why should we stop with a troupe of educated felons? Let us recognize the principle to the full and apply it with logical heroism, unstayed by considerations of taste and sense. Let us have theater companies composed of reformed assassins who have been preachers. A company of deaf mutes whose grandfathers were hanged, would prove a magnetic “attraction” and play to good houses — that is to say, they would *be* to good houses. In a troupe of senators with warts on their noses the pleasure-shoving public would find an infinite gratification and delight. It might lack the allurement of feminine charm, most senators being rather old women, but for magnificent inaction it would bear the palm. Even better would be a company of distinguished corpses supporting some such star inactor, as the mummy of his late Majesty, Rameses II of Egypt. In them the do-nothing-be-something principle would have its highest, ripest and richest development. In the broad blaze of their histrionic glory Mrs. Langtry would pale her uneffectual fire and Mr. Sullivan hide his diminished head.

From the example of such a company streams of good would radiate in every direction, with countless ramifications. Not only would it accomplish the long desired “elevation of the stage” to such a plane that even the pulpit need not be ashamed to work with it in elicitation of the human snore, but it would spread the light over other arts and industries, causing “the dawn of a new era” generally. Even with the comparatively slow progress we are making now, it is not unreasonable to hope that eventually Man will cease his fussy activity altogether and do nothing whatever, each individual of the species becoming a veritable monument of philosophical inaction, rapt in the contemplation of his own abstract worth and perhaps taking root where he stands to survey it.

PECTOLITE

THIS is one of the younger group of minerals: it was discovered by a German scientist in 1828. For its age it is an exceptionally interesting stone — if it is a stone. Its most eminent and distinguishing peculiarity is described as the “property of parting with minute splinters from its surface upon being handled, these splinters or spicules piercing the hand, producing a pain similar to that experienced by contact with a nettle.”

In the mineral kingdom pectolite ought to take high rank, near the very throne. In its power of annoying man it is a formidable competitor to several illustrious members of the vegetable kingdom, such as the nettle, the cactus, the poison ivy and the domestic briar. There are, indeed, several members of the animal kingdom which hardly excel it in the power of producing human misery. Considering its remarkable aptitude in that bad way its rarity is somewhat difficult to understand, and is perhaps more apparent than real. Professor Hanks says that previously to its discovery in California it had been found in only eight places. If upon investigation these should turn out to be Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America, Australia and the two Polar continents, the unnatural discrepancy between its objectionable character and its narrow distribution would be explained away, and pectolite seen to be “in touch” with its sister malevolences, whose abundance is usually in the direct ratio of their noxiousness to man.

In his efforts to make this uncommon mineral known, advance its interests and bring it into closer relations with mankind, Professor Hanks is winning golden opinions from the manufacturer of arsenic, the promoter of the Canadian thistle, and the local agent of the imported rattlesnake. The various uses to which it can be put are obvious and numberless. As a missile in a riot — the impeller wearing a glove, but the other person having nothing to guard his face and eyes — its field of usefulness will be wide and fertile. Small fragments of it attractively displayed here and there about the city will give a rich return of agony when thoughtlessly picked up. For village sidewalks inimical to the thin shoe of the period it would be entirely superior to the knotty plank studded with projecting nail heads. With a view to these various “uses of adversity,” it would be well for Professor Hanks to submit careful estimates of the cost of quarrying it and transporting it to places where it can be made to do the greatest harm to the greatest number. To assist and further the purposes of Nature, as manifested in the character of the several agencies and materials which she employs, is the greatest glory of science. A human being assailed by all the natural forces, seizing a stone to defend himself and getting a fistful of pectolitic spiculæ, is a spectacle in which one can get as near and clear a glimpse of the Great Mystery as in any; and science is now prepared to supply the stone.

LA BOULANGERE

A ONCE famous American actress, Miss Mary Anderson — sometimes, I think, called “Our Mary” — was an accomplished baker. Among her personal friends, those at least who had the happiness to dine at her home, she had a distinguished reputation as a bread-maker. She was once persuaded to make public the prescription that she used, through the London *Times*, thus materially enlarging her practice by addition of many new patients. I regret my inability to reproduce the prescription here for the benefit of such housekeepers as are unfettered by Colonial tradition — who, not having inherited the New World system from their great-grandmothers, might be accessible to the light of a later dispensation. For bread-making is, I think, a progressive science in which perfection is not attained at a bound by merely “dissolving the political bands” which connect one country with another.

History is garrulous of our Revolutionary sires: their virtues and other vices are abundantly extolled; but concerning our Revolutionary dames the trumpet of fame remains mysteriously and significantly reticent — a phenomenon not easily accounted for on any hypothesis which assumes or concedes their worth. Historians, poets and those, generally, who have possession of the public ear and hold it from generation to generation, seem to feel that the less said about these merry old girls the better. I believe the secret of it lies in the consciousness of the literary class that the mothers of the Republic made treasonably bad bread, and that their sins of that sort are being visited upon their children, even to these third and fourth generations, and (which is worse) practiced by them. No doubt the success of the Revolutionary War would have been achieved later if our brave grandfathers had not been fortified in body and spirit by privation of the domestic loaf of the period, known to us through the domestic loaf of our own. To immunity from the latter desolating agency the soldiers on both sides in the more recent and greater conflict were obviously indebted for the development of that martial spirit which made them so reluctant to stop fighting and go home. It must be said, however, in defence of the Bread of Our Union that if one is going to eat the salt-spangled butter which also appertains to the home of the brave it really does not greatly matter what one eats it on.

America’s dyspepsia is not entirely the product of the frying-pan, the pie and the use of the stop-watch at meals. Any wholesome reform in bread-making as practiced darkly in the secrecy of our kitchens, will materially mitigate the national disorder; though even bread made according to the plans and specifications of Our Mary can hardly be expected to manifest all its virtues if eaten blazing hot. Whatever may be the outcome of Mistress Mary’s quite contrary way of imparting her sacred secret to a foreign newspaper and ignoring the press of her own country — whether anybody now compounds bread after her prescription or not, or if anybody does, whether anybody else will eat it — this much was accomplished: she showed that at least one American woman was not afraid to tell the world and the public prosecutors how she made bread. As a bread-maker she was indubitably gifted with the divine audacity of genius.

ADVICE TO OLD MEN

IT goes without saying that among the elements of success a broad and liberal total abstinence is chief. The old man who gets drunk before dinner is born to failure as the sparks fly upward. Diligence in business is another qualification that needs not be particularly dwelt upon; the old man who seeks his ease while his young and energetic employees, trained to habits of industry, are stealing all the profits of the business will find his finish where he did not lose it. He is beyond the reach of remonstrance.

Study the rising old man. You will find him invariably distinguished by seriousness. He is not given to frivolity. He does not play at football. He does not contribute jokes to the comic papers. He does not waste his time kissing the girls. The rising old man is all business. We can all be that way if we are old enough to have no infrangible habits.

As to manners, and these are of the utmost importance, a deferential and reverent attitude toward youth has a commercial value that it would be hard to appraise too highly. ‘Remember, old man, that the youth whom you employ to-day you may serve to-morrow, if he will have you. It is worth while to make him admire you, and the best way to do so is to show him that you respect him. There are certain virtues that win the admiration of all; let him think that you think that he has them.

A most desirable quality in an old man is modesty. It is not only valuable as a mental equipment necessary to success, it is right and Just that you should have it. Pray do not forget, in the exultation of growing old, that age is peculiarly liable to error through the glamour of experience. To the errors of age and experience are attributable most of those failures which come to us in the later life. We can not help being old, but Heaven has not denied us the opportunity to take counsel of youth and ignorance. Some one has said that the way to succeed is to think like a philosopher and then act like a fool. The thinking being needless, a mere intellectual luxury, and therefore a sinful waste of the time allowed us for another and better purpose, renounce it. As to action, study the young. Every successful man was once young.

Do not try; to get anything for nothing: when you have obtained a liberal discount for cash you have done much; do the rest by paying the cash. An honest old man is the pride and glory of his son.

Dig, save, fast, go as nearly naked as the law allows, and if Heaven does not reward you with success you will nevertheless have the satisfaction that comes of the consciousness of being a glittering example to American age.

A DUBIOUS VINDICATION

HARDLY any class of persons enjoys complete immunity from injustice and calumny, even if “armed with the ballot”; but probably no class has so severely suffered from Slander’s mordant tooth as our man-eating brethren of that indefinite region known as the “Cannibal Islands.” Nations which do not eat themselves, and which, with even greater self-denial, refrain from banqueting on other nations, have for generations been subjected to a species of criticism that must be a sore trial to their patience. Every reprobate among us who has sense enough to push a pencil along the measured mile of a day’s task in a newspaper office without telling the truth has experienced a sinful pleasure in representing anthropophagi as persons of imperfect refinement and ailing morals. They have been censured even, for murder; though surely it is kinder to take the life of a man whom you set apart for your dinner than to eat him struggling. It has been said of them that they are particularly partial to the flesh of missionaries.

It appears that this is not so. The Rev. Mr. Hopkins, of the Methodist Church, who returned to New York after a residence of fifteen years in the various islands of the South Pacific, assured his brethren that in all that period he could not recollect a single instance in which he was made to feel himself a comestible. He averred that his spiritual character was everywhere recognized, and so far as he knew he was never in peril of being put to the tooth.

His testimony, unluckily, has not the value that its obvious sincerity and truth merit. In point of physical structure he was conspicuously inedible; so much so, in truth, that an unsympathetic reporter coldly described him as “fibrous” and declared that in a country where appetizers are unknown and pepsin a medicine of the future, Mr. Hopkins could under no circumstances cut any figure as a viand. And this same writer meaningly inquired of the cartilaginous missionary the present address of one “Fatty Dawson.”

Fully to understand the withering sarcasm of this inquiry it is necessary to know that the person whose whereabouts it was desired to ascertain was a co-worker of Mr. Hopkins in the same missionary field. His success in spreading the light was such as to attract the notice of the native king. In the last letter received from Mr. Dawson he explained that that potentate had just done him the honor to invite him to dinner.

Mr. Hopkins being a missionary, one naturally prefers his views to those of anyone who is still in the bonds of iniquity, and moreover, writes for the newspapers; nevertheless, I do not see that any harm would come of a plain statement of the facts in the case of the Rev. Mr. Dawson. He was not eaten by the dusky monarch — in the face of Mr. Hopkins’ solemn assurance that cannibalism is a myth, it is impossible to believe that Mr. Dawson was himself the dinner to which he was invited. That he was eaten by Mr. Hopkins himself is a proposition so abysmally horrible that none but the hardiest and most impenitent calumniator would Have the depravity to suggest it.

THE JAMAICAN MONGOOSE

WHEN man undertakes for some sordid purpose to disturb the balance of natural forces concerned in the conservation and in the destruction of life on this planet he is all too likely to err. For example, when some public-spirited Australian, observing a dearth of donkeys in his great lone land, thoughtfully imported a shipload of rabbits, believing that they would grow up with the country, learn to carry loads and eventually bray, he performed a disservice to his fellow colonists which they would gladly requite by skinning him alive if they could lay hands on him. It is well known that our thoughtless extermination of the American Indian has been followed by an incalculable increase of the grasshoppers which once served him as food. So strained is the resulting situation that some of our most prominent seers are baffled in attempting to forecast the outcome; and it is said that the Secretary of Agriculture holds that farming on this continent is doomed unless we take to a grasshopper diet ourselves.

The matter lends itself to facile illustration: one could multiply instances to infinity. We might cite the Australian ladybird, which was by twenty well defined and several scientists brought here and acclimated at great expense to feed upon a certain fruit pest, but which, so far, has confined its ravages mainly to the fruit.

The latest, and in some ways the most striking, instance of the peril of making a redistribution of the world’s fauna, is supplied by the beautiful tropical isle of Jamaica, home of the Demon Rum. It appears that someone in Jamaica was imperfectly enamored of the native rats, which are creatures of eminent predacity, intrepid to a degree that is most disquieting. This person introduced from a foreign land the mongoose — an animal whose name it seems prudent to give in the singular number. The mongoose, as is well known, is affected with an objection to rats compared with which the natural animosity of a dog to another dog is a mild passion indeed, and that of a collector of customs to holy water seems hardly more than a slight coolness. Jamaica is now ratless, but, alas, surpassingly tickful.

The ticks have so multiplied upon the face of the earth that man and beast are in equal danger of extinction. The people hardly dare venture out-of-doors to plant the rum vine and help the north-bound steamers to take on monkeys. The mongoose alone is immune to ticks.

It appears that when this creature had effaced the rats it was itself threatened with effacement from lack of comestible suited to its tooth; but instead of wasting its life in repinings and unavailing regrets — instead of yielding to the insidious importunities of nostalgia, it fell upon the lizards and banqueted royally if roughly; and soon the lizards had gone to join the rats in the Unknown. Now, the Jamaica lizard had for countless ages “wittled free” upon ticks, maintaining among them a high death-rate with which, apparently, their own dietetic excesses (for ticks are greatly addicted to the pleasures of the table) had nothing to do. The lizard abating his ravages, through being himself abated by the mongoose, the tick holds dominion by the unchallenged authority of numbers. Man, the whilom tyrant, flees to his mountain fastnesses, the rum vine withers in the fields and the north-bound steamer sails monkeyless away. Jamaica’s last state is worse than her first and almost as bad as ours. She is as yet, however, spared the last and lowest humiliation that a brave and generous people can experience; her parasites do not pose as patriots, nor tickle the vanity of those whom they bleed.

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A POSSIBLE BENEFACTOR

FROM Paris comes the terrible news that M. Verneuil, a chemist, has succeeded in making rubies at no considerable cost. This will doubtless prove a sharp affliction to many persons addicted to display of rubies on their surfaces, as well as to some who have them under lock and key for sale to the others; for of course the value of the natural stones must eventually fall to that of the artificial, if the two kinds are identical in composition, hardness and color. Rubies will perhaps go out of use altogether, for gems accessible to the poor are worthless to the rich, and gems worthless to the rich are not wanted by the poor. The beauty of the ruby will remain, but so will human nature.

Having few rubies and, I trust, not much human nature, I am disposed to regard M. Verneuil's crime as a public benefaction. If he will pursue his experimentation to its "logical conclusion," giving us cheap diamonds, pearls, emeralds, turquoises and the rest, many of us will rise up (from our seats away back) and call him blest.

Victims of the habit of wearing pretty pebbles have always accounted for their affliction by affirming the beauty of the pebbles. If that is why they wear them they will continue to wear them when they are common and cheap — when M. Verneuil and his anarchist co-workers in the laboratory have put them "within the reach of all." Does any one believe that they will? Why do they not now wear (and confess it) the paste jewels that are every bit as beautiful as the genuine? Why would the "society woman" consider herself dishonored if caught red-handed in a necklace of wax beads distinguishable from pearls by the microscope only?

The "preciousness" of these things is their cost. A woman "ablaze with diamonds" is a woman silently shouting: "I am rich!" If her jewels did not say this, and say it plainly, she would throw them into the nearest gutter — nay, her contempt of them might receive such avowal as giving them to the poor.

Lo, the poor Indian whose untutored taste persuades him to personal adornment with porcupine quills, eagle feathers, bear-claws and the tail of a wildcat! They are lovely — no doubt of that — but if porcupines, eagles, bears and wildcats were abundant, accessible and amiable he would make himself a thing of glory and consequence with something less easily acquired. Please to consider the peculiar significance lurking in the good old word *a* bravery" applied to the fine attire and ornaments of the lowly. Does it not distinctly point to a primitive state when personal adornment was the prize of courage in the chase? “Bravery” is the finery of persons not far removed from a state of nature; our own finery we do not call so, not even in poetry. A fairly good name for it is “pursery.”

In the progress of the race away from primitive conditions and barbaric modes of thought and feeling, the female contingent does not walk at the head of the procession. Women are more “conservative” than men: they are last to renounce the habits and customs of the ancestral savage. Witness their addiction to powder and paint. We have all inherited the tendency to daub our faces, a once useful custom, for by differing designs tribes and families were distinguished from one another at a glance. Attentive to other matters, mostly nonsense and mischief, men have suffered the practice to fall into disuse, but women — whom God bless! — continue it as when frighthood was in flower, accounting for it by hardily affirming its service to the complexion. Let it go at that; that is a better reason than can be urged for defacing the female periphery with pebbles, candidly inutile and in open apostasy to the gospel of Beauty Unadorned. Wherefore, that we may have surcease of the pretty-pebble habit in the otherwise supportable female of our species as she has been handed down to us from her noisy sessions in primeval tree-tops, let us pray for success of M. Verneuil and his accomplices in their hardy effort to discredit and vulgarize the product of gem farm and pearl pool.

1902.

WARLIKE AMERICA

I

IN a speech at Huntsville, Alabama, President McKinley said:

"We are not a military people. We are not dedicated to arms. We love peace, and the United States never goes to war except for peace, and only where it can have it in no other way. We have never gone to war for conquest, for exploitation or for territory, but always for liberty and humanity, and in our recent war with Spain the people of the whole United States as one man marched with the flag for the honor of the nation, to relieve the oppressed people in Cuba."

The American people are a singularly "cantankerous" people. True we are not "military," but that was not what the president meant to affirm; he meant that we are not "warlike," which is a very different thing. The Germans are military, the North American Indians are warlike. To be warlike is to be fond of war; to be military is to cultivate the arts and sciences of war, to make the arts of peace subservient to them, to maintain a powerful standing army, with armaments of high efficiency. A people may be both warlike and military, or it may be either and not the other. The distinction was evidently not in the president's mind, for he said that we love peace, that we go to war only to assure it, and so forth. What are the facts?

There have been four generations of politically independent Americans. Each of the four fought a war of magnitude, not counting the small affairs and the "continuous performance" against the Indians. There were the war of 1812 against Great Britain, the war against Mexico, the war among ourselves, the war against Spain. We may say that all these were fought to assure peace, and that is true — peace on our terms. No war is undertaken for any other purpose. It was for that that Alexander invaded Asia and Hannibal Italy. It was for that that the Turks laid siege to Vienna. It was for that that Napoleon overran Europe.

II

It seems that “we have never gone to war for conquest, for exploitation, nor for territory;” we have the word of a president for that. Observe, now, how Providence overrules the intentions of the truly good for their advantage. We went to war with Mexico for peace, humanity and honor, yet emerged from the contest with an extension of territory beyond the dreams of political avarice. We went to war with Spain for relief of an oppressed people, and at the close found ourselves in possession of vast and rich insular dependencies and with a pretty tight grasp upon the country for relief of whose oppressed people we took up arms. We could hardly have profited more had “territorial aggrandizement” been the spirit of our purpose and the heart of our hope.

The slightest acquaintance with history shows that powerful republics are the most warlike and unscrupulous of nations. They insist upon having their own way, and in dealing with vanquished enemies are without conscience. If it were not for the restraints that powerful European sovereigns are able to put upon their subjects, Europe would be a theater of continuous war. We lack that element of restraint. Happily we lack, also, many of the hereditary animosities that inflame the jealous peoples of the Old World; but when the fire is kindled it burns; there is nobody to quench it. We have always a hand upon the sword, and if we do not more frequently strike, it is because, in the first place, it is not much of a sword, and, in the second, the enemy is commonly out of reach. In our navy we have now a sword that is a trifle longer and stronger, but our army is still a dull and clumsy weapon.

In the future, as in the past, we shall have wars and enough of them — wars of honor, wars of conquest, wars of hatred and revenge. War has never found us ready. War has never found any modern nation ready, excepting Prussia, and her only once. If we will learn nothing by experience, let us try observation. Let us cease our hypocritical cant, rise from our dreams of peace and of the love of it, confess ourselves the warlike people that we are, and become the military people that we are not.

III

The notion that a standing army of whatever strength could be a “menace to American liberty” is one of the crudest and most discreditable of errors. It is an outgrowth of ignorance, and rooted in a false analogy. It assumes that the *a* common people” of the Old World monarchies are oppressed, discontented, ripe for revolt and republican government; that they are held in subjection by the powerful armies that serve their tyrants. Of course all this is mere moonshine, but if true it would hold no such lesson for us as we think we read in it, namely, that all armies are serviceable tools to tyrants and usurpers. A European army, recruited by conscription and officered by noblemen and the sons of relatives of noblemen, is an entirely different thing from what we have, and very different indeed from what we may have if we choose. The monarchical army sustains the monarchy, not because an army is naturally and necessarily monarchist, but because monarchy is the constitutional government; and armies, more generally than other human organizations, are faithful to duty and obedient to law. For the same reasons an American army will sustain the republic. Whenever a monarchical army has *not* sustained the monarchy — has assisted to overthrow it and set up a republic — then, indeed, have we been given a reason to distrust “the military” — of a monarchy.

An army of raw volunteers springing to the colors to meet some unforeseen emergency is an inspiring spectacle, but that kind of army is good for nothing when pitted against trained and seasoned troops. Every military man knows this, although there are no large recent instances free from obscuring elements, like “the war of 1812.”

In European countries that have universal conscription the years that the young men pass in the army are the best spent years of their lives. Those who enter the service as ignorant peasant lads, brutally stupid, leave it well set up in body and mind — with better health, better morals and better intelligence. The American peasant is of course perfect in respect of all that, but perhaps his refining society would be of advantage to his officers.

WRITERS OF DIALECT

I

WITH regard to dialect, the literary law, I take it, is about this: To be allowable in either verse or prose it must be the mother-speech, not only of the characters using it, but of the writer himself, who, also, must be unable to write equally well in the larger tongue. This was the case with Burns. Had he not been to the manner born how absurd it would have been in him to write for the few who, naturally or by study and with difficulty, can understand, instead of the many who read and love good English! For my part, I am unable to read Burns with satisfaction; and I am steadfast in the conviction that, excepting among his countrymen, few of those who parrot his praise are better able than I. Of another thing I am tolerably well assured, albeit it is nothing to the purpose, namely, that Burns was more wit than poet. Upon that proposition I am ready to do battle with all Caledonia, the pipers alone excepted.

In humorous and satirical work like, for example, *The Biglow Papers,* the law is relaxed, even suspended; and in serious prose fiction if the exigencies of the narrative demand the introduction of an unlettered hind whose speech would naturally be “racy of the soil” he must needs come in and sport the tangles of his tongue. But he is to be got rid of as promptly as possible — preferably by death. The making of an entire story out of the lives and loves and lingoes of him and his co-pithecans — that is effrontery. If it be urged in deprecation of this my view that it is incompatible with relish of and respect for, Miss Mary Wilkins Freeman, Miss Mary Murfree, Mr. Hamlin Garland and other curled darlings of the circulating libraries, I candidly confess that it is open to that objection. Of all such offenders against sweetness and sense I have long cherished a comfortable conviction that it were better if instead of writing things “ racy of the soil” they would till it.

The talk of intelligent persons in an unfamiliar language is a legitimate literary “property,” but the talk of ignorant persons misusing their own language has value and interest to nobody but other ignorant persons and, possibly, the philologist. Literature, however, is not intended for service in advancing the interests of philology. The “general reader” whose interest in the characters of a tale is quickened by their faulty speech may reasonably boast that the ties of affinity connecting him with their intellectual condition have not been strained by stretching: it is not overfar from where he is to where he came from.

For several months the booksellers of the principal cities in this country reported that the book *David Harum* sold better than any other. The sales went into the hundreds of thousands. It was reviewed with acclamation by all the popular newspapers and magazines, stared at you from every "centre table" and was flung into your ears whenever you had the hardihood to enter a "parlor." *David Harum* is one of the most candidly vulgar and stupid books ever proffered to the taste and understanding of "the general reader." It is of course largely written in "dialect" — that is, in the loutly locution of an illiterate clown making a trial at his mother-speech. Its "dialect" is so particularly offensive that I suppose it to be a "transcript from nature:" persons from whom it is possible would certainly not deny themselves the happiness of speaking it; and the book may have some value to the hardy philologer tracing backward the line of linguistic evolution to the grunt of the primeval pig. To record the vocal riddances of the ignorant may be one of the purposes of popular fiction, for anything that I know, but at least its authors might, in the interest of art, charge its horrible words with something that one unaffected by softening of the brain might think to be thoughts; and perhaps they would if that pandemic infirmity had not marked them for its own.

Male and female created He them. Mary E. Wilkins Freeman furnishes forth her annual output of New-English antiques and detestables, filing their teeth with their tongues, to the inexpressible uncomforting of the auditory nerve. Mary Murfree, in perpetual session on the Delectable Mountains, with a lapful of little clay-eaters and snuff-rubbers, sweats great beads of blood to build the lofty crime and endow it with enough galvanic vitality to stand alone while she reaches for more mud for a new creation. There follows an interminable line of imitators and imitatresses, causing two "dialects" to grow where but one grew before, and rabbiting the literary preserve with a multiplication of impossibles to speak them. And we forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of American letters.

Now, the "dialect" of which these persons are so enamored as to fill whole volumes with it is not dialect; it is simply English as spoken by none but uneducated persons and "recorded" by those to whom ignorance is attractive and seems picturesque. To a sane intelligence it is neither. Such an intelligence regards it with tolerance or aversion — that depends on whether in life it is modest or presumptuous; in letters, subordinate and incidental or dominant and essential. The writers named — they and their literary co-populists, an innumerable commonalty — love ignorance for its own sake. They seem to think, and indubitably do think, that the lives and adventures, the virtues and vices, joys and sorrows of the illiterate are more interesting than those prone to grammar and ablution. To those fortuitous collocations of peasant instincts and pithecan intuitions which these writers call their understandings a sentiment is deemed to have an added value when expressed in coarse and faulty speech. So they give us whole books of it, coddle the resulting popularity as "fame" and prosper abundantly by their sin.

There are dialects which in literary work are legitimate and acceptable — to those who understand. That of Burns, for example, is spoken by thousands of cultivated persons and was his own mother-tongue. He erred in writing in it, as do all having command of the better and more spacious speech that assures a wider attention, but in so doing, he broke no laws of taste nor of sense. The matter is simple enough. A true dialect is legitimate; the faulty speech of an educated person in an unfamiliar tongue is legitimate, as is that of a child; but the lame locution of the merely ignorant — the language of the letterless — that is not dialect, and in any quantity in excess of an amount that may be needful in fiction for *vraisemblance,* or in verse for humor, is reasonless and offensive. As to poetry, our literature contains no line of that in any such speech. The muse is not so feasible; she does not submit herself to the embrace of a yokel — not even to a Tennyson wearing the smock of a northern farmer.

In fiction the limits of dialect that is not dialect are plainly defined, not by usage of the masters, for none than masters go more often wrong — as none but they can afford to do — but by reason and the sense of things. If in evolution of his plot the story teller find it expedient to seek assistance from the "man o' the people" as a subordinate character, that worthy person must needs use the speech of his tribe; as actors, having to wear something — a regrettable necessity — may garb themselves in the costume of the time of the play, however hideous it may be. But beyond this the teller of stories that are not true is denied the right to go. To take for hero or heroine a person unable to speak the language of the tale, whose conversations are turbid swirls in the clear stream of the narrative, is an affront justifiable only by a moral purpose presumably in equal need of justification.

II

One reads Mr. Hay's earlier poems with a thrill of pride. They open glimpses of unselfish courage and sublime devotion compared with which the prancing pageantry of Homer afflicts us like the cheap tinsel of the melodrama.

Such is the serious judgment of a reputable writer living in the capital of the nation. It has a particular reference to “Little Breeches” and “Jim Bludso,” which are not poems at all, but formless blobs of coarse, rank sentimentality in the speech of snuff-rubbers and clay-eaters — the so-called “dialect.” They are no better and could not be worse than the “Hoosier” horrors of Riley and the “barrack-room” afflictions of Kipling. I do not doubt that Hay’s dislike of them and his wish that they might be forgotten incited him to literary silence, whereby we are deprived of the poetry that he might have given us had he remained in the field. There is not a true poet in this country who has not experienced the deep disgust of observing the superior “popularity” of his own worst work. That here and there a few should give up in despair, taking to politics, to business, to any coarse pursuit “understanded of the people,” is natural and not to be condemned. These accept their dreadful fame as a punishment fitting the crime, and promise atonement by resolving to write no more “ dialect poetry” while stealing is more honorable and indigence more interesting.

John Hay was a true poet; so is Riley; so is Kipling. In addition to their panderings to peasants all have written well. At their best they stir the blood and thrill the nerves of all who can be trusted to feel because taught to think. Yet the late Charles A. Dana, who for years successfully posed as a judge of poetry, had at last the indiscretion to disclose himself by a specific utterance of his taste: he pronounced Kipling’s “Gunga Din” one of the greatest of English poems! After that there was no more to say about Dana, but Dana had not the reticence to say it. Poetry, like any other art, is a matter of manner. If the manner is that of a clown the matter will not redeem it, but, as the dyer’s hand is “subdued to what it works in,” will itself be smirched by its environment. English of the cornfield and the slum is suited to certain kinds of humor and in moderation may itself be amusing, but it has no place in serious or sentimental composition, either verse or prose. Persons writing it confess their peasant understandings, and those who like *t(* dialect poems” like them because they do not know any better than to like them, and that’s all there is to it.

The prose writer whom I have quoted probably does know better, but prefers to march with the procession. Since he mentions Homer and Tennyson (to affirm the greater glory of the author of “Little Breeches” and “Jim Bludso”), perhaps he will permit himself to be asked if he sees no “unselfish courage” in Hector? — no “sublime devotion” in Penelope? — none in Enid? — nothing magnanimous in Arthur’s tenderness to Guinevere? Does he think these noble qualities would shine with a diviner light in the character of a cornfed lout of the stables, a whiskey-sodden riverman or a slattern of the slums?

The higher virtues are not a discovery of yesterday; they were known as long ago as last week; and some of us who affect an acquaintance with antiquity profess to have found traces of them in the poetry of an even earlier period, before all men began to be born equal. In “the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome” there were singing pigs, as there are to-day, and doubtless they had their special wallows with mud of a particular brew; but they were not permitted to thrust their untidy muzzles into the sweet water of the Pierian Spring, turn it into slime and scatter plenty of it o’er a smiling land. It has remained for the “fierce democracies” of the Brand-New World to impose upon letters the law of the Dominion of Dirt.

The leader of the New Movement is indubitably Mr. James Whitcomb Riley, and here is an example of his work. It is called “His Pa’s Romance,” and these two passages are quoted with effusion by one of the “critics:

Elsie lisps so, she can’t say
Her own name, ist any way
She says ‘Elthy’ — like they wuz
Feathers on her words, an’ they
Ist stuck on her tongue like fuzz.

How charming! — it affects the sensibilities like the ripple of a rill of buttermilk falling into a pig-trough. “Ist,” by the way, means (to an idiot) “just” — it is not easy to say why. Here followeth the other inspiring passage:

One time
Elsie start to say the rhyme
“Thing a thong o’ thixpenth” — whee!
I ist yell; an’ ma say I’m Unpolite as I can be.

If this is not poetry, what kind of an abysmal imbecility has it the characteristic distinction to be? Mr. Riley turns off this stuff by the linear mile, it is received with enthusiasm and reviewed with acclamation by nearly every “literary critic” in America, and the peasants whose taste they share and ignorance reflect are generous enough to give him a living. Think not, observer from another land, whose eye may chance to note these lines, that all these “dialect poets” wear smocks and toil in the fields; it is the peculiar glory of this great country that its peasants wear as good clothing, pursue as high vocations and talk as glibly about art and literature as anybody. Say not in your lack of light that the American gentleman has boorish taste; say, rather, that the American boor has visible signs of the prosperity of a gentleman, and to an alien eye is not readily distinguishable from his betters.

III

To put a good thought, a tender sentiment, a passionate emotion into faulty words is to defile it. Does a precious stone acquire an added value from a setting of brass? Is a rare and excellent wine better when drunk out of a gourd?

In Herman Scheffauer's first book, *Of Both Worlds,* are two little poems of such naturalness, simplicity and beauty that I hardly know of anything better in their kind. My purpose in quoting them here is, partly, to bring them to the attention of those who may be unfamiliar with Mr. Scheffauer's work, but chiefly to suggest to the "dialect poets" that they undertake to give them an added charm by rewriting them in their own manner.

THE SLEEPERS

The winds lie hushed in the hill
And the waves upon the seas;
The birds are mute and still,
Deep in their dreaming trees;
The earth lies dumb in night,
And the stars in their degrees
Sleep with the suns in space,
With angels, with seraphs bright,
In the light of God His face.

Softly lie the heads
Of the sleepers in their beds;
But the sleepers in the ground —

They alone sleep sweet and sound,
They alone know rest profound.
Fear not — soon a rest as deep

Comes to thee — thou, too, shalt sleep.

MISERERE

The last few prayers are done,
The pall and shroud are spread;
Seven tapers at thy feet And seven at thy head.

Thy hands are crossed upon
Thy bosom white where now
Thy heart is stilled.
O Death, How beautiful art thou!

ON KNOWING ONE’S BUSINESS — AN INSTANCE

NO series of connected and consecutive military events has been so closely analyzed by military students as those marking the first Italian campaign of Napoleon Bonaparte. All expounders of the military art who have had the good fortune to live since its principles were so wonderfully illustrated by that campaign have delighted to use its incidents in exposition. Every student has early learned that he could not afford to neglect it. Even to the “general reader,” unacquainted with the mysteries of strategy and tactics, who in the darkness of his ignorance cherishes the error that war is fortuitous fighting loosely directed to results by physical courage and the will of God, the history of these brilliant operations can hardly fail, when lucidly related, to prove interesting and charming beyond the power of fiction. As related by the mere “historian,” with his port-fire and blood-fumes to emotionalize the situation, it is doubtless as dull reading as the literature of the heart generally. What, in brief, *was* this remarkable campaign?

In the month of March, 1796, Bonaparte, a boy of twenty-six, untried in independent command, was intrusted with an army of some forty thousand badly clad and inadequately supplied men, with which to invade Italy. He was opposed by Beaulieu, with a well equipped force, Austrians and Sardinians, of fifty thousand. The Alps and Apennines were between. Bonaparte began active operations on the eleventh day of April, 1796. On the seventh day of April, 1797, at Leoben, near Vienna, he received the Austrian Emperor’s emissaries, who came to sue for peace, and the war was at an end. During this period of one year less four days, with forces averaging forty-six thousand opposed to forces averaging sixty-one thousand he had in fifteen pitched battles routed one Sardinian army and the six Austrian armies successively sent to drive him out of Italy, only to be driven out themselves. His losses during the campaign in killed, wounded and prisoners were about equal to the numbers of his army at the outset. The losses that he inflicted upon the enemy were no fewer than one hundred and twenty thousand men and vast quantities of *material.*

How were these astonishing feats of arms performed? Not by the superior courage of his soldiers, for the Austrians then, as they are now, were a brave and warlike people. Not by the “will of God,” whose agency is to the military eye nowhere discernible, and whose political predilections are still unknown. Nor were these admirable results due to “luck,” the “favors of fortune,” the “magic” of genius. They were brought about by the very commonplace method of knowing his business thoroughly and applying the knowledge. There is nothing miraculous in that. It is an open secret which Napoleon himself has explained:

“In war nothing is accomplished but by calculation. During a campaign, whatever is not profoundly considered in all its details is without result. Every enterprise should be systematically conducted; chance alone can not bring success.”

I should be sorry to be understood as affirming the possibility of such military success as Napoleon’s to the mere student of military art, devoid of Napoleon’s genius. On the other hand, Napoleon’s genius would have been futile without his mastery of the art. Military art is no exception to art in general; for eminent achievement is required great natural aptitude, *plus* a comprehensive and minute knowledge of the business in hand. Given these two requisites in the commander, and the army is multiplied by two. For many generations, doubtless, the French will boast of Montenotte, Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, and Wagram; but every intelligent soldier’s view is that on all these historic fields there was but one victor. To quote his words again:

“It was not the Roman army that conquered Gaul, but Cæsar; it was not the Carthaginian army which, at the gates of Rome, made the Eternal City tremble, but Hannibal; it was not the Macedonian army that marched as far as the Indus, but Alexander; it was not the Prussian army that defended Prussia for seven years against the three most powerful states of Europe, but Frederick.”

The contrary view — the theory of the insignificance of the individual — so persistently urged a generation ago by Mill, and so eagerly accepted by the young philosophers of his period, derives no support from military history. Tolstoi, it is true, is in full, if somewhat belated, advocacy of it, and professes to find confirmation in the events that he relates in his military novels. And it must be confessed that, as he relates them, they indubitably do seem to justify his view that leaders do not truly lead. With the splendid irresponsibility of the Hedonist, he shows that the French people having incurred, somehow, a blind, reasonless impulse to go gadding about Europe, caught up Napoleon, as a stream bursting out of its banks might catch up a sheep or a log, and pushed him along before them. A careful study of the progress through Italy will, I think, show that at least he did something toward reducing the friction incident to the movement.

Any one really believing in unimportance of the individual must be prepared to affirm that a chance bullet finding a lodgment in the brain of the commander of the Army of Italy at Montenotte would have made but little difference in the conduct of the campaign and the later history of Europe; and any one prepared to affirm this may justly boast himself impregnable to argument, through induration of the understanding.

The history of the military operations that we have been considering has never been better told than in a book entitled *Napoleon Bonaparte's First Campaign* — it should be remembered that he was then simply General Bonaparte. The author of the book is Lieutenant Herbert H. Sargent, of the Army.

(After distinguished service as colonel of volunteers in the Cuban and Philippine wars, this great soldier is now retired as major in the regular army. Before retirement he published two other books, *The Campaign of Marengo* and *The Campaign of Santiago de Cuba*, both characterized by all the qualities so conspicuous in his first book — qualities that are themselves a fine result of "knowing one's business."

1912.)

Nothing could well exceed the clarity with which the author has told his story; and nothing that I have seen in military literature is more admirable than his professional but untechnical comments on its successive stages Everything is made so clear that the benighted civilian of the anti-West Point sort, the fearfully and wonderfully bepistoled swashbuckler of the frontier, the gilded whiskey-soldier of the National Guard and even the self-taught strategist of the press can comprehend it all without a special revelation from Heaven. Those conscious of a desire, however vague and formless, to acquire such a knowledge of military science and art as will give them a keener interest in "war news" that is not "bluggy" than they ever had in that which reeks with gore and "multiplies the slain" will find in Lieutenant Sargent a guide, philosopher and friend for whom they cannot be sufficiently thankful to the God that bestowed him.

A TRADE OF REFUGE

THERE is no security — even the life of a steeple-climber is held by a precarious tenure. One cannot always be clinging to a spire in “the intense inane;” one must sometimes descend to “this place of wrath and tears” in order to eat and write poetry for the newspapers; and then the manifold perils besetting a surface existence begin their deadly work, and man that is born of woman is of few days and full of surprises.

Once upon a time, ‘tis said, a foolhardy steeple-jack took his life in his hands and ventured down among us. Doubtless he wanted but little here below; certainly he did not want that little long, for he made acquaintance with a trolley car and passed away forthwith. If in the moment of disaster “beneath thy wheels, O Juggernath,” it was granted to him to hear the comforting “I told you so” of some fellow craftsman in midheaven, how acutely he must have sympathized with us unfortunates condemned to dwell in the midst of alarms from the cradle to the grave!

Our hard lot must have touched him nearly; participation in its disadvantages must have brought it home to his business and bosom with a more compelling compassion than that of the tempest-tossed mariner who prays, “God help the poor devils on shore such a night as this!” In the consciousness of that sympathy — transient though it necessarily had to be — let us take heart and hope, to confront the perils of our environment. Let us walk our appointed ways among them with no less circumspection, but a superior resignation.

We cannot all be steeple-climbers. We cannot all go down to the sea in ships and know

The exulting sense, the pulse’s maddening play,

That thrill the wanderer on the trackless way as he reflects on his immunity from the insistent vehicle, the stealthy sewer gas, the subterranean steam boiler, the Conqueror Dog and all the other maleficent agencies unknown to a life on the ocean wave.

Some there must be to till the soil (mostly malarial), some to hold the offices, some to feed the dogs, some to tear up the streets, and many — oh, so many! — to write poetry for the magazines. Ships must be built for the happy, happy mariner, and steeples to exalt the prudent climber above the perilous region of industrial discontent. The timorous aviator, in pursuit of longevity must be supplied with his apparatus. By rustic and urban industries soldiers must be maintained in the security of service *in partibus infidelium* where the devastating open coalhole comes not to execute its prank, and missionaries outfitted to grasp the longevital advantages of labor among the cannibals. In the formation of trusts to bring the producer and consumer together in the poor-house we must toil in the pestilential atmosphere of Wall Street. The necessity of making “elevators” to dispose of the surplus population in our congested cities is imperious.

Most of these needful activities have to be conducted on the surface of the land, amidst the horrors of peace and the deadly devices of an advanced civilization. It requires the greater and more courageous part of the population to carry them on; only a few shrinking souls can afford to seek safety on the steeples.

But the lives of these have a peculiar value to the millions engaged in the perilous trades that go on below them. They are survivals of the time that was, forerunners of the time to be. They serve to remind us of that blessed barbarism — that golden age when our sylvan forefather gave himself a chance to live out half his life; and in this dark period of transition they foreshadow that brighter and better time when the land will be studded with abundant steeples of refuge for all excepting condemned criminals and enough ruffian officers of the law to operate, for their extinction, a few of the more deadly appliances and modern conveniences of civilization.

The steeple-jack is a precious possession — let him not be cast out. In order that he may not be compelled to incur the perils of the street, let him be clothed and fed with a kite.

THE DEATH PENALTY

I

“DOWN with the gallows!” is a cry not unfamiliar in America. There is always a movement afoot to make odious the just principle of “a life for a life” — to represent it as *a* relic of barbarism,”

“a usurpation of the divine authority,” and the rest of it. The law making murder punishable by death is as purely a measure of self-defense as is the display of a pistol to one diligently endeavoring to kill without provocation. It is in precisely the same sense an admonition, a warning to abstain from crime. Society says by that law: “If you kill one of us you die,” just as by display of the pistol the individual whose life is attacked says: “Desist or be shot.” To be effective the warning in either case must be more than an idle threat. Even the most unearthly reasoner among the anti-hanging unfortunates would hardly expect to frighten away an assassin who knew the pistol to be unloaded.

Of course these queer illogicians can not be made to understand that their position commits them to absolute non-resistance to any kind of aggression; and that is fortunate for the rest of us, for if as Christians they frankly and consistently took that ground we should be under the miserable necessity of respecting them.

We have good reason to hold that the horrible prevalence of murder in this country is due to the fact that we do not execute our laws — that the death penalty is threatened but not inflicted — that the pistol is not loaded. In civilized countries where there is enough respect for the laws to administer them, there is enough to obey them. While man still has as much of the ancestral brute as his skin can hold without cracking we shall have thieves and demagogues and anarchists and assassins and persons with a private system of lexicography who define murder as disease and hanging as murder, but in all this welter of crime and stupidity are areas where human life is comparatively secure against the human hand. It is at least a significant coincidence that in these the death penalty for murder is fairly well enforced by judges who do not derive any part of their authority from those for whose restraint and punishment they hold it. Against the life of one guiltless person the lives of ten thousand murderers count for nothing;

their hanging is a public good, without reference to the crimes that disclose their deserts. If we could discover them by other signs than their bloody deeds they should be hanged anyhow. Unfortunately we must have a death as evidence. The scientist who will tell us how to recognize the potential assassin, and persuade us to kill him, will be the greatest benefactor of his century.

What would these enemies of the gibbet have? — these lineal descendants of the drunken mobs that hooted the hangman at Tyburn Tree; this progeny of criminals, which has so defiled with the mud of its animosity the noble office of public executioner that even "in this enlightened age" he shirks his high duty, entrusting it to a hidden or unnamed subordinate? If murder is unjust of what importance is it whether its punishment by death be just or not? — nobody needs to incur it. Men are not drafted for the death penalty; they volunteer. "Then it is not deterrent," mutters the gentleman whose rude forefather hooted the hangman. Well, as to that, the law which is to accomplish more than a part of its purpose must be awaited with great patience. Every murder proves that hanging is not altogether deterrent; every hanging, that it is somewhat deterrent — it deters the person hanged. A man's first murder is his crime, his second is ours.

The socialists, it seems, believe with Alphonse Karr, in the expediency of abolishing the death penalty; but apparently they do not hold, with him, that the assassins should begin. They want the state to begin, believing that the magnanimous example will effect a change of heart in those about to murder. This, I take it, is the meaning of their assertion that death penalties have not the deterring influence that imprisonment for life carries. In this they obviously err: death deters at least the person who suffers it — he commits no more murder; whereas the assassin who is imprisoned for life and immune from further punishment may with impunity kill his keeper or whomsoever he may be able to get at. Even as matters now are, incessant vigilance is required to prevent convicts in prison from murdering their attendants and one another. How would it be if the "life-termer" were assured against any additional inconvenience for braining a guard occasionally, or strangling a chaplain now and then? A penitentiary may be described as a place of punishment and reward; and under the system proposed, the difference in desirableness between a sentence and an appointment would be virtually effaced. To overcome this objection a life sentence would have to mean solitary confinement, and that means insanity. Is that what these gentlemen propose to substitute for death?

The death penalty, say these amiables and futilitarians, creates bloodthirstiness in the unthinking masses and defeats its own ends — is itself a cause of murder, not a check. These gentlemen are themselves of "the unthinking masses" — they do not know how to think. Let them try to trace and lucidly expound the chain of motives lying between the knowledge that a murderer has been hanged and the wish to commit a murder. How, precisely, does the one beget the other? By what unearthly process of reasoning does a man turning away from the gallows persuade himself that it is expedient to incur the danger of hanging? Let us have pointed out to us the several steps in that remarkable mental progress. Obviously, the thing is absurd; one might as reasonably say that contemplation of a pitted face will make a man wish to go and catch smallpox, or the spectacle of an amputated limb on the scrap-heap of a hospital tempt him to cut off his arm or renounce his leg.

"An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," say the opponents of the death penalty, "is not justice; it is revenge and unworthy of a Christian civilization." It is exact justice: nobody can think of anything more accurately just than such punishments would be, whatever the motive in awarding them. Unfortunately such a system is not practicable, but he who denies its justice must deny also the justice of a bushel of corn for a bushel of corn, a dollar for a dollar, service for service. We can not undertake by such clumsy means as laws and courts to do to the criminal exactly what he has done to his victim, but to demand a life for a life is simple, practicable, expedient and (therefore) right.

"Taking the life of a murderer does not restore the life he took, therefore it is a most illogical punishment. Two wrongs do not make a right."

Here's richness! Hanging an assassin is illogical because it does not restore the life of his victim; incarceration is logical; therefore, incarceration does — *quod erat demonstrandum*.

Two wrongs certainly do not make a right, but the veritable thing in dispute is whether taking the life of a life-taker is a wrong. So naked and unashamed an example of *petitio principii* would disgrace a debater in a pinafore. And these wonder-mongers have the effrontery to babble of "logic"! Why, if one of them were to meet a syllogism in a lonely road he would run away in a hundred and fifty directions as hard as ever he could hook it. One is almost ashamed to dispute with such intellectual cloudings.

Whatever an individual may rightly do to protect himself society may rightly do to protect him, for he is a part of itself. If he may rightly take life in defending himself society may rightly take life in defending him. If society may rightly take life in defending him it may rightly threaten to take it. Having rightly and mercifully threatened to take it, it not only rightly may take it, but expediently must.

II

The law of a life for a life does not altogether prevent murder. No law can altogether prevent any form of crime, nor is it desirable that it should. Doubtless God could so have created us that our sense of right and justice could have existed without contemplation of injustice and wrong; as doubtless he could so have created us that we could have felt compassion without a knowledge of suffering; but he did not. Constituted as we are, we can know good only by contrast with evil. Our sense of sin is what our virtues feed upon; in the thin air of universal morality the altar-fires of honor and the beacons of conscience could not be kept alight. A community without crime would be a community without warm and elevated sentiments — without the sense of justice, without generosity, without courage, without mercy, without magnanimity — a community of small, smug souls, uninteresting to God and uncoveted by the Devil. We can have, and do have, too much of crime, no doubt; what the wholesome proportion is none can say. Just now we are running a good deal to murder, but he who can gravely attribute that phenomenon, or any part of it, to infliction of the death penalty, instead of to virtual immunity from any penalty at all, is justly entitled to the innocent satisfaction that comes of being a simpleton.

III

The New Woman is against the death penalty, naturally, for she is hot and hardy in the conviction that whatever is is wrong. She has visited this world in order to straighten things about a bit, and is in distress lest the number of things be insufficient to her need. The matter is important variously; not least so in its relation to the new heaven and the new earth that are to be the outcome of woman suffrage. There can be no doubt that the vast majority of women have sentimental objections to the death penalty that quite outweigh such practical considerations in its favor as they can be persuaded to comprehend. Aided by the minority of men afflicted by the same mental malady, they will indubitably effect its abolition in the first lustrum of their political “equality.” The New Woman will scarcely feel the seat of power warm beneath her before giving to the assassin’s “unhand me, villain!” the authority of law. So we shall make again the old experiment, discredited by a thousand failures, of preventing crime by tenderness to caught criminals. And the criminal uncaught will treat us to a quantity and quality of crime notably augmented by the Christian spirit of the new *régime*.

IV

As to painless executions, the simple and practical way to make them both just and expedient is the adoption by murderers of a system of painless assassinations. Until this is done there seems to be no call to renounce the wholesome discomfort of the style of executions endeared to us by memories and associations of the tenderest character. There is, I fancy, a shaping notion in the observant mind that the penologists and their allies have gone about as far as they can safely be permitted to go in the direction of a softer suasion of the criminal nature toward good behavior. The modern prison has become a rather more comfortable habitation than the dangerous classes are accustomed to at home. Modern prison life has in their eyes something of the charm and glamor of an ideal existence, like that in the Happy Valley from which Rasselas had the folly to escape. Whatever advantages to the public may be secured by abating the rigors of imprisonment and inconveniences incident to execution, there is this objection: it makes them less deterrent. Let the penologers and philanthropers have their way and even hanging might be made so pleasant and withal so interesting a social distinction that it would deter nobody but the person hanged. Adopt the euthanasian method of electricity, asphyxia by smothering in rose-leaves, or slow poisoning with rich food, and the death penalty may come to be regarded as the object of a noble ambition to the *bon vivant,* and the rising young suicide may go and kill somebody else instead of himself, in order to receive from the public executioner a happier dispatch than his own ‘prentice hand can assure him.

But the advocates of agreeable pains and penalties tell us that in the darker ages, when cruel and degrading punishment was the rule, and was freely inflicted for every light infraction of the law, crime was more common than it is now; and in this they appear to be right. But one and all, they overlook a fact equally obvious and vastly significant: that the intellectual, moral and social condition of the masses was very low. Crime was more common because ignorance was more common, poverty was more common, sins of authority, and therefore hatred of authority, were more common. The world of even a century ago was a different world from the world of to-day, and a vastly more uncomfortable one. The popular adage to the contrary notwithstanding, human nature was not by a long cut the same then that it is now. In the very ancient time of that early English king, George III, when women were burned at the stake in public for various offenses and men were hanged for “coining” and children for theft, and in the still remoter period, *(circa* 1530) when poisoners were boiled in several waters, divers sorts of criminals were disemboweled and some are thought to have undergone the *peine forte et dure* of cold-pressing (an infliction which the pen of Hugo has since made popular — in literature), — in these wicked old days crime flourished, not because of the law's severity, but in spite of it. It is possible that our lawmaking ancestors understood the situation as it then was a trifle better than we can understand it on the hither side of this gulf of years, and that they were not the reasonless barbarians that we think them to have been. And if they were, what must have been the unreason and barbarity of the criminal element with which they had to deal?

I am far from thinking that severity of punishment can have the same restraining effect as probability of some punishment being inflicted; but if mildness of penalty is to be superadded to difficulty of conviction, and both are to be mounted upon laxity in detection, the pile will be complete indeed. There is a peculiar fitness, perhaps, in the fact that all these pleas for comfortable punishment should be urged at a time when there appears to be a general disposition to inflict no punishment at all. There are, however, still a few old-fashioned persons who hold it obvious that one who is ambitious to break the laws of his country will not with so light a heart and so airy an indifference incur the peril of a harsh penalty as he will the chance of one more nearly resembling that which he would himself select.

V

After lying for more than a century dead I was revived, dowered with a new body, and restored to society. The first thing of interest that I observed was an enormous building, covering a square mile of ground. It was surrounded on all sides by a high, strong wall of hewn stone upon which armed sentinels paced to and fro. In one face of the wall was a single gate of massive iron, strongly guarded. While admiring the cyclopean architecture of the "reverend pile" I was accosted by a man in uniform, evidently the warden, with a cheerful salutation.

"Colonel," I said, " pray tell me what is this building."

"This," said he, "is the new state penitentiary. It is one of twelve, all alike."

"You surprise me," I replied. "Surely the criminal element must have increased enormously."

"Yes, indeed," he assented; "under the Reform *régime,* which began in your day, crime became so powerful, bold and fierce that arrests were no longer possible and the prisons then in existence were soon overcrowded. The state was compelled to erect others of greater capacity."

"But, Colonel," I protested, "if the criminals were too bold and powerful to be taken into custody, of what use are the prisons? And how are they crowded?"

He fixed upon me a look that I could not fail to interpret as expressing a doubt of my sanity. "What!" he said, "is it possible that the modern penology is unknown to you? Do you suppose we practise the antiquated and ineffective method of shutting up the rascals? Sir, the growth of the criminal element has, as I said, compelled the erection of more and larger prisons. We have enough to hold comfortably all the honest men and women of the state. Within these protecting walls they carry on all the necessary vocations of life excepting commerce. That is necessarily in the hands of the rogues, as before."

"Venerated representative of Reform," I exclaimed, wringing his hand with effusion, "you are Knowledge, you are History, you are the Higher Education! We must talk further. Come, let us enter this benign edifice; you shall show me your dominion and instruct me in the rules. You shall propose me as an inmate."

I walked rapidly to the gate. When challenged by the sentinel, I turned to summon my instructor. He was nowhere visible. I turned again to look at the prison. Nothing was there: desolate and forbidding, as about the broken statue of Ozymandias, The lone and level sands stretched far away.

A ROLLING CONTINENT

LIKE hope, the passion for prophecy springs eternal in the human breast; man is prone to it, as the sparks fly upward. Stripped of its several disguises, a considerable part of the world’s writing and speaking is pure prediction; even the official forecaster of the weather bureau can not resist the universal urge and maintain a discreet and dignified silence befitting his office. Eliminate from politics, for example, all prophecies, expressed or implied — all the jeremiads based on assumption of the opposite party’s success and all the assurances of a golden age to ensue from its defeat — and politics will “look another thing.”

But of all the cloud of witnesses to the kind of mountain which the mouse of our country’s future is to bring forth, none seems clearly to discern the adverse conditions environing the American prophet and foredooming to futility his vision and his dream. None appears to take account of the annulling fact that this continent is turning over like a man in bed; yet it ought to be obvious to the meanest understanding that if this movement continue it will supply conditions suitable to neither the reign of terror consequent upon the success of one’s political opponents nor the golden age dependent on the ascendency of the principles professed by oneself.

It has been shown that the Farallon islands, just off the Pacific coast, are becoming, as Tennyson would put it, “more and more;” the lighthouse keeper out there is in progressive achievement of the role of “prominent citizen.” The bar at the mouth of San Francisco harbor is rising faster in fathoms than those farther inland in public esteem. In the steady ascension of the bottom of the bay lurks a possibility which without vanity we may affirm will astonish the astronomers of Mars. In short, the entire Pacific Coast is insurgent.

On the Atlantic seaboard inundations from marine storms occur every year. The waves eat farther and farther into the land; the high-water mark of one decade becomes the low-water mark of the next, and diking as an agricultural method has a growing importance. It is estimated that the greater part of Manhattan island will be submerged within fifty years, and that within an even shorter period the Jersey mosquito will find no rest for the sole of his foot, and must become a pelican or quit.

But the steady subsidence of the Atlantic littoral foreshadows changes more startling than these — more startling, at least, to some who have not the advantage to be Jersey mosquitoes. Man himself, the man of the Eastern states, *Homo smugwumpus,* will find himself face to face with a problem of supreme scientific interest and personal importance. Will he travel west and go up with the country, or, staying where he is, develop into a fish and be mighty quick about it? The ordinary process of evolution, whereby a million years are required to change a red worm into a rhinoceros or advance a cave-bat one step in biological preferment and make it a theologian, will not do for *H. smugwumpus* when the wave is at his armpits and his ancestral acres are falling away from his webless feet. Even the fittest of his species must travel with uncommon speed along the line of development in order to survive in the new environment. They must slide nimbly up the scale of being, passing every intermediate stage between smugwumphood and fishness without pausing to enjoy its advantages. Probably, however, most of them will prefer to ascend the new watercourses up the ever-steepening slope of the great plains, settling eventually on the summit of the continent, roundabout San Francisco — where it is to be hoped they will be welcome if they behave themselves. Doubtless they will miss many of the blessings of their lowland existence, but they will find in the superior altitude an immunity from sunstroke and the mad dog, which will be partial compensation for renouncing the fascinating study of the long thermometer.

Probably the turning over of the continent will in time be stayed; to the unscientific mind, at least, its complete subversion is imperfectly thinkable. But for the next few thousand years, while still the memory of the purpose and efficacy of Noah’s deluge is fresh and pleasing in Heaven, the movement will be likely to continue. By the time that it ceases the Atlantic shore will perhaps be a contour line on the eastern declivity of the Rocky Mountains, and the Pacific slope comprise all that region now underlying the “great gulf” between this world and Hawaii. As a practical settlement of the annexation question on a staying basis, this unpolitical movement is worthy of the highest commendation. With the construction of the San Francisco and Honolulu Pacific Railroad by Government and at the rate of fifty million dollars a mile in hand paid to the owners of the road, and by them kept for their honesty, the status of the descendants of Kamehameha and Kalakaua will be definitely fixed — they will be payers of All That The Traffic Will Bear.

The upward tendency of the Pacific side of the continent will be attended, no doubt, with certain inconveniences. Already the relentless progress of its ascension has laid “effacing fingers” on the *amour propre* of several worthy persons who thought themselves heavy enough to hold it down.

1892.

A MONUMENT TO ADAM

IT is believed that every just-minded and right-feeling American will experience a glow of gratification in the assurance that after ages of indifference, neglect, and even contumelious disparagement, Adam is at last to have a monument. The proposal to erect a “suitable memorial” to the good forefather is singularly touching; in a tranquil, business-like way it gets a tolerably firm footing in the sympathies and sentiments of the human heart, quietly occupying the citadel of the affections before the unready conservatisms of habit, prejudice, and unreason can recover from their surprise to repel it. It will be difficult for even the most impenitent obstructionist to utter himself cogently in opposition; the promoters of the filial scheme will have the argument as much their own way as have the promoters of temperance, chastity, truth, and honor. The comparison is ominous, but not entirely discouraging, inasmuch as the builders of monuments are less dependent on “right reason and the will of God” than the builders of character. Stones are not laid in logic; even the men of the plains of Shinar, desperately wrong-headed as in the light of Revelation we now perceive them to have been, and ghastly incapable of adding an inch to their moral stature, succeeded in piling up a fairish testimonial to their own worth, and would no doubt have achieved the top course had it not happened that suddenly each appeared to be of a different mind, so that in the multitude of counselors there was little wisdom. Dr. Noah Webster being dead — heaven rest him! — and the reporters of the press being easily propitiated with libations of news, there is not likely to be any tampering with the American tongue that will not be a distinct advantage to it; so we may reasonably expect the stones of the Adamite monument to be appropriately inscribed. Many reasons occur why this ought to be so. Of Adam, even more than of Washington it may justly be said that he was “first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.” In truth, he was first in everything and all round.

To the patriot the plan of erecting to him a fitting memorial will especially commend itself: it is an American, and therefore a superior, plan. Contrast its glossy originality with the threadbare second-handedness of the project to import Cleopatra’s other needle! The religious mind will not fail to discover in the proposal a kind of special providence for the arrest and eventual overthrow of Infidelity, against whose dark disciples it will lift a finger of permanent admonition. Can even the most flippant scoffer look up at the reverend pile and doubt the Mosaic account of creation? If the architect have only the sagacity to omit the date of erection, and the subscribers the self-denial to forego the glory of displaying their names on it, will not posterity naturally come to think that he whose virtues it commemorates “reposes beneath”? True, the wily scientist, alarmed for his theory, or touched with a sentiment of filial piety as *he* understands it, may countercheck by building a similar monument to the recent Ourang-Outang, the remote Ascidian, or the ultimate Bathybius. He may even have the prudent audacity to put up a stone to the memory of that unthinkable, and therefore irrefutable, Missing Link — as the groping pagan of antiquity with his single gleam of spiritual light erected an altar “To the Unknown God.” If the hardy Evolutionist do anything of this kind it will be a clear infringement of the *leges non scriptæ* of copyright. Justice, religion, and reason alike will dictate the upsetting of his profane memorial with as little compunction as the wave felt for Caliban’s designs in the sea-sand.

That the Adam monument project is seriously entertained there can be no intelligent doubt: in the list of its founders is publicly mentioned a name which, for better or for worse, is inseparably linked with that of the Great Progenitor — the name of Mark Twain, whose sobs at the paternal tomb have reverberated through the world with an authenticating energy that makes the erection of the monument a matter of comparatively trifling importance, after all.

1878.

HYPNOTISM

WE are all hypnotists. Every human being has in some degree the power to influence the thought and action of another, or some others, by what we will consent to call “hypnotic suggestion,” though the term, while serviceable, is inaccurate. Most of us have the power in varying degrees of feebleness, but few know how to apply what they have of it; but some have it so strong as to be able to control an unresisting will. Assent, however, is not always, nor usually, to be inferred from consent, even when consent is given in good faith; there is such a thing as unconscious resistance. In those having no knowledge of hypnotism, resistance is the natural attitude, for they think that susceptibility to control implies a weak will or a low intelligence, which is an error. At least the contrary view is supported by my own observation; and I accept some things, despite the fact that I have observed them to be true.

The mysterious force which in its more spectacular manifestations we call hypnotism, and one form of which is known as “mind-reading,” is at the back of all kinds and degrees of affection and persuasion. Why is one person loved better than another person more worthy of love? Because he has more “personal magnetism.” This term is an old acquaintance; for many decades we have been using it to signify an engaging manner. We thought it a figurative expression; that is why it commended itself to us. But it denotes a fact with literalness; some persons have a quality, or rather a property, which actually does draw other persons toward and to them, as a magnet attracts steel; and it is the same property in magnet and in man, and can be augmented by the scientific use of apparatus. A favorite “subject” of mine when blindfolded and turned loose in a room and commanded to find a hidden object will sometimes fail. But she never fails if the object is a horse-shoe magnet.

Did you ever, by oral argument, convince anyone that he was wrong and you right? Not often, of course, but sometimes, you think. If you are a member of Congress you are very sure about it; that is what you are a member of Congress for. I venture to believe that you never did. It was by unconscious hypnotism that you did the trick. Your argument (on the cogency and eloquence of which I congratulate you) served only to hold your victim’s attention to the matter in hand. Without it he might, have thought you wanted him to become a horse, and would indubitably have neighed and pranced.

In the Twenty-first Century, doubtless, a legislator will owe his election to the confidence of his constituents in his ability to exert this kind of suasion. The candidate who can not by the power of his unaided eye compel his opponent to eat shoe-blacking and jump over a broomstick will not have the ghost of a chance at the polls.

Suppose, madam, that your husband had relied upon argument to convince you that you ought to marry him. Of course he did have to plead long and hard — that is conceded; but suppose that while doing so he had always worn green spectacles. Or suppose that in all his long and arduous courtship he had never looked you squarely (and impudently) in the eyes — gloated upon you. I deem it certain, madam, that you would now be the wife of a wiser man, probably a deaf mute.

In our present stage of controversial progress speech is not without a certain clumsy utility. It enables you to apprise your opponent of the views to which you invite his allegiance. But for the purpose of inducing him to accept them it is destitute of effect — is not at all superior to the plunk-plunking of a banjo, or that favorite political argument, the braying of a brass band. Your success in convincing another person depends upon (1) the degree of your hypnotic power, (2) your opportunities of exerting it and (3) his susceptibility to it. In brief, the business of converting the several kinds of heathens is a thing which, like checking the too rapid increase of population, cannot be done by talking. I have tried to show you how it can be done if you have the gift. If you have not, be thankful, for you will escape much defamation from those who believe hypnotism a kind of sorcery liable to the basest abuses and pracnotize a thief I can make him steal. If I can hypnotize a bad girl — but that would be needless. Whatever in one’s normal state one is tised only for purposes of sin. Is it possible so to practice it? Why, yes, if I can hyp-willing to do, or wants to do, one can be made to do by hypnotic control. That is as far as the power can go; it cannot make a sinner out of a saint, a demagogue out of a gentleman, nor a mute out of Theodore Roosevelt

AT THE DRAIN OF THE WASHBASIN

THE Prohibitionists, good souls, are funny. They are all “down upon” license — high or low — because it is a legal “recognition” of the liquor trade. As reasonably they might condemn fines for misdemeanor as legal recognition of misdemeanor. Until the liquor trade is forbidden it is legally recognized, whether licensed or not. Why can not militant aquarians accustom themselves to think of a license fee as an *ante facto* fine? I am not loaded down with controversial weapons for the fray between liquor and water; I love neither the one liquid nor the other; but I enjoy the quarrels of others, am enamored of effective means in battle and should be miserable if I had failed to point out to any combatant in any contention how he could obtain an honest advantage.

Do I not drink water? Yes, a little — when instigated by thirst. Does any one drink it under any other circumstances? Does any one drink it because he likes it? — or rather, does any one like it when not suffering from a disagreeable disorder? We take water as medicine for the disease thirst. It is to be considered as a remedial agent — but so vilely compounded in nature’s laboratory and so distasteful to the normal palate that the world in all ages has been virtually united in avoiding it. Nothing has so stimulated human ingenuity and invited such constant investments as the discovery, invention and manufacture of palatable substitutes for plain water; and nothing could be more unphilosophical than to attribute this universal movement to perversity or caprice. Extravagant as are some of its manifestations, deplorable as are some of its consequences, at the back of it all, as at the back of every wide and persistent trend of human activity, is some imperious and unsleeping necessity.

Consider, if you will be so good, what “drinking-water” actually is. It is the world’s sewage. It is what that dirty boy, the earth, has washed his face with. The wells, rivers and rills are nature’s slop-buckets, and the lowland springs are not much better; all soluble substances on or near the surface of the earth eventually get into them. Melted mountain snow is pure enough, but by the time it reaches the lip of the flatlander it is a solution of abomination. It is macerated man. It is hydrate of dead dog with an infusion of all that is untidy — infested with germs of nameless plagues, carrying ferocious anthropophagi and loaded with mordant minerals. By many scientists it is held that age is simply a disease caused, mainly, by cumulative deposits of lime and other inorganic matter in the organs of the body, most of them taken in water. If our drink were free of minerals and depeopled of its little reptiles it is probable that we might live a thousand years and die of the minerals and reptiles in our food — those of us who are not shot or hanged.

The protagonists of water tell us that it is the natural drink of man. We drink it for economy, from ignorance or inattention, from hereditary habit bequeathed to us by barbarian ancestors who had nothing else and knew not the sacred grape. They ate beetles, too, stale fish and one another. Were these the natural food of man? Man has no natural food and drink; he takes what he can get. An infant race is like an infant individual: whatever it can lay its hands on goes into its dauby mouth.

Water, *pure* water, has one merit — it is cheap; and one disadvantage — it is not good.

Mr. Prohibitionist would like to deprive me of wine by law; not because that would make me happier: it would make *him* happier. As long as I cannot prevent him from trying, I fancy that I don't wish to, and execute a multitude of fine sentiments about the virtue of tolerance and the advantages of free speech. But give me the power, and the first time I catch him rolling his rebuking eye at my wineglass I will fill up his well.

GODS IN CHICAGO

IN the death of Mr. W. J. Gunning theology incurred a serious loss. The deceased was an intelligent and painstaking collector of gods, and at the time of his death was in the service of the Committee on Gods, of the “World’s Fair” in Chicago. He had already got together about five hundred deities, some of them exceedingly powerful, and was on his way around the world on the lookout for more. It is believed that he would have enriched the pantheon of the fair with some singularly fine exhibits if he had been spared, for he was a most accomplished theologian, knew exactly where to lay his hand on any deity that he needed in his business, and whenever he went godding was blessed (under Providence) with a large take. He was an honest collector, a kind and considerate provider, and left behind him a wide circle of Celestial Powers bewailing their loss.

The advantage of having a first-rate collection of gods at a world’s fair is obvious. Hitherto the study of comparative theology has been beset with dispiriting difficulties, many of which will vanish in the light that such a collection will pour upon the science. In actual presence of the wood and stone which the heathen in his blindness bows down to we shall be able to trace resemblances and relationships hitherto undiscerned and even unsuspected. We shall know, perhaps, why the religion of the Inquots is somewhat similar to that of the Abemjees when we see (if such is the fact) that the gods of both these widely separated tribes have availed themselves of the advantages of the tail. We shall perhaps find the missing link between the Hindu’s mild disposition and his adoration of the “idol of hope and slaughter.” Better than all, we shall by actual scrutiny of the mongrel and measly gods of other and inferior nations be confirmed in the True Faith, as in this favored land we have the happiness to know it.

That the goddery will be a point of chief attraction goes without saying. A temple in which, satisfying the two mightiest needs of his spiritual nature, one may both scoff and pray will have a powerful fascination for the truly religious. There the visiting stranger from the overseas can perform appropriate rites before the deity of his fathers and execute feats of contumelious disdain — short of actual demolition — before the hideous and senseless images adored of those not delivered from error’s chain. Even to the wicked person who has justly incurred the ancient reproach that he “tears down but does not build up,” the god-show will have a certain value as displaying everywhere the kind of things he tears down and nowhere the kind he is expected to build up — whereby he shall be put into better esteem and kicked and cuffed with abated assiduity. There is one disquieting possibility — one haunting thought that grows amain to apprehension: What will be the effect of setting up a multitude of gods in a city which has not hitherto tolerated one? It was well, though, to make the experiment, even as a missionary measure; and if the lakeside pantheon had served to lure the world’s pious to their financial doom the Chicagonese might have become a profoundly religious people, attentive to pilgrims and blandly assuring them that it was no trouble to show gods.

1892.

FOR LAST WORDS

THE special kind of telephone designed to be affixed to the bedside of one who may have the bad luck to suffer from some infectious or contagious disease is a thoughtful provision for a crying need. By means of the instrument so placed, the patient’s friends are able to converse to him, read and sing at him, and, in general, give him the benefit of their society without danger of getting back more than they bestow. The plan is of admirable simplicity and nothing could be better — for the friends. There must be a certain satisfaction in possessing one end of a telephone at the other end of which there is one who cannot get away — one who has to listen to as many helloes as may be thought good for him, and to submit to the question, “Is that you?” when you know that it is he, as frequently as you choose to afflict him with it. That he is heartily wishing but impotently unable to transmit his disorder through the wire adds something to the joy of the situation.

One of the advantages of the sick-bed telephone lies in the fact that it can be used for preservation of “last words.” Hitherto those only of men who died surrounded by attentive friends have had a chance of getting before the public; those of the unfortunate infectionary, isolated from his race and dying in a pesthouse, assisted by hireling physicians and unsympathetic nurses, have been lost to the world. No matter how many years of his life the patient may have been engaged in their composition and rehearsal; no matter how “neat and opprobrious” they were, they fell upon unappreciative ears, and were, not recorded. Under the new *régime* the patient as his fire fails may summon his friends to the telephone, launch at them his Parthian platitude and die in the pleasant consciousness that posterity will have profit of his death. Whether, like Falstaff, he choose to give his remarks a reminiscent character and “babble o’green fields;” confine himself to the historical method, like Daniel Webster with his memorable “I still live;” assume the benevolent pose, and, like Charles II, urge the survivors not to let some “poor Nelly” starve; the exclamatory, like the late President Garfield, who, according to one Swaim, said *“O*

Swaim!” and let it go at that; or the merely idiotic, like the great Napoleon with his *“Tête d’armée”* the faithful telephone will be there, ready and willing to transmit (and transmute) the sentiment, admonition, statement or whatever it may be.

To persons intending to make this use of the telephone a word of counsel may not be impertinent. As no human being, however well-eared, ever understood the telephone until it had repeated itself a number of times in response to his demands for more light, and as the moribund are not commonly in very good voice, it will be wise to begin the “last words” while there is yet a little reserve fund of life and strength remaining, for repetition and explanation.

THE CHAIR OF LITTLE EASE

NOT many years ago, as I remember, a deal of deprecatory talk was in evolution about a certain Governor of a Persian province, who was said to have been boiled alive by order of the Shah. Our shouting and shrilling in this matter were not altogether becoming, considering whose progeny we are. It is not so very long since all the nations of Europe practised boiling alive — commonly in oil, which was thought to impart a fine discomfort to the person so unlucky as to be in the cauldron. In England boiling was the legal punishment for poisoners for a long time, beginning in 1531, in the reign of Henry VII. Among those who suffered this discomfort was a man mentioned in the chronicle of the Grey Friars, who was let down into the kettle by a chain until he was done. He, however, was not boiled in oil — just plain. Some of the items of an expense account relating to the execution of Friar Stone at Canterbury are interesting in their homely way:

Paid 2 men that sat by the kettle and parboiled him — 1s To 3 men that carried his quarters to the gates and set them up — 1s For a woman that scoured the kettle — 2d

With regard to that last item one cannot repress the flame of a consuming curiosity to know if the scouring was done before or afterward. If afterward, the poor woman seems to have been miserably underpaid.

But call it a long time ago, protesting that the tendency to boil one another has exhausted its impetus, or, if you please, worked itself out of our clarifying blood. But the year 1790 is not so far back, and burning at the stake probably generates an uneasiness to which that of the oil-boiled gentry of the earlier period was nowise superior. It was in the year mentioned — in the reign of his most gracious Majesty George, the third of that name — that burning at the stake ceased to be the legal penalty for “coining,” which was accounted “treason,” and murder of a husband, which was “petty treason.” But wife-killers and coiners, male, were hanged. The last woman burned alive departed this life, I think, in 1789. Men are living to-day whose fathers were living then and may, as children, have played in the ashes.

Still (it may be urged) it was not actually we who did it: in our milder day we have neither the cauldron nor the stake. Ah, but we have the dynamo. We have the custom of putting a small percentage of our assassins into an “electrical chair” and doing them to death by pressing a button — a process to which in defiance of two languages we have given the name *a* electrocution.” For encouragement of the rising young assassin, physicians assure us that this gives a painless death.

The physicians know nothing about it; for anything they know to the contrary, death by electricity may be the most frightful torment that it is possible for any of nature’s forces or processes to produce. The agony may be not only inconceivably great, but to the sufferer it may seem to endure for a period inconceivably long. That many of the familiar physical indications of suffering are absent (though “long, shuddering sighs” and “straining at the straps” are not certainly symptoms of joy) is very little to the purpose when we know that electricity paralyzes the muscles by whose action pain is familiarly manifested. We know that it paralyzes all the seats of sensation, for that matter, and puts an end to possibilities of pain. That is only to say that it kills. But by what secret and infernal pang may not all this be accompanied or accomplished? Through what unnatural exaltation of the senses may not the moment of its accomplishing be commuted into unthinkable cycles of time? Of all this the physicians can have no more knowledge than so many toads under stones.

It is probable, at least it is possible, that a “victim’s” sum of suffering from his instantaneous pervasion with enough of the fluid to kill him is no less than if it were leisurely rilled through him a little faster than he could bear until he should die of it that way. Theories of the painlessness of sudden death appear to be based mostly upon the fact that those who undergo it make no entries of their sensations in their diaries. It is to be wished that they would be more thoughtful and less selfish. The man smitten by lightning, or widely distributed by a hitch in the proceedings at a powder mill, owes a duty to his fellow men of which he commonly appears to have but an imperfect sense. A careful and analytic record of his sensations at every stage of his mischance would be a precious contribution to medical literature. Published under some such title as *A Diary of Sudden Death; by a Public-Spirited Observer on the Inside* it would serve many useful purposes, and also profit the publisher. What we most need — next to more doctors at executions — is some person having experience of the matter, to tell us fairly in inoffensive English, interlarded with “Soche-sorte Latin as physickers doe use,” just how it feels to be dead all over at once.

A GHOST IN THE UNMAKING

BELIEF in ghosts is natural, general and comforting. In many minds it is cherished as a good working substitute for religion; in others it appears to take the place of morality. It is rather more convenient than either, for it may be disavowed and even reviled without exposing oneself to suspicion and reproach. As an intellectual conviction it is, in fact, not a very common phenomenon among people of thought and education; nevertheless the number of civilized and enlightened human beings who can pass through a graveyard at midnight without whistling is not notably greater than the number who are unable to whistle.

It may be noted here as a distinction with a difference that belief in ghosts is not the same thing as faith in them. Many men believe in the adversary of souls, but comparatively few, and they not among our best citizens, have any faith in him. Similarly, the belief in ghosts has reference only to their existence, not to their virtues. They are, indeed, commonly thought to harbor the most evil designs against the continuity of peaceful thoughts and the integrity of sleep. Their malevolence has in it a random and wanton quality which invests it with a peculiarly lively interest: there is no calculating upon whom it will fall: the just and the unjust alike are embraced in its baleful jurisdiction and subjected to the humiliating indignity of displaying the white feather. And this leads us directly back to the incident by which these remarks have the honor to be suggested.

A woman living near Sedalia, Missouri, who had recently been married alive to a widower, was once passing along a “lonely road” which had been thoughtfully laid out near her residence. It was late in the evening, and the lady was, naturally, somewhat apprehensive in a land known to be infested by Missourians of the deepest dye. She was, therefore, not in a suitable frame of mind for an interview with an inhabitant of the other world, and it was with no slight trepidation that she suddenly discovered in the gloom a tall figure, clad all in white, standing silent and menacing in the road before her. She endeavored to run away, but terror fastened her feet to the earth; to shriek, but her lungs refused their office — the first time that an office was ever refused in that sovereign commonwealth. In short, to use a neat and graphic locution of the vicinity, she was utterly “guv out.” The ghost was tremendously successful. Unluckily it could not hold its ghost of a tongue, and that spectral organ could accomplish feats of speech intelligible to ears still in the flesh. The apparition advanced upon its helpless victim and said in hollow accents: “I am the spirit of your husband’s first wife: beware, beware!” Nothing could have been more imprudent. The cowering lady effected a vertical attitude, grew tall, and expanded. Her terror gave place to an intrepidity of the most military character, and she moved at once to the attack. A moment later all that was mortal of that immortal part, divested of its funeral habiliments, hair, teeth and whatever was removable — battered, lacerated, gory and unconscious — lay by the roadside awaiting identification. When the husband arrived upon the scene with a horrible misgiving and a lantern, his worst fears were not realized; the grave had bravely held its own; the object by the roadside was what was left of his deceased wife’s sister. On learning that her victim was not what she had incautiously represented herself to be, the victorious lady expressed the deepest regret Such incidents as this go far to account for that strong current of human testimony to the existence of ghosts, which Dr. Johnson found running through all the ages, and at the same time throw a new and significant light upon Heine’s suggestion that ghosts are as much afraid of us as we of them. It would appear that some of the less judicious of them have pretty good reason.

THE TURN OF THE TIDE

IN the year 1890 I wrote in the San Francisco *Examiner, àpropos* of Chinese immigration:

“There is but one remedy — I do not recommend it: to kill the Chinese. That we shall not do: the minority will not undertake, nor the majority permit. It would be massacre now; in its own good time (too late) it will be war. We could kill the Chinese now, as we have killed the Indians; but fifty years hence — perhaps thirty — the nation that kills Chinamen will have to answer to China.” Twenty-one years later a Chinese warship steamed into the port of Vera Cruz, Mexico, to back up a demand of the Chinese government for an indemnity for a massacre of Chinese subjects. She was a little warship, but she bore a momentous mandate, performed it and steamed away, the world as inattentive to the event as it had been to the prophecy.

Perhaps our national indifference to the portentous phenomenon came of “use and wont;” already an American president had been made to grovel at the feet of a Japanese emperor, and had truculently threatened a state of the union with war if it did not adjust its municipal laws to the will of that Asian sovereign. Clearly, as the hope was then expressed, “we have reached the end of Asiatic dictation” — the hither end, unfortunately.

All Asia is astir, looking East and West. Its incalculable multitudes are learning war and navigation; and Caucasian powers—” infatuate, blind, selfsure!” — are their tutors. Their armies are taught by European officers, their warships are built in European and American ports. All the military powers unite in maintaining “the integrity of China” and in awakening her to aggression and dominance.

Even if it were to our immediate interest to preserve the integrity of the Chinese Empire a long look ahead might disclose a greater one that would be best subserved by partition. In a single generation Japan has performed the astonishing feat of changing civilizations. It has been, for her, retrogression, for the civilization that she has discarded was superior to that which she has adopted; but in one important particular she has been the gainer by the exchange; in the matter, namely, of military power, and therefore political consequence. As by a leap, she has advanced from nowhere to the position of a first-rate power. What she has done China is doing, with this difference: China’s advance will be to a position that will dominate the world and reduce the foremost nations of to-day to second place. Trained by European officers to European methods of warfare, such an army as she can raise and equip from her four hundred millions of population will be invincible. It may overrun Europe and extinguish Christian civilization on that continent, which would not be a very good thing for it on this. It was only yesterday — a little more than two hundred years ago — that Europe came within a single battle-hazard of being an Islam dependency. If John Sobieski had been defeated under the walls of Vienna, that city, Berlin, Paris and London would to-day be Mohammedan capitals. History has not exhausted its reserve of astounding events, nor have civilizations learned the secret of stability.

It is easy to affirm, in the case of China, the impossibility of any such racial transformation as the one supposed, but fifty years ago it would have been easy to point out its impossibility in the case of Japan — if any human being had had the imagination and hardihood to suggest it. Japan has made the impossible possible, the possible a thing to be feared. As a measure of precaution, the partition of China merits the profoundest consideration.

Actual forces at the back of a great movement are seldom apparent to those engaged in directing it. Statesmanship is mostly a matter of temporary expedients for accomplishment of small purposes, but if there is to-day a really great statesman of the Caucasian race he is considering the partition of China among European nations as an alternative to the partition of European nations among the Chinese.

Meantime we occupy ourselves with laws and treaties to “exclude” Chinese and other inevitable Asians from our continent. Successive relays of American statesmen wreck themselves upon the problem and go down smiling. To some of us it is given to see that the Asian can not be excluded — that the course of empire, having taken its way westward until it has reached its point of departure, is turning backward, an irresistible “tide in the affairs of men.” But what can we do but propose further and futile measures of “exclusion”? We supplicate our Government to forbid us to employ our destroyers, to deny us the fruits of our cupidity and prohibit us from bringing the hateful race here in our own ships. Our courts, minded madwise, make in good faith the monstrous assumption that the writ of *habeas corpus* is a right which we, having invented it, are bound to share with races that never heard of it. Our churches, gone clean daft in pursuit of souls never caught and not worth the catching, pull the strings of their God to a gesture of injunction and bid us respect the brotherhood of man. Every moment and at all points we feel the baffling hand thrusting us roughly down and back, while this awful invasion pours in upon us with augmenting power.

Not for an instant has the refluent wave been stayed. Every American city has its “Chinatown,” every American village its scouts and pioneers of the movement. On the Pacific Coast the Japanese have a foothold everywhere, monopolizing entire industries in cities and valleys, owning the lands that once they leased and charitably employing their former employers. And all along the line of every growing railway in the west may be seen the turbaned Hindu bending to his work and biding his time to be a “shipper.”

As it is, it will be: the Oriental races are in motion westward, and this continent is doomed to their occupancy. A higher, sterner law than any of man’s devising is in action here. Fate has exercised the right of emiment domain and condemned this New World to the use of ancient races. For four hundred years the European has been wresting it from the Indian; within one-half the time the Asian will have accomplished its conquest from the European. There is no help for us: as we did unto others it shall be done unto us, and the Asian shall be master here. It is comforting to know that we shall have had a hand in our undoing; one does not like to be a “dead-head” in any enterprise.

No; we shall not kill the Chinese, nor will they “go” without killing — nor cease to come. As surely as the sun shall rise each day, so surely each day will his beams gild the ever advancing flag of this irresistible migration. Beneath the feet of that mighty host the arts and sciences of the Aryan, his laws and letters, his religions and languages, the very body and soul of his civilization will be trampled out of record, out of memory, out of tradition.

It is not a sunny picture; what need to look upon it? I invite to despair; but there stands the dear American statesman, parchment in hand — a new exclusion law! His face shines in the dawning of another hope; in his eyes is the morning of a new era. Between the two of us — him and me — all patriots may be united: each with a prophet of his choice. It is clear whom ye will choose, but I hope I don’t intrude.

FAT BABIES AND FATE

THE modern Baby Show is a fruitful source of mischief — a degenerate successor to that ancient display whose beneficent purpose was to ascertain what ailing or deformed or merely puny infants might most advantageously be flung off a cliff. The object of the modern Baby Show is not improvement of the race by assisting Nature in “weeding out,” nor is such the practical result. Prizes, we are told, are commonly bestowed by a committee of matrons, and necessarily fall to the fattest exhibit. In the matron’s ideal “scale of being” the pudgiest, the most orbicular, babe holds the summit place, the first adiposition, so to speak.

This is not as it should be; no true improvement in the race can be effected by encouraging our young to bury their noses in their cheeks and their knuckles under a mass of tissues overlying them like a boxing-glove. The prize winners do not become better men and women than their unsuccessful but more deserving competitors; while the latter, beginning life in the shadow of a great disappointment, retain to the end of their days a sharp sense of injustice incompatible with warm and elevated sentiments. The effect on the characters of the beaten mothers is even more deplorable. Every mother of a defeated babe is convinced that her exhibit is incomparably superior, physically, intellectually and morally, to the roly-poly impostors honored by the committee of matrons. Her wrath at the unjust decision is deep, constant and lasting; it embitters her life, sours her temper and spoils her beauty. As to the fathers, the only discernible effect upon them of either winning or losing is to make them a trifle more ashamed of their offspring than they were before “ The proud and happy father” had never the advantage of existing outside the female imagination, but if he really existed the Baby Show would be fatal to both his pride and his happiness.

In enumerating the manifold mischiefs that fly from that Pandora’s-box, the Baby Show, we are perhaps not justified in mentioning the desolating effect upon the committee of matrons whose action springs the lid. It is doubtful if the disasters which themselves incur can rightly be rated as evils in the larger sense of the word; and, anyhow, the nature of these is imperfectly known; for after making their award the unhappy arbiters commonly vanish from the busy haunts of women. The places which knew them know them no more forever, and their fate is involved in obscurities pervious only to conjecture. In view of this regrettable but apparently inevitable fact, it is desirable (if the Baby Show cannot be averted) that the lady judges be selected early, in order that our citizens may bestow upon them before they are taken from us some suitable testimonial of public esteem and gratitude, attesting the popular sense of their heroism in accepting the fatal distinction.

CERTAIN AREAS OF OUR SEAMY SIDE

THE thrifty person who attends, uninvited, a wedding reception and, retiring early from the festivities, leaves the unhappy couple poorer by a few unconsidered trifles of jewelry has a just claim to the gratitude of mankind. The interests of justice demand his immunity from detection: the officer who shall molest him is *hostis humani generis.* Neither grave rebuke nor ridicule has sufficed to overcome and stamp out the vulgar custom of ostentatiously displaying wedding presents, with names of givers attached; perhaps it will yield to the silent suasion of the sneak-thief. To healthy and honest understandings — that is to say, to the understandings of this present writer and those who have the intelligence to think as he does — it is but faintly conceivable how self-respecting persons can do this thing. Display of any kind is necessarily repugnant to those tastes which distinguish the well-bred from those whose worth is of another sort. Among the latter we are compelled (reluctantly) to reckon those amiable beings who display coats-of-arms, crests and the like, whether they are theirs by inheritance, purchase or invention; those, we mean, who blazon them about in conspicuous places for the obvious purpose of declaring with emphasis whatever merits and advantages may inhere in their possession. In this class, also, we must place the excellent ladies and gentlemen who “boast” their descent from illustrious, or merely remote, ancestors. (The remoter the ancestor — that is to say, the less of his blood his descendant has — the greater that funny person’s pride in the distinction.) A person of sense would be as likely to direct attention to his own virtues as to those of his forefathers; a woman of modesty, to her own beauty or grace as to the high social position of her grandmother.

Nay, we must carry our condemnation to an even greater extreme. The man who on public occasions covers his breast with decorations, the insignia of orders, the badges of high service or of mere distinction such as results from possession of the badge, is guilty of immodesty. “Why do you not wear your Victoria Cross?” the only recipient of it who ever failed to wear it was asked. “When I wish people to know how valiant I am in battle,” was the reply, “I will tell them.”

But below this lowest deep of vanity there is a lower deep of cupidity — and something more. The custom of displaying wedding presents duly labeled with the givers’ names and publishing the list in the newspapers supplies a very “genteel” method of extortion to those who have conscientious scruples against highway robbery. That extortion is very often the conscious intent I am far from affirming; but that such is the practical effect many a reader inadequately provided with this world’s goods will pause at this point feelingly to aver. But he is a lofty soul indeed if at the next silent demand he do not stand and deliver as meekly as heretofore. Looked at how one may please, it is a bad business, not greatly superior in point of morality to that of the sneak-thief who is one of its perils, and with whose intelligent activity its existence may, one hopes, become in time altogether incompatible.

FOR BREVITY AND CLARITY

MR. GEORGE R. SIMS once “invited proposals” for a brief and convenient name for the misdemeanor known in England as “traveling in a class of railway carriage superior to that for which the defendant had taken a ticket.” It is a ludicrous fact that the offense has never had another name, nor is it quite easy to invent a better one off-hand. I should like to know what it is in Esperanto. We have in this country certain clumsy phrases which might advantageously be condensed into single words. For example, to “join in the holy bonds of Wedlock” might become to “jedlock.” The society editor would be spared much labor if he could say of the unhappy couple that they were “jedlocked,” or “lemaltared,” — the latter word meaning, of course, “led to the matrimonial altar.” Many of the ordinary reporter’s favorite expressions could be treated in the same practical fashion. The familiar “much-needed rest” would become simply “mest.”

The “devouring element” would be “delement,” and have done with it. When it is, as so very frequently it is, necessary to say that something “reflects credit” on somebody, the verb “to refledit” would serve an honorable and useful purpose. Instead of writing of a man freshly dead that he was “much esteemed by all who knew him,” we should say that he was “mestewed.” By such simple and rational devices as these the language would be notably improved, and in a newspaper report of the birth of a rich man’s child a few lines could be saved for the death of a poet.

As the words “not either” have been condensed into “neither,”

“not ever” into “never” and “no one” into “none,” why should not the negative or privative, when followed by a vowel, be always compounded in the same way? For example, “neven” for “not even,” “nin” and “nout” for “not in” and ”not out” “Nirish” for “no Irish,” and so forth. Nay, it is not necessary that a vowel follow the negative: “no Popery” could be “nopery,” “no matter,” “natter,” and “never-to-be-forgotten,” “notten,” or “netten. The principle is pregnant with possibilities.

While reforming the language I crave leave to introduce an improvement in punctuation — the snigger point, or note of cachinnation. It is written thus w and represents, as nearly as may be, a smiling mouth. It is to be appended, with the full stop, to every jocular or ironical sentence; or, without the stop, to every jocular or ironical clause of a sentence otherwise serious — thus: “Mr. Edward

Bok is the noblest work of God w.”

“Our respected and esteemed w contemporary, Mr. Slyvester Vierick, whom for his virtues we revere and for his success envy w, is going to the devil as fast as his two heels can carry him.”

“Deacon Harvey, a truly good man w, is self-made in the largest sense of the term; for although he was born great, wise and rich, the deflection of his nose is the work of his own coat-sleeve.”

To many a great writer the new point will be as useful as was the tail to his unlettered ancestor. By a single stroke of his pen at the finish, the illustrious humorist who reviews books for *The Nation* can give to his dismalist plagiarism from Mulgrub’s *Theory of Quaternions* all the charm and value of a lively personal anecdote, as he would relate it. By liberally sprinkling his literary criticism with it; Dr. Hamilton W. Mabie can give to the work a lilt and vivacity that will readily distinguish it from a riding-master’s sermon on the mount; the points will apprise his reader of a humorous intention not otherwise observable as a factor in the humorous effect. Embellished with this useful mark, even the writings of that sombre soul, Mr. John Kendrick Bangs, will have a quality that will at least prevent the parsons from reading them at the graveside as passages from the burial service.

GENIUS AS A PROVOCATION

IN his own honorable tongue Mr. Yoni Noguchi is, I dare say, a poet; in ours he is a trifle unintelligible. His English prose, too, is of a kind that one does not write if one has a choice in the matter, yet sometimes Mr. Noguchi thinks in it with clarity and point. Concerning the late Lafcadio Hearn and the little tempest that was roaring round that author's life and character, Mr. Noguchi wrote:

"It is perfectly appalling to observe in the Western countries that when one dies his friends have to rush to print his private letters, and even an unexpected person volunteers to speak as his best friend, and presumes to write his biography."

No, this is not good prose (barring the "unexpected person," which is delicious) but it is obvious truth and righteous judgment. Publication of letters not written for publication is *prima facie* evidence of moral delinquency in the offender. In doing this thing he supplies the strongest presumption against himself. The burden of proof is heavy upon him; he is to be held guilty unless he can support it with positive evidence of a difficult thing to prove — an untainted intention not related to gain, glory nor gratification of a public appetite to which there is no honorable purveyance. No evidence less valid than written permission obviously covering the particular letters published is acceptable. In all the instances that I have observed this credential is wanting. True, the scope of my observation is somewhat narrow, for I would no more read a dead man's private correspondence in a book than I would break open his desk to obtain it. From a woman related to a famous poet and critic then recently deceased I had once a request for any letters that I might have from him. The lady said that she wanted them for his biography, already in course of preparation. The letters related to literary matters only, but as the lady submitted no authorization from their writer for their publication I civilly refused and took the consequences — there were consequences. Whether or not my part of the correspondence appeared in the book I shall not know unless told.

The family of a man of genius and renown may be pretty confidently trusted to make him ridiculous in life with their clumsy tongues, and after death with their thrifty pens. I think there was never a man of genius whom all his relatives excepting his immediate offspring did not, while jealous of his fame, secretly regard as a fool. (Even the brothers of Jesus of Nazareth did not "believe on him," and to some of us who are immune to legends of the Church it is given to know that his mother was of their way of thinking.) Dumbly resenting the distinction that seems to accentuate their own obscurity, these worthies are nevertheless keen to shine by the growing light of his posthumous fame, if he have it, and to profit by it too, as are his more appreciative children and children's children, usually dullards and dolts to the thirteenth and fourteenth generation. His death is the opportunity of all. Some of them are very sure to crucify the body of him and thrust a pen into his side to show that his blood is the same as their own.

A most disagreeable instance of this most disagreeable practice is that of a son of Robert Browning, who has won literary renown and popular commendation by publishing his parents' love-letters. Doubtless he is proud of his work, but in the eyes of his sainted father, I fear, he is one of Mr. Noguchi's "unexpected persons," at least in the sense that he is not expected in Paradise. Another and more recent illustration is the book *My Soldier*, the sanguinary work of a wife. Observe with what celerity the forehanded family of Tennyson "improved the occasion" of his passing. The poor man was hardly cold before they thrust a volume of Shakspeare into his dead hand, clove it with his finger at a significant passage chosen by a domestic council, admitted a consistent ray of moonshine into the death chamber and invited the world to witness the edifying show. So the man who wrote

Sunset and evening star,

And one clear call for me was made to seem to "pass out to sea" in an impressive pose, appropriately spectacular and dramatically ridiculous.

If there is a Better Land it is where a great man can grow up from the ground like a tree, without human agency, get on without a friend, write no letters and leave no name at which himself grew pale, to point a lying anecdote or tale.

To the perils herein pointed out authors are peculiarly exposed. The world has apparently agreed that he who writes for publication shall write for nothing else. I have heard men of decent life and social repute gravely defend the thesis that the public has a *right* to all that an author has written; and as his letters are likely to be rather more interesting than those of one who works at another trade, they are held to have a value disproportionate to the mere fame of their writer. We all concede the virtue of abstention from theft of a paste jewel, but a real diamond I — that is another matter.

The people are not pigs; the author of their favorite personal letters need not have a great personal renown. If he has uttered a sufficient body of private correspondence they are willing to forgive him for their inattention to his public work. Their purveyors are even more liberal in the matter: they do not insist on an excellent epistolary style nor anything of that kind. An intimate "human document” in ailing syntax is quite as available for their purpose as one baring the heart of a grammarian. *The Filial Correspondence of George Ade* is foredoomed to as sharp a competition among dealers as *The Love Letters of Professor Harry Thurston Peck, Stylist*.

It may be thought that all this is a cry from the deep and dark of a great fear. Not so; since I became a public writer I have never engaged in a correspondence in which it has not been distinctly understood that my letters were never to be printed. Only through an impossible treachery can the public ever have the happiness and profit of reading them. As to love-letters I am clean-handed: all mine have been written in honorable payment for favors and, as Conscience is my willing witness, I never meant one word of them.

A BIVOUAC OF THE DEAD

AWAY up in the heart of the Allegheny mountains, in Pocahontas county, West Virginia, is a beautiful little valley through which flows the east fork of the Greenbrier river. At a point where the valley road intersects the old Staunton and Parkersburg turnpike, a famous thoroughfare in its day, is a post office in a farm house. The name of the place is Travelers' Repose, for it was once a tavern. Crowning some low hills within a stone's throw of the house are long lines of old Confederate fortifications, skilfully designed and so well "preserved" that an hour's work by a brigade would put them into serviceable shape for the next civil war. This place had its battle — what was called a battle in the "green and salad days" of the great rebellion. A brigade of Federal troops, the writer's regiment among them, came over Cheat mountain, fifteen miles to the westward, and, stringing its lines across the little valley, felt the enemy all day; and the enemy did a little feeling, too. There was a great cannonading, which killed about a dozen on each side; then, finding the place too strong for assault, the Fédérals called the affair a reconnaissance in force, and burying their dead withdrew to the more comfortable place whence they had come. Those dead now lie in a beautiful national cemetery at Grafton, duly registered, so far as identified, and companioned by other Federal dead gathered from the several camps and battlefields of West Virginia. The fallen soldier (the word "hero" appears to be a later invention) has such humble honors as it is possible to give.

His part in all the pomp that fills
The circuit of the Summer hills
Is that his grave is green.

True, more than a half of the green graves in the Grafton cemetery are marked "Unknown," and sometimes it occurs that one thinks of the contradiction involved in "honoring the memory" of him of whom no memory remains to honor; but the attempt seems to do no great harm to the living, even to the logical.

A few hundred yards to the rear of the old Confederate earthworks is a wooded hill. Years ago it was not wooded. Here, among the trees and in the undergrowth, are rows of shallow depressions, discoverable by removing the accumulated forest leaves. From some of them may be taken (and reverently replaced) small thin slabs of the split stone of the country, with rude and reticent inscriptions by comrades. I found only one with a date, only one with full names of man and regiment. The entire number found was eight.

In these forgotten graves rest the Confederate dead — between eighty and one hundred, as nearly as can be made out. Some fell in the “battle;” the majority died of disease. Two, only two, have apparently been disinterred for reburial at their homes. So neglected and obscure in this *campo santo* that only he upon whose farm it is — the aged postmaster of Travelers’ Repose — appears to know about it Men living within a mile have never heard of it. Yet other men must be still living who assisted to lay these Southern soldiers where they are, and could identify some of the graves. Is there a man, North or South, who would begrudge the expense of giving to these fallen brothers the tribute of green graves? One would rather not think so. True, there are several hundreds of such places still discoverable in the track of the great war. All the stronger is the dumb demand — the silent plea of these fallen brothers to what is “likest God within the soul.”

They were honest and courageous foemen, having little in common with the political madmen who persuaded them to their doom and the literary bearers of false witness in the aftertime. They did not live through the period of honorable strife into the period of vilification — did not pass from the iron age to the brazen — from the era of the sword to that of the tongue and pen. Among them is no member of the Southern Historical Society. Their valor was not the fury of the non-combatant; they have no voice in the thunder of the civilians and the shouting. Not by them are impaired the dignity and infinite pathos of the Lost Cause. Give them, these blameless gentlemen, their rightful part in all the pomp that fills the circuit of the summer hills.

1903.

THE BATTLE OF NASHVILLE

An Attack of General Debility

First published in the *Wasp* (San Francisco), July 14, 1883.

A line in last Tuesday's dispatches, to the effect that a French colony in Senegal has been attacked by typhus fever, recalls an incident of the civil war. After the battle of Nashville I happened to be serving on the staff of the illustrious General Sam Beatty, of Ohio. His command was at one time greatly scattered in pursuit of the enemy, who retired sullenly, and one brigade of it held a peculiarly exposed position some ten miles from General Sam's headquarters. There was a telegraph, however, and one day the commander of this brigade sent the general a dispatch which read thus: "Please relieve me; I am suffering from an attack of General Debility." "The ablest cavalry officer in the Confederate army," said my honored chief, showing me the telegram. "I served under him in Mexico." And he promptly prescribed three regiments of infantry and a battery of Rodman guns.

I was directed to pilot that expedition to the scene of the disaster to our arms. I never felt so brave in all my life. I rode a hundred yards in advance, prepared to expostulate single-handed with the victorious enemy at whatever point I might encounter him. I dashed forward through every open space into every suspicious looking wood and spurred to the crest of every hill, exposing myself recklessly to draw the Confederates' fire and disclose their position. I told the commander of the relief column that he need not throw out any advance guard as a precaution against an ambuscade — I would myself act in that perilous capacity, and by driving in the rebel skirmishers gain time for him to form his line of battle in case I should not be numerically strong enough to scoop up the entire opposition at one wild dash. I begged him, however, to recover my body if I fell.

There was no fighting: the forces of General Debility had conquered nobody but the brigade commander — his troops were holding their ground nobly, reading dime novels and playing draw poker pending the arrival of our succoring command. The official reports of this affair explained, a little obscurely, that there had been a misunderstanding; but my unusual gallantry elicited the highest commendation in general orders, and will never, I trust, be forgotten by a grateful country.

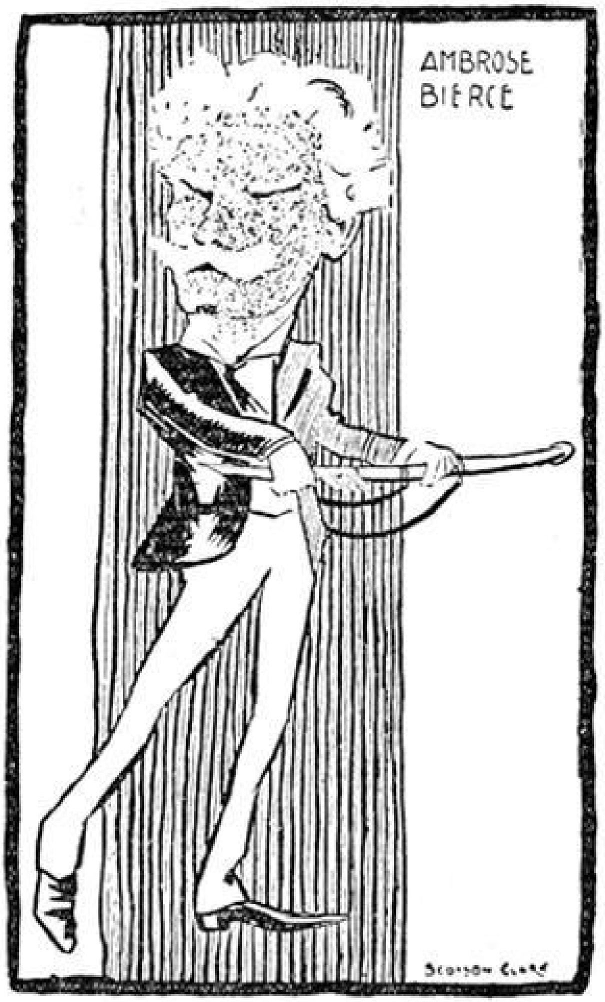
ON BLACK SOLDIERING

First published in the *San Francisco Examiner,* June 5, 1898.

A skeptical correspondent asks me for an opinion of the fighting qualities of our colored regiments. Really I had thought the question settled long ago. The Negro will fight and fight well. From the time when we began to use him in civil war, through all his service against Indians on the frontier, to this day he has not failed to acquit himself acceptable to his White officers. I the more cheerfully testify to this because I was at one time a doubter. Under a general order from the headquarters of the Army, or possibly from the War Department, I once in a burst of ambition applied for rank as a field officer of colored troops, being then a line officer of white troops. Before my application was acted on I had repented and persuaded myself that the darkies would not fight; so when ordered to report to the proper board of officers, with a view to gratification of my wish, I “backed out” and secured “influence” which enabled me to remain in my humbler station. But at the battle of Nashville it was borne in upon me that I had made a fool of myself. During the two days of that memorable engagement the only reverse sustained by our arms was in an assault upon Overton Hill, a fortified salient of the Confederate line on the second day. The troops repulsed were a brigade of Beatty’s division and a colored brigade of raw troops which had been brought up from a camp of instruction at Chattanooga. I was serving on Gen. Beatty’s staff, but was not doing duty that day, being disabled by a wound — just sitting in the saddle and looking on. Seeing the darkies going in on our left I was naturally interested and observed them closely. Better fighting was never done. The front of the enemy’s earthworks was protected by an intricate abatis of felled trees denuded of their foliage and twigs. Through this obstacle a cat would have made slow progress; its passage by troops under fire was hopeless from the first — even the inexperienced black chaps must have known that. They did not hesitate a moment: their long lines swept into that fatal obstruction in perfect order and remained there as long as those of the white veterans on their right. And as many of them in proportion remained until borne away and buried after the action. It was as pretty an example of courage and discipline as one could wish to see. In order that my discomfiture and humiliation might lack nothing of completeness I was told afterward that one of their field officers succeeded in forcing his horse through a break in the abatis and was shot to rags on the slope on the parapet.

But for my abjuration of faith in the Negroes’ fighting qualities I might perhaps have been so fortunate as to be that man!

The Essays


AMBROSE BIERCE
SCOTSON CLARK

A caricature of Bierce from a London periodical

LIST OF ESSAYS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

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The Letters

Bierce, c. 1895

THE LETTERS OF AMBROSE BIERCE

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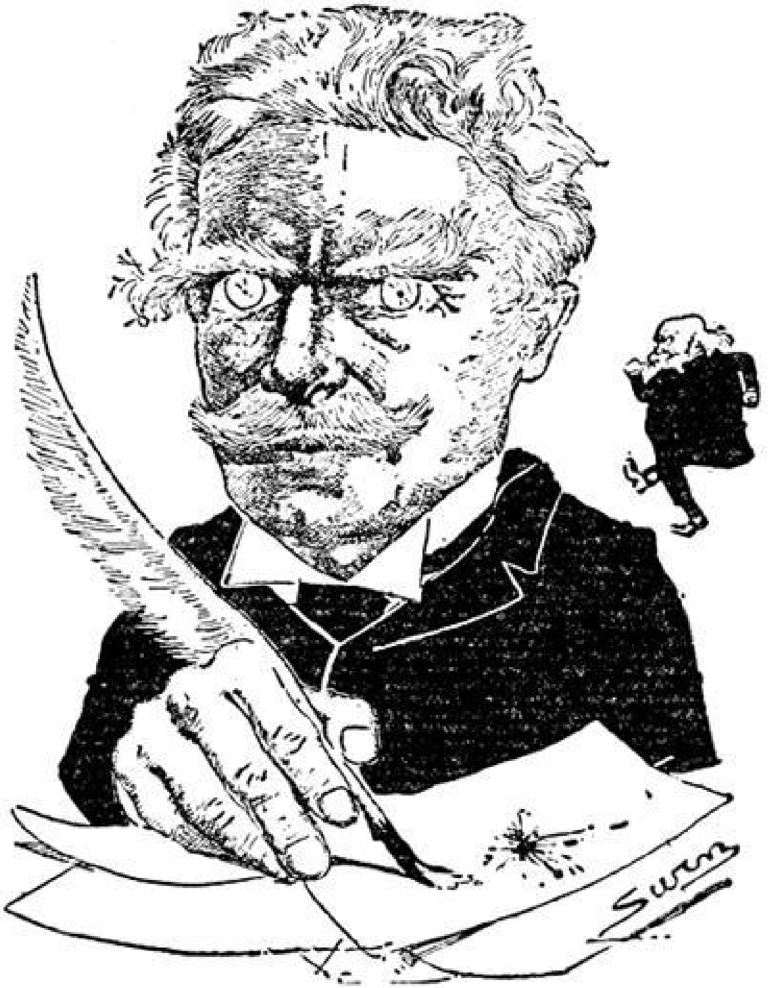

Swinnerton’s conception of Bierce

INTRODUCTION by Bertha Clark Pope

"The question that starts to the lips of ninety-nine readers out of a hundred," says Arnold Bennett, in a review in the London *New Age* in 1909, "even the best informed, will assuredly be: 'Who is Ambrose Bierce?' I scarcely know, but I will say that among what I may term 'underground reputations' that of Ambrose Bierce is perhaps the most striking example. You may wander for years through literary circles and never meet anybody who has heard of Ambrose Bierce, and then you may hear some erudite student whisper in an awed voice: 'Ambrose Bierce is the greatest living prose writer.' I have heard such an opinion expressed."

Bierce himself shows his recognition of the "underground" quality of his reputation in a letter to George Sterling: "How many times, and during a period of how many years must one's unexplainable obscurity be pointed out to constitute fame? Not knowing, I am almost disposed to consider myself the most famous of authors. I have pretty nearly ceased to be 'discovered,' but my notoriety as an obscurian may be said to be worldwide and everlasting."

Anything which would throw light on such a figure, at once obscure and famous, is valuable. These letters of Ambrose Bierce, here printed for the first time, are therefore of unusual interest. They are the informal literary work — the term is used advisedly — of a man esteemed great by a small but acutely critical group, read enthusiastically by a somewhat larger number to whom critical examination of what they read seldom occurs, and ignored by the vast majority of readers; a man at once more hated and more adored than any on the Pacific Coast; a man not ten years off the scene yet already become a tradition and a legend; whose life, no less than his death, held elements of mystery, baffling contradictions, problems for puzzled conjecture, motives and meanings not vouchsafed to outsiders.

Were Ambrose Bierce as well known as he deserves to be, the introduction to these letters could be slight; we should not have to stop to inquire who he was and what he did. As it is, we must.

Ambrose Bierce, the son of Marcus Aurelius and Laura (Sherwood) Bierce, born in Meiggs County, Ohio, June 24, 1842, was at the outbreak of the Civil War a youth without formal education, but with a mind already trained. "My father was a poor farmer," he once said to a friend, "and could give me no general education, but he had a good library, and to his books I owe all that I have." He promptly volunteered in 1861 and served throughout the war. Twice, at the risk of his life, he rescued wounded companions from the battlefield, and at Kenesaw Mountain was himself severely wounded in the head. He was brevetted Major for distinguished services; but in after life never permitted the title to be used in addressing him. There is a story that when the war was over he tossed up a coin to determine what should be his career. Whatever the determining auguries, he came at once to San Francisco to join his favorite brother Albert — there were ten brothers and sisters to choose from — and for a short time worked with him in the Mint; he soon began writing paragraphs for the weeklies, particularly the *ARGONAUT* and the *NEWS LETTER*.

"I was a slovenly writer in those days," he observes in a letter forty years later, "though enough better than my neighbors to have attracted my own attention. My knowledge of English was imperfect 'a whole lot.' Indeed, my intellectual status (whatever it may be, and God knows it's enough to make me blush) was of slow growth — as was my moral. I mean, I had not literary sincerity." Apparently, attention other than his own was attracted, for he was presently editing the *NEWS LETTER*.

In 1872 he went to London and for four years was on the staff of *FUN*. In London Bierce found congenial and stimulating associates. The great man of his circle was George Augustus Sala, "one of the most skilful, finished journalists ever known," a keen satiric wit, and the author of a ballad of which it is said that Swift might have been proud. Another notable figure was Tom Hood the younger, mordantly humorous. The satiric style in journalism was popular then; and "personal" journals were so personal that one "Jimmy" Davis, editor of the *CUCKOO* and the *BAT* successively, found it healthful to remain some years in exile in France. Bierce contributed to several of these and to *FIGARO*, the editor of which was James Mortimer. To this gentleman Bierce owed what he designated as the distinction of being "probably the only American journalist who was ever employed by an Empress in so congenial a pursuit as the pursuit of another journalist." This other journalist was M. Henri Rochefort, communard, formerly editor of *LA LANTERNE* in Paris, in which he had made incessant war upon the Empire and all its personnel, particularly the Empress. When, an exile, Rochefort announced his intention of renewing *LA LANTERNE* in London, the exiled Empress circumvented him by secretly copyrighting the title, *THE LANTERN*, and proceeding to publish a periodical under that name with the purpose of undermining his influence. Two numbers were enough; M. Rochefort fled to Belgium. Bierce said that in "the field of chromatic journalism" it was the finest thing that ever came from a press, but of the literary excellence of the twelve pages he felt less qualified for judgment as he had written every line.

This was in 1874. Two years earlier, under his journalistic pseudonym of “Dod Grile,” he had published his first books — two small volumes, largely made up of his articles in the San Francisco *NEWS LETTER*, called The Fiend’s Delight, *and* Nuggets And Dust Panned Out In California. Now, he used the same pseudonym on the title-page of a third volume, *Cobwebs from an Empty Skull*. The *Cobwebs* were selections from his work in *FUN* — satirical tales and fables, often inspired by weird old woodcuts given him by the editors with the request that he write something to fit. His journalistic associates praised these volumes liberally, and a more distinguished admirer was Gladstone, who, discovering the *Cobwebs* in a second-hand bookshop, voiced his delight in their cleverness, and by his praise gave a certain currency to Bierce’s name among the London elect. But despite so distinguished a sponsor, the books remained generally unknown.

Congenial tasks and association with the brilliant journalists of the day did not prevent Bierce from being undeniably hard up at times. In 1876 he returned to San Francisco, where he remained for twenty-one years, save for a brief but eventful career as general manager of a mining company near Deadwood, South Dakota. All this time he got his living by writing special articles — for the *WASP*, a weekly whose general temper may be accurately surmised from its name, and, beginning in 1886, for the *EXAMINER*, in which he conducted every Sunday on the editorial page a department to which he gave the title he had used for a similar column in *THE LANTERN* — *Prattle*. A partial explanation of a mode of feeling and a choice of themes which Bierce developed more and more, ultimately to the practical exclusion of all others, is to be found in the particular phase through which California journalism was just then passing.

In the evolution of the comic spirit the lowest stage, that of delight in inflicting pain on others, is clearly manifest in savages, small boys, and early American journalism. It was exhibited in all parts of America — Mark Twain gives a vivid example in his *Journalistic Wild Oats* of what it was in Tennessee — but with particular intensity in San Francisco. As a community, San Francisco exalted personal courage, directness of encounter, straight and effective shooting. The social group was so small and so homogeneous that any news of importance would be well known before it could be reported, set up in type, printed, and circulated. It was isolated by so great distances from the rest of the world that for years no pretense was made of furnishing adequate news from the outside. So the newspapers came to rely on other sorts of interest. They were pamphlets for the dissemination of the opinions of the groups controlling them, and weapons for doing battle, if need be, for those opinions. And there was abundant occasion: municipal affairs were corrupt, courts weak or venal, or both. Editors and readers enjoyed a good fight; they also wanted humorous entertainment; they happily combined the two. In the creative dawn of 1847 when the foundations of the journalistic earth were laid and those two morning stars, the *CALIFORNIAN* of Monterey and the *CALIFORNIA STAR* of San Francisco, sang together, we find the editors attacking the community generally, and each other particularly, with the utmost ferocity, laying about them right and left with verbal broad-axes, crow-bars, and such other weapons as might be immediately at hand. The CALIFORNIA STAR'S introduction to the public of what would, in our less direct day, be known as its "esteemed contemporary" is typical:

"We have received two late numbers of the *CALIFORNIAN*, a dim, dirty little paper printed in Monterey on the worn-out materials of one of the old California *WAR PRESSES*. It is published and edited by Walter Colton and Robert Semple, the one a *WHINING SYCOPHANT*, and the other an OVER-GROWN LICK-SPITTLE. At the top of one of the papers we find the words 'please exchange.' This would be considered in almost any other country a bare-faced attempt to swindle us. We should consider it so now were it not for the peculiar situation of our country which induces us to do a great deal for others in order for them to do us a little good.... We have concluded to give our paper to them this year, so as to afford them some insight into the manner in which a Republican newspaper should be conducted. They appear now to be awfully verdant."

Down through the seventies and eighties the tradition persisted, newspapers being bought and read, as a historian of journalism asserts, not so much for news as to see who was getting "lambasted" that day. It is not strange, then, that journals of redoubtable pugnacity were popular, or that editors favored writers who were likely to excel in the gladiatorial style. It is significant that public praise first came to Bierce through his articles in the caustic *NEWS LETTER*, widely read on the Pacific Coast during the seventies. Once launched in this line, he became locally famous for his fierce and witty articles in the *ARGONAUNT* and the *WASP*, and for many years his column *Prattle* in the *EXAMINER* was, in the words of Mr. Bailey Millard, "the most wickedly clever, the most audaciously personal, and the most eagerly devoured column of *causerie* that ever was printed in this country."

In 1896 Bierce was sent to Washington to fight, through the Hearst newspapers, the "refunding bill" which Collis P. Huntington was trying to get passed, releasing his Central Pacific Railroad from its obligations to the government. A year later he went again to Washington, where he remained during the rest of his journalistic career, as correspondent for the New York *AMERICAN*, conducting also for some years a department in the *COSMOPOLITAN*.

Much of Bierce's best work was done in those years in San Francisco. Through the columns of the *WASP* and the *EXAMINER* his wit played free; he wielded an extraordinary influence; his trenchant criticism made and unmade reputations — literary and otherwise. But this to Bierce was mostly "journalism, a thing so low that it cannot be mentioned in the same breath with literature." His real interest lay elsewhere. Throughout the early eighties he devoted himself to writing stories; all were rejected by the magazine editors to whom he offered them. When finally in 1890 he gathered these stories together into book form and offered them to the leading publishers of the country, they too, would have none of them. "These men," writes Mr. Bailey Millard, "admitted the purity of his diction and the magic of his haunting power, but the stories were regarded as revolting."

At last, in 1891, his first book of stories, *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians,* saw the reluctant light of day. It had this for foreword:

"Denied existence by the chief publishing houses of the country, this book owes itself to Mr. E. L. G. Steele, merchant, of this city, *[San Francisco]*. In attesting Mr. Steele's faith in his judgment and his friend, it will serve its author's main and best ambition."

There is Biercean pugnacity in these words; the author flings down the gauntlet with a confident gesture. But it cannot be said that anything much happened to discomfit the publishing houses of little faith. Apparently, Bierce had thought to appeal past the dull and unjust verdict of such lower courts to the higher tribunal of the critics and possibly an elect group of general readers who might be expected to recognize and welcome something rare. But judgment was scarcely reversed. Only a few critics were discerning, and the book had no vogue. When The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter was published by F. J. Schulte and Company, Chicago, the next year, and *Can Such Things Be* by The Cassell Publishing Company, the year following, a few enthusiastic critics could find no words strong enough to describe Bierce's vivid imagination, his uncanny divination of atavistic terrors in man's consciousness, his chiseled perfection of style; but the critics who disapproved had even more trouble in finding words strong enough for their purposes and, as before, there was no general appreciation.

For the next twenty years Ambrose Bierce was a prolific writer but, whatever the reason, no further volumes of stories from his pen were presented to the world. *Black Beetles in Amber*, a collection of satiric verse, had appeared the same year as The Monk and the Hangman’s Daughter; then for seven years, with the exception of a republication by G. P. Putnam’s Sons of *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians* under the title, *In the Midst of Life*, no books by Bierce. In 1899 appeared *Fantastic Fables*; in 1903 *Shapes of Clay*, more satiric verse; in 1906 The Cynic’s Word Book, a dictionary of wicked epigrams; in 1909 *Write it Right*, a blacklist of literary faults, and *The Shadow on the Dial*, a collection of essays covering, to quote from the preface of S. O. Howes, “a wide range of subjects, embracing among other things, government, dreams, writers of dialect and dogs” — Mr. Howes might have heightened his crescendo by adding “emancipated woman”; and finally — 1909 to 1912 — *The Collected Works of Ambrose Bierce*, containing all his work previously published in book form, save the two last mentioned, and much more besides, all collected and edited by Bierce himself.

On October 2, 1913, Ambrose Bierce, having settled his business affairs, left Washington for a trip through the southern states, declaring in letters his purpose of going into Mexico and later on to South America. The fullest account of his trip and his plans is afforded by a newspaper clipping he sent his niece in a letter dated November 6, 1913; through the commonplaceness of the reportorial vocabulary shines out the vivid personality that was making its final exit:

“Traveling over the same ground that he had covered with General Hazen’s brigade during the Civil War, Ambrose Bierce, famed writer and noted critic, has arrived in New Orleans. Not that this city was one of the places figuring in his campaigns, for he was here after and not during the war. He has come to New Orleans in a haphazard, fancy-free way, making a trip toward Mexico. The places that he has visited on the way down have become famous in song and story — places where the greatest battles were fought, where the moon shone at night on the burial corps, and where in day the sun shone bright on polished bayonets and the smoke drifted upward from the cannon mouths.

“For Mr. Bierce was at Chickamauga; he was at Shiloh; at Murfreesboro; Kenesaw Mountain, Franklin and Nashville. And then when wounded during the Atlanta campaign he was invalided home. He ‘has never amounted to much since then,’ he said Saturday. But his stories of the great struggle, living as deathless characterizations of the bloody episodes, stand for what he ‘has amounted to since then.’

“Perhaps it was in mourning for the dead over whose battlefields he has been wending his way toward New Orleans that Mr. Bierce was dressed in black. From head to foot he was attired in this color, except where the white cuffs and collar and shirt front showed through. He even carried a walking cane, black as ebony and unrelieved by gold or silver. But his eyes, blue and piercing as when they strove to see through the smoke at Chickamauga, retained all the fire of the indomitable fighter.

"'I'm on my way to Mexico, because I like the game,' he said, 'I like the fighting; I want to see it. And then I don't think Americans are as oppressed there as they say they are, and I want to get at the true facts of the case. Of course, I'm not going into the country if I find it unsafe for Americans to be there, but I want to take a trip diagonally across from northeast to southwest by horseback, and then take ship for South America, go over the Andes and across that continent, if possible, and come back to America again.

"'There is no family that I have to take care of; I've retired from writing and I'm going to take a rest. No, my trip isn't for local color. I've retired just the same as a merchant or business man retires. I'm leaving the field for the younger authors.'

"An inquisitive question was interjected as to whether Mr. Bierce had acquired a competency only from his writings, but he did not take offense.

"'My wants are few, and modest,' he said, 'and my royalties give me quite enough to live on. There isn't much that I need, and I spend my time in quiet travel. For the last five years I haven't done any writing. Don't you think that after a man has worked as long as I have that he deserves a rest? But perhaps after I have rested I might work some more — I can't tell, there are so many things—' and the straightforward blue eyes took on a faraway look, 'there are so many things that might happen between now and when I come back. My trip might take several years, and I'm an old man now.'

"Except for the thick, snow-white hair no one would think him old. His hands are steady, and he stands up straight and tall — perhaps six feet."

In December of that same year the last letter he is known to have written was received by his daughter. It is dated from Chihuahua, and mentions casually that he has attached himself unofficially to a division of Villa's army, and speaks of a prospective advance on Ojinaga. No further word has ever come from or of Ambrose Bierce. Whether illness overtook him, then an old man of seventy-one, and death suddenly, or whether, preferring to go foaming over a precipice rather than to straggle out in sandy deltas, he deliberately went where he knew death was, no one can say. His last letters, dauntless, grave, tender, do not say, though they suggest much. "You must try to forgive my obstinacy in not 'perishing' where I am," he wrote as he left Washington. "I want to be where something worth while is going on, or where nothing whatever is going on." "Good-bye — if you hear of my being stood up against a Mexican stone wall and shot to rags please know that I think that a pretty good way to depart this life. It beats old age, disease, or falling down the cellar stairs. To be a Gringo in Mexico — ah, that is euthanasia!” Whatever end Ambrose Bierce found in Mexico, the lines of George Sterling well express what must have been his attitude in meeting it:

“Dream you he was afraid to live?
Dream you he was afraid to die?
Or that, a suppliant of the sky,
He begged the gods to keep or give?
Not thus the shadow-maker stood,
Whose scrutiny dissolved so well
Our thin mirage of Heaven or Hell —
The doubtful evil, dubious good....

“If now his name be with the dead,
And where the gaunt agaves flow’r,
The vulture and the wolf devour
The lion-heart, the lion-head,
Be sure that heart and head were laid
In wisdom down, content to die;
Be sure he faced the Starless Sky
Unduped, unmurmuring, unafraid.”

In any consideration of the work of Ambrose Bierce, a central question must be why it contains so much that is trivial or ephemeral. Another question facing every critic of Bierce, is why the fundamentally original point of view, the clarity of workmanship of his best things — mainly stories — did not win him immediate and general recognition.

A partial answer to both questions is to be found in a certain discord between Bierce and his setting. Bierce, paradoxically, combined the bizarre in substance, the severely restrained and compressed in form. An ironic mask covered a deep-seated sensibility; but sensibility and irony were alike subject to an uncompromising truthfulness; he would have given deep-throated acclaim to Clough’s

“But play no tricks upon thy soul, O man,
Let truth be truth, and life the thing it can.”

He had the aristocrat’s contempt for mass feeling, a selectiveness carried so far that he instinctively chose for themes the picked person and experience, the one decisive moment of crisis. He viewed his characters not in relation to other men and in normal activities; he isolated them — often amid abnormalities.

All this was in sharp contrast to the literary fashion obtaining when he dipped his pen to try his luck as a creative artist. The most popular novelist of the day was Dickens; the most popular poet, Tennyson. Neither looked straight at life; both veiled it: one in benevolence, the other in beauty. Direct and painful verities were best tolerated by the reading public when exhibited as instances of the workings of natural law. The spectator of the macrocosm in action could stomach the wanton destruction of a given human atom; one so privileged could and did excuse the Creator for small mistakes like harrying Hetty Sorrell to the gallow’s foot, because of the conviction that, taking the Universe by and large, “He was a good fellow, and ‘twould all be well.” This benevolent optimism was the offspring of a strange pair, evangelicism and evolution; and in the minds of the great public whom Bierce, under other circumstances and with a slightly different mixture of qualities in himself, might have conquered, it became a large, soft insincerity that demanded “happy endings,” a profuse broadness of treatment prohibitive of harsh simplicity, a swathing of elemental emotion in gentility or moral edification.

But to Bierce’s mind, “noble and nude and antique,” this mid-Victorian draping and bedecking of “unpleasant truths” was abhorrent. Absolutely direct and unafraid — not only in his personal relations but, what is more rare, in his thinking — he regarded easy optimism, sure that God is in his heaven with consequently good effects upon the world, as blindness, and the hopefulness that demanded always the “happy ending,” as silly. In many significant passages Bierce’s attitude is the ironic one of Voltaire: “‘Had not Pangloss got himself hanged,’ replied Candide, ‘he would have given us most excellent advice in this emergency; for he was a profound philosopher.’” Bierce did not fear to bring in disconcerting evidence that *a priori* reasoning may prove a not infallible guide, that causes do not always produce the effects complacently pre-argued, and that the notion of this as the best of all possible worlds is sometimes beside the point.

The themes permitted by such an attitude were certain to displease the readers of that period. In *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*, his first book of stories, he looks squarely and grimly at one much bedecked subject of the time — war; not the fine gay gallantry of war, the music and the marching and the romantic episodes; but the ghastly horror of it; through his vivid, dramatic passages beats a hatred of war, not merely “unrighteous” war, but all war, the more disquieting because never allowed to become articulate. With bitter but beautiful truth he brings each tale to its tragic close, always with one last turn of the screw, one unexpected horror more. And in this book — note the solemn implication of the title he later gave it, *In the Midst of Life* — as well as in the next, *Can Such*

Things Be, is still another subject which Bierce alone in his generation seemed unafraid to consider curiously: “Death, in warfare and in the horrid guise of the supernatural, was painted over and over. Man’s terror in the face of death gave the artist his cue for his wonderful physical and psychologic microscopics. You could not pin this work down as realism, or as romance; it was the greatest human drama — the conflict between life and death — fused through genius. Not Zola, in the endless pages of his *Debâcle*, not the great Tolstoi in his great *War and Peace* had ever painted war, horrid war, more faithfully than any of the stories of this book; not Maupassant had invented out of war’s terrible truths more dramatically imagined plots.... There painted an artist who had seen the thing itself, and being a genius, had made it an art still greater.

Death of the young, the beautiful, the brave, was the closing note of every line of the ten stories of war in this book. The brilliant, spectacular death that came to such senseless bravery as Tennyson hymned for the music-hall intelligence in his *Charge of the Light Brigade*; the vision-starting, slow, soul-drugging death by hanging; the multiplied, comprehensible death that makes rivers near battlefields run red; the death that comes by sheer terror; death actual and imagined — every sort of death was on these pages, so painted as to make Pierre Loti’s *Book of Pity and Death* seem but feeble fumbling.”

Now death by the mid-Victorian was considered almost as undesirable an element in society as sex itself. Both must be passed over in silence or presented decently draped. In the eighties any writer who dealt unabashed with death was regarded as an unpleasant person. “Revolting!” cried the critics when they read Bierce’s *Chickamauga* and The Affair at Coulter’s Notch.

Bierce’s style, too, by its very fineness, alienated his public. Superior, keen, perfect in detail, finite, compressed — such was his manner in the free and easy, prolix, rambling, multitudinous nineteenth century.

Bierce himself knew that although it is always the fashion to jeer at fashion, its rule is absolute for all that, whether it be fashion in boots or books.

“A correspondent of mine,” he wrote in 1887 in his *EXAMINER* column, “a well-known and clever writer, appears surprised because I do not like the work of Robert Louis Stevenson. I am equally hurt to know that he does. If he was ever a boy he knows that the year is divided, not into seasons and months, as is vulgarly supposed, but into ‘top time,’ ‘marble time,’ ‘kite time,’ et cetera, and woe to the boy who ignores the unwritten calendar, amusing himself according to the dictates of an irresponsible conscience. I venture to remind my correspondent that a somewhat similar system obtains in matters of literature — a word which I beg him to observe means fiction. There are, for illustration — or rather, there were — James time, Howells time, Crawford time, Russell time and

Conway time, each epoch — named for the immortal novelist of the time being — lasting, generally speaking, as much as a year.... All the more rigorous is the law of observance. It is not permitted to admire Jones in Smith time. I must point out to my heedless correspondent that this is not Stevenson time — that was last year.” It was decidedly not Bierce time when Bierce’s stories appeared.

And there was in him no compromise — or so he thought. “A great artist,” he wrote to George Sterling, “is superior to his world and his time, or at least to his parish and his day.” His practical application of that belief is shown in a letter to a magazine editor who had just rejected a satire he had submitted:

“Even *you* ask for literature — if my stories are literature, as you are good enough to imply. (By the way, all the leading publishers of the country turned down that book until they saw it published without them by a merchant in San Francisco and another sort of publishers in London, Leipsig and Paris.) Well, you wouldn’t do a thing to one of my stories!

“No, thank you; if I have to write rot, I prefer to do it for the newspapers, which make no false pretenses and are frankly rotten, and in which the badness of a bad thing escapes detection or is forgotten as soon as it is cold.

“I know how to write a story (of ‘happy ending’ sort) for magazine readers for whom literature is too good, but I will not do so, so long as stealing is more honorable and interesting. I have offered you ... the best that I am able to make; and now you must excuse me.” In these two utterances we have some clue to the secret of his having ceased, in 1893, to publish stories. Vigorously refusing to yield in the slightest degree to the public so far as his stories were concerned, he abandoned his best field of creative effort and became almost exclusively a “columnist” and a satirist; he put his world to rout, and left his “parish and his day” resplendently the victors.

All this must not be taken to mean that the “form and pressure of the time” put into Bierce what was not there. Even in his creative work he had a satiric bent; his early training and associations, too, had been in journalistic satire. Under any circumstances he undoubtedly would have written satire — columns of it for his daily bread, books of it for self-expression; but under more favorable circumstances he would have kept on writing other sort of books as well. Lovers of literature may well lament that Bierce’s insistence on going his way and the demands of his “parish” forced him to overdevelop one power to the almost complete paralysis of another and a perhaps finer.

As a satirist Bierce was the best America has produced, perhaps the best since Voltaire. But when he confined himself to “exploring the ways of hate as a form of creative energy,” it was with a hurt in his soul, and with some intellectual and spiritual confusion. There resulted a kink in his nature, a contradiction that appears repeatedly, not only in his life, but in his writings. A striking instance is found in his article *To Train a Writer*:

"He should, for example, forget that he is an American and remember that he is a man. He should be neither Christian nor Jew, nor Buddhist, nor Mahometan, nor Snake Worshiper. To local standards of right and wrong he should be civilly indifferent. In the virtues, so-called, he should discern only the rough notes of a general expediency; in fixed moral principles only time-saving predecisions of cases not yet before the court of conscience. Happiness should disclose itself to his enlarging intelligence as the end and purpose of life; art and love as the only means to happiness. He should free himself of all doctrines, theories, etiquettes, politics, simplifying his life and mind, attaining clarity with breadth and unity with height. To him a continent should not seem wide nor a century long. And it would be needful that he know and have an ever-present consciousness that this is a world of fools and rogues, blind with superstition, tormented with envy, consumed with vanity, selfish, false, cruel, cursed with illusions — frothing mad!"

Up to that last sentence Ambrose Bierce beholds this world as one where tolerance, breadth of view, simplicity of life and mind, clear thinking, are at most attainable, at least worthy of the effort to attain; he regards life as purposive, as having happiness for its end, and art and love as the means to that good end. But suddenly the string from which he has been evoking these broad harmonies snaps with a snarl. All is evil and hopeless—"frothing mad." Both views cannot be held simultaneously by the same mind. Which was the real belief of Ambrose Bierce? The former, it seems clear. But he has been hired to be a satirist.

On the original fabric of Bierce's mind the satiric strand has encroached more than the design allows. There results not only considerable obliteration of the main design, but confusion in the substituted one. For it is significant that much of the work of Bierce seems to be that of what he would have called a futilitarian, that he seldom seems able to find a suitable field for his satire, a foeman worthy of such perfect steel as he brings to the encounter; he fights on all fields, on both sides, against all comers; ubiquitous, indiscriminate, he is as one who screams in pain at his own futility, one who "might be heard," as he says of our civilization, "from afar in space as a scolding and a riot." That Bierce would have spent so much of his superb power on the trivial and the ephemeral, breaking magnificent vials of wrath on Oakland nobodies, preserving insignificant black beetles in the amber of his art, is not merely, as it has long been, cause of amazement to the critics; it is cause of laughter to the gods, and of weeping among Bierce's true admirers.

Some may argue that Bierce’s failure to attain international or even national fame cannot be ascribed solely to a lack of concord between the man and his time and to the consequent reaction in him. It is true that in Bierce’s work is a sort of paucity — not a mere lack of printed pages, but of the fulness of creative activity that makes Byron, for example, though vulgar and casual, a literary mountain peak. Bierce has but few themes, few moods; his literary river runs clear and sparkling, but confined — a narrow current, not the opulent stream that waters wide plains of thought and feeling. Nor has Bierce the power to weave individual entities and situations into a broad pattern of existence, which is the distinguishing mark of such writers as Thackeray, Balzac, and Tolstoi among the great dead, and Bennett and Wells among the lesser living. Bierce’s interest does not lie in the group experience nor even in the experience of the individual through a long period. His unit of time is the minute, not the month. It is significant that he never wrote a novel — unless The Monk and the Hangman’s Daughter be reckoned one — and that he held remarkable views of the novel as a literary form, witness this passage from *Prattle*, written in 1887:

“English novelists are not great because the English novel is dead — deader than Queen Anne at her deadest. The vein is worked out. It was a thin one and did not ‘go down.’ A single century from the time when Richardson sank the discovery shaft it had already begun to ‘pinch out.’ The miners of today have abandoned it altogether to search for ‘pockets,’ and some of the best of them are merely ‘chloriding the dumps.’ To expect another good novel in English is to expect the gold to ‘grow’ again.”

It may well be that at the bottom of this sweeping condemnation was an instinctive recognition of his own lack of constructive power on a large scale.

But an artist, like a nation, should be judged not by what he cannot do, but by what he can. That Bierce could not paint the large canvas does not make him negligible or even inconsiderable. He is by no means a second-rate writer; he is a first-rate writer who could not consistently show his first-rateness.

When he did show his first-rateness, what is it? In all his best work there is originality, a rare and precious idiosyncracy; his point of view, his themes are rich with it. Above all writers Bierce can present — brilliantly present — startling fragments of life, carved out from attendant circumstance; isolated problems of character and action; sharply bitten etchings of individual men under momentary stresses and in bizarre situations. Through his prodigious emotional perceptivity he has the power of feeling and making us feel some strange, perverse accident of fate, destructive of the individual — of making us feel it to be real and terrible. This is not an easy thing to do. De Maupassant said that men were killed every year in Paris by the falling of tiles from the roof, but if he got rid of a principal character in that way, he should be hooted at. Bierce can make us accept as valid and tragic events more odd than the one de Maupassant had to reject. “In the line of the startling, — half Poe, half Merimee — he cannot have many superiors,” says Arnold Bennett.... “A story like *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* — well, Edgar Allan Poe might have deigned to sign it. And that is something.

“He possesses a remarkable style — what Kipling’s would have been had Kipling been born with any significance of the word ‘art’ — and a quite strangely remarkable perception of beauty. There is a feeling for landscape in *A Horseman in the Sky* which recalls the exquisite opening of that indifferent novel, *Les Frères Zemganno* by Edmond de Goncourt, and which no English novelist except Thomas Hardy, and possibly Charles Marriott, could match.” The feeling for landscape which Bennett notes is but one part of a greater power — the power to make concrete and visible, action, person, place. Bierce’s descriptions of Civil War battles in his *Bits of Autobiography* are the best descriptions of battle ever written. He lays out the field with map-like clearness, marshals men and events with precision and economy, but his account never becomes exposition — it is drama. Real battles move swiftly; accounts make them seem labored and slow. What narrator save Bierce can convey the sense of their being lightly swift, and, again and again the shock of surprise the event itself must have given?

This could not be were it not for his verbal restraint. In his descriptions is no welter of adjectives and adverbs; strong exact nouns and verbs do the work, and this means that the veritable object and action are brought forward, not qualifying talk around and about them. And this, again, could not be were it not for what is, beyond all others, his greatest quality — absolute precision. “I sometimes think,” he once wrote playfully about letters of his having been misunderstood, “I sometimes think that I am the only man in the world who understands the meaning of the written word. Or the only one who does not.” A reader of Ambrose Bierce comes almost to believe that not till now has he found a writer who understands — completely — the meaning of the written word. He has the power to bring out new meanings in well-worn words, so setting them as to evoke brilliant significances never before revealed. He gives to one phrase the beauty, the compressed suggestion of a poem; his titles — *Black Beetles in Amber*, *Ashes of the Beacon*, *Cobwebs from an Empty Skull* are masterpieces in miniature. That he should have a gift of coining striking words naturally follows: in his later years he has fallen into his “anecdotage,” a certain Socialist is the greatest “futilitarian” of them all, “femininies” — and so on infinitely. Often the smaller the Biercean gem, the more exquisite the workmanship. One word has all the sparkle of an epigram.

In such skill Ambrose Bierce is not surpassed by any writer, ancient or modern; it gives him rank among the few masters who afford that highest form of intellectual delight, the immediate recognition of a clear idea perfectly set forth in fitting words — wit’s twin brother, evoking that rare joy, the sudden, secret laughter of the mind. So much for Bierce the artist; the man is found in these letters. If further clue to the real nature of Ambrose Bierce were needed it is to be found in a conversation he had in his later years with a young girl: “You must be very proud, Mr. Bierce, of all your books and your fame?” “No,” he answered rather sadly, “you will come to know that all that is worth while in life is the love you have had for a few people near to you.”

A MEMOIR OF AMBROSE BIERCE by George Sterling

Though from boyhood a lover of tales of the terrible, it was not until my twenty-second year that I heard of Ambrose Bierce, I having then been for ten months a resident of Oakland, California. But in the fall of the year 1891 my friend Roosevelt Johnson, newly arrived from our town of birth, Sag Harbor, New York, asked me if I were acquainted with his work, adding that he had been told that Bierce was the author of stories not inferior in awesomeness to the most terrible of Poe's.

We made inquiry and found that Bierce had for several years been writing columns of critical comment, satirically named *Prattle*, for the editorial page of the Sunday *EXAMINER*, of San Francisco. As my uncle, of whose household I had been for nearly a year a member, did not subscribe to that journal, I had unfortunately overlooked these weekly contributions to the wit and sanity of our western literature — an omission for which we partially consoled ourselves by subsequently reading with great eagerness each installment of *Prattle* as it appeared. But, so far as his short stories were concerned, we had to content ourselves with the assurance of a neighbor that "they'd scare an owl off a tombstone."

However, later in the autumn, while making a pilgrimage to the home of our greatly worshipped Joaquin Miller, we became acquainted with Albert, an elder brother of Bierce's, a man who was to be one of my dearest of friends to the day of his death, in March, 1914. From him we obtained much to gratify our not unnatural curiosity as to this mysterious being, who, from his isolation on a lonely mountain above the Napa Valley, scattered weekly thunderbolts on the fool, the pretender, and the knave, and cast ridicule or censure on many that sat in the seats of the mighty. For none, however socially or financially powerful, was safe from the stab of that aculeate pen, the venom of whose ink is to gleam vividly from the pages of literature for centuries yet to come.

For Bierce is of the immortals. That fact, known, I think, to him, and seeming then more and more evident to some of his admirers, has become plainly apparent to anyone who can appraise the matter with eyes that see beyond the flimsy artifices that bulk so large and so briefly in the literary arena. Bierce was a sculptor who wrought in hardest crystal.

I was not to be so fortunate as to become acquainted with him until after the publication of his first volume of short stories, entitled *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*. That mild title gives scant indication of the terrors that await the unwarned reader. I recall that I hung fascinated over the book, unable to lay it down until the last of its printed dooms had become an imperishable portion of the memory. The tales are told with a calmness and reserve that make most of Poe's seem somewhat boyish and melodramatic by comparison. The greatest of them seems to me to be *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*, though I am perennially charmed by the weird beauty of *An Inhabitant of Carcosa*, a tale of unique and unforgettable quality.

Bierce, born in Ohio in 1842, came to San Francisco soon after the close of the Civil War. It is amusing to learn that he was one of a family of eleven children, male and female, the Christian name of each of whom began with the letter "A!" Obtaining employment at first in the United States Mint, whither Albert, always his favorite brother, had preceded him, he soon gravitated to journalism, doing his first work on the San Francisco *NEWS LETTER*. His brother once told me that he (Ambrose) had from boyhood been eager to become a writer and was expectant of success at that pursuit.

Isolated from most men by the exalted and austere habit of his thought, Bierce finally suffered a corresponding exile of the body, and was forced to live in high altitudes, which of necessity are lonely. This latter banishment was on account of chronic and utterly incurable asthma, an ailment contracted in what might almost be termed a characteristic manner. Bierce had no fear of the dead folk and their marble city. From occasional strollings by night in Laurel Hill Cemetery, in San Francisco, his spirit "drank repose," and was able to attain a serenity in which the cares of daytime existence faded to nothingness. It was on one of those strolls that he elected to lie for awhile in the moonlight on a flat tombstone, and awakening late in the night, found himself thoroughly chilled, and a subsequent victim of the disease that was to cast so dark a shadow over his following years. For his sufferings from asthma were terrible, arising often to a height that required that he be put under the influence of chloroform.

So afflicted, he found visits to the lowlands a thing not to be indulged in with impunity. For many years such trips terminated invariably in a severe attack of his ailment, and he was driven back to his heights shaken and harassed. But he found such visits both necessary and pleasant on occasion, and it was during one that he made in the summer of 1892 that I first made his acquaintance, while he was temporarily a guest at his brother Albert's camp on a rocky, laurel-covered knoll on the eastern shore of Lake Temescal, a spot now crossed by the tracks of the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railway.

I am not likely to forget his first night among us. A tent being, for his ailment, insufficiently ventilated, he decided to sleep by the campfire, and I, carried away by my youthful hero-worship, must partially gratify it by occupying the side of the fire opposite to him. I had a comfortable cot in my tent, and was unaccustomed at the time to sleeping on the ground, the consequence being that I awoke at least every half-hour. But awake as often as I might, always I found Bierce lying on his back in the dim light of the embers, his gaze fixed on the stars of the zenith. I shall not forget the gaze of those eyes, the most piercingly blue, under yellow shaggy brows, that I have ever seen.

After that, I saw him at his brother’s home in Berkeley, at irregular intervals, and once paid him a visit at his own temporary home at Skylands, above Wrights, in Santa Clara County, whither he had moved from Howell Mountain, in Napa County. It was on this visit that I was emboldened to ask his opinion on certain verses of mine, the ambition to become a poet having infected me at the scandalously mature age of twenty-six. He was hospitable to my wish, and I was fortunate enough to be his pupil almost to the year of his going forth from among us. During the greater part of that time he was a resident of Washington, D. C., whither he had gone in behalf of the San Francisco *EXAMINER*, to aid in defeating (as was successfully accomplished) the Funding Bill proposed by the Southern Pacific Company. It was on this occasion that he electrified the Senate’s committee by repeatedly refusing to shake the hand of the proponent of that measure, no less formidable an individual than Collis P. Huntington.

For Bierce carried into actual practice his convictions on ethical matters. Secure in his own self-respect, and valuing his friendship or approval to a high degree, he refused to make, as he put it, “a harlot of his friendship.” Indeed, he once told me that it was his rule, on subsequently discovering the unworth of a person to whom a less fastidious friend had without previous warning introduced him, to write a letter to that person and assure him that he regarded the introduction as a mistake, and that the twain were thenceforth to “meet as strangers!” He also once informed me that he did not care to be introduced to persons whom he had criticized, or was about to criticize, in print. “I might get to like the beggar,” was his comment, “and then I’d have one less pelt in my collection.”

In his criticism of my own work, he seldom used more than suggestion, realizing, no doubt, the sensitiveness of the tyro in poetry. It has been hinted to me that he laid, as it were, a hand of ice on my youthful enthusiasms, but that, to such extent as it may be true, was, I think, a good thing for a pupil of the art, youth being apt to gush and become over-sentimental. Most poets would give much to be able to obliterate some of their earlier work, and he must have saved me a major portion of such putative embarrassment. Reviewing the manuscripts that bear his marginal counsels, I can now see that such suggestions were all "indicated," though at the time I dissented from some of them. It was one of his tenets that a critic should "keep his heart out of his head" (to use his own words), when sitting in judgment on the work of writers whom he knew and liked. But I cannot but think that he was guilty of sad violations of that rule, especially in my own case.

Bierce lived many years in Washington before making a visit to his old home. That happened in 1910, in which year he visited me at Carmel, and we afterwards camped for several weeks together with his brother and nephew, in Yosemite. I grew to know him better in those days, and he found us hospitable, in the main degree, to his view of things, socialism being the only issue on which we were not in accord. It led to many warm arguments, which, as usual, conduced nowhere but to the suspicion that truth in such matters was mainly a question of taste.

I saw him again in the summer of 1911, which he spent at Sag Harbor. We were much on the water, guests of my uncle in his power-yacht "La Mascotte II." He was a devotee of canoeing, and made many trips on the warm and shallow bays of eastern Long Island, which he seemed to prefer to the less spacious reaches of the Potomac. He revisited California in the fall of the next year, a trip on which we saw him for the last time. An excursion to the Grand Canyon was occasionally proposed, but nothing came of it, nor did he consent to be again my guest at Carmel, on the rather surprising excuse that the village contained too many anarchists! And in November, 1913, I received my last letter from him, he being then in Laredo, Texas, about to cross the border into warring Mexico.

Why he should have gone forth on so hazardous an enterprise is for the most part a matter of conjecture. It may have been in the spirit of adventure, or out of boredom, or he may not, even, have been jesting when he wrote to an intimate friend that, ashamed of having lived so long, and not caring to end his life by his own hand, he was going across the border and let the Mexicans perform for him that service. But he wrote to others that he purposed to extend his pilgrimage as far as South America, to cross the Andes, and return to New York by way of a steamer from Buenos Ayres. At any rate, we know, from letters written during the winter months, that he had unofficially attached himself to a section of Villa's army, even taking an active part in the fighting. He was heard from until the close of 1913; after that date the mist closes in upon his trail, and we are left to surmise what we may. Many rumors as to his fate have come out of Mexico, one of them even placing him in the trenches of Flanders. These rumors have been, so far as possible, investigated: all end in nothing. The only one that seems in the least degree illuminative is the tale brought by a veteran reporter from the City of Mexico, and published in the San Francisco *BULLETIN*. It is the story of a soldier in Villa's army, one of a detachment that captured, near the village of Icamole, an ammunition train of the Carranzistas. One of the prisoners was a sturdy, white-haired, ruddy-faced Gringo, who, according to the tale, went before the firing squad with an Indian muleteer, as sole companion in misfortune. The description of the manner — indifferent, even contemptuous — with which the white-haired man met his death seems so characteristic of Bierce that one would almost be inclined to give credence to the tale, impossible though it may be of verification. But the date of the tragedy being given as late in 1915, it seems incredible that Bierce could have escaped observation for so long a period, with so many persons in Mexico eager to know of his fate. It is far more likely that he met his death at the hands of a roving band of outlaws or guerrilla soldiery.

I have had often in mind the vision of his capture by such a squad, their discovery of the considerable amount of gold coin that he was known to carry on his person, and his immediate condemnation and execution as a spy in order that they might retain possession of the booty. Naturally, such proceedings would not have been reported, from fear of the necessity of sharing with those "higher up." And so the veil would have remained drawn, and impenetrable to vision. Through the efforts of the War Department, all United States Consuls were questioned as to Bierce's possible departure from the country; all Americans visiting or residing in Mexico were begged for information — even prospectors. But the story of the reporter is the sole one that seems partially credible. To such darkness did so shining and fearless a soul go forth.

It is now over eight years since that disappearance, and though the likelihood of his existence in the flesh seems faint indeed, the storm of detraction and obloquy that he always insisted would follow his demise has never broken, is not even on the horizon. Instead, he seems to be remembered with tolerance by even those whom he visited with a chastening pen. Each year of darkness but makes the star of his fame increase and brighten, but we have, I think, no full conception as yet of his greatness, no adequate realization of how wide and permanent a fame he has won. It is significant that some of the discerning admire him for one phase of his work, some for another. For instance, the clear-headed H. L. Mencken acclaims him as the first wit of America, but will have none of his tales; while others, somewhat disconcerted by the cynicism pervading much of his wit, place him among the foremost exponents of the art of the short story. Others again prefer his humor (for he was humorist as well as wit), and yet others like most the force, clarity and keen insight of his innumerable essays and briefer comments on mundane affairs. Personally, I have always regarded Poe's *Fall of the House of Usher* as our greatest tale; close to that come, in my opinion, at least a dozen of Bierce's stories, whether of the soldier or civilian. He has himself stated in *Prattle*: "I am not a poet." And yet he wrote poetry, on occasion, of a high order, his *Invocation* being one of the noblest poems in the tongue. Some of his satirical verse seems to me as terrible in its withering invective as any that has been written by classic satirists, not excepting Juvenal and Swift. Like the victims of their merciless pens, his, too, will be forgiven and forgotten. Today no one knows, nor cares, whether or not those long-dead offenders gave just offense. The grave has closed over accuser and accused, and the only thing that matters is that a great mind was permitted to function. One may smile or sigh over the satire, but one must also realize that even the satirist had his own weaknesses, and could have been as savagely attacked by a mentality as keen as his own. Men as a whole will never greatly care for satire, each recognizing, true enough, glimpses of himself in the invective, but sensing as well its fundamental bias and cruelty. However, Bierce thought best of himself as a satirist.

Naturally, Bierce carried his wit and humor into his immediate human relationships. I best recall an occasion, when, in my first year of acquaintance with him, we were both guests at the home of the painter, J. H. E. Partington. It happened that a bowl of nasturtiums adorned the center table, and having been taught by Father Tabb, the poet, to relish that flower, I managed to consume most of them before the close of the evening, knowing there were plenty more to be had in the garden outside. Someone at last remarked: "Why, George has eaten all the nasturtiums! Go out and bring some more." At which Bierce dryly and justly remarked: "No — bring some thistles!" It is an indication, however, of his real kindness of heart that, observing my confusion, he afterwards apologized to me for what he termed a thoughtless jest. It was, nevertheless, well deserved.

I recall even more distinctly a scene of another setting. This concerns itself with Bierce's son, Leigh, then a youth in the early twenties. At the time (*circa* 1894) I was a brother lodger with them in an Oakland apartment house. Young Bierce had contracted a liaison with a girl of his own age, and his father, determined to end the affair, had appointed an hour for discussion of the matter. The youth entered his father's rooms defiant and resolute: within an hour he appeared weeping, and cried out to me, waiting for him in his own room: "My father is a greater man than Christ! He has suffered more than Christ!" And the affair of the heart was promptly terminated.

One conversant with Bierce only as a controversionalist and *censor morum* was, almost of necessity, constrained to imagine him a misanthrope, a soured and cynical recluse. Only when one was privileged to see him among his intimates could one obtain glimpses of his true nature, which was considerate, generous, even affectionate. Only the waving of the red flag of Socialism could rouse in him what seemed to us others a certain savageness of intolerance. Needless to say, we did not often invoke it, for he was an ill man with whom to bandy words. It was my hope, at one time, to involve him and Jack London in a controversy on the subject, but London declined the oral encounter, preferring one with the written word. Nothing came of the plan, which is a pity, as each was a supreme exponent of his point of view. Bierce subsequently attended one of the midsummer encampments of the Bohemian Club, of which he was once the secretary, in their redwood grove near the Russian river. Hearing that London was present, he asked why they had not been mutually introduced, and I was forced to tell him that I feared that they'd be, verbally, at each other's throats, within an hour. "Nonsense!" exclaimed Bierce. "Bring him around! I'll treat him like a Dutch Uncle." He kept his word, and seemed as much attracted to London as London was to him. But I was always ill at ease when they were conversing. I do not think the two men ever met again.

Bierce was the cleanest man, personally, of whom I have knowledge — almost fanatically so, if such a thing be possible. Even during our weeks of camping in the Yosemite, he would spend two hours on his morning toilet in the privacy of his tent. His nephew always insisted that the time was devoted to shaving himself from face to foot! He was also a most modest man, and I still recall his decided objections to my bathing attire when at the swimming-pool of the Bohemian Club, in the Russian River. Compared to many of those visible, it seemed more than adequate; but he had another opinion of it. He was a good, even an eminent, tankard-man, and retained a clear judgment under any amount of potations. He preferred wine (especially a dry *vin du pays,* usually a sauterne) to "hard likker," in this respect differing in taste from his elder brother. In the days when I first made his acquaintance, I was accustomed to roam the hills beyond Oakland and Berkeley from Cordonices Creek to Leona Heights, in company with Albert Bierce, his son Carlton, R. L. ("Dick") Partington, Leigh Bierce (Ambrose's surviving son) and other youths. On such occasions I sometimes hid a superfluous bottle of port or sherry in a convenient spot, and Bierce, afterwards accompanying us on several such outings, pretended to believe that I had such flagons concealed under each bush or rock in the reach and breadth of the hills, and would, to carry out the jest, hunt zealously in such recesses. I could wish that he were less often unsuccessful in the search, now that he has had "the coal-black wine" to drink.

Though an appreciable portion of his satire hints at misanthropy, Bierce, while profoundly a pessimist, was, by his own confession to me, “a lover of his country and his fellowmen,” and was ever ready to proffer assistance in the time of need and sympathy in the hour of sorrow. His was a great and tender heart, and giving of it greatly, he expected, or rather hoped for, a return as great. It may have been by reason of the frustration of such hopes that he so often broke with old and, despite his doubts, appreciative friends. His brother Albert once told me that he (Ambrose) had never been “quite the same,” after the wound in the head that he received in the battle of Kenesaw Mountain, but had a tendency to become easily offended and to show that resentment. Such estrangements as he and his friends suffered are not, therefore, matters on which one should sit in judgment. It is sad to know that he went so gladly from life, grieved and disappointed. But the white flame of Art that he tended for nearly half a century was never permitted to grow faint nor smoky, and it burned to the last with a pure brilliance. Perhaps, he bore witness to what he had found most admirable and enduring in life in the following words, the conclusion of the finest of his essays:

“Literature and art are about all that the world really cares for in the end; those who make them are not without justification in regarding themselves as masters in the House of Life and all others as their servitors. In the babble and clamor, the pranks and antics of its countless incapables, the tremendous dignity of the profession of letters is overlooked; but when, casting a retrospective eye into ‘the dark backward and abysm of time’ to where beyond these voices is the peace of desolation, we note the majesty of the few immortals and compare them with the pygmy figures of their contemporary kings, warriors and men of action generally — when across the silent battle-fields and hushed *fora* where the dull destinies of nations were determined, nobody cares how, we hear

like ocean on a western beach
The surge and thunder of the Odyssey,

then we appraise literature at its true value, and how little worth while seems all else with which Man is pleased to occupy his fussy soul and futile hands!”

THE LETTERS OF AMBROSE BIERCE

1892.

[Angwin, July 31, 1892.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

You will not, I hope, mind my saying that the first part of your letter was so pleasing that it almost solved the disappointment created by the other part. For *that* is a bit discouraging. Let me explain.

You receive my suggestion about trying your hand * at writing, with assent and apparently pleasure. But, alas, not for love of the art, but for the purpose of helping God repair his botchwork world. You want to "reform things," poor girl — to rise and lay about you, slaying monsters and liberating captive maids. You would "help to alter for the better the position of working-women." You would be a missionary — and the rest of it. Perhaps I shall not make myself understood when I say that this discourages me; that in such aims (worthy as they are) I would do nothing to assist you; that such ambitions are not only impracticable but incompatible with the spirit that gives success in art; that such ends are a prostitution of art; that "helpful" writing is dull reading. If you had had more experience of life I should regard what you say as entirely conclusive against your possession of any talent of a literary kind. But you are so young and untaught in that way — and I have the testimony of little felicities and purely literary touches (apparently unconscious) in your letters — perhaps your unschooled heart and hope should not be held as having spoken the conclusive word. But surely, my child — as surely as anything in mathematics — Art will laurel no brow having a divided allegiance. Love the world as much as you will, but serve it otherwise. The best service you can perform by writing is to write well with no care for anything but that. Plant and water and let God give the increase if he will, and to whom it shall please him.

Suppose your father were to "help working-women" by painting no pictures but such (of their ugly surroundings, say) as would incite them to help themselves, or others to help them. Suppose you should play no music but such as — but I need go no further. Literature (I don't mean journalism) is an *art*; — it is not a form of benevolence. It has nothing to do with "reform," and when used as a means of reform suffers accordingly and justly. Unless you can *feel* that way I cannot advise you to meddle with it.

It would be dishonest in me to accept your praise for what I wrote of the Homestead Works quarrel — unless you should praise it for being well written and true. I have no sympathies with that savage fight between the two kinds of rascals, and no desire to assist either — except to better hearts and manners. The love of truth is good enough motive for me when I write of my fellowmen. I like many things in this world and a few persons — I like you, for example; but after they are served I have no love to waste upon the irreclaimable mass of brutality that we know as "mankind." Compassion, yes — I am sincerely sorry that they are brutes.

Yes, I wrote the article "The Human Liver." Your criticism is erroneous. My opportunities of knowing women's feelings toward Mrs. Grundy are better than yours. They hate her with a horrible antipathy; but they cower all the same. The fact that they are a part of her mitigates neither their hatred nor their fear.

*

After next Monday I shall probably be in St. Helena, but if you will be so good as still to write to me please address me here until I apprise you of my removal; for I shall intercept my letters at St. Helena, wherever addressed. And maybe you will write before Monday. I need not say how pleasant it is for me to hear from you. And I shall want to know what you think of what I say about your "spirit of reform."

How I should have liked to pass that Sunday in camp with you all. And to-day — I wonder if you are there to-day. I feel a peculiar affection for that place.

Please give my love to all your people, and forgive my intolerably long letters — or retaliate in kind.

Sincerely your friend,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[St. Helena, August 15, 1892.]

I KNOW, DEAR BLANCHE, of the disagreement among men as to the nature and aims of literature; and the subject is too "long" to discuss. I will only say that it seems to me that men holding Tolstoi's view are not properly literary men (that is to say, artists) at all. They are "missionaries," who, in their zeal to lay about them, do not scruple to seize any weapon that they can lay their hands on; they would grab a crucifix to beat a dog. The dog is well beaten, no doubt (which makes him a worse dog than he was before) but note the condition of the crucifix! The work of these men is better, of course, than the work of men of truer art and inferior brains; but always you see the possibilities — possibilities to *them* — which they have missed or consciously sacrificed to their fad. And after all they do no good. The world does not wish to be helped. The poor wish only to be rich, which is impossible, not to be better. They would like to be rich in order to be worse, generally speaking. And your working woman (also generally speaking) does not wish to be virtuous; despite her insincere deprecation she would not let the existing system be altered if she could help it. Individual men and women can be assisted; and happily some are worthy of assistance. No *class* of mankind, no tribe, no nation is worth the sacrifice of one good man or woman; for not only is their average worth low, but they like it that way; and in trying to help them you fail to help the good individuals. Your family, your immediate friends, will give you scope enough for all your benevolence. I must include your *self*.

In timely illustration of some of this is an article by Ingersoll in the current *North American Review* — I shall send it you. It will be nothing new to you; the fate of the philanthropist who gives out of his brain and heart instead of his pocket — having nothing in that — is already known to you. It serves him richly right, too, for his low taste in loving. He who dilutes, spreads, subdivides, the love which naturally *all* belongs to his family and friends (if they are good) should not complain of non-appreciation. Love those, help those, whom from personal knowledge you know to be worthy. To love and help others is treason to *them*. But, bless my soul! I did not mean to say all this.

But while you seem clear as to your own art, you seem undecided as to the one you wish to take up. I know the strength and sweetness of the illusions (that is, *de*lusions) that you are required to forego. I know the abysmal ignorance of the world and human character which, as a girl, you necessarily have. I know the charm that inheres in the beckoning of the Britomarts, as they lean out of their dream to persuade you to be as like them as is compatible with the fact that you exist. But I believe, too, that if you are set thinking — not reading — you will find the light.

You ask me of journalism. It is so low a thing that it *may* be legitimately used as a means of reform or a means of anything deemed worth accomplishing. It is not an art; art, except in the greatest moderation, is damaging to it. The man who can write well must not write as well as he can; the others may, of course. Journalism has many purposes, and the people’s welfare *may* be one of them; though that is not the purpose-in-chief, by much.

I don’t mind your irony about my looking upon the unfortunate as merely “literary material.” It is true in so far as I consider them *with reference to literature*. Possibly I might be willing to help them otherwise — as your father might be willing to help a beggar with money, who is not picturesque enough to go into a picture. As you might be willing to give a tramp a dinner, yet unwilling to play “The Sweet Bye-and-Bye,” or “Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay,” to tickle his ear.

You call me “master.” Well, it is pleasant to think of you as a pupil, but — you know the young squire had to watch his arms all night before the day of his accolade and investiture with knighthood. I think I'll ask you to contemplate yours a little longer before donning them — not by way of penance but instruction and consecration. When you are quite sure of the nature of your *call* to write — quite sure that it is *not* the voice of "duty" — then let me do you such slight, poor service as my limitations and the injunctions of circumstance permit. In a few ways I can help you.

*

Since coming here I have been ill all the time, but it seems my duty to remain as long as there is a hope that I *can* remain. If I get free from my disorder and the fear of it I shall go down to San Francisco some day and then try to see your people and mine. Perhaps you would help me to find my brother's new house — if he is living in it.

With sincere regards to all your family, I am most truly your friend,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

Your letters are very pleasing to me. I think it nice of you to write them.

[St. Helena, August 17, 1892.]

DEAR BLANCHE,

It was not that I forgot to mail you the magazine that I mentioned; I could not find it; but now I send it.

My health is bad again, and I fear that I shall have to abandon my experiment of living here, and go back to the mountain — or some mountain. But not directly.

You asked me what books would be useful to you — I'm assuming that you've repented your sacrilegious attitude toward literature, and will endeavor to thrust your pretty head into the crown of martyrdom otherwise. I may mention a few from time to time as they occur to me. There is a little book entitled (I think) simply "English Composition." It is by Prof. John Nichol — elementary, in a few places erroneous, but on the whole rather better than the ruck of books on the same subject.

Read those of Landor's "Imaginary Conversations" which relate to literature.

Read Longinus, Herbert Spencer on Style, Pope's "Essay on Criticism" (don't groan — the detractors of Pope are not always to have things their own way), Lucian on the writing of history — though you need not write history. Read poor old obsolete Kames' notions; some of them are not half bad. Read Burke "On the Sublime and Beautiful."

Read — but that will do at present. And as you read don't forget that the rules of the literary art are deduced from the work of the masters who wrote in ignorance of them or in unconsciousness of them. That fixes their value; it is secondary to that of *natural* qualifications. None the less, it is considerable. Doubtless you have read many — perhaps most — of these things, but to read them with a view to profit *as a writer* may be different. If I could get to San Francisco I could dig out of those artificial memories, the catalogues of the libraries, a lot of titles additional — and get you the books, too. But I've a bad memory, and am out of the Book Belt.

I wish you would write some little thing and send it me for examination. I shall not judge it harshly, for this I *know*: the good writer (supposing him to be born to the trade) is not made by reading, but by observing and experiencing. You have lived so little, seen so little, that your range will necessarily be narrow, but within its lines I know no reason why you should not do good work. But it is all conjectural — you may fail. Would it hurt if I should tell you that I thought you had failed? Your absolute and complete failure would not affect in the slightest my admiration of your intellect. I have always half suspected that it is only second rate minds, and minds below the second rate, that hold their cleverness by so precarious a tenure that they can detach it for display in words.

God bless you,
A. B.

[St. Helena, August 28, 1892.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

I positively shall not bore you with an interminated screed this time. But I thought you might like to know that I have recovered my health, and hope to be able to remain here for a few months at least. And if I remain well long enough to make me reckless I shall visit your town some day, and maybe ask your mother to command you to let me drive you to Berkeley. It makes me almost sad to think of the camp at the lake being abandoned.

So you liked my remarks on the "labor question." That is nice of you, but aren't you afraid your praise will get me into the disastrous literary habit of writing for some *one* pair of eyes? — your eyes? Or in resisting the temptation I may go too far in the opposite error. But you do not see that it is "Art for Art's sake" — hateful phrase! Certainly not, it is not Art at all. Do you forget the distinction I pointed out between journalism and literature? Do you not remember that I told you that the former was of so little value that it might be used for anything? My newspaper work is in *no* sense literature. It is nothing, and only becomes something when I give it the very use to which I would put nothing literary. (Of course I refer to my editorial and topical work.)

If you want to learn to write that kind of thing, so as to do good with it, you've an easy task. *Only* it is not worth learning and the good that you can do with it is not worth doing. But literature — the desire to do good with *that* will not help you to your means. It is not a sufficient incentive. The Muse will not meet you if you have any work for her to do. Of course I sometimes like to do good — who does not? And sometimes I am glad that access to a great number of minds every week gives me an opportunity. But, thank Heaven, I don't make a business of it, nor use in it a tool so delicate as to be ruined by the service.

Please do not hesitate to send me anything that you may be willing to write. If you try to make it perfect before you let me see it, it will never come. My remarks about the kind of mind which holds its thoughts and feelings by so precarious a tenure that they are detachable for use by others were not made with a forethought of your failure.

Mr. Harte of the New England Magazine seems to want me to know his work (I asked to) and sends me a lot of it cut from the magazine. I pass it on to you, and most of it is just and true.

But I'm making another long letter.

I wish I were not an infidel — so that I could say: "God bless you," and mean it literally. I wish there *were* a God to bless you, and that He had nothing else to do.

Please let me hear from you. Sincerely,

A. B.

[St. Helena, September 28, 1892.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

I have been waiting for a full hour of leisure to write you a letter, but I shall never get it, and so I'll write you anyhow. Come to think of it, there is nothing to say — nothing that *needs* be said, rather, for there is always so much that one would like to say to you, best and most patient of *sayees*.

I'm sending you and your father copies of my book. Not that I think you (either of you) will care for that sort of thing, but merely because your father is my co-sinner in making the book, and you in sitting by and diverting my mind from the proof-sheets of a part of it. Your part, therefore, in the work is the typographical errors. So you are in literature in spite of yourself.

I appreciate what you write of my girl. She is the best of girls to me, but God knoweth I'm not a proper person to direct her way of life. However, it will not be for long. A dear friend of mine — the widow of another dear friend — in London wants her, and means to come out here next spring and try to persuade me to let her have her — for a time at least. It is likely that I shall. My friend is wealthy, childless and devoted to both my children. I wish that in the meantime she (the girl) could have the advantage of association with *you*.

Please say to your father that I have his verses, which I promise myself pleasure in reading.

You appear to have given up your ambition to "write things." I'm sorry, for "lots" of reasons — not the least being the selfish one that I fear I shall be deprived of a reason for writing you long dull letters. Won't you *play* at writing things?

My (and Danziger's) book, "The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter," is to be out next month. The Publisher — I like to write it with a reverent capital letter — is unprofessional enough to tell me that he regards it as the very best piece of English composition that he ever saw, and he means to make the world know it. Now let the great English classics hide their diminished heads and pale their ineffectual fires!

So you begin to suspect that books do not give you the truth of life and character. Well, that suspicion is the beginning of wisdom, and, so far as it goes, a preliminary qualification for writing — books. Men and women are certainly not what books represent them to be, nor what *they* represent — and sometimes believe — themselves to be. They are better, they are worse, and far more interesting.

With best regards to all your people, and in the hope that we may frequently hear from you, I am very sincerely your friend,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

Both the children send their *love* to you. And they mean just that.

[St. Helena, October 6, 1892.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

I send you by this mail the current *New England Magazine* — merely because I have it by me and have read all of it that I shall have leisure to read. Maybe it will entertain you for an idle hour.

I have so far recovered my health that I hope to do a little pot-boiling to-morrow. (Is that properly written with a hyphen? — for the life o' me I can't say, just at this moment. There is a story of an old actor who having played one part half his life had to cut out the name of the person he represented wherever it occurred in his lines: he could never remember which syllable to accent.) My illness was only asthma, which, unluckily, does not kill me and so should not alarm my friends.

Dr. Danziger writes that he has ordered your father's sketch sent me. And I've ordered a large number of extra impressions of it — if it is still on the stone. So you see I like it.

Let me hear from you and about you.

Sincerely your friend,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

I enclose Bib.

[St. Helena, October 7, 1892.]

DEAR MR. PARTINGTON,

I've been too ill all the week to write you of your manuscripts, or even read them understandingly.

I think "Honest Andrew's Prayer" far and away the best. *It* is witty — the others hardly more than earnest, and not, in my judgment, altogether fair. But then you know you and I would hardly be likely to agree on a point of that kind, — I refuse my sympathies in some directions where I extend my sympathy — if that is intelligible. You, I think, have broader sympathies than mine — are not only sorry for the Homestead strikers (for example) but approve them. I do not. But we are one in detesting their oppressor, the smug-wump, Carnegie.

If you had not sent "Honest Andrew's Prayer" elsewhere I should try to place it here. It is so good that I hope to see it in print. If it is rejected please let me have it again if the incident is not then ancient history.

I'm glad you like some things in my book. But you should not condemn me for debasing my poetry with abuse; you should commend me for elevating my abuse with a little poetry, here and there. I am not a poet, but an abuser — that makes all the difference. It is "how you look at it."

But I'm still too ill to write. With best regards to all your family, I am sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

I've been reading your pamphlet on Art Education. You write best when you write most seriously — and your best is very good.

[St. Helena, October 15, 1892.]

DEAR BLANCHE,

I send you this picture in exchange for the one that you have — I'm "redeeming" all those with these. But I asked you to return that a long time ago. Please say if you like this; to me it looks like a dude. But I hate the other — the style of it.

It is very good of your father to take so much trouble as to go over and work on that stone. I want the pictures — lithographs — only for economy: so that when persons for whom I do not particularly care want pictures of me I need not bankrupt myself in orders to the photographer. And I do not like photographs anyhow. How long, O Lord, how long am I to wait for that sketch of *you*?

My dear girl, I do not see that folk like your father and me have any just cause of complaint against an unappreciative world; nobody compels us to make things that the world does not want. We merely choose to because the pay, *plus* the satisfaction, exceeds the pay alone that we get from work that the world does want. Then where is our grievance? We get what we prefer when we do good work; for the lesser wage we do easier work. It has never seemed to me that the "unappreciated genius" had a good case to go into court with, and I think he should be promptly non-suited. Inspiration from Heaven is all very fine — the mandate of an attitude or an instinct is good; but when A works for B, yet insists on taking his orders from C, what can he expect? So don't distress your good little heart with compassion — not for me, at least; whenever I tire of pot-boiling, wood-chopping is open to me, and a thousand other honest and profitable employments.

I have noted Gertrude's picture in the Examiner with a peculiar interest. That girl has a bushel of brains, and her father and brother have to look out for her or she will leave them out of sight. I would suggest as a measure of precaution against so monstrous a perversion of natural order that she have her eyes put out. The subjection of women must be maintained.

*

Bib and Leigh send love to you. Leigh, I think, is expecting Carlt. I've permitted Leigh to join the band again, and he is very peacocky in his uniform. God bless you.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[St. Helena, November 6, 1892.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

I am glad you will consent to tolerate the new photograph — all my other friends are desperately delighted with it. I prefer your tolerance.

But I don't like to hear that you have been "ill and blue"; that is a condition which seems more naturally to appertain to me. For, after all, whatever cause you may have for "blueness," you can always recollect that you are *you*, and find a wholesome satisfaction in your identity; whereas I, alas, am *I*!

I'm sure you performed your part of that concert creditably despite the ailing wrist, and wish that I might have added myself to your triumph.

I have been very ill again but hope to get away from here (back to my mountain) before it is time for another attack from my friend the enemy. I shall expect to see you there sometime when my brother and his wife come up. They would hardly dare to come without you.

No, I did not read the criticism you mention — in the *Saturday Review*. Shall send you all the *Saturdays* that I get if you will have them. Anyhow, they will amuse (and sometimes disgust) your father.

I have awful arrears of correspondence, as usual.

The children send love. They had a pleasant visit with Carlt, and we hope he will come again.

May God be very good to you and put it into your heart to write to your uncle often.

Please give my best respects to all Partingtons, jointly and severally.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Angwin, November 29, 1892.]

DEAR BLANCHE,

Only just a word to say that I have repented of my assent to your well-meant proposal for your father to write of *me*. If there is anything in my work in letters that engages his interest, or in my *literary* history — that is well enough, and I shall not mind. But “biography” in the other sense is distasteful to me. I never read biographical “stuff” of other writers — of course you know “stuff” is literary slang for “matter” — and think it “beside the question.” Moreover, it is distinctly mischievous to letters. It throws no light on one’s work, but on the contrary “darkens counsel.” The only reason that posterity judges work with some slight approach to accuracy is that posterity knows less, and cares less, about the author’s personality. It considers his work as impartially as if it had found it lying on the ground with no footprints about it and no initials on its linen.

My brother is not “fully cognizant” of my history, anyhow — not of the part that is interesting.

So, on the whole, I’ll ask that it be not done. It was only my wish to please that made me consent. That wish is no weaker now, but I would rather please otherwise.

I trust that you arrived safe and well, and that your memory of those few stormy days is not altogether disagreeable. Sincerely your friend,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Angwin, December 25, 1892.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

Returning here from the city this morning, I find your letter. And I had not replied to your last one before that! But *that* was because I hoped to see you at your home. I was unable to do so — I saw no one (but Richard) whom I really wanted to see, and had not an hour unoccupied by work or “business” until this morning. And then — it was Christmas, and my right to act as skeleton at anybody’s feast by even so much as a brief call was not clear. I hope my brother will be as forgiving as I know you will be.

When I went down I was just recovering from as severe an attack of illness as I ever had in my life. Please consider unsaid all that I have said in praise of this mountain, its air, water, and everything that is its.

*

It was uncommonly nice of Hume to entertain so good an opinion of me; if you had seen him a few days later you would have found a different state of affairs, probably; for I had been exhausting relays of vials of wrath upon him for delinquent diligence in securing copyright for my little story — whereby it is uncopyrighted. I ought to add that he has tried to make reparation, and is apparently contrite to the limit of his penitential capacity.

No, there was no other foundation for the little story than its obvious naturalness and consistency with the sentiments “appropriate to the season.” When Christendom is guzzling and gorging and clowning it has not time to cease being cruel; all it can do is to augment its hypocrisy a trifle.

Please don’t lash yourself and do various penances any more for your part in the plaguing of poor Russell; he is quite forgotten in the superior affliction sent upon James Whitcomb Riley. *That* seems a matter of genuine public concern, if I may judge by what I heard in town (and I heard little else) and by my letters and “esteemed” (though testy) “contemporaries.” Dear, dear, how sensitive people are becoming!

Richard has promised me the Blanchescape that I have so patiently waited for while you were practicing the art of looking pretty in preparation for the sitting, so now I am happy. I shall put you opposite Joaquin Miller, who is now framed and glazed in good shape. I have also your father’s sketch of me — that is, I got it and left it in San Francisco to be cleaned if possible; it was in a most unregenerate state of dirt and grease.

Seeing Harry Bigelow’s article in the *Wave* on women who write (and it’s unpleasantly near to the truth of the matter) I feel almost reconciled to the failure of my gorgeous dream of making a writer of *you*. I wonder if you would have eschewed the harmless, necessary tub and danced upon the broken bones of the innocuous toothbrush. Fancy you with sable nails and a soiled cheek, uttering to the day what God taught in the night! Let us be thankful that the peril is past.

The next time I go to “the Bay” I shall go to 1019 *first*.

God bless you for a good girl.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[First part of this letter missing.]

*

Yes, I know Blackburn Harte has a weakness for the proletariat of letters * and doubtless thinks Riley good *because* he is “of the people,” peoply. But he will have to endure me as well as he can. You ask my opinion of Burns. He has not, I think, been translated into English, and I do not (that is, I can but *will* not) read that gibberish. I read Burns once — that was once too many times; but happily it was before I knew any better, and so my time, being worthless, was not wasted.

I wish you could be up here this beautiful weather. But I dare say it would rain if you came. In truth, it is “thickening” a trifle just because of my wish. And I wish I *had* given you, for your father, all the facts of my biography from the cradle — downward. When you come again I shall, if you still want them. For I’m worried half to death with requests for them, and when I refuse am no doubt considered surly or worse. And my refusal no longer serves, for the biography men are beginning to write my history from imagination. So the next time I see you I shall give you (orally) that “history of a crime,” my life. Then, if your father is still in the notion, he can write it from your notes, and I can answer all future inquiries by enclosing his article.

Do you know? — you will, I think, be glad to know — that I have many more offers for stories at good prices, than I have the health to accept. (For I am less nearly well than I have told you.) Even the *Examiner* has “waked up” (I woke it up) to the situation, and now pays me $20 a thousand words; and my latest offer from New York is $50.

I hardly know why I tell you this unless it is because you tell me of any good fortune that comes to your people, and because you seem to take an interest in my affairs such as nobody else does in just the same unobjectionable and, in fact, agreeable way. I wish you were my “real, sure-enough” niece. But in that case I should expect you to pass all your time at Howell Mountain, with your uncle and cousin. Then I should teach you to write, and you could expound to me the principles underlying the art of being the best girl in the world. Sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

1893.

[Angwin, January 4, 1893.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

Not hearing from *[you]* after writing you last week, I fear you are ill — may I not know? I am myself ill, as I feared. On Thursday last I was taken violently ill indeed, and have but just got about. In truth, I'm hardly able to write you, but as I have to go to work on Friday, *sure*, I may as well practice a little on you. And the weather up here is Paradisaical. Leigh and I took a walk this morning in the woods. We scared up a wild deer, but I did not feel able to run it down and present you with its antlers.

I hope you are well, that you are all well. And I hope Heaven will put it into your good brother's heart to send me that picture of the sister who is so much too good for him — or anybody.

In the meantime, and always, God bless you.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

My boy (who has been an angel of goodness to me in my illness) sends his love to you and all your people.

[Angwin, Cal., January 14, 1893.]

MY DEAR PARTINGTON,

You see the matter is this way. You can't come up here and go back the same day — at least that would give you but about an hour here. You must remain over night. Now I put it to you — how do you think I'd feel if you came and remained over night and I, having work to do, should have to leave you to your own devices, mooning about a place that has nobody to talk to? When a fellow comes a long way to see me I want to see a good deal of him, however *he* may feel about it. It is not the same as if he lived in the same bailiwick and "dropped in." That is why, in the present state of my health and work, I ask all my friends to give me as long notice of their coming as possible. I'm sure you'll say I am right, inasmuch as certain work if undertaken must be done by the time agreed upon.

My relations with Danziger are peculiar — as any one's relations with him must be. In the matter of which you wished to speak I could say nothing. For this I must ask you to believe there are reasons. It would not have been fair not to let you know, before coming, that I would not talk of him.

I thought, though, that you would probably come up to-day if I wrote you. Well, I should like you to come and pass a week with me. But if you come for a day I naturally want it to be an “off” day with me. Sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Angwin, January 23, 1893.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

I should have written you sooner; it has been ten whole days since the date of your last letter. But I have not been in the mood of letter writing, and am prepared for maledictions from all my neglected friends but you. My health is better. Yesterday I returned from Napa, where I passed twenty-six hours, buried, most of the time, in fog; but apparently it has not harmed me. The weather here remains heavenly. *

If I grow better in health I shall in time feel able to extend my next foray into the Lowlands as far as Oakland and Berkeley.

Here are some fronds of maiden-hair fern that I have just brought in. The first wild flowers of the season are beginning to venture out and the manzanitas are a sight to see.

With warmest regards to all your people, I am, as ever, your most unworthy uncle,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Angwin, February 5, 1893.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

What an admirable reporter you would be! Your account of the meeting with Miller in the restaurant and of the “entertainment” are amusing no end. * By the way, I observe a trooly offle “attack” on me in the Oakland *Times* of the 3rd (I think) * (I know of course it means me — I always know that when they pull out of their glowing minds that old roasted chestnut about “tearing down” but not “building up” — that is to say, effacing one imposture without giving them another in place of it.) The amusing part of the business is that he points a contrast between me and Realf (God knows there’s unlikeness enough) quite unconscious of the fact that it is I and no other who have “built up” Realf’s reputation as a poet — published his work, and paid him for it, when nobody else would have it; repeatedly pointed out its greatness, and when he left that magnificent crown of sonnets behind him protested that posterity would know California better by the incident of his death than otherwise — not a soul, until now, concurring in my view of the verses. Believe me, my trade is not without its humorous side.

Leigh and I went down to the waterfall yesterday. It was almost grand — greater than I had ever seen it — and I took the liberty to wish that you might see it in that state. My wish must have communicated itself, somehow, though imperfectly, to Leigh, for as I was indulging it he expressed the same wish with regard to Richard.

I wish too that you might be here to-day to see the swirls of snow. It is falling rapidly, and I'm thinking that this letter will make its way down the mountain to-morrow morning through a foot or two of it. Unluckily, it has a nasty way of turning to rain.

My health is very good now, and Leigh and I take long walks. And after the rains we look for Indian arrow-heads in the plowed fields and on the gravel bars of the creek. My collection is now great; but I fear I shall tire of the fad before completing it. One in the country must have a fad or die of dejection and oxidation of the faculties. How happy is he who can make a fad of his work!

By the way, my New York publishers (The United States Book Company) have failed, owing me a pot of money, of which I shall probably get nothing. I'm beginning to cherish an impertinent curiosity to know what Heaven means to do to me next. If your function as one of the angels gives you a knowledge of such matters please betray your trust and tell me where I'm to be hit, and how hard.

But this is an intolerable deal of letter.

With best regards to all good Partingtons — and I think there are no others — I remain your affectionate uncle by adoption,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

Leigh has brought in some manzanita blooms which I shall try to enclose. But they'll be badly smashed.

[Angwin, February 14, 1893.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

I thank you many times for the picture, which is a monstrous good picture, whatever its shortcomings as a portrait may be. On the authority of the great art critic, Leigh Bierce, I am emboldened to pronounce some of the work in it equal to Gribayedoff at his best; and that, according to the g. a. c. aforesaid, is to exhaust eulogium. But — it isn't altogether the Blanche that I know, as I know her. Maybe it is the hat — I should prefer you hatless, and so less at the mercy of capricious fortune. Suppose hats were to "go out" — I tremble to think of what would happen to that gorgeous superstructure which now looks so beautiful. O, well, when I come down I shall drag you to the hateful photographer and get something that looks quite like you — and has no other value.

And I mean to "see Oakland and die" pretty soon. I have not dared go when the weather was bad. It promises well now, but I am to have visitors next Sunday, so must stay at home. God and the weather bureau willing, you may be bothered with me the Saturday or Sunday after. We shall see.

I hope your father concurs in my remarks on picture "borders" — I did not think of him until the remarks had been written, or I should have assured myself of his practice before venturing to utter my mind o' the matter. If it were not for him and Gertrude and the *Wave* I should snarl again, anent "half-tones," which I abhor. Hume tried to get me to admire his illustrations, but I would not, so far as the process is concerned, and bluntly told him he would not get your father's best work that way.

If you were to visit the Mountain now I should be able to show you a redwood forest (newly discovered) and a picturesque gulch to match.

The wild flowers are beginning to put up their heads to look for you, and my collection of Indian antiquities is yearning to have you see it.

Please convey my thanks to Richard for the picture — the girlscape — and my best regards to your father and all the others.

Sincerely your friend,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Angwin, February 21, 1893.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

I'm very sorry indeed that I cannot be in Oakland Thursday evening to see you "in your glory," arrayed, doubtless, like a lily of the field. However glorious you may be in public, though, I fancy I should like you better as you used to be out at camp.

Well, I mean to see you on Saturday afternoon if you are at home, and think I shall ask you to be my guide to Grizzlyville; for surely I shall never be able to find the wonderful new house alone. So if your mamma will let you go out there with me I promise to return you to her instead of running away with you. And, possibly, weather permitting, we can arrange for a Sunday in the redwoods or on the hills. Or don't your folks go out any more o' Sundays?

Please give my thanks to your mother for the kind invitation to put up at your house; but I fear that would be impossible. I shall have to be where people can call on me — and such a disreputable crowd as my friends are would ruin the Partingtonian reputation for respectability. In your new neighborhood you will all be very proper — which you could hardly be with a procession of pirates and vagrants pulling at your door-bell.

So — if God is good — I shall call on you Saturday afternoon. In the meantime and always be thou happy — thou and thine. Your unworthy uncle,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Angwin, March 18, 1893.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

It is good to have your letters again. If you will not let me teach you my trade of writing stories it is right that you practice your own of writing letters. You are mistress of that. Byron's letters to Moore are dull in comparison with yours to me. Some allowance, doubtless, must be made for my greater need of your letters than of Byron's. For, truth to tell, I've been a trifle dispirited and noncontent. In that mood I peremptorily resigned from the *Examiner*, for one thing — and permitted myself to be coaxed back by Hearst, for another. My other follies I shall not tell you. *

We had six inches of snow up here and it has rained steadily ever since — more than a week. And the fog is of superior opacity — quite peerless that way. It is still raining and fogging. Do you wonder that your unworthy uncle has come perilously and alarmingly near to loneliness? Yet I have the companionship, at meals, of one of your excellent sex, from San Francisco. *

Truly, I should like to attend one of your at-homes, but I fear it must be a long time before I venture down there again. But when this brumous visitation is past I can *look* down, and that assists the imagination to picture you all in your happy (I hope) home. But if that woolly wolf, Joaquin Miller, doesn't keep outside the fold I *shall* come down and club him soundly. I quite agree with your mother that his flattery will spoil you. You said I would spoil Phyllis, and now, you bad girl, you wish to be spoiled yourself. Well, you can't eat four Millerine oranges. — My love to all your family.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Angwin, March 26, 1893.]

MY DEAR PARTINGTON,

I am very glad indeed to get the good account of Leigh that you give me. I've feared that he might be rather a bore to you, but you make me easy on that score. Also I am pleased that you think he has a sufficient "gift" to do something in the only direction in which he seems to care to go.

He is anxious to take the place at the *Examiner*, and his uncle thinks that would be best — if they will give it him. I'm a little reluctant for many reasons, but there are considerations — some of them going to the matter of character and disposition — which point to that as the best arrangement. The boy needs discipline, control, and work. He needs to learn by experience that life is not all beer and skittles. Of course you can't quite know him as I do. As to his earning anything on the *Examiner* or elsewhere, that cuts no figure — he'll spend everything he can get his fingers on anyhow; but I feel that he ought to have the advantage of a struggle for existence where the grass is short and the soil stony.

Well, I shall let him live down there somehow, and see what can be done with him. There's a lot of good in him, and a lot of the other thing, naturally.

I hope Hume has, or will, put you in authority in the *Post* and give you a decent salary. He seems quite enthusiastic about the *Post* and — about you.

With sincere regards to Mrs. Partington and all the Partingtonettes, I am very truly yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Angwin, April 10, 1893.]

MY DEAR PARTINGTON,

If you are undertaking to teach my kid (which, unless it is entirely agreeable to you, you must not do) I hope you will regard him as a pupil whose tuition is to be paid for like any other pupil. And you should, I think, name the price. Will you kindly do so?

Another thing. Leigh tells me you paid him for something he did for the *Wave*. That is not right. While you let him work with you, and under you, his work belongs to you — is a part of yours. I mean the work that he does in your shop for the *Wave*.

I don't wish to feel that you are bothering with him for nothing — will you not tell me your notion of what I should pay you?

I fancy you'll be on the *Examiner* pretty soon — if you wish.

With best regards to your family I am sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Angwin, April 10, 1893.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

As I was writing to your father I was, of course, strongly impressed with a sense of *you*; for you are an intrusive kind of creature, coming into one's consciousness in the most lawless way — Phyllis-like. (Phyllis is my "type and example" of lawlessness, albeit I'm devoted to her — a Phyllistine, as it were.)

Leigh sends me a notice (before the event) of your concert. I hope it was successful. Was it?

It rains or snows here all the time, and the mountain struggles in vain to put on its bravery of leaf and flower. When this kind of thing stops I'm going to put in an application for you to come up and get your bad impressions of the place effaced. It is insupportable that my earthly paradise exist in your memory as a “bad eminence,” like Satan’s primacy.

I’m sending you the *New England Magazine* — perhaps I have sent it already — and a Harper’s Weekly with a story by Mrs. *, who is a sort of pupil of mine. She used to do bad work — does now sometimes; but she will do great work by-and-by.

I wish you had not got that notion that you cannot learn to write. You see I’d like you to do *some* art work that I can understand and enjoy. I wonder why it is that no note or combination of notes can be struck out of a piano that will touch me — give me an emotion of any kind. It is not wholly due to my ignorance and bad ear, for other instruments — the violin, organ, zither, guitar, etc., sometimes affect me profoundly. Come, read me the riddle if you know. What have I done that I should be inaccessible to your music? I know it is good; I can hear that it is, but not feel that it is. Therefore to me it is not.

Now that, you will confess, is a woeful state—”most tolerable and not to be endured.” Will you not cultivate some art within the scope of my capacity? Do you think you could learn to walk on a wire (if it lay on the ground)? Can you not ride three horses at once if they are suitably dead? Or swallow swords? Really, you should have some way to entertain your uncle.

True, you can talk, but you never get the chance; I always “have the floor.” Clearly you must learn to write, and I mean to get Miller to teach you how to be a poet.

I hope you will write occasionally to me, — letter-writing is an art that you do excel in — as I in “appreciation” of your excellence in it.

Do you see my boy? I hope he is good, and diligent in his work.

*

You must write to me or I shall withdraw my avuncular relation to you.

With good will to all your people — particularly Phyllis — I am sincerely your friend,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Angwin, Calif., April 16, 1893.]

MY DEAR PARTINGTON,

I think you wrong. On your own principle, laid down in your letter, that “every man has a right to the full value of his labor” — pardon me, good Englishman, I meant “laboUr” — you have a right to your wage for the labo*u*r of teaching Leigh. And what work would *he* get to do but for you?

I can’t hold you and inject shekels into your pocket, but if the voice of remonstrance has authority to enter at your ear without a ticket I pray you to show it hospitality.

Leigh doubtless likes to see his work in print, but I hope you will not let him put anything out until it is as good as he can make it — nor then if it is not good *enough*. And that whether he signs it or not. I have talked to him about the relation of conscience to lab-work, but I don't know if my talk all came out at the other ear.

O — that bad joke o' mine. Where do you and Richard expect to go when death do you part? You were neither of you present that night on the dam, nor did I know either of you. Blanche, thank God, retains the old-time reverence for truth: it was to her that I said it. Richard evidently dreamed it, and you — you've been believing that confounded *Wave*! Sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Angwin, April 18, 1893.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

I take a few moments from work to write you in order (mainly) to say that your letter of March 31st did not go astray, as you seem to fear — though why *you* should care if it did I can't conjecture. The loss to me — that is probably what would touch your compassionate heart.

So you *will* try to write. That is a good girl. I'm almost sure you can — not, of course, all at once, but by-and-by. And if not, what matter? You are not of the sort, I am sure, who would go on despite everything, determined to succeed by dint of determining to succeed.

*

We are blessed with the most amiable of all conceivable weathers up here, and the wild flowers are putting up their heads everywhere to look for you. Lying in their graves last autumn, they overheard (*under*heard) your promise to come in the spring, and it has stimulated and cheered them to a vigorous growth.

I'm sending you some more papers. Don't think yourself obliged to read all the stuff I send you — *I* don't read it.

Condole with me — I have just lost another publisher — by failure. Schulte, of Chicago, publisher of "The Monk" etc., has "gone under," I hear. Danziger and I have not had a cent from him. I put out three books in a year, and lo! each one brings down a publisher's gray hair in sorrow to the grave! for Langton, of "Black Beetles," came to grief — that is how Danziger got involved. "O that mine enemy would *publish* one of my books!"

I am glad to hear of your success at your concert. If I could have reached you you should have had the biggest basket of pretty vegetables that was ever handed over the footlights. I'm sure you merited it all — what do you *not* merit?

Your father gives me good accounts of my boy. He *must* be doing well, I think, by the way he neglects all my commissions.

Enclosed you will find my contribution to the Partington art gallery, with an autograph letter from the artist. You can hang them in any light you please and show them to Richard. He will doubtless be pleased to note how the latent genius of his boss has burst into bloom.

I have been wading in the creek this afternoon for pure love of it; the gravel looked so clean under the water. I was for the moment at least ten years younger than your father. To whom, and to all the rest of your people, my sincere regards, Your uncle,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Angwin, Cala., April 26, 1893.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

*

I accept your sympathy for my misfortunes in publishing. It serves me right (I don’t mean the sympathy does) for publishing. I should have known that if a publisher cannot beat an author otherwise, or is too honest to do so, he will do it by failing. Once in London a publisher gave me a check dated two days ahead, and then (the only thing he could do to make the check worthless) — ate a pork pie and died. That was the late John Camden Hotten, to whose business and virtues my present London publishers, Chatto and Windus, have succeeded. They have not failed, and they refuse pork pie, but they deliberately altered the title of my book.

All this for your encouragement in “learning to write.” Writing books is a noble profession; it has not a shade of selfishness in it — nothing worse than conceit.

O yes, you shall have your big basket of flowers if ever I catch you playing in public. I wish I could give you the carnations, lilies-of-the-valley, violets, and first-of-the-season sweet peas now on my table. They came from down near you — which fact they are trying triumphantly and as hard as they can to relate in fragrance.

I trust your mother is well of her cold — that you are all well and happy, and that Phyllis will not forget me. And may the good Lord bless you regularly every hour of every day for your merit, and every minute of every hour as a special and particular favor to Your uncle,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Berkeley, October 2, 1893.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

I accept with pleasure your evidence that the Piano is not as black as I have painted, albeit the logical inference is that I'm pretty black myself. Indubitably I'm "in outer darkness," and can only say to you: "Lead, kindly light." Thank you for the funny article on the luxury question — from the funny source. But you really must not expect me to answer it, nor show you wherein it is "wrong." I cannot discern the expediency of you having any "views" at all in those matters — even correct ones. If I could have my way you should think of more profitable things than the (conceded) "wrongness" of a world which is the habitat of a wrongheaded and wronghearted race of irreclaimable savages. * When woman "broadens her sympathies" they become annular. Don't.

Cosgrave came over yesterday for a "stroll," but as he had a dinner engagement to keep before going home, he was in gorgeous gear. So I kindly hoisted him atop of Grizzly Peak and sent him back across the Bay in a condition impossible to describe, save by the aid of a wet dishclout for illustration.

Please ask your father when and where he wants me to sit for the portrait. If that picture is not sold, and ever comes into my possession, I shall propose to swap it for yours. I have always wanted to lay thievish hands on that, and would even like to come by it honestly. But what under the sun would I do with either that or mine? Fancy me packing large paintings about to country hotels and places of last resort!

Leigh is living with me now. Poor chap, the death of his aunt has made him an orphan. I feel a profound compassion for any one whom an untoward fate compels to live with *me*. However, such a one is sure to be a good deal alone, which is a mitigation.

With good wishes for all your people, I am sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Berkeley, December 27, 1893.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

I'm sending you (by way of pretext for writing you) a magazine that I asked Richard to take to you last evening, but which he forgot. There's an illustrated article on gargoyles and the like, which will interest you. Some of the creatures are delicious — more so than I had the sense to perceive when I saw them alive on Notre Dame.

I want to thank you too for the beautiful muffler before I take to my willow chair, happy in the prospect of death. For at this hour, 10:35 p. m., I "have on" a very promising case of asthma. If I come out of it decently alive in a week or so I shall go over to your house and see the finished portrait if it is "still there," like the flag in our national anthem.

Sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

1894.

[Oakland, July 31, 1894.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

If you are not utterly devoured by mosquitoes perhaps you'll go to the postoffice and get this. In that hope I write, not without a strong sense of the existence of the clerks in the Dead Letter Office at Washington.

I hope you are (despite the mosquitoes) having "heaps" of rest and happiness. As to me, I have only just recovered sufficiently to be out, and "improved the occasion" by going to San Francisco yesterday and returning on the 11:15 boat. I saw Richard, and he seemed quite solemn at the thought of the dispersal of his family to the four winds.

I have a joyous letter from Leigh dated "on the road," nearing Yosemite. He has been passing through the storied land of Bret Harte, and is permeated with a sense of its beauty and romance. When shall you return? May I hope, then, to see you?

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

P.S. Here are things that I cut out for memoranda. On second thought *I* know all that; so send them to you for the betterment of your mind and heart.

B.

[San Jose, October 17, 1894.]

MY DEAR BLANCHE,

Your kindly note was among a number which I put into my pocket at the postoffice and forgot until last evening when I returned from Oakland. (I dared remain up there only a few hours, and the visit did me no good.)

Of course I should have known that your good heart would prompt the wish to hear from your patient, but I fear I was a trifle misanthropic all last week, and indisposed to communicate with my species.

I came here on Monday of last week, and the change has done me good. I have no asthma and am slowly getting back my strength.

Leigh and Ina Peterson passed Sunday with me, and Leigh recounted his adventures in the mountains. I had been greatly worried about him; it seems there was abundant reason. The next time he comes I wish he would bring you.

It is lovely down here. Perhaps you and Katie can come some time, and I'll drive you all over the valley — if you care to drive.

If I continue well I shall remain here or hereabout; if not I don't know where I shall go. Probably into the Santa Cruz mountains or to Gilroy. If I could have my way I'd live at Piedmont.

Do you know I lost Pin the Reptile? I brought him along in my bicycle bag (I came the latter half of the way bike-back) and the ungrateful scoundrel wormed himself out and took to the weeds just before we got to San Jose. So I've nothing to lavish my second-childhoodish affection upon — nothing but just myself.

My permanent address is Oakland, as usual, but *you* may address me here at San Jose if you will be so good as to address me anywhere. Please do, and tell me of your triumphs and trials at the Conservatory of Music. I do fervently hope it may prove a means of prosperity to you, for, behold, you are The Only Girl in the World Who Merits Prosperity!

Please give my friendly regards to your people; and so — Heaven be good to you.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[San Jose, October 28, 1894.]

O, BEST OF POETS,

How have you the heart to point out what you deem an imperfection in those lines. Upon my soul, I swear they are faultless, and "moonlight" is henceforth and forever a rhyme to "delight." Also, likewise, moreover and furthermore, a —— is henceforth —— ; and —— are forever —— ; and to —— shall be —— ; and so forth. You have established new canons of literary criticism — more liberal ones — and death to the wretch who does not accept them! Ah, I always knew you were a revolutionist.

Yes, I am in better health, worse luck! For I miss the beef-teaing expeditions more than you can by trying.

By the way, if you again encounter your fellow practitioner, Mrs. Hirshberg, please tell her what has become of her patient, and that I remember her gratefully.

It is not uninteresting to me to hear of your progress in your art, albeit I am debarred from entrance into the temple where it is worshiped. After all, art finds its best usefulness in its reaction upon the character; and in that work I can trace your proficiency in the art that you love. As you become a better artist you grow a nicer girl, and if your music does not cause my tympana to move themselves aright, yet the niceness is not without its effect upon the soul o' me. So I'm not so *very* inert a clod, after all.

No, Leigh has not infected me with the exploring fad. I exhausted my capacity in that way years before I had the advantage of his acquaintance and the contagion of his example. But I don't like to think of that miserable mountain sitting there and grinning in the consciousness of having beaten the Bierce family.

So — apropos of my brother — *I* am "odd" after a certain fashion! My child, that is blasphemy. You grow hardier every day of your life, and you'll end as a full colonel yet, and challenge Man to mortal combat in true Stetsonian style. Know thy place, thou atom!

Speaking of colonels reminds me that one of the most eminent of the group had the assurance to write me, asking for an "audience" to consult about a benefit that she — she! — is getting up for my friend Miss *, a glorious writer and eccentric old maid whom you do not know. * evidently wants more notoriety and proposes to shine by Miss * light. I was compelled to lower the temperature of the situation with a letter curtly courteous. Not even to assist Miss * shall my name be mixed up with those of that gang. But of course all that does not amuse you.

I wish I could have a chat with you. I speak to nobody but my chambermaid and the waiter at my restaurant. By the time I see you I shall have lost the art of speech altogether and shall communicate with you by the sign language.

God be good to you and move you to write to me sometimes.

Sincerely your friend,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[First part of this letter missing.]

*

You may, I think, expect my assistance in choosing between (or among) your suitors next month, early. I propose to try living in Oakland again for a short time beginning about then. But I shall have much to do the first few days — possibly in settling my earthly affairs for it is my determination to be hanged for killing all those suitors. That seems to me the simplest way of disembarrassing you. As to me — it is the "line of least resistance" — unless they fight.

*

So you have been ill. You must not be ill, my child — it disturbs my Marcus Aurelian tranquillity, and is most selfishly inconsiderate of you.

Mourn with me: the golden leaves of my poplars are now underwheel. I sigh for the perennial eucalyptus leaf of Piedmont.

I hope you are all well. Sincerely your friend,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[San Jose, November 20, 1894.]

Since writing you yesterday, dear Blanche, I have observed that the benefit to * is not abandoned — it is to occur in the evening of the 26th, at Golden Gate Hall, San Francisco. I recall your kind offer to act for me in any way that I might wish to assist Miss *. Now, I will not have my name connected with anything that the * woman and her sister-in-evidence may do for their own glorification, but I enclose a Wells, Fargo & Co. money order for all the money I can presently afford — wherewith you may do as you will; buy tickets, or hand it to the treasurer in your own name. I know Miss * must be awfully needy to accept a benefit — you have no idea how sensitive and suspicious and difficult she is. She is almost impossible. But there are countless exactions on my lean purse, and I must do the rest with my pen. So — I thank you.

Sincerely your friend,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

1901.

[18 Iowa Circle, Washington, D. C., January 1, 1901.]

DEAR STERLING,

This is just a hasty note to acknowledge receipt of your letter and the poems. I hope to reach those pretty soon and give them the attention which I am sure they will prove to merit — which I cannot do now. By the way, I wonder why most of you youngsters so persistently tackle the sonnet. For the same reason, I suppose, that a fellow always wants to make his first appearance on the stage in the rôle of “Hamlet.” It is just the holy cheek of you.

Yes, Leigh prospers fairly well, and I — well, I don’t know if it is prosperity; it is a pretty good time.

I suppose I shall have to write to that old scoundrel Grizzly,[1] to give him my new address, though I supposed he had it; and the old one would do, anyhow. Now that his cub has returned he probably doesn’t care for the other plantigrades of his kind.

Thank you for telling me so much about some of our companions and companionesses of the long ago. I fear that not all my heart was in my baggage when I came over here. There’s a bit of it, for example, out there by that little lake in the hills.

So I may have a photograph of one of your pretty sisters. Why, of course I want it — I want the entire five of them; their pictures, I mean. If you had been a nice fellow you would have let me know them long ago. And how about that other pretty girl, your infinitely better half? You might sneak into the envelope a little portrait of *her*, lest I forget, lest I forget. But I’ve not yet forgotten.

The new century’s best blessings to the both o’ you.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

P.S. — In your studies of poetry have you dipped into Stedman’s new “American Anthology”? It is the most notable collection of American verse that has been made — on the whole, a book worth having. In saying so I rather pride myself on my magnanimity; for of course I don’t think he has done as well by me as he might have done. That, I suppose, is what every one thinks who happens to be alive to think it. So I try to be in the fashion.

A. B.

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[1] Albert Bierce.

[18 Iowa Circle, Washington, D. C., January 19, 1901.]

MY DEAR STERLING,

I've been a long while getting to your verses, but there were many reasons — including a broken rib. They are pretty good verses, with here and there *very* good lines. I'd a strong temptation to steal one or two for my "Passing Show," but I knew what an avalanche of verses it would bring down upon me from other poets — as every mention of a new book loads my mail with new books for a month.

If I ventured to advise you I should recommend to you the simple, ordinary meters and forms native to our language.

I await the photograph of the pretty sister — don't fancy I've forgotten.

It is 1 a. m. and I'm about to drink your health in a glass of Riesling and eat it in a pâte.

My love to Grizzly if you ever see him. Yours ever,

A. B.

[Washington, D. C., January 23, 1901.]

MY DEAR DOYLE,

Your letter of the 16th has just come and as I am waiting at my office (where I seldom go) I shall amuse myself by replying "to onct." See here, I don't purpose that your attack on poor Morrow's book shall become a "continuous performance," nor even an "annual ceremony." It is not "rot." It is not "filthy." It does not "suggest bed-pans," — at least it did not to me, and I'll wager something that Morrow never thought of them. Observe and consider: If his hero and heroine had been man and wife, the bed-pan would have been there, just the same; yet you would not have thought of it. Every reader would have been touched by the husband's devotion. A physician has to do with many unpleasant things; whom do his ministrations disgust? A trained nurse lives in an atmosphere of bed-pans — to whom is her presence or work suggestive of them? I'm thinking of the heroic Father Damien and his lepers; do you dwell upon the rotting limbs and foul distortions of his unhappy charges? Is not his voluntary martyrdom one of the sanest, cleanest, most elevating memories in all history? Then it is *not* the bed-pan necessity that disgusts you; it is something else. It is the fact that the hero of the story, being neither physician, articled nurse, nor certificated husband, nevertheless performed *their* work. He ministered to the helpless in a natural way without authority from church or college, quite irregular and improper and all that. My noble critic, there speaks in your blood the Untamed Philistine. You were not caught young enough. You came into letters and art with all your beastly conventionalities in full mastery of you. Take a purge. Forget that there are Philistines. Forget that they have put their abominable pantalettes upon the legs of Nature. Forget that their code of morality and manners (it stinks worse than a bed-pan) does *not* exist in the serene altitude of great art, toward which you have set your toes and into which I want you to climb. I know about this thing. I, too, tried to rise with all that dead weight dragging at my feet. Well, I could not — now I could if I cared to. In my mind I do. It is not freedom of act — not freedom of living, for which I contend, but freedom of thought, of mind, of spirit; the freedom to see in the horrible laws, prejudices, custom, conventionalities of the multitude, something good for them, but of no value to you in your art. In your life and conduct defer to as much of it as you will (you'll find it convenient to defer to a whole lot), but in your mind and art let not the Philistine enter, nor even speak a word through the keyhole. My own chief objection to Morrow's story is (as I apprised him) its unnaturalness. He did not dare to follow the logical course of his narrative. He was too cowardly (or had too keen an eye upon his market of prudes) to make hero and heroine join in the holy bonds of *bed*lock, as they naturally, inevitably and rightly would have done long before she was able to be about. I daresay that, too, would have seemed to you "filthy," without the parson and his fee. When you analyze your objection to the story (as I have tried to do for you) you will find that it all crystallizes into that — the absence of the parson. I don't envy you your view of the matter, and I really don't think you greatly enjoy it yourself. I forgot to say: Suppose they had been two men, two partners in hunting, mining, or exploring, as frequently occurs. Would the bed-pan suggestion have come to you? Did it come to you when you read of the slow, but not uniform, starvation of Greeley's party in the arctic? Of course not. Then it is a matter, not of bed-pans, but of sex-exposure (unauthorized by the church), of prudery — of that artificial thing, the "sense of shame," of which the great Greeks knew nothing; of which the great Japanese know nothing; of which Art knows nothing. Dear Doctor, do you really put trousers on your piano-legs? Does your indecent intimacy with your mirror make you blush?

There, there's the person whom I've been waiting for (I'm to take her to dinner, and I'm not married to even so much of her as her little toe) has come; and until you offend again, you are immune from the switch. May all your brother Philistines have to "Kiss the place to make it well."

Pan is dead! Long live Bed-Pan!

Yours ever,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, February 17, 1901.]

MY DEAR STERLING,

I send back the poems, with a few suggestions. You grow great so rapidly that I shall not much longer dare to touch your work. I mean that.

Your criticisms of Stedman's Anthology are just. But equally just ones can be made of any anthology. None of them can suit any one. I fancy Stedman did not try to "live up" to his standard, but to make *representative*, though not always the *best*, selections. It would hardly do to leave out Whitman, for example. *We* may not like him; thank God, we don't; but many others — the big fellows too — do; and in England he is thought great. And then Stedman has the bad luck to know a lot of poets personally — many bad poets. Put yourself in his place. Would you leave out me if you honestly thought my work bad?

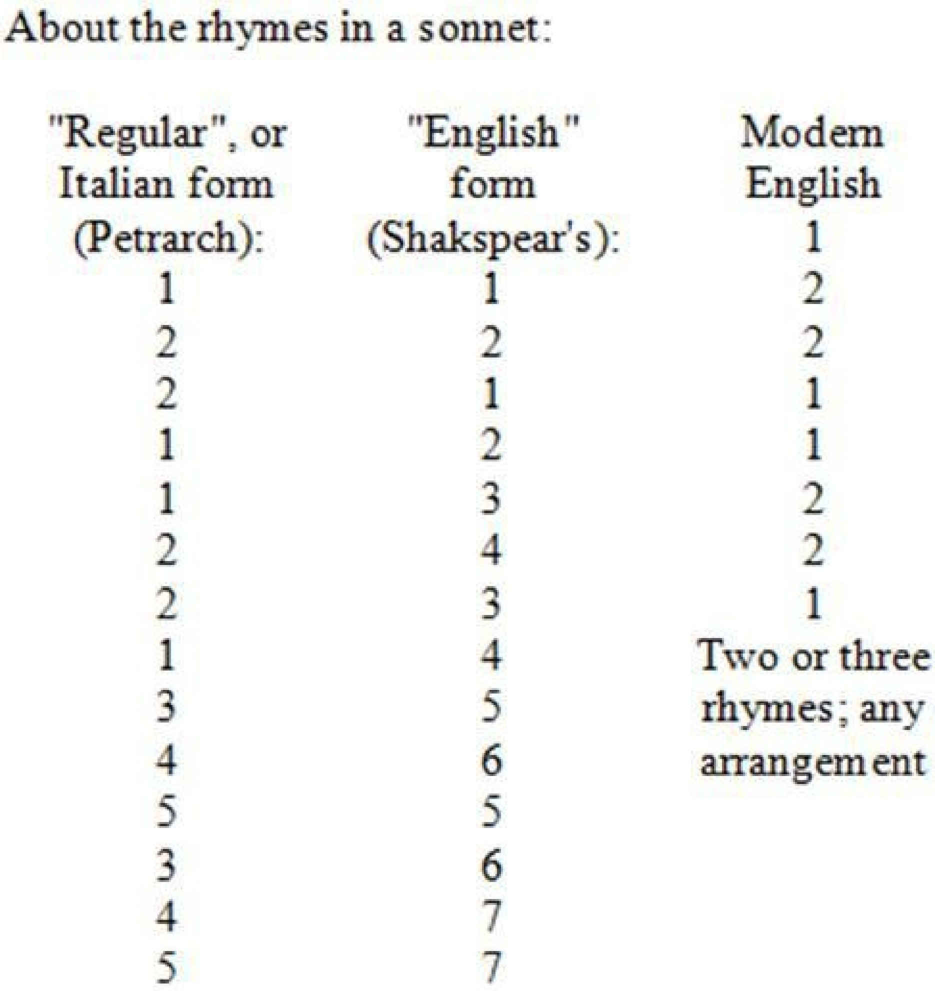
In any compilation we will all miss some of our favorites — and find some of the public's favorites. You miss from Whittier "Joseph Sturge" — I the sonnet "Forgiveness," and so forth. Alas, there is no universal standard!

Thank you for the photographs. Miss * is a pretty girl, truly, and has the posing instinct as well. She has the place of honor on my mantel. * But what scurvy knave has put the stage-crime into her mind? If you know that life as I do you will prefer that she die, poor girl.

It is no trouble, but a pleasure, to go over your verses — I am as proud of your talent as if I'd made it.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[over]



About the rhymes in a sonnet:

"Regular", or Italian form (Petrarch):	"English" form (Shakspear's):	Modern English
1	1	1
2	2	2
2	1	2
1	2	1
1	3	1
2	4	2
2	3	2
1	4	1
3	5	Two or three rhymes; any arrangement
4	6	
5	5	
3	6	
4	7	
5	7	

There are good reasons for preferring the regular Italian form created by Petrarch — who knew a thing or two; and sometimes good reasons for another arrangement — of the sestet rhymes. If one should sacrifice a great thought to be like Petrarch one would not resemble him.

A. B.

[Washington, D. C., May 2, 1901.]

MY DEAR STERLING,

I am sending to the “Journal” your splendid poem on Memorial Day. Of course I can’t say what will be its fate. I am not even personally acquainted with the editor of the department to which it goes. But if he has not the brains to like it he is to send it back and I’ll try to place it elsewhere. It is great — great! — the loftiest note that you have struck and *held*.

Maybe I owe you a lot of letters. I don’t know — my correspondence all in arrears and I’ve not the heart to take it up.

Thank you for your kind words of sympathy.[2] I’m hit harder than any one can guess from the known facts — am a bit broken and gone gray of it all.

[2] Concerning the death of his son Leigh.

But I remember you asked the title of a book of synonyms. It is “Roget’s Thesaurus,” a good and useful book.

The other poems I will look up soon and consider. I’ve made no alterations in the “Memorial Day” except to insert the omitted stanza. Sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, May 9, 1901.]

MY DEAR STERLING,

I send the poems with suggestions. There’s naught to say about ‘em that I’ve not said of your other work. Your “growth in grace” (and other poetic qualities) is something wonderful. You are leaving my other “pupils” so far behind that they are no longer “in it.” Seriously, you “promise” better than any of the new men in our literature — and perform better than all but Markham in his lucid intervals, alas, too rare.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, May 22, 1901.]

MY DEAR STERLING,

I enclose a proof of the poem[3] — all marked up. The poem was offered to the Journal, but to the wrong editor. I would not offer it to him in whose department it could be used, for he once turned down some admirable verses of my friend Scheffauer which I sent him. I’m glad the Journal is *not* to have it, for it now goes into the Washington Post — and the Post into the best houses here and elsewhere — a good, clean, unyellow paper. I’ll send you some copies with the poem.

[3] “Memorial Day.”

I think my marks are intelligible — I mean my *re*marks. Perhaps you’ll not approve all, or anything, that I did to the poem; I’ll only ask you to endure. When you publish in covers you can restore to the original draft if you like. I had not time (after my return from New York) to get your approval and did the best and the least I could.

*

My love to your pretty wife and sister. Let me know how hard you hate me for monkeying with your sacred lines.

Sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

Yes, your poem recalled my “Invocation” as I read it; but it is better, and not too much like — hardly like at all except in the “political” part. Both, in that, are characterized, I think, by decent restraint. How * would, at those places, have ranted and chewed soap! — a superior quality of soap, I confess.

A. B.

[1825 Nineteenth St., N. W., Washington, D. C., June 30, 1901.]

MY DEAR STERLING,

I am glad my few words of commendation were not unpleasing to you. I meant them all and more. You ought to have praise, seeing that it is all you got. The “Post,” like most other newspapers, “don’t pay for poetry.” What a damning confession! It means that the public is as insensible to poetry as a pig to — well, to poetry. To any sane mind such a poem as yours is worth more than all the other contents of a newspaper for a year.

I’ve not found time to consider your “bit of blank” yet — at least not as carefully as it probably merits.

My relations with the present editor of the Examiner are not unfriendly, I hope, but they are too slight to justify me in suggesting anything to him, or even drawing his attention to anything. I hoped you would be sufficiently “enterprising” to get your poem into the paper if you cared to have it there. I wrote Dr. Doyle about you. He is a dear fellow and you should know each other. As to Scheffauer, he is another. If you want him to see your poem why not send it to him? But the last I heard he was very ill. I’m rather anxious to hear more about him.

It was natural to enclose the stamps, but I won’t have it so — so there! as the women say.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[1825 Nineteenth St., N. W., Washington, D. C., July 15, 1901.]

MY DEAR STERLING,

Here is the bit of blank. When are we to see the book? Needless question — when you can spare the money to pay for publication, I suppose, if by that time you are ambitious to achieve public inattention. That’s my notion of encouragement — I like to cheer up the young author as he sets his face toward “the peaks of song.”

Say, that photograph of the pretty sister — the one with a downward slope of the eyes — is all faded out. That is a real misfortune: it reduces the sum of human happiness hereabout. Can't you have one done in fast colors and let me have it? The other is all right, but that is not the one that I like the better for my wall. Sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Olympia, Washington, D. C., December 16, 1901.]

MY DEAR STERLING,

I enclose the poems with a few suggestions. They require little criticism of the sort that would be "helpful." As to their merit I think them good, but not great. I suppose you do not expect to write great things every time. Yet in the body of your letter (of Oct. 22) you do write greatly — and say that the work is "egoistic" and "unprintable." If it[4] were addressed to another person than myself I should say that it is "printable" exceedingly. Call it what you will, but let me tell you it will probably be long before you write anything better than some — many — of these stanzas.

[4] "Dedication" poem to Ambrose Bierce.

You ask if you have correctly answered your own questions. Yes; in four lines of your running comment:

"I suppose that I'd do the greater good in the long run by making my work as good poetry as possible."

*

Of course I deplore your tendency to dalliance with the demagogic muse. I hope you will not set your feet in the dirty paths — leading nowhither — of social and political "reform".... I hope you will not follow * in making a sale of your poet's birthright for a mess of "popularity." If you do I shall have to part company with you, as I have done with him and at least *one* of his betters, for I draw the line at demagogues and anarchists, however gifted and however beloved.

Let the "poor" alone — they are oppressed by nobody but God. Nobody hates them, nobody despises. "The rich" love them a deal better than they love one another. But I'll not go into these matters; your own good sense must be your salvation if you are saved. I recognise the temptations of environment: you are of San Francisco, the paradise of ignorance, anarchy and general yellowness. Still, a poet is not altogether the creature of his place and time — at least not of his to-day and his parish.

By the way, you say that * is your only associate that knows anything of literature. She is a dear girl, but look out for her; she will make you an anarchist if she can, and persuade you to kill a President or two every fine morning. I warrant you she can pronounce the name of McKinley’s assassin to the ultimate zed, and has a little graven image of him next her heart.

Yes, you can republish the Memorial Day poem without the Post’s consent — could do so in “book form” even if the *Post* had copyrighted it, which it did not do. I think the courts have held that in purchasing work for publication in his newspaper or magazine the editor acquires no right in it, *except for that purpose*. Even if he copyright it that is only to protect him from other newspapers or magazines; the right to publish in a book remains with the author. Better ask a lawyer though — preferably without letting him know whether you are an editor or an author.

I ought to have answered (as well as able) these questions before, but I have been ill and worried, and have written few letters, and even done little work, and that only of the pot-boiling sort.

My daughter has recovered and returned to Los Angeles.

Please thank Miss * for the beautiful photographs — I mean for being so beautiful as to “take” them, for doubtless I owe their possession to you.

I wrote Doyle about you and he cordially praised your work as incomparably superior to his own and asked that you visit him. He’s a lovable fellow and you’d not regret going to Santa Cruz and boozing with him.

Thank you for the picture of Grizzly and the cub of him.

Sincerely yours, with best regards to the pretty ever-so-much-better half of you,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

P.S. *

1902.

[The Olympia, Washington, D. C., March 15, 1902.]

MY DEAR STERLING,

Where are you going to stop? — I mean at what stage of development? I presume you have not a “whole lot” of poems really writ, and have not been feeding them to me, the least good first, and not in the order of their production. So it must be that you are advancing at a stupendous rate. This last[5] beats any and all that went before — or I am bewitched and befuddled. I dare not trust myself to say what I think of it. In manner it is great, but the greatness of the theme! — that is beyond anything.

[5] “The Testimony of the Suns.”

It is a new field, the broadest yet discovered. To paraphrase Coleridge,

You are the first that ever burst
Into that silent *[unknown]* sea —

a silent sea *because* no one else has burst into it in full song. True, there have been short incursions across the “border,” but only by way of episode. The tremendous phenomena of Astronomy have never had adequate poetic treatment, their meaning adequate expression. You must make it your own domain. You shall be the poet of the skies, the prophet of the suns. Don’t fiddle-faddle with such infinitesimal and tiresome trivialities as (for example) the immemorial squabbles of “rich” and “poor” on this “mote in the sun-beam.” (Both “classes,” when you come to that, are about equally disgusting and unworthy — there’s not a pin’s moral difference between them.) Let them cheat and pick pockets and cut throats to the satisfaction of their base instincts, but do thou regard them not. Moreover, by that great law of change which you so clearly discern, there can be no permanent composition of their nasty strife. “Settle” it how they will — another beat of the pendulum and all is as before; and ere another, Man will again be savage, sitting on his naked haunches and gnawing raw bones.

Yes, circumstances make the “rich” what they are. And circumstances make the poor what *they* are. I have known both, long and well. The rich — *while* rich — are a trifle better. There’s nothing like poverty to nurture badness. But in this country there are no such “classes” as “rich” and “poor”: as a rule, the wealthy man of to-day was a poor devil yesterday; the poor devils of to-day have an equal chance to be rich to-morrow — or would have if they had equal brains and providence. The system that gives them the chance is not an oppressive one. Under a really oppressive system a salesman in a village grocery could not have risen to a salary of one million dollars a year because he was worth it to his employers, as Schwab has done. True, some men get rich by dishonesty, but the poor commonly cheat as hard as they can and remain poor — thereby escaping observation and censure. The moral difference between cheating to the limit of a small opportunity and cheating to the limit of a great one is to me indiscernable. The workman who "skimps his work" is just as much a rascal as the "director" who corners a crop.

As to "Socialism." I am something of a Socialist myself; that is, I think that the principle, which has always coexisted with competition, each safeguarding the other, may be advantageously extended. But those who rail against "the competitive system," and think they suffer from it, really suffer from their own unthrift and incapacity. For the competent and provident it is an ideally perfect system. As the other fellows are not of those who effect permanent reforms, or reforms of any kind, pure Socialism is the dream of a dream.

But why do I write all this. One's opinions on such matters are unaffected by reason and instance; they are born of feeling and temperament. There is a Socialist diathesis, as there is an Anarchist diathesis. Could you teach a bulldog to retrieve, or a sheep to fetch and carry? Could you make a "born artist" comprehend a syllogism? As easily persuade a poet that black is not whatever color he loves. Somebody has defined poetry as "glorious nonsense." It is not an altogether false definition, albeit I consider poetry the flower and fruit of speech and would rather write gloriously than sensibly. But if poets saw things as they are they would write no more poetry.

Nevertheless, I venture to ask you: Can't you see in the prosperity of the strong and the adversity of the weak a part of that great beneficent law, "the survival of the fittest"? Don't you see that such evils as inhere in "the competitive system" are evils only to individuals, but blessings to the race by gradually weeding out the incompetent and their progeny?

I've done, i' faith. Be any kind of 'ist or 'er that you will, but don't let it get into your ink. Nobody is calling you to deliver your land from Error's chain. What we want of you is poetry, not politics. And if you care for fame just have the goodness to consider if any "champion of the poor" has ever obtained it. From the earliest days down to Massanielo, Jack Cade and Eugene Debs the leaders and prophets of "the masses" have been held unworthy. And with reason too, however much injustice is mixed in with the right of it. Eventually the most conscientious, popular and successful "demagogue" comes into a heritage of infamy. The most brilliant gifts cannot save him. That will be the fate of Edwin Markham if he does not come out o' that, and it will be the fate of George Sterling if he will not be warned.

You think that "the main product of that system" (the "competitive") "is the love of money." What a case of the cart before the horse! The love of money is not the product, but the root, of the system — not the effect, but the cause. When one man desires to be better off than another he competes with him. You can abolish the system when you can abolish the desire — when you can make man as Nature did *not* make him, content to be as poor as the poorest. Do away with the desire to excel and you may set up your Socialism at once. But what kind of a race of sloths and slugs will you have?

But, bless me, I shall *never* have done if I say all that comes to me.

Why, of course my remarks about * were facetious — playful. She really is an anarchist, and her sympathies are with criminals, whom she considers the "product" of the laws, but — well, she inherited the diathesis and can no more help it than she can the color of her pretty eyes. But she is a child — and except in so far as her convictions make her impossible they do not count. She would not hurt a fly — not even if, like the toad, it had a precious jewel in its head that it did not work for. But I am speaking of the * that *I* knew. If I did not know that the anarchist leopard's spots "will wash," your words would make me think that she might have changed. It does not matter what women think, if thinking it may be called, and * will never be other than lovable.

Lest you have *not* a copy of the verses addressed to me I enclose one that I made myself. Of course their publication could not be otherwise than pleasing to me if you care to do it. You need not fear the "splendid weight" expression, and so forth — there is nothing "conceited" in the poem. As it was addressed to me, I have not criticised it — I can't. And I guess it needs no criticism.

I fear for the other two-thirds of this latest poem. If you descend from Arcturus to Earth, from your nebulae to your neighbors, from Life to lives, from the measureless immensities of space to the petty passions of us poor insects, won't you incur the peril of anti-climax? I doubt if you can touch the "human interest" after those high themes without an awful tumble. I should be sorry to see the poem "peter out," or "soak in." It would be as if Goethe had let his "Prologue in Heaven" expire in a coon song. You have reached the "heights of dream" all right, but how are you to stay there to the end? By the way, you must perfect yourself in Astronomy, or rather get a general knowledge of it, which I fear you lack. Be sure about the pronunciation of astronomical names.

I have read some of Jack London's work and think it clever. Of Whitaker I never before heard, I fear. If London wants to criticise your "Star poem" what's the objection? I should not think, though, from his eulogism of *, that he is very critical. *

Where are you to place Browning? Among thinkers. In his younger days, when he wrote in English, he stood among the poets. I remember writing once — of the thinker: “There’s nothing more obscure than Browning except blacking.” I’ll stand to that.

No, don’t take the trouble to send me a copy of these verses: I expect to see them in a book pretty soon. *

Sincerely yours, AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Olympia, Washington, D. C., March 31, 1902.]

DEAR STERLING,

I am glad to know that you too have a good opinion of that poem.[6] One should know about one’s own work. Most writers think their work good, but good writers know it. Pardon me if I underrated your astronomical knowledge. My belief was based on your use of those names. I never met with the spelling “Betelgeux”; and even if it is correct and picturesque I’d not use it if I were you, for it does not quite speak itself, and you can’t afford to jolt the reader’s attention from your thought to a matter of pronunciation. In my student days we, I am sure, were taught to say Procy´on. I don’t think I’ve heard it pronounced since, and I’ve no authority at hand. If you are satisfied with Pro´cyon I suppose it is that. But your pronunciation was Aldeb´aran or your meter very crazy indeed. I asked (with an interrogation point) if it were not Aldeba´ran — and I think it is. Fomalhaut I don’t know about; I thought it French and masculine. In that case it would, I suppose, be “ho,” not “hote.”

[6] “The Testimony of the Suns.”

Don’t cut out that stanza, even if “clime” doesn’t seem to me to have anything to do with duration. The stanza is good enough to stand a blemish.

“Ye stand rebuked by suns who claim” — I was wrong in substituting “that” for “who,” not observing that it would make it ambiguous. I merely yielded to a favorite impulse: to say “that” instead of “who,” and did not count the cost.

Don’t cut out *any* stanza — if you can’t perfect them let them go imperfect.

“Without or genesis or end.”
“Devoid of birth, devoid of end.”

These are not so good as

“Without beginning, without end”; — I submit them to suggest a way to overcome that identical rhyme. All you have to do is get rid of the second "without." I should not like "impend."

Yes, I vote for Orion's *sword* of suns. "Cimetar" sounds better, but it is more specific — less generic. It is modern — or, rather, less ancient than "sword," and makes one think of Turkey and the Holy Land. But "sword" — there were swords before Homer. And I don't think the man who named this constellation ever saw a curved blade. And yet, and yet—"cimetar of suns" is "mighty catchin'."

No, indeed, I could not object to your considering the heavens in a state of war. I have sometimes fancied I could hear the rush and roar of it. Why, a few months ago I began a sonnet thus:

"Not as two erring spheres together grind,
With monstrous ruin, in the vast of space,
Destruction born of that malign embrace —
Their hapless peoples all to death consigned—" *etc.*

I've been a star-gazer all my life — from my habit of being "out late," I guess; and the things have always seemed to me *alive*.

The change in the verses *ad meum*, from "*thy* clearer light" to "*the* clearer light" may have been made modestly or inadvertently — I don't recollect. It is, of course, no improvement and you may do as you please. I'm uniformly inadvertent, but intermittently modest.

*

A class of stuff that I can't (without "trouble in the office") write my own way I will not write at all. So I'm writing very little of anything but nonsense. *

With best regards to Mrs. Sterling and Miss Marian I am

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

Leigh died a year ago this morning. I wish I could stop counting the days.

[The Olympia, Washington, D. C., April 15, 1902.]

DEAR STERLING,

All right — I only wanted you to be *sure* about those names of stars; it would never do to be less than sure.

After all our talk (made by me) I guess that stanza would better stand as first written. "Clime" — climate — connotes temperature, weather, and so forth, in ordinary speech, but a poet may make his own definitions, I suppose, and compel the reader to study them out and accept them.

Your misgiving regarding your inability to reach so high a plane again as in this poem is amusing, but has an element of the pathetic. It certainly is a misfortune for a writer to do his *best* work early; but I fancy you'd better trust your genius and do its bidding whenever the monkey chooses to bite. "The Lord will provide." Of course you have read Stockton's story "His Wife's Deceased Sister." But Stockton gets on very well, despite "The Lady or the Tiger." I've a notion that you'll find other tragedies among the stars if earth doesn't supply you with high enough themes.

Will I write a preface for the book? Why, yes, if you think me competent. Emerson commands us to "hitch our wagon to a star?" and, egad! here's a whole constellation — a universe — of stars to draw mine! It makes me blink to think of it.

O yes, I'd like well enough to "leave the Journal," but —

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Olympia, Washington, D. C., July 10, 1902.]

MY DEAR STERLING,

If rejection wounded, all writers would bleed at every pore. Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done. Of course I shall be glad to go over your entire body of work again and make suggestions if any occur to me. It will be no trouble — I could not be more profitably employed than in critically reading you, nor more agreeably.

*

Of course your star poem has one defect — if it is a defect — that limits the circle of understanding and admiring readers — its lack of "*human* interest." We human insects, as a rule, care for nothing but ourselves, and think that is best which most closely touches such emotions and sentiments as grow out of our relations, the one with another. I don't share the preference, and a few others do not, believing that there are things more interesting than men and women. The Heavens, for example. But who knows, or cares anything about them — even knows the name of a single constellation? Hardly any one but the professional astronomers — and there are not enough of them to buy your books and give you fame. I should be sorry not to have that poem published — sorry if you did not write more of the kind. But while it may impress and dazzle "the many" it will not win them. They want you to finger their heart-strings and pull the cord that works their arms and legs. So you must finger and pull — too.

The Château Yquem came all right, and is good. Thank you for it — albeit I'm sorry you feel that you must do things like that. It is very conventional and, I fear, “proper.” However, I remember that you used to do so when you could not by any stretch of imagination have felt that you were under an “obligation.” So I guess it is all right — just your way of reminding me of the old days. Anyhow, the wine is so much better than my own that I’ve never a scruple when drinking it.

Has “Maid Marian” a photograph of me? — I don’t remember. If not I’ll send her one; I’ve just had some printed from a negative five or six years old. I’ve renounced the photograph habit, as one renounces other habits when age has made them ridiculous — or impossible.

Send me the typewritten book when you have it complete.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, August 19, 1902.]

MY DEAR STERLING,

I suppose you are in Seattle, but this letter will keep till your return.

I am delighted to know that I am to have “the book” so soon, and will give it my best attention and (if you still desire) some prefatory lines. Think out a good title and I shall myself be hospitable to any suggestion of my dæmon in the matter. He has given me nothing for the star poem yet.

*

You’ll “learn in suffering what you teach in song,” all right; but let us hope the song will be the richer for it. It *will* be. For that reason I never altogether “pity the sorrows” of a writer — knowing they are good for him. He needs them in his business. I suspect you must have shed a tear or two since I knew you.

I’m sending you a photograph, but you did not tell me if Maid Marian the Superb already has one — that’s what I asked you, and if you don’t answer I shall ask her.

*

Yes, I am fairly well, and, though not “happy,” content. But I’m dreadfully sorry about Peterson.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

I am about to break up my present establishment and don’t know where my next will be. Better address me “Care N. Y. American and Journal Bureau, Washington, D. C.”

You see I’m still chained to the oar of yellow journalism, but it is a rather light servitude.

[Address me at 1321 Yale Street, Washington, D. C., December 20, 1902.]

DEAR STERLING,

I fancy you must fear by this time that I did not get the poems, but I did. I'll get at them, doubtless, after awhile, though a good deal of manuscript — including a couple of novels! — is ahead of them; and one published book of bad poems awaits a particular condemnation.

I'm a little embarrassed about the preface which I'm to write. I fear you must forego the preface or I the dedication. That kind of "coöperation" doesn't seem in very good taste: it smacks of "mutual admiration" in the bad sense, and the reviewers would probably call it "log-rolling." Of course it doesn't matter too much what the reviewers say, but it matters a lot what the intelligent readers think; and your book will have no others. I really shouldn't like to write the preface of a book dedicated to me, though I did not think of that at first.

The difficulty could be easily removed by *not* dedicating the book to me were it not that that would sacrifice the noble poem with my name atop of it. That poem is itself sufficiently dedicatory if printed by itself in the forepages of the book and labeled "Dedication — To Ambrose Bierce." I'm sure that vanity has nothing to do, or little to do, with my good opinion of the verses. And, after all, they *show* that I have said *to you* all that I could say to the reader in your praise and encouragement. What do you think?

As to dedicating individual poems to other fellows, I have not the slightest hesitancy in advising you against it. The practice smacks of the amateur and is never, I think, pleasing to anybody but the person so honored. The custom has fallen into "innocuous desuetude" and there appears to be no call for its revival. Pay off your obligations (if such there be) otherwise. You may put it this way if you like: The whole book being dedicated to me, no part of it *can* be dedicated to another. Or this way: Secure in my exalted position I don't purpose sharing the throne with rival (and inferior) claimants. They be gam doodled!

Seriously — but I guess it is serious enough as it stands. It occurs to me that in saying: "no part of it *can* be dedicated to another" I might be understood as meaning: "no part of it *must* be," *etc.* No; I mean only that the dedication to another would contradict the dedication to me. The two things are (as a matter of fact) incompatible.

Well, if you think a short preface by me preferable to the verses with my name, all right; I will cheerfully write it, and that will leave you free to honor your other friends if you care to. But those are great lines, and implying, as they do, all that a set preface could say, it seems to me that they ought to stand.

*

Maid Marian shall have the photograph.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

1903.

[1321 Yale Street, Washington, D. C., March 1, 1903.]

MY DEAR STERLING,

You are a brick. You shall do as you will. My chief reluctance is that if it become known, or *when* it becomes known, there may ensue a suspicion of my honesty in praising you and *your* book; for critics and readers are not likely to look into the matter of dates. For your sake I should be sorry to have it thought that my commendation was only a log-rolling incident; for myself, I should care nothing about it. This eel is accustomed to skinning.

It is not the least pleasing of my reflections that my friends have always liked my work — or me — well enough to want to publish my books at their own expense. Everything that I have written could go to the public that way if I would consent. In the two instances in which I did consent they got their money back all right, and I do not doubt that it will be so in this; for if I did not think there was at least a little profit in a book of mine I should not offer it to a publisher. "Shapes of Clay" *ought* to be published in California, and it would have been long ago if I had not been so lazy and so indisposed to dicker with the publishers. Properly advertised — which no book of mine ever has been — it should sell there if nowhere else. Why, then, do *I* not put up the money? Well, for one reason, I've none to put up. Do you care for the other reasons?

But I must make this a condition. If there is a loss, *I* am to bear it. To that end I shall expect an exact accounting from your Mr. Wood, and the percentage that Scheff. purposes having him pay to me is to go to you. The copyright is to be mine, but nothing else until you are entirely recouped. But all this I will arrange with Scheff., who, I take it, is to attend to the business end of the matter, with, of course, your assent to the arrangements that he makes.

I shall write Scheff. to-day to go ahead and make his contract with Mr. Wood on these lines. Scheff. appears not to know who the "angel" in the case is, and he need not, unless, or until, you want him to.

I've a pretty letter from Maid Marian in acknowledgment of the photograph. I shall send one to Mrs. Sterling at once, in the sure and certain hope of getting another. It is good of her to remember my existence, considering that your scoundrelly monopoly of her permitted us to meet so seldom. I go in for a heavy tax on married men who live with their wives.

"She holds no truce with Death *or* Peace" means that with *one* of them she holds no truce; "nor" makes it mean that she holds no truce with *either*. The misuse of "or" (its use to mean "nor") is nearly everybody's upsetting sin. So common is it that "nor" instead usually sounds harsh.

I omitted the verses on "Puck," not because Bunner is dead, but because his work is dead too, and the verses appear to lack intrinsic merit to stand alone. I shall perhaps omit a few more when I get the proofs (I wish you could see the bushels I've left out already) and add a few serious ones.

I'm glad no end that you and Scheff. have met. I'm fond of the boy and he likes me, I think. He too has a book of verses on the ways, and I hope for it a successful launching. I've been through it all; some of it is great in the matter of thews and brawn; some fine.

Pardon the typewriter; I wanted a copy of this letter.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The New York "American" Bureau, Washington, D. C., June 13, 1903.]

DEAR STERLING,

It is good to hear from you again and to know that the book is so nearly complete as to be in the hands of the publishers. I dare say they will not have it, and you'll have to get it out at your own expense. When it comes to that I shall hope to be of service to you, as you have been to me.

So you like Scheff. Yes, he is a good boy and a good friend. I wish you had met our friend Dr. Doyle, who has now gone the long, lone journey. It has made a difference to me, but that matters little, for the time is short in which to grieve. I shall soon be going his way.

No, I shall not put anything about the * person into "Shapes of Clay." His offence demands another kind of punishment, and until I meet him he goes unpunished. I once went to San Francisco to punish him (but that was in hot blood) but * of "The Wave" told me the man was a hopeless invalid, suffering from locomotor ataxia. I have always believed that until I got your letter and one from Scheff. Is it not so? — or *was* it not? If not he has good reason to think me a coward, for his offence was what men are killed for; but of course one does not kill a helpless person, no matter what the offence is. If * lied to me I am most anxious to know it; he has always professed himself a devoted friend.

The passage that you quote from Jack London strikes me as good. I don't dislike the word "penetrate" — rather like it. It is in frequent use regarding exploration and discovery. But I think you right about "rippling"; it is too lively a word to be outfitted with such an adjective as "melancholy." I see London has an excellent article in "The Critic" on "The Terrible and Tragic in Fiction." He knows how to think a bit.

What do I think of Cowley-Brown and his “Goosequill”? I did not know that he had revived it; it died several years ago. I never met him, but in both Chicago and London (where he had “The Philistine,” or “The Anti-Philistine,” I do not at the moment remember which) he was most kind to me and my work. In one number of his magazine — the London one — he had four of my stories and a long article about me which called the blushes to my maiden cheek like the reflection of a red rose in the petal of a violet. Naturally I think well of Cowley-Brown.

You make me sad to think of the long leagues and the monstrous convexity of the earth separating me from your camp in the redwoods. There are few things that I would rather do than join that party; and I’d be the last to strike my tent and sling my swag. Alas, it cannot be — not this year. My outings are limited to short runs along this coast. I was about to set out on one this morning; and wrote a hasty note to Scheff in consequence of my preparations. In five hours I was suffering from asthma, and am now confined to my room. But for eight months of the year here I am immune — as I never was out there.

*

You will have to prepare yourself to endure a good deal of praise when that book is out. One does not mind when one gets accustomed to it. It neither pleases nor bores; you will have just no feeling about it at all. But if you really care for *my* praise I hope you have quoted a bit of it at the head of those dedicatory verses, as I suggested. That will give them a raison d’être.

With best regards to Mrs. Sterling and Katie I am sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

P.S. — If not too much trouble you may remind Dick Partington and wife that I continue to exist and to remember them pleasantly.

[N. Y. “American” Bureau, Washington, D. C., [July, 1903].]

DEAR SCHEFF:

I got the proofs yesterday, and am returning them by this mail. The “report of progress” is every way satisfactory, and I don’t doubt that a neat job is being done.

The correction that you made is approved. I should have wanted and expected you to make many corrections and suggestions, but that I have had a purpose in making this book — namely, that it should represent my work at its average. In pursuance of this notion I was not hospitable even to suggestions, and have retained much work that I did not myself particularly approve; some of it trivial. You know I have always been addicted to trifling, and no book from which trivialities were excluded would fairly represent me.

I could not commend this notion in another. In your work and Sterling's I have striven hard to help you to come as near to perfection as we could, because perfection is what you and he want, and as young writers ought to want, the character of your work being higher than mine. I reached my literary level long ago, and seeing that it is not a high one there would seem to be a certain affectation, even a certain dishonesty, in making it seem higher than it is by republication of my best only. Of course I have not carried out this plan so consistently as to make the book dull: I had to "draw the line" at that.

I say all this because I don't want you and Sterling to think that I disdain assistance: I simply decided beforehand not to avail myself of its obvious advantages. You would have done as much for the book in one way as you have done in another.

I'll have to ask you to suggest that Mr. Wood have a man go over all the matter in the book, and see that none of the pieces are duplicated, as I fear they are. Reading the titles will not be enough: I might have given the same piece two titles. It will be necessary to compare first lines, I think. That will be drudgery which I'll not ask you to undertake: some of Wood's men, or some of the printer's men, will do it as well; it is in the line of their work.

The "Dies Irae" is the most earnest and sincere of religious poems; my travesty of it is mere solemn fooling, which fact is "given away" in the prose introduction, where I speak of my version being of possible service in the church! The travesty is not altogether unfair — it was inevitably suggested by the author's obvious inaccessibility to humor and logic — a peculiarity that is, however, observable in all religious literature, for it is a fundamental necessity to the religious mind. Without logic and a sense of the ludicrous a man is religious as certainly as without webbed feet a bird has the land habit.

It is funny, but I am a "whole lot" more interested in seeing your cover of the book than my contents of it. I don't at all doubt — since you dared undertake it — that your great conception will find a fit interpreter in your hand; so my feeling is not anxiety. It is just interest — pure interest in what is above my powers, but in which *you* can work. By the way, Keller, of the old "Wasp" was *not* the best of its cartoonists. The best — the best of *all* cartoonists if he had not died at eighteen — was another German, named Barkhaus. I have all his work and have long cherished a wish to republish it with the needed explanatory text — much of it being "local" and "transient." Some day, perhaps — most likely not. But Barkhaus was a giant.

How I envy you! There are few things that would please me so well as to "drop in" on you folks in Sterling's camp. Honestly, I think all that prevents is the (to me) killing journey by rail. And two months would be required, going and returning by sea. But the rail trip across the continent always gives me a horrible case of asthma, which lasts for weeks. I shall never take *that* journey again if I can avoid it. What times you and they will have about the campfire and the table! I feel like an exile, though I fear I don’t look and act the part.

I did not make the little excursion I was about to take when I wrote you recently. Almost as I posted the letter I was taken ill and have not been well since.

Poor Doyle! how thoughtful of him to provide for the destruction of my letters! But I fear Mrs. Doyle found some of them queer reading — if she read them.

*

Great Scott! if ever they begin to publish mine there will be a circus! For of course the women will be the chief sinners, and — well, they have material a-plenty; they can make many volumes, and your poor dead friend will have so bad a reputation that you’ll swear you never knew him. I dare say, though, you have sometimes been indiscreet, too. *My* besetting sin has been in writing to my girl friends as if they were sweethearts — the which they’ll doubtless not be slow to affirm. The fact that they write to me in the same way will be no defense; for when I’m worm’s meat I can’t present the proof — and wouldn’t if I could. Maybe it won’t matter — if I don’t turn in my grave and so bother the worms.

As Doyle’s “literary executor” I fear your duties will be light: he probably did not leave much manuscript. I judge from his letters that he was despondent about his work and the narrow acceptance that it had. So I assume that he did not leave much more than the book of poems, which no publisher would (or will) take.

You are about to encounter the same stupid indifference of the public — so is Sterling. I’m sure of Sterling, but don’t quite know how it will affect *you*. You’re a pretty sturdy fellow, physically and mentally, but this *may* hurt horribly. I pray that it do not, and could give you — perhaps have given you — a thousand reasons why it *should* not. You are still young and your fame may come while you live; but you must not expect it now, and doubtless do not. To me, and I hope to you, the approval of one person who knows is sweeter than the acclaim of ten thousand who do not — whose acclaim, indeed, I would rather not have. If you do not *feel* this in every fibre of your brain and heart, try to learn to feel it — practice feeling it, as one practices some athletic feat necessary to health and strength.

Thank you very much for the photograph. You are growing too infernally handsome to be permitted to go about unchained. If I had your “advantages” of youth and comeliness I'd go to the sheriff and ask him to lock me up. That would be the honorable thing for you to do, if you don't mind. God be with you — but inattentive.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Aurora, Preston Co., West Virginia, August 15, 1903.]

DEAR STERLING,

I fear that among the various cares incident to my departure from Washington I forgot, or neglected, to acknowledge the Joaquin Miller book that you kindly sent me. I was glad to have it. It has all his characteristic merits and demerits — among the latter, his interminable prolixity, the thinness of the thought, his endless repetition of favorite words and phrases, many of them from his other poems, his mispronunciation, his occasional flashes of prose, and so forth.

Scheff tells me his book is out and mine nearly out. But what of yours? I do fear me it never will be out if you rely upon its "acceptance" by any American publisher. If it meets with no favor among the publisher tribe we must nevertheless get it out; and you will of course let me do what I can. That is only tit for tat. But tell me about it.

I dare say Scheff, who is clever at getting letters out of me — the scamp! — has told you of my being up here atop of the Alleghenies, and why I *am* here. I'm having a rather good time. * Can you fancy me playing croquet, cards, lawn — no, thank God, I've escaped lawn tennis and golf! In respect of other things, though, I'm a glittering specimen of the Summer Old Man.

Did *you* have a good time in the redwoods?

Please present my compliments to Madame (and Mademoiselle) Sterling. Sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Aurora, West Virginia, September 8, 1903.]

DEAR STERLING,

I return the verses with a few suggestions.

I'm sorry your time for poetry is so brief. But take your pencil and figure out how much you would write in thirty years (I hope you'll live that long) at, say, six lines a day. You'll be surprised by the result — and encouraged. Remember that 50,000 words make a fairly long book.

You make me shudder when you say you are reading the "Prattle" of years. I haven't it and should hardly dare to read it if I had. There is so much in it to deplore — so much that is not wise — so much that was the expression of a mood or a whim — so much was not altogether sincere — so many half-truths, and so forth. Make allowances, I beg, and where you cannot, just forgive.

Scheff has mentioned his great desire that you join the Bohemian Club. I know he wants me to advise you to do so. So I'm between two fires and would rather not advise at all. There are advantages (obvious enough) in belonging; and to one of your age and well grounded in sobriety and self-restraint generally, the disadvantages are not so great as to a youngster like Scheff. (Of course he is not so young as he seems to me; but he is younger by a few years and a whole lot of thought than you.)

The trouble with that kind of club — with any club — is the temptation to waste of time and money; and the danger of the drink habit. If one is proof against these a club is all right. I belong to one myself in Washington, and at one time came pretty near to "running" it.

*

No, I don't think Scheff's view of Kipling just. He asked me about putting that skit in the book. It *was* his view and, that being so, I could see no reason for suppressing it in deference to those who do not hold it. I like free speech, though I'd not accord it to my enemies if I were Dictator. I should not think it for the good of the State to let * write verses, for example. The modern fad Tolerance does not charm me, but since it is all the go I'm willing that my friends should have their fling.

I dare say Scheff is unconscious of Kipling's paternity in the fine line in "Back, back to Nature":

"Loudly to the shore cries the surf upon the sea."

But turn to "The Last Chanty," in "The Seven Seas," fill your ears with it and you'll write just such a line yourself.

*

God be decent to you, old man.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Aurora, West Virginia, September 12, 1903.]

DEAR STERLING,

I have yours of the 5th. Before now you have mine of *some* date.

*

I'm glad you like London; I've heard he is a fine fellow and have read one of his books—"The Son of the Wolf," I think is the title — and it seemed clever work mostly. The general impression that remains with me is that it is always winter and always night in Alaska.

*

* will probably be glad to sell his scrap-book later, to get bread. He can't

make a living out of the labor unions alone. I wish he were not a demgagoue and would not, as poor Doyle put it, go a-whoring after their Muse. When he returns to truth and poetry I'll receive him back into favor and he may kick me if he wants to.

No, I can't tell you how to get "Prattle"; if I could I'd not be without it myself. You ask me when I began it in the "Examiner." Soon after Hearst got the paper — I don't know the date — they can tell you at the office and will show you the bound volumes.

I have the bound volumes of the "Argonaut" and "Wasp" during the years when I was connected with them, but my work in the "Examiner" (and previously in the "News Letter" and the London "Fun" and "Figaro" and other papers) I kept only in a haphazard and imperfect way.

I don't recollect giving Scheff any "epigram" on woman or anything else. So I can't send it to you. I amuse myself occasionally with that sort of thing in the "Journal" ("American") and suppose Hearst's other papers copy them, but the "environment" is uncongenial and uninspiring.

Do I think extracts from "Prattle" would sell? I don't think anything of mine will sell. I could make a dozen books of the stuff that I have "saved up" — have a few ready for publication now — but all is vanity so far as profitable publication is concerned. Publishers want nothing from me but novels — and I'll die first.

Who is * — and why? It is good of London to defend me against him. I fancy all you fellows have a-plenty of defending me to do, though truly it is hardly worth while. All my life I have been hated and slandered by all manner of persons except good and intelligent ones; and I don't greatly mind. I knew in the beginning what I had to expect, and I know now that, like spanking, it hurts (sometimes) but does not harm. And the same malevolence that has surrounded my life will surround my memory if I am remembered. Just run over in your mind the names of men who have told the truth about their unworthy fellows and about human nature "as it was given them to see it." They are the bogie-men of history. None of them has escaped vilification. Can poor little I hope for anything better? When you strike you are struck. The world is a skunk, but it has rights; among them that of retaliation. Yes, you deceive yourself if you think the little fellows of letters "like" you, or rather if you think they will like you when they know how big you are. They will lie awake nights to invent new lies about you and new means of spreading them without detection. But you have your revenge: in a few years they'll all be dead — just the same as if you had killed them. Better yet, you'll be dead yourself. So — you have my entire philosophy in two words: "Nothing matters."

Reverting to Scheff. What he has to fear (if he cares) is not incompetent criticism, but public indifference. That does not bite, but poets are an ambitious folk and like the limelight and the center of the stage. Maybe Scheff is different, as I know you are. Try to make him so if he isn't. * Wise poets write for one another. If the public happens to take notice, well and good. Sometimes it does — and then the wise poet would a blacksmith be. But this screed is becoming an essay.

Please give my love to all good Sterlings — those by birth and those by marriage. *

My friends have returned to Washington, and I'm having great times climbing peaks (they are knobs) and exploring gulches and cañons — for which these people have no names — poor things. My dreamland is still unrevisited. They found a Confederate soldier over there the other day, with his rifle alongside. I'm going over to beg his pardon.

Ever yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C. [Postmarked October 12, 1903.]]

MY DEAR STERLING,

I have Jack London's books — the one from you and the one from him. I thank you and shall find the time to read them. I've been back but a few days and find a brace of dozen of books "intitualed" "Shapes of Clay." That the splendid work done by Scheff and Wood and your other associates in your labor of love is most gratifying to me should "go without saying." Surely *I* am most fortunate in having so good friends to care for my interests. Still, there will be an aching void in the heart of me until *your* book is in evidence. Honest, I feel more satisfaction in the work of you and Scheff than in my own. It is through you two that I expect my best fame. And how generously you accord it! — unlike certain others of my "pupils," whom I have assisted far more than I did you.

My trip through the mountains has done my health good — and my heart too. It was a "sentimental journey" in a different sense from Sterne's. Do you know, George, the charm of a new emotion? Of course you do, but at my age I had thought it impossible. Well, I had it repeatedly. Bedad, I think of going again into my old "theatre of war," and setting up a cabin there and living the few days that remain to me in meditation and sentimentalizing. But I should like you to be near enough to come up some Saturday night with some'at to drink. Sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[N. Y. Journal Office, Washington, D. C., October 21, 1903.]

MY DEAR STERLING,

I'm indebted to you for two letters — awfully good ones. In the last you tell me that your health is better, and I can see for myself that your spirits are. This you attribute to exercise, correctly, no doubt. You need a lot of the open air — we all do. I can give myself hypochondria in forty-eight hours by staying indoors. The sedentary life and abstracted contemplation of one's own navel are good for Oriental gods only. We spirits of a purer fire need sunlight and the hills. My own recent wanderings afoot and horseback in the mountains did me more good than a sermon. And you have "the hills back of Oakland"! God, what would I not give to help you range them, the dear old things! Why, I know every square foot of them from Walnut Creek to Niles Cañon. Of course they swarm with ghosts, as do all places out there, even the streets of San Francisco; but I and my ghosts always get on well together. With the female ones my relations are sometimes a bit better than they were with the dear creatures when they lived.

I guess I did not acknowledge the splendidly bound "Shapes" that you kindly sent, nor the Jack London books. Much thanks.

I'm pleased to know that Wood expects to sell the whole edition of my book, but am myself not confident of that.

So we are to have your book soon. Good, but I don't like your indifference to its outward and visible aspect. Some of my own books have offended, and continue to offend, in that way. At best a book is not too beautiful; at worst it is hideous. Be advised a bit by Scheff in this matter; his taste seems to me admirable and I'm well pleased by his work on the "Shapes"; even his covers, which I'm sorry to learn do not please Wood, appear to me excellent. I approved the design before he executed it — in fact chose it from several that he submitted. Its only fault seems to me too much gold leaf, but that is a fault "on the right side." In that and all the rest of the work (except my own) experts here are delighted. I gave him an absolutely free hand and am glad I did. I don't like the ragged leaves, but he does not either, on second thought. The public — the reading public — I fear does, just now.

I'll get at your new verses in a few days. It will be, as always it is, a pleasure to go over them.

About "Prattle." I should think you might get help in that matter from Oscar T. Schuck, 2916 Laguna St. He used to suffer from "Prattle" a good deal, but is very friendly, and the obtaining it would be in the line of his present business.

How did you happen to hit on Markham's greatest two lines — but I need not ask that — from "The Wharf of Dreams"?

Well, I wish I could think that those lines of mine in “Geotheos” were worthy to be mentioned with Keats’ “magic casements” and Coleridge’s “woman wailing for her demon lover.” But I don’t think any lines of anybody are. I laugh at myself to remember that Geotheos, never before in print I believe, was written for E. L. G. Steele to read before a “young ladies’ seminary” somewhere in the cow counties! Like a man of sense he didn’t read it. I don’t share your regret that I have not devoted myself to serious poetry. I don’t think of myself as a poet, but as a satirist; so I’m entitled to credit for what little gold there may be in the mud I throw. But if I professed gold-throwing, the mud which I should surely mix with the missiles would count against me. Besides, I’ve a preference for being the first man in a village, rather than the second man in Rome. Poetry is a ladder on which there is now no room at the top — unless you and Scheff throw down some of the chaps occupying the upper rung. It looks as if you might, but I could not. When old Homer, Shakspeare and that crowd — building better than Ozymandias — say: “Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!” I, considering myself specially addressed, despair. The challenge of the wits does not alarm me.

*

As to your problems in grammar.

If you say: “There is no hope *or* fear” you say that *one* of them does not exist. In saying: “There is no hope *nor* fear” you say that *both* do not exist — which is what you mean.

“Not to weary you, I shall say that I fetched the book from his cabin.” Whether that is preferable to “I will say” depends on just what is meant; both are grammatical. The “shall” merely indicates an intention to say; the “will” implies a certain shade of concession in saying it.

It is no trouble to answer such questions, *nor* to do anything else to please you. I only hope I make it clear.

I don’t know if all my “Journal” work gets into the “Examiner,” for I don’t see all the issues of either paper. I’m not writing much anyhow. They don’t seem to want much from me, and their weekly check is about all that I want from them.

*

No, I don’t know any better poem of Kipling than “The Last Chanty.” Did you see what stuff of his Prof. Harry Thurston Peck, the Hearst outfit’s special literary censor, chose for a particular commendation the other day? Yet Peck is a scholar, a professor of Latin and a writer of merited distinction. Excepting the ability to write poetry, the ability to understand it is, I think, the rarest of intellectual gifts. Let us thank “whatever gods may be” that we have it, if we haven’t so very much else.

I've a lovely birch stick a-seasoning for you — cut it up in the Alleghanies.

*

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., October 29, 1903.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I return the verses — with apology for tardiness. I've been "full up" with cares.

*

I would not change "Religion" to "Dogma" (if I were you) for all "the pious monks of St. Bernard." Once you begin to make concessions to the feelings of this person or that there is no place to stop and you may as well hang up the lyre. Besides, Dogma does not "seek"; it just impudently declares something to have been found. However, it is a small matter — nothing can destroy the excellence of the verses. I only want to warn you against yielding to a temptation which will assail you all your life — the temptation to "edit" your thought for somebody whom it may pain. Be true to Truth and let all stand from under.

Yes, I think the quatrain that you wrote in Col. Eng's book good enough to go in your own. But I'd keep "discerning," instead of substituting "revering." In art discernment *carries* reverence.

Of course I expect to say something of Scheff's book, but in no paper with which I have a present connection can I regularly "review" it. Hearst's papers would give it incomparably the widest publicity, but they don't want "reviews" from me. They have Millard, who has already reviewed it — right well too — and Prof. Peck — who possibly might review it if it were sent to him. "Prof. Harry Thurston Peck, care of 'The American,' New York City." Mention it to Scheff. I'm trying to find out what I can do.

I'm greatly pleased to observe your ability to estimate the relative value of your own poems — a rare faculty. "To Imagination" is, *I* think, the best of all your short ones.

I'm impatient for the book. It, too, I shall hope to write something about. Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Navarre Hotel and Importation Co., Seventh Avenue and 38th St., New York, December 26, 1903.]

DEAR GEORGE,

A thousand cares have prevented my writing to you — and Scheff. And this is to be a “busy day.” But I want to say that I’ve not been unmindful of your kindness in sending the book — which has hardly left my pocket since I got it. And I’ve read nothing in it more than once, excepting the “Testimony.” *That* I’ve studied, line by line — and “precept by precept” — finding in it always “something rich and strange.” It is greater than I knew; it is the greatest “ever”!

I’m saying a few words about it in tomorrow’s “American” — would that I had a better place for what I say and more freedom of saying. But they don’t want, and won’t have, “book reviews” from me; probably because I will not undertake to assist their advertising publishers. So I have to disguise my remarks and work up to them as parts of another topic. In this case I have availed myself of my favorite “horrible example,” Jim Riley, who ought to be proud to be mentioned on the same page with you. After all, the remarks may not appear; I have the *littlest* editor that ever blue-penciled whatever he thought particularly dear to the writer. I’m here for only a few days, I hope.

*

I want to say that you seem to me greatest when you have the greatest subject — not flowers, women and all that, — but something above the flower-and-woman belt — something that you see from altitudes from which *they* are unseen and unsmelled. Your poetry is incomparable with that of our other poets, but your thought, philosophy, — that is greater yet. But I’m writing this at a desk in the reading room of a hotel; when I get home I’ll write you again.

I’m concerned about your health, of which I get bad reports. Can’t you go to the mesas of New Mexico and round up cattle for a year or two — or do anything that will permit, or compel, you to sleep out-of-doors under your favorite stars — something that will *not* permit you to enter a house for even ten minutes? You say no. Well, some day you’ll *have* to — when it is too late — like Peterson, my friend Charley Kaufman and so many others, who might be living if they had gone into that country in time and been willing to make the sacrifice when it would have done good. You can go *now* as well as *then*; and if now you’ll come back well, if then, you’ll not only sacrifice your salary, “prospects,” and so forth, but lose your life as well. I *know* that kind of life would cure you. I’ve talked with dozens of men whom it did cure.

You’ll die of consumption if you don’t. Twenty-odd years ago I was writing articles on the out-of-doors treatment for consumption. Now — only just now — the physicians are doing the same, and establishing out-of-door sanitaria for consumption.

You’ll say you haven’t consumption. I don’t say that you have. But you will have if you listen to yourself saying: “I can’t do it.” *

Pardon me, my friend, for this rough advice as to your personal affairs: I am greatly concerned about you. Your life is precious to me and to the world. Sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

1904.

[Washington, D. C., January 8, 1904.]

MY DEAR GEORGE,

Thank you so much for the books and the inscription — which (as do all other words of praise) affects me with a sad sense of my shortcomings as writer and man. Things of that kind from too partial friends point out to me with a disquieting significance what I ought to be; and the contrast with what I am hurts. Maybe you feel enough that way sometimes to understand. You are still young enough to profit by the pain; *my* character is made — *my* opportunities are gone. But it does not greatly matter — nothing does. I have some little testimony from you and Scheff and others that I have not lived altogether in vain, and I know that I have greater satisfaction in my slight connection with your and their work than in my own. Also a better claim to the attention and consideration of my fellow-men.

Never mind about the “slow sale” of my book; I did not expect it to be otherwise, and my only regret grows out of the fear that some one may lose money by the venture. It is not to be you. You know I am still a little “in the dark” as to what *you* have really done in the matter. I wish you would tell me if any of your own money went into it. The contract with Wood is all right; it was drawn according to my instructions and I shall not even accept the small royalty allowed me if anybody is to be “out.” If *you* are to be out I shall not only not accept the royalty, but shall reimburse you to the last cent. Do you mind telling me about all that? In any case don’t “buy out Wood” and don’t pay out anything for advertising nor for anything else.

The silence of the reviewers does not trouble me, any more than it would you. Their praise of my other books never, apparently, did me any good. No book published in this country ever received higher praise from higher sources than my first collection of yarns. But the book was never a “seller,” and doubtless never will be. That *I* like it fairly well is enough. You and I do not write books to sell; we write — or rather publish — just because we like to. We’ve no right to expect a profit from fun.

It is odd and amusing that you could have supposed that I had any other reason for not writing to you than a fixed habit of procrastination, some preoccupation with my small affairs and a very burdensome correspondence. Probably you *could* give me a grievance by trying hard, but if you ever are conscious of not having tried you may be sure that I haven't the grievance.

I should have supposed that the author of "Viverols" and several excellent monographs on fish would have understood your poems. (O no; I don't mean that your Muse is a mermaid.) Perhaps he did, but you know how temperate of words men of science are by habit. Did you send a book to Garrett Serviss? I should like to know what he thinks of the "Testimony." As to Joaquin, it is his detestable habit, as it was Longfellow's, to praise all poetry submitted to him, and he said of Madge Morris's coyote poem the identical thing that he says of your work. Sorry to disillusionize you, but it is so.

As to your health. You give me great comfort. * But it was not only from Scheff that I had bad accounts of you and "your cough." Scheff, indeed, has been reticent in the matter, but evidently anxious; and you yourself have written despondently and "forecasted" an early passing away. If nothing is the matter with you and your lungs some of your friends are poor observers. I'm happy to have your testimony, and beg to withdraw my project for your recovery. You whet my appetite for that new poem. The lines

"The blue-eyed vampire, sated at her feast,
Smiles bloodily against the leprous moon"

give me the shivers. Gee! they're awful! Sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., February 5, 1904.]

DEAR GEORGE,

*

You should not be irritated by the "conspiracy of silence" about me on the part of the "Call," the "Argonaut" and other papers. Really my enemies are under no obligation to return good for evil; I fear I should not respect them if they did. *, his head still sore from my many beatings of that "distracted globe," would be a comic figure stammering his sense of my merit and directing attention to the excellence of the literary wares on my shelf.

As to the pig of a public, its indifference to a diet of pearls — *our* pearls — was not unknown to me, and truly it does not trouble me anywhere except in the pocket. *That* pig, too, is not much beholden to me, who have pounded the snout of it all my life. Why should it assist in the rite? Its indifference to *your* work constitutes a new provocation and calls for added whacks, but not its indifference to mine.

The Ashton Stevens interview was charming. His finding you and Scheff together seems too idyllic to be true — I thought it a fake. He put in quite enough — too much — about me. As to Joaquin’s hack at me — why, that was magnanimity itself in one who, like most of us, does not offset blame against praise, subtract the latter from the former and find matter for thanks in the remainder. You know “what fools we mortals be”; criticism that is not all honey is all vinegar. Nobody has more delighted than I in pointing out the greatness of Joaquin’s great work; but nobody than I has more austerely condemned *, his vanity and the general humbugery that makes his prose so insupportable. Joaquin is a good fellow, all the same, and you should not demand of him impossible virtues and a reach of reasonableness that is alien to him.

*

I have the books you kindly sent and have planted two or three in what I think fertile soil which I hope will produce a small crop of appreciation.

*

And the poem![7] I hardly know how to speak of it. No poem in English of equal length has so bewildering a wealth of imagination. Not Spenser himself has flung such a profusion of jewels into so small a casket. Why, man, it takes away the breath! I’ve read and reread — read it for the expression and read it for the thought (always when I speak of the “thought” in your work I mean the meaning — which is another thing) and I shall read it many times more. And pretty soon I’ll get at it with my red ink and see if I can suggest anything worth your attention. I fear not.

[7] “A Wine of Wizardry.”

*

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[“New York American” Office, Washington, D. C., February 29, 1904.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I wrote you yesterday. Since then I have been rereading your letter. I wish you would not say so much about what I have done for you, and how much it was worth to you, and all that. I should be sorry to think that I did not do a little for you — I tried to. But, my boy, you should know that I don’t keep that kind of service *on sale*. Moreover, I’m amply repaid by what *you* have done for *me* — I mean with your pen. Do you suppose *I* do not value such things? Does it seem reasonable to think me unpleasured by those magnificent dedicatory verses in your book? Is it nothing to me to be called “Master” by such as you? Is my nature so cold that I have no pride in such a pupil? There is no obligation in the matter — certainly none that can be suffered to satisfy itself out of your pocket.

You greatly overestimate the sums I spend in “charity.” I sometimes help some poor devil of an unfortunate over the rough places, but not to the extent that you seem to suppose. I couldn’t — I’ve too many regular, constant, *legitimate* demands on me. Those, mostly, are what keep me poor.

*

Maybe you think it odd that I’ve not said a word in print about any of your work except the “Testimony.” It is not that I don’t appreciate the minor poems — I do. But I don’t like to scatter; I prefer to hammer on a single nail — to push one button until someone hears the bell. When the “Wine” is published I’ll have another poem that is not only great, but striking — notable — to work on. However good, or even great, a short poem with such a title as “Poesy,” “Music,” “To a Lily,” “A White Rose,” and so forth, cannot be got into public attention. Some longer and more notable work, of the grander manner, may *carry* it, but of itself it will not go. Even a bookful of its kind will not. Not till you’re famous.

Your letter regarding your brother (who has not turned up) was needless — I could be of no assistance in procuring him employment. I’ve tried so often to procure it for others, and so vainly, that nobody could persuade me to try any more. I’m not fond of the character of suppliant, nor of being “turned down” by the little men who run this Government. Of course I’m not in favor with this Administration, not only because of my connection with Democratic newspapers, but because, also, I sometimes venture to dissent openly from the doctrine of the divinity of those in high station — particularly Teddy.

I’m sorry you find your place in the office intolerable. That is “the common lot of all” who work for others. I have chafed under the yoke for many years — a heavier yoke, I think, than yours. It does not fit my neck anywhere. Some day perhaps you and I will live on adjoining ranches in the mountains — or in adjoining caves—”the world forgetting, by the world forgot.” I have really been on the point of hermitizing lately, but I guess I’ll have to continue to live like a reasonable human being a little longer until I can release myself with a conscience void of offense to my creditors and dependents. But “the call of the wild” sounds, even in my dreams.

You ask me if you should write in “A Wine of Wizardry” vein, or in that of “The Testimony of the Suns.” Both. I don’t know in which you have succeeded the better. And I don’t know anyone who has succeeded better in either. To succeed in both is a marvelous performance. You may say that the one is fancy, the other imagination, which is true, but not the whole truth. The “Wine” has as true imagination as the other, and fancy into the bargain. I like your grandiose manner, and I like the other as well. In terms of another art I may say — rear great towers and domes. Carve, also, friezes. But I'd not bother to cut single finials and small decorations. However exquisite the workmanship, they are not worth your present attention. If you were a painter (as, considering your wonderful sense of color, you doubtless could have been) your large canvases would be your best.

*

I don't care if that satire of Josephare refers to me or not; it was good. He may jump on me if he wants to — I don't mind. All I ask is that he do it well.

*

I passed yesterday with Percival Pollard, viewing the burnt district of Baltimore. He's a queer duck whom I like, and he likes your work. I'm sending you a copy of "The Papyrus," with his "rehabilitation" of the odious Oscar Wilde. Wilde's work is all right, but what can one do with the work of one whose name one cannot speak before women?

*

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., April 19, 1904.]

DEAR GEORGE,

The "belatedness" of your letter only made *me* fear that *I* had offended *you*. Odd that we should have such views of each other's sensitiveness.

About Wood. No doubt that he is doing all that he can, but — well, he is not a publisher. For example: He sent forty or fifty "Shapes" here. They lie behind a counter at the bookseller's — not even *on* the counter. There are probably not a dozen persons of my acquaintance in Washington who know that I ever wrote a book. Now *how* are even these to know about *that* book? The bookseller does not advertise the books he has on sale and the public does not go rummaging behind his counters. A publisher's methods are a bit different, naturally.

Only for your interest I should not care if my books sold or not; they exist and will not be destroyed; every book will eventually get to *somebody*.

*

It seems to be a matter for you to determine — whether Wood continues to try to sell the book or it is put in other hands if he is ever tired of it. Remember, I don't care a rap what happens to the book except as a means of reimbursing you; I want no money and I want no glory. If you and Wood can agree, do in all things as you please.

I return Wood's letters; they show what I knew before: that the public and the librarians would not buy that book. Let us discuss this matter no more, but at some time in the future you tell me how much you are out of pocket.

Your book shows that a fellow can get a good deal of glory with very little profit. You are now famous — at least on the Pacific Coast; but I fancy you are not any "for'arder" in the matter of wealth than you were before. I too have some reputation — a little wider, as yet, than yours. Well, my work sells tremendously — in Mr. Hearst's newspapers, at the price of a small fraction of one cent! Offered by itself, in one-dollar and two-dollar lots, it tempts nobody to fall over his own feet in the rush to buy. A great trade, this of ours!

I note with interest the "notices" you send. The one by Monahan is amusing with its gabble about your "science." To most men, as to him, a mention of the stars suggests astronomy, with its telescopes, spectroscopes and so forth. Therefore it is "scientific." To tell such men that there is nothing of science in your poem would puzzle them greatly.

I don't think poor Lang meant to do anything but his best and honestest. He is a rather clever and rather small fellow and not to be blamed for the limitations of his insight. I have repeatedly pointed out in print that it requires genius to discern genius at first hand. Lang has written almost the best, if not quite the best, sonnet in the language — yet he is no genius.

*

Why, of course — why should you not help the poor devil, *; I used to help him myself — introduced him to the public and labored to instruct him. Then — but it is unspeakable and so is he. He will bite your hand if you feed him, but I think I'd throw a crust to him myself.

*

No, I don't agree with you about Homer, nor "stand for" your implied view that narrative poetry is not "pure poetry." Poetry seems to me to speak with a thousand voices—"a various language." The miners have a saying: "Gold is where you find it." So is poetry; I'm expecting to find it some fine day in the price list of a grocery store. I fancy *you* could put it there.

*

As to Goethe, the more you read him, the better you will love Heine.

Thank you for "A Wine of Wizardry" — amended. It seems to me that the fake dictum of "Merlin-sage" (I don't quite perceive the necessity of the hyphen) is better than the hackneyed Scriptural quotation. It is odd, but my recollection is that it was the "sick enchantress" who cried "unto Betelgeuse a mystic word." Was it not so in the copy that I first had, or do I think so merely because the cry of one is more lone and awful than the cry of a number?

I am still of the belief that the poem should have at least a few breaks in it, for

I find myself as well as the public more or less — I, doubtless, less than the public — indisposed to tackle solid columns of either verse or prose. I told you this poem "took away one's breath," — give a fellow, can't you, a chance to recover it now and again.

"Space to breathe, how short soever."

Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done, on earth as it is in San Francisco. Sincerely yours, AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., May 11, 1904.]

DEAR GEORGE,

To begin at the beginning, I shall of course be pleased to meet Josephare if he come this way; if only to try to solve the problem of what is in a fellow who started so badly and in so short a time was running well, with a prospect of winning "a place." Byron, you know, was the same way and Tennyson not so different. Still their start was not so bad as Josephare's. I freely confess that I thought him a fool. It is "one on me."

*

I wonder if a London house would publish "Shapes of Clay." Occasionally a little discussion about me breaks out in the London press, blazes up for a little while and "goes up in smoke." I enclose some evidences of the latest one — which you may return if you remember to do so. The letter of "a deeply disappointed man" was one of rollicking humor suggested by some articles of Barr about me and a private intimation from him that I should publish some more books in London.

Yes, I've dropped "The Passing Show" again, for the same old reason — wouldn't stand the censorship of my editor. I'm writing for the daily issues of The American, mainly, and, as a rule, anonymously. It's "dead easy" work.

*

It is all right — that "cry unto Betelgeuse"; the "sick enchantress" passage is good enough without it. I like the added lines of the poem. Here's another criticism: The "Without" and "Within," beginning the first and third lines, respectively, *seem* to be antithetic, when they are not, the latter having the sense of "into," which I think might, for clearness, be substituted for it without a displeasing break of the metre — a trochee for an iambus.

Why should I not try "The Atlantic" with this poem? — if you have not already done so. I could write a brief note about it, saying what *you* could not say, and possibly winning attention to the work. If you say so I will. It is impossible to imagine a magazine editor rejecting that amazing poem. I have read it at least twenty times with ever increasing admiration.

Your book, by the way, is still my constant companion — I carry it in my pocket and read it over and over, in the street cars and everywhere. *All* the poems are good, though the "Testimony" and "Memorial Day" are supreme — the one in grandeur, the other in feeling.

I send you a criticism in a manuscript letter from a friend who complains of your "obscurity," as many have the candor to do. It requires candor to do that, for the fault is in the critic's understanding. Still, one who understands Shakspeare and Milton is not without standing as a complaining witness in the court of literature.

*

My favorite translation of Homer is that of Pope, of whom it is the present fashion to speak disparagingly, as it is of Byron. I know all that can be said against them, and say *some* of it myself, but I wish their detractors had a little of their brains. I know too that Pope's translations of The Iliad and The Odyssey are rather paraphrases than translations. But I love them just the same, while wondering (with you, doubtless) what so profoundly affected Keats when he "heard Chapman speak out loud and bold." Whatever it was, it gave us what Coleridge pronounced the best sonnet in our language; and Lang's admiration of Homer has given us at least the next best. Of course there must be something in poems that produce poems — in a poet whom most poets confess their king. I hold (with Poe) that there is no such thing as a *long* poem — a poem of the length of an Epic. It must consist of poetic passages connected by *recitativo*, to use an opera word; but it is perhaps better for that. If the writer cannot write "sustained" poetry the reader probably could not read it. Anyhow, I vote for Homer.

I am passing well, but shall soon seek the mountains, though I hope to be here when Scheff points his prow this way. Would that you were sailing with him!

I've been hearing all about all of you, for Eva Crawford has been among you "takin' notes," and Eva's piquant comments on what and whom she sees are delicious reading. I should suppose that *you* would appreciate Eva — most persons don't. She is the best letter writer of her sex — who are all good letter writers — and she is much beside. I may venture to whisper that you'd find her estimate of your work and personality "not altogether displeasing."

Now that I'm about such matters, I shall enclose a note to my friend Dr. Robertson, who runs an insanery at Livermore and is an interesting fellow with a ditto family and a library that will make you pea-green with envy. Go out and see him some day and take Scheff, or any friend, along — he wants to know you. You won't mind the facts that he thinks all poetry the secretion of a diseased brain, and that the only reason he doesn't think all brains (except his own) diseased is the circumstance that not all secrete poetry.

*

Seriously, he is a good fellow and full of various knowledges that most of us wot not of.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., June 14, 1904.]

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I have a letter from *, who is in St. Louis, to which his progress has been more leisurely than I liked, considering that I am remaining away from my mountains only to meet him. However, he intimates an intention to come in a week. I wish you were with him.

I am sending the W. of W. to Scribner's, as you suggest, and if it is not taken shall try the other mags in the order of your preference. But it's funny that you — *you* — should prefer the "popular" magazines and wish the work "illustrated." Be assured the illustrations will shock you if you get them.

*

I understand what you say about being bored by the persons whom your work in letters brings about your feet. The most *contented* years of my life lately were the two or three that I passed here before Washington folk found out that I was an author. The fact has leaked out, and although not a soul of them buys and reads my books some of them bore me insupportably with their ignorant compliments and unwelcome attentions. I fancy I'll have to "move on."

Tell Maid Marian to use gloves when modeling, or the clay will enter into her soul through her fingers and she become herself a Shape of Clay. My notion is that she should work in a paste made of ashes-of-roses moistened with nectar.

*

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

P.S. Does it bore you that I like you to know my friends? Professor *'s widow (and daughter) are very dear to me. She knows about you, and I've written her that I'd ask you to call on her. You'll like them all right, but I have another purpose. I want to know how they prosper; and they are a little reticent about that. Maybe you could ascertain indirectly by seeing how they live. I asked Grizzly to do this but of course he didn't, the shaggy brute that he is.

A. B.

[Haines' Falls, Greene Co., N. Y., August 4, 1904.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I haven't written a letter, except on business, since leaving Washington, June 30 — no, not since Scheff's arrival there. I now return to earth, and my first call is on you.

You'll be glad to know that I'm having a good time here in the Catskills. I shall not go back so long as I can find an open hotel.

*

I should like to hear from you about our — or rather your — set in California, and especially about *you*. Do you still dally with the Muse? Enclosed you will find two damning evidences of additional incapacity. Harper's now have "A Wine of Wizardry," and they too will indubitably turn it down. I shall then try *The Atlantic*, where it should have gone in the first place; and I almost expect its acceptance.

I'm not working much — just loafing on my cottage porch; mixing an occasional cocktail; infesting the forests, knife in hand, in pursuit of the yellow-birch sapling that furnishes forth the walking stick like yours; and so forth. I knocked off work altogether for a month when Scheff came, and should like to do so for *you*. Are you never going to visit the scenes of your youth?

*

It is awfully sad — that latest visit of Death to the heart and home of poor Katie Peterson. Will you kindly assure her of my sympathy?

Love to all the Piedmontese. Sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Haines' Falls, Greene Co., N. Y., August 27, 1904.]

MY DEAR GEORGE,

First, thank you for the knife and the distinction of membership in the Ancient and Honorable Order of Knifers. I have made little use of the blades and other appliances, but the corkscrew is in constant use.

I'm enclosing a little missive from the editor of Harper's. Please reserve these things awhile and sometime I may ask them of you to "point a moral or adorn a tale" about that poem. If we can't get it published I'd like to write for some friendly periodical a review of an unpublished poem, with copious extracts and a brief history of it. I think that would be unique.

I find the pictures of Marian interesting, but have the self-denial to keep only one of them — the prettiest one of course. Your own is rather solemn, but it will do for the title page of the Testimony, which is still my favorite reading.

Scheff showed me your verses on Katie's baby, and Katie has since sent them.

They are very tender and beautiful. I would not willingly spare any of your “personal” poems — least of all, naturally, the one personal to me. Your success with them is exceptional. Yet the habit of writing them is perilous, as the many failures of great poets attest — Milton, for example, in his lines to Syriack Skinner, his lines to a baby that died a-bornin’ and so forth. The reason is obvious, and you have yourself, with sure finger, pointed it out:

“Remiss the ministry they bear
 Who serve her with divided heart;
 She stands reluctant to impart
Her strength to purpose, end, or care.”

When one is intent upon pleasing some mortal, one is less intent upon pleasing the immortal Muse. All this is said only by way of admonition for the future, not in criticism of the past. I’m a sinner myself in that way, but then I’m not a saint in any way, so my example doesn’t count.

I don’t mind * calling me a “dignified old gentleman” — indeed, that is what I have long aspired to be, but have succeeded only in the presence of strangers, and not always then. *

(I forgot to say that your poem is now in the hands of the editor of the Atlantic.)

Your determination to “boom” me almost frightens me. Great Scott! you’ve no notion of the magnitude of the task you undertake; the labors of Hercules were as nothing to it. Seriously, don’t make any enemies that way; it is not worth while. And you don’t know how comfortable I am in my obscurity. It is like being in “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

How goes the no sale of Shapes of Clay? I am slowly saving up a bit of money to recoup your friendly outlay. That’s a new thing for me to do — the saving, I mean — and I rather enjoy the sensation. If it results in making a miser of me you will have to answer for it to many a worthy complainant.

Get thee behind me, Satan! — it is not possible for me to go to California yet. For one thing, my health is better here in the East; I have utterly escaped asthma this summer, and summer is my only “sickly season” here. In California I had the thing at any time o’ year — even at Wright’s. But it is my hope to end my days out there.

I don’t think Millard was too hard on Kipling; it was no “unconscious” plagiarism; just a “straight steal.”

About Prentice Mulford. I knew him but slightly and used to make mild fun of him as “Dismal Jimmy.” That expressed my notion of his character and work, which was mostly prose platitudes. I saw him last in London, a member of the Joaquin Miller-Charles Warren Stoddard-Olive Harper outfit at 11 Museum Street, Bloomsbury Square. He married there a fool girl named Josie — forget her other name — with whom I think he lived awhile in hell, then freed himself, and some years afterward returned to this country and was found dead one morning in a boat at Sag Harbor. Peace to the soul of him. No, he was not a faker, but a conscientious fellow who mistook his vocation.

My friends have returned to Washington, but I expect to remain here a few weeks yet, infesting the woods, devastating the mountain larders, supervising the sunsets and guiding the stars in their courses. Then to New York, and finally to Washington. Please get busy with that fame o' yours so as to have the wealth to come and help me loaf.

I hope you don't mind the typewriter — *I* don't.

Convey my love to all the sweet ladies of your entourage and make my compliments also to the Gang. Sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, October 5, 1904.]

DEAR GEORGE,

Your latest was dated Sept. 10. I got it while alone in the mountains, but since then I have been in New York City and at West Point and — here. New York is too strenuous for me; it gets on my nerves.

*

Please don't persuade me to come to California — I mean don't *try* to, for I can't, and it hurts a little to say nay. There's a big bit of my heart there, but — O never mind the reasons; some of them would not look well on paper. One of them I don't mind telling; I would not live in a state under union labor rule. There is still one place where the honest American laboring man is not permitted to cut throats and strip bodies of women at his own sweet will. That is the District of Columbia.

I am anxious to read Lilith; please complete it.

I have another note of rejection for you. It is from *. Knowing that you will not bank on what he says about the Metropolitan, I enclose it. I've acted on his advising and sent the poem. It is about time for it to come back. Then I shall try the other magazines until the list is exhausted.

Did I return your Jinks verses? I know I read them and meant to send them back, but my correspondence and my papers are in such hopeless disorder that I'm all at sea on these matters. For aught I know I may have elaborately "answered" the letter that I think myself to be answering now. I liked the verses very temperately, not madly.

Of course you are right about the magazine editors not knowing poetry when they see it. But who does? I have not known more than a half-dozen persons in America that did, and none of them edited a magazine.

*

No, I did not write the "Urus-Agricola-Acetes stuff," though it was written *for* me and, I believe, at my suggestion. The author was "Jimmy" Bowman, of whose death I wrote a sonnet which is in Black Beetles. He and I used to have a lot of fun devising literary mischiefs, fighting sham battles with each other and so forth. He was a clever chap and a good judge of whiskey.

Yes, in The Cynic's Dictionary I did "jump from A to M." I had previously done the stuff in various papers as far as M, then lost the beginning. So in resuming I re-did that part (quite differently, of course) in order to have the thing complete if I should want to make a book of it. I guess the Examiner isn't running much of it, nor much of anything of mine.

*

I like your love of Keats and the early Coleridge.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The N. Y. American Office, Washington, D. C., October 12, 1904.]

MY DEAR DAVIS,

The "bad eminence" of turning down Sterling's great poem is one that you will have to share with some of your esteemed fellow magazinists — for examples, the editors of the Atlantic, Harper's, Scribner's, The Century, and now the Metropolitan, all of the élite. All of these gentlemen, I believe, profess, as you do not, to know literature when they see it, and to deal in it.

Well I profess to deal in it in a small way, and if Sterling will let me I propose some day to ask judgment between them and me.

Even *you* ask for literature — if my stories are literature, as you are good enough to imply. (By the way, all the leading publishers of the country turned down that book until they saw it published without them by a merchant in San Francisco and another sort of publishers in London, Leipzig and Paris.) Well, you wouldn't do a thing to one of my stories!

No, thank you; if I have to write rot, I prefer to do it for the newspapers, which make no false pretences and are frankly rotten, and in which the badness of a bad thing escapes detection or is forgotten as soon as it is cold.

I know how to write a story (of the "happy ending" sort) for magazine readers for whom literature is too good, but I will not do so so long as stealing is more honorable and interesting.

I've offered you the best stuff to be had — Sterling's poem — and the best that I am able to make; and now you must excuse me. I do not doubt that you really think that you would take "the kind of fiction that made 'Soldiers and Civilians' the most readable book of its kind in this country," and it is nice of you to put it that way; but neither do I doubt that you would find the story sent a different kind of fiction and, like the satire which you return to me, "out of the question." An editor who has a preformed opinion of the kind of stuff that he is going to get will always be disappointed with the stuff that he does get.

I know this from my early experience as an editor — before I learned that what I needed was, not any particular kind of stuff, but just the stuff of a particular kind of writer.

All this without any feeling, and only by way of explaining why I must ask you to excuse me.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., December 6, 1904.]
DEAR GEORGE,

*

Yes, I got and read that fool thing in the August Critic. I found in it nothing worse than stupidity — no malice. Doubtless you have not sounded the deeper deeps of stupidity in critics, and so are driven to other motives to explain their unearthly errors. I know from my own experience of long ago how hard it is to accept abominable criticism, obviously (to the criticee) unfair, without attributing a personal mean motive; but the attribution is nearly always erroneous, even in the case of a writer with so many personal enemies as I. You will do well to avoid that weakness of the tyro. * has the infirmity in an apparently chronic form. Poets, by reason of the sensibilities that *make* them poets, are peculiarly liable to it. I can't see any evidence that the poor devil of the Critic knew better.

The Wine of Wizardry is at present at the Booklovers'. It should have come back ere this, but don't you draw any happy augury from that: I'm sure they'll turn it down, and am damning them in advance.

I had a postal from * a few days ago. He was in Paris. I've written him only once, explaining by drawing his attention to the fact that one's reluctance to write a letter increases in the ratio of the square of the distance it has to go. I don't know why that is so, but it is — at least in my case.

*

Yes, I'm in perfect health, barring a bit of insomnia at times, and enjoy life as much as I ever did — except when in love and the love prospering; that is to say, when it was new.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., December 8, 1904.]

DEAR GEORGE,

This is the worst yet! This jobbernowl seems to think "The Wine of Wizardry" a story. It should "arrive" and be "dramatic" — the denouement being, I suppose, a particularly exciting example of the "happy ending."

My dear fellow, I'm positively ashamed to throw your pearls before any more of these swine, and I humbly ask your pardon for having done it at all. I guess the "Wine" will have to await the publication of your next book.

But I'd like to keep this fellow's note if you will kindly let me have it. Sometime, when the poem is published, I shall paste it into a little scrap book, with all the notes of rejection, and then if I know a man or two capable of appreciating the humor of the thing I can make merry over it with them.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

1905.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., My permanent address, February 18, 1905.]

DEAR GEORGE,

It’s a long time since the date of your latest letter, but I’ve been doing two men’s work for many weeks and have actually not found the leisure to write to my friends. As it is the first time that I’ve worked really hard for several years I ought not to complain, and don’t. But I hope it will end with this session of Congress.

I think I did not thank you for the additional copies of your new book — the new edition. I wish it contained the new poem, “A Wine of Wizardry.” I’ve given up trying to get it into anything. I related my failure to Mackay, of “Success,” and he asked to be permitted to see it. “No,” I replied, “you too would probably turn it down, and I will take no chances of losing the respect that I have for you.” And I’d not show it to him. He declared his intention of getting it, though — which was just what I wanted him to do. But I dare say he didn’t.

Yes, you sent me “The Sea Wolf.” My opinion of it? Certainly — or a part of it. It is a most disagreeable book, as a whole. London has a pretty bad style and no sense of proportion. The story is a perfect welter of disagreeable incidents. Two or three (of the kind) would have sufficed to *show* the character of the man Larsen; and his own self-revealings by word of mouth would have “done the rest.” Many of these incidents, too, are impossible — such as that of a man mounting a ladder with a dozen other men — more or less — hanging to his leg, and the hero’s work of rerigging a wreck and getting it off a beach where it had stuck for weeks, and so forth. The “love” element, with its absurd suppressions and impossible proprieties, is awful. I confess to an overwhelming contempt for both the sexless lovers.

Now as to the merits. It is a rattling good story in one way; something is “going on” all the time — not always what one would wish, but *something*. One does not go to sleep over the book. But the great thing — and it is among the greatest of things — is that tremendous creation, Wolf Larsen. If that is not a permanent addition to literature, it is at least a permanent figure in the memory of the reader. You “can’t lose” Wolf Larsen. He will be with you to the end. So it does not really matter how London has hammered him into you. You may quarrel with the methods, but the result is almost incomparable. The hewing out and setting up of such a figure is enough for a man to do in one life-time. I have hardly words to impart my good judgment of *that* work.

*

That is a pretty picture of Phyllis as Cleopatra — whom I think you used to call “the angel child” — as the Furies were called Eumenides.

*

I’m enclosing a review of your book in the St. Louis “Mirror,” a paper always kindly disposed toward our little group of gifted obscurians. I thought you might not have seen it; and it is worth seeing. Percival Pollard sends it me; and to him we owe our recognition by the “Mirror.”

I hope you prosper apace. I mean mentally and spiritually; all other prosperity is trash.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., April 17, 1905.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I’ve reached your letter on my file. I wonder that I did, for truly I’m doing a lot of work — mostly of the pot-boiler, newspaper sort, some compiling of future — probably *very* future — books and a little for posterity.

Valentine has not returned the “Wine of Wizardry,” but I shall tell him to in a few days and will then try it on the magazines you mention. If that fails I can see no objection to offering it to the English periodicals.

I don’t know about Mackay. He has a trifle of mine which he was going to run months ago. He didn’t and I asked it back. He returned it and begged that it go back to him for immediate publication. It went back, but publication did not ensue. In many other ways he has been exceedingly kind. Guess he can’t always have his way.

*

I read that other book to the bitter end — the “Arthur Sterling” thing. He is the most disagreeable character in fiction, though Marie Bashkirtseff and Mary McLean in real life could give him cards and spades. Fancy a poet, or any kind of writer, whom it hurts to think! What the devil are his agonies all about — his writhings and twistings and foaming at all his mouths? What would a poem by an intellectual epileptic like that be? Happily the author spares us quotation. I suppose there are Arthur Sterlings among the little fellows, but if genius is not serenity, fortitude and reasonableness I don’t know what it is. One cannot even imagine Shakespeare or Goethe bleeding over his work and howling when “in the fell clutch of circumstance.” The great ones are figured in my mind as ever smiling — a little sadly at times, perhaps, but always with conscious inaccessibility to the pinpricking little Titans that would storm their Olympus armed with ineffectual disasters and pop-gun misfortunes. Fancy a fellow wanting, like Arthur Sterling, to be supported by his fellows in order that he may write what they don't want to read! Even Jack London would gag at such Socialism as *that*.

*

I'm going to pass a summer month or two with the Pollards, at Saybrook, Conn. How I wish you could be of the party. But I suppose you'll be chicken-ranching then, and happy enough where you are. I wish you joy of the venture and, although I fear it means a meagre living, it will probably be more satisfactory than doubling over a desk in your uncle's office. The very name Carmel Bay is enchanting. I've a notion I shall see that ranch some day. I don't quite recognize the "filtered-through-the-emasculated-minds-of-about-six-fools" article from which you say I quote — don't remember it, nor remember quoting from it.

I don't wonder at your surprise at my high estimate of Longfellow in a certain article. It is higher than my permanent one. I was thinking (while writing for a newspaper, recollect) rather of his fame than of his genius — I had to have a literary equivalent to Washington or Lincoln. Still, we must not forget that Longfellow wrote "Chrysaor" and, in narrative poetry (which you don't care for) "Robert of Sicily." Must one be judged by his average, or may he be judged, on occasion, by his highest? He is strongest who can lift the greatest weight, not he who habitually lifts lesser ones.

As to your queries. So far as I know, Realf *did* write his great sonnets on the night of his death. Anyhow, they were found with the body. Your recollection that I said they were written before he came to the Coast is faulty. Some of his other things were in print when he submitted them to me (and took pay for them) as new; but not the "De Mortuis."

I got the lines about the echoes (I *think* they go this way:

"the loon
Laughed, and the echoes, huddling in affright,
Like Odin's hounds went baying down the night")

from a poem entitled, I think, "The Washers of the Shroud." I found it in the "Atlantic," in the summer of 1864, while at home from the war suffering from a wound, and — disgraceful fact! — have never seen nor heard of it since. If the magazine was a current number, as I suppose, it should be easy to find the poem. If you look it up tell me about it. I don't even know the author — had once a vague impression that it was Lowell but don’t know.

The compound “mulolatry,” which I made in “Ashes of the Beacon,” would not, of course, be allowable in composition altogether serious. I used it because I could not at the moment think of the right word, “gyneolatry,” or “gynecolatry,” according as you make use of the nominative or the accusative. I once made “caniolatry” for a similar reason — just laziness. It’s not nice to do things o’ that kind, even in newspapers.

*

I had intended to write you something of “beesness,” but time is up and it must wait. This letter is insupportably long already.

My love to Carrie and Katie. Sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., May 16, 1905.]

DEAR GEORGE,

Bailey Millard is editor of “The Cosmopolitan Magazine,” which Mr. Hearst has bought. I met him in New York two weeks ago. He had just arrived and learning from Hearst that I was in town looked me up. I had just recommended him to Hearst as editor. He had intended him for associate editor. I think that will give you a chance, such as it is. Millard dined with me and I told him the adventures of “A Wine of Wizardry.” I shall send it to him as soon as he has warmed his seat, unless you would prefer to send it yourself. He already knows my whole good opinion of it, and he shares my good opinion of you.

I suppose you are at your new ranch, but I shall address this letter as usual.

*

If you hear of my drowning know that it is the natural (and desirable) result of the canoe habit. I’ve a dandy canoe and am tempting fate and alarming my friends by frequenting, not the margin of the upper river, but the broad reaches below town, where the wind has miles and miles of sweep and kicks up a most exhilarating combobbery. If I escape I’m going to send my boat up to Saybrook, Connecticut, and navigate Long Island Sound.

Are you near enough to the sea to do a bit of boating now and then? When I visit you I shall want to bring my canoe.

I’ve nearly given up my newspaper work, but shall do something each month for the Magazine. Have not done much yet — have not been in the mind. Death has been striking pretty close to me again, and you know how that upsets a fellow.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, June 16, 1905.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I'm your debtor for two good long letters. You err in thinking your letters, of whatever length and frequency, can be otherwise than delightful to me.

No, you had not before sent me Upton Sinclair's article explaining why American literature is "bourgeois." It is amusingly grotesque. The political and economical situation has about as much to do with it as have the direction of our rivers and the prevailing color of our hair. But it is of the nature of the faddist (and of all faddists the ultra socialist is the most untamed by sense) to see in everything his hobby, with its name writ large. He is the humorist of observers. When Sinclair transiently forgets his gospel of the impossible he can see well enough.

I note what you say of * and know that he did not use to like me, though I doubt if he ever had any antipathy to you. Six or eight years ago I tackled him on a particularly mean fling that he had made at me while I was absent from California. (I think I had not met him before.) I told him, rather coarsely, what I thought of the matter. He candidly confessed himself in the wrong, expressed regret and has ever since, so far as I know, been just and even generous to me. I think him sincere now, and enclose a letter which seems to show it. You may return it if you will — I send it mainly because it concerns your poem. The trouble — our trouble — with * is that he has voluntarily entered into slavery to the traditions and theories of the magazine trade, which, like those of all trades, are the product of small men. The big man makes his success by ignoring them. Your estimate of * I'm not disposed to quarrel with, but do think him pretty square.

*

Bless you, don't take the trouble to go through the Iliad and Odyssey to pick out the poetical parts. I grant you they are brief and infrequent — I mean in the translation. I hold, with Poe, that there are no long poems — only bursts of poetry in long spinnings of metrical prose. But even the "recitativo" of the translated Grecian poets has a charm to one that it may not have to another. I doubt if anyone who has always loved "the glory that was Greece" — who has been always in love with its jocund deities, and so forth, can say accurately just how much of his joy in Homer (for example) is due to love of poetry, and how much to a renewal of mental youth and young illusions. Some part of the delight that we get from verse defies analysis and classification. Only a man without a memory (and memories) could say just what pleased him in poetry and be sure that it was the poetry only. For example, I never read the opening lines of the

Pope Iliad — and I don't need the book for much of the first few hundred, I guess — without seeming to be on a sunny green hill on a cold windy day, with the bluest of skies above me and billows of pasture below, running to a clean-cut horizon. There's nothing in the text warranting that illusion, which is nevertheless to me a *part* of the Iliad; a most charming part, too. It all comes of my having first read the thing under such conditions at the age of about ten. I *remember* that; but how many times I must be powerfully affected by the poets *without* remembering why. If a fellow could cut out all that extrinsic interest he would be a fool to do so. But he would be a better critic.

You ought to be happy in the contemplation of a natural, wholesome life at Carmel Bay — the "prospect pleases," surely. But I fear, I fear. Maybe you can get a newspaper connection that will bring you in a small income without compelling you to do violence to your literary conscience. I doubt if you can get your living out of the ground. But I shall watch the experiment with sympathetic interest, for it "appeals" to me. I'm a trifle jaded with age and the urban life, and maybe if you can succeed in that other sort of thing I could.

*

As to * the Superb. Isn't Sag Harbor somewhere near Saybrook, Connecticut, at the mouth of the river of that name? I'm going there for a month with Percival Pollard. Shall leave here about the first of July. If Sag Harbor is easily accessible from there, and * would care to see me, I'll go and call on her. * But maybe I'd fall in love with her and, being now (alas) eligible, just marry her alive! — or be turned down by her, to the unspeakable wrecking of my peace! I'm only a youth — 63 on the 24th of this month — and it would be too bad if I got started wrong in life. But really I don't know about the good taste of being jocular about *. I'm sure she must be a serious enough maiden, with the sun of a declining race yellow on her hair. Eva Crawford thinks her most lovable — and Eva has a clear, considering eye upon you all.

*

I'm going to send up my canoe to Saybrook and challenge the rollers of the Sound. Don't you fear — I'm an expert canoeist from boyhood. *

Sincerely,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., December 3, 1905.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I have at last the letter that I was waiting for — didn't answer the other, for one of mine was on the way to you.

*

You need not worry yourself about your part of the business. You have acted "mighty white," as was to have been expected of you; and, caring little for any other feature of the matter, I'm grateful to you for giving my pessimism and growing disbelief in human disinterestedness a sound wholesome thwack on the mazzard.

*

Yes, I was sorry to whack London, for whom, in his character as author, I have a high admiration, and in that of publicist and reformer a deep contempt. Even if he had been a personal friend, I should have whacked him, and doubtless much harder. I'm not one of those who give their friends carte blanche to sin. If my friend dishonors himself he dishonors me; if he makes a fool of himself he makes a fool of me — which another cannot do.

*

Your description of your new environment, in your other letter, makes me "homesick" to see it. I cordially congratulate you and Mrs. Sterling on having the sense to do what I have always been too indolent to do — namely as you please. Guess I've been always too busy "warming both hands before the fire of life." And now, when

"It sinks and I am ready to depart,"

I find that the damned fire was in *me* and ought to have been quenched with a dash of cold sense. I'm having my canoe decked and yawl-rigged for deep water and live in the hope of being drowned according to the dictates of my conscience.

By way of proving my power of self-restraint I'm going to stop this screed with a whole page unused.

Sincerely yours, as ever,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

1906.

[Washington, D. C., February 3, 1906.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I don’t know why I’ve not written to you — that is, I don’t know why God made me what I have the misfortune to be: a sufferer from procrastination.

*

I have read Mary Austin’s book with unexpected interest. It is pleasing exceedingly. You may not know that I’m familiar with the *kind* of country she writes of, and reading the book was like traversing it again. But the best of her is her style. That is delicious. It has a slight “tang” of archaism — just enough to suggest “lucent sirups tinct with cinnamon,” or the “spice and balm” of Miller’s sea-winds. And what a knack at observation she has! Nothing escapes her eye. Tell me about her. What else has she written? What is she going to write? If she is still young she will do great work; if not — well, she *has* done it in that book. But she’ll have to hammer and hammer again and again before the world will hear and heed.

As to me I’m pot-boiling. My stuff in the N. Y. American (I presume that the part of it that you see is in the Examiner) is mere piffle, written without effort, purpose or care. My department in the Cosmopolitan is a failure, as I told Millard it would be. It is impossible to write topical stuff for a magazine. How can one discuss with heart or inspiration a thing that happens two months or so before one’s comments on it will be read? The venture and the title were Hearst’s notion, but the title so handicaps me that I can do nothing right. I shall drop it.

I’ve done three little stories for the March number (they may be postponed) that are ghastly enough to make a pig squeal.

*

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., March 12, 1906.]

MY DEAR GEORGE,

First, about the “Wine,” I dislike the “privately printed” racket. Can you let the matter wait a little longer? Neale has the poem, and Neale is just now inaccessible to letters, somewhere in the South in the interest of his magazine-that-is-to-be. I called when in New York, but he had flown and I've been unable to reach him; but he is due here on the 23rd. Then if his mag is going to hold fire, or if he doesn't want the poem for it, let Robertson or Josephare have a hack at it.

Barr is amusing. I don't care to have a copy of his remarks.

About the pirating of my stories. That is a matter for Chatto and Windus, who bought the English copyright of the book from which that one story came. I dare say, though, the publication was done by arrangement with them. Anyhow my interests are not involved.

I was greatly interested in your account of Mrs. Austin. She's a clever woman and should write a good novel — if there is such a thing as a good novel. I won't read novels.

Yes, the "Cosmopolitan" cat-story is Leigh's and is to be credited to him if ever published in covers. I fathered it as the only way to get it published at all. Of course I had to rewrite it; it was very crude and too horrible. A story may be terrible, but must not be horrible — there is a difference. I found the manuscript among his papers.

It is disagreeable to think of the estrangement between * and his family. Doubtless the trouble arises from his being married. Yes, it is funny, his taking his toddy along with you old soakers. I remember he used to kick at my having wine in camp and at your having a bottle hidden away in the bushes.

I had seen that group of you and Joaquin and Stoddard and laughed at your lifelike impersonation of the Drowsy Demon.

I passed the first half of last month in New York. Went there for a dinner and stayed to twelve. Sam Davis and Homer Davenport were of the party.

Sam was here for a few days — but maybe you don't know Sam. He's a brother to Bob, who swears you got your Dante-like solemnity of countenance by coming into his office when he was editing a newspaper.

You are not to think I have thrown * over. There are only two or three matters of seriousness between us and they cannot profitably be discussed in letters, so they must wait until he and I meet if we ever do. I shall mention them to no one else and I don't suppose he will to anyone but me. Apart from these — well, our correspondence was disagreeable, so the obvious thing to do was to put an end to it. To unlike a friend is not an easy thing to do, and I've not attempted to do it.

Of course I approve the new lines in the "Wine" and if Neale or anybody else will have the poem I shall insert them in their place. That "screaming thing" stays with one almost as does "the blue-eyed vampire," and is not only visible, as is she, but audible as well. If you go on adding lines to the poem I shall not so sharply deplore our failure to get it into print. As Mark Twain says: "Every time you draw you fill."

The "Night in Heaven" is fine work in the grand style and its swing is haunting when one gets it. I get a jolt or two in the reading, but I dare say you purposely contrived them and I can't say they hurt. Of course the rhythm recalls Kipling's "The Last Chanty" (I'm not sure I spell the word correctly — if there's a correct way) but that is nothing. Nobody has the copyright of any possible metre or rhythm in English prosody. It has been long since anybody was "first." When are you coming to Washington to sail in my canoe?

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., April 5, 1906.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I've been in New York again but am slowly recovering. I saw Neale. He assures me that the magazine will surely materialize about June, and he wants the poem, "A Wine of Wizardry," with an introduction by me. I think he means it; if so that will give it greater publicity than what you have in mind, even if the mag eventually fail. Magazines if well advertised usually sell several hundred thousand of the first issue; the trick is to keep them going. Munsey's "Scrap Book" disposed of a half-million. *

* was to start for a few weeks in California about now. I hope you will see him. He is not a bad lot when convinced that one respects him. He has been treated pretty badly in this neck o' the woods, as is every Western man who breaks into this realm of smugwumps.

My benediction upon Carmelites all and singular — if any are all.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

Doubleday, Page & Co. are to publish my "Cynic's Dictionary."

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., April 20, 1906.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I write in the hope that you are alive and the fear that you are wrecked.[8]

[8] The San Francisco earthquake and fire had occurred April 18, 1906.

Please let me know if I can help — I need not say how glad I shall be to do so. "Help" would go with this were I sure about you and the post-office. It's a mighty bad business and one does not need to own property out there to be "hit hard" by it. One needs only to have friends there.

We are helpless here, so far as the telegraph is concerned — shall not be able to get anything on the wires for many days, all private dispatches being refused.

Pray God you and yours may be all right. Of course anything that you may be able to tell me of my friends will be gratefully received. Sincerely yours, AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., May 6, 1906.]

DEAR GEORGE,

Your letter relieves me greatly. I had begun to fear that you had "gone before." Thank you very much for your news of our friends. I had already heard from Eva Croffie. Also from Grizzly.

*

Thank you for Mr. Eddy's review of "Shapes." But he is misinformed about poor Flora Shearer. Of course I helped her — who would not help a good friend in adversity? But she went to Scotland to a brother long ago, and at this time I do not know if she is living or dead.

But here am I forgetting (momentarily) that awful wiping out of San Francisco. It "hit" me pretty hard in many ways — mostly indirectly, through my friends. I had rather hoped to have to "put up" for you and your gang, and am a trifle disappointed to know that you are all right — except the chimneys. I'm glad that tidal wave did not come, but don't you think you'd better have a canoe ready? You could keep it on your veranda stacked with provisions and whiskey.

My letter from Ursus (written during the conflagration) expresses a keen solicitude for the Farallones, as the fire was working westward.

If this letter is a little disconnected and incoherent know, O King, that I have just returned from a dinner in Atlantic City, N. J. I saw Markham there, also Bob Davis, Sam Moffett, Homer Davenport, Bob Mackay and other San Franciscans. (Can there be a San Franciscan when there is no San Francisco? I don't want to go back. Doubtless the new San Francisco — while it lasts — will be a finer town than the old, but it will not be *my* San Francisco and I don't want to see it. It has for many years been, to me, full of ghosts. Now it is itself a ghost.)

I return the sonnets. Destruction of "Town Talk" has doubtless saved you from having the one on me turned down. Dear old fellow, don't take the trouble to defend my memory when — or at least until —

"I am fled
From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell."

I'm not letting my enemies' attitude trouble me at all. On the contrary, I'm rather sorry for them and their insomnia — lying awake o' nights to think out new and needful lies about me, while I sleep sweetly. O, it is all right, truly.

No, I never had any row (nor much acquaintance) with Mark Twain — met him but two or three times. Once with Stoddard in London. I think pretty well of him, but doubt if he cared for me and can't, at the moment, think of any reason why he *should* have cared for me.

"The Cynic's Dictionary" is a-printing. I shall have to call it something else, for the publishers tell me there is a "Cynic's Dictionary" already out. I dare say the author took more than my title — the stuff has been a rich mine for a plagiarist for many a year. They (the publishers) won't have "The Devil's Dictionary." Here in the East the Devil is a sacred personage (the Fourth Person of the Trinity, as an Irishman might say) and his name must not be taken in vain.

No, "The Testimony of the Suns" has not "palled" on me. I still read it and still think it one of the world's greatest poems.

*

Well, God be wi' ye and spare the shack at Carmel,

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., June 11, 1906.]

DEAR GEORGE,

Your poem, "A Dream of Fear" was so good before that it needed no improvement, though I'm glad to observe that you have "the passion for perfection." Sure — you shall have your word "colossal" applied to a thing of two dimensions, an you will.

I have no objection to the publication of that sonnet on me. It may give my enemies a transient feeling that is disagreeable, and if I can do that without taking any trouble in the matter myself it is worth doing. I think they must have renewed their activity, to have provoked you so — got up a new and fascinating lie, probably. Thank you for putting your good right leg into action themward.

What a "settlement" you have collected about you at Carmel! All manner of cranks and curios, to whom I feel myself drawn by affinity. Still I suppose I shall not go. I should have to see the new San Francisco — when it has foolishly been built — and I'd rather not. One does not care to look upon either the mutilated face of one's mashed friend or an upstart imposter bearing his name. No, *my* San Francisco is gone and I'll have no other.

*

You are wrong about Gorky — he has none of the "artist" in him. He is not only a peasant, but an anarchist and an advocate of assassination — by others; like most of his tribe, he doesn't care to take the risk himself. His "career" in this country has been that of a yellow dog. Hearst's newspapers and * are the only friends that remain to him of all those that acclaimed him when he landed. And all the sturdy lying of the former cannot rehabilitate him. It isn't merely the woman matter. You'd understand if you were on this side of the country. I was myself a dupe in the matter. He had expressed high admiration of my books (in an interview in Russia) and when his Government released him from prison I cabled him congratulations. O, my!

Yes, I've observed the obviously lying estimates of the San Franciscan dead; also that there was no earthquake — just a fire; also the determination to "beat" the insurance companies. Insurance is a hog game, and if they (the companies) can be beaten out of their dishonest gains by superior dishonesty I have no objection; but in my judgment they are neither legally nor morally liable for the half that is claimed of them. Those of them that took no earthquake risks don't owe a cent.

Please don't send *'s verses to me if you can decently decline. I should be sorry to find them bad, and my loathing of the Whitmaniacal "form" is as deep as yours. Perhaps I should find them good otherwise, but the probability is so small that I don't want to take the chance.

*

I've just finished reading the first proofs of "The Cynic's Word Book," which Doubleday, Page & Co. are to bring out in October. My dealings with them have been most pleasant and one of them whom I met the other day at Atlantic City seems a fine fellow.

I think I told you that S. O. Howes, of Galveston, Texas, is compiling a book of essays and sich from some of my stuff that I sent him. I've left the selection entirely to him and presented him with the profits if there be any. He'll probably not even find a publisher. He has the work about half done. By the way, he is an enthusiastic admirer of you. For that I like him, and for much else.

I mean to stay here all summer if I die for it, as I probably shall. Luck and love to you.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., June 20, 1906.]

DEAR MR. CAHILL,

I am more sorry than I can say to be unable to send you the copy of the Builder's Review that you kindly sent *me*. But before receiving your note I had, in my own interest, searched high and low for it, in vain. Somebody stole it from my table. I especially valued it after the catastrophe, but should have been doubly pleased to have it for you.

It was indeed a rough deal you San Franciscans got. I had always expected to go back to the good old town some day, but I have no desire to see the new town, if there is to be one. I fear the fire consumed even the ghosts that used to meet me at every street corner — ghosts of dear dead friends, oh, so many of them!

Please accept my sympathy for your losses. I too am a "sufferer," a whole edition of my latest book, plates and all, having gone up in smoke and many of my friends being now in the "dependent class." It hit us all pretty hard, I guess, wherever we happened to be.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C, August 11, 1906.]
DEAR GEORGE,

*

If your neighbor Carmelites are really "normal" and respectable I'm sorry for you. They will surely (remaining cold sober themselves) drive you to drink. Their sort affects *me* that way. God bless the crank and the curio! — what would life in this desert be without its mullahs and its dervishes? A matter of merchants and camel drivers — no one to laugh with and at.

Did you see Gorky's estimate of us in "Appleton's"? Having been a few weeks in the land, whose language he knows not a word of, he knows (by intuition of genius and a wee-bit help from Gaylord Wilshire and his gang) all about us, and tells it in generalities of vituperation as applicable to one country as to another. He's a dandy bomb-thrower, but he handles the stink-pot only indifferently well. He should write (for "The Cosmopolitan") on "The Treason of God."

Sorry you didn't like my remarks in that fool "symposium." If I said enough to make it clear that I don't care a damn for any of the matters touched upon, nor for the fellows who *do* care, I satisfied my wish. It was not intended to be an "argument" at all — at least not on my part; I don't argue with babes and sucklings. Hunter is a decentish fellow, for a dreamer, but the Hillquit person is a humorless anarchist. When I complimented him on the beauty of his neck and expressed the hope of putting a nice, new rope about it he nearly strangled on the brandy that I was putting down it at the hotel bar. And it wasn't with merriment. His anarchist sentiments were all cut out.

I'm not familiar with the poetry of William Vaughan Moody. Can you "put me on"?

I'm sending you an odd thing by Eugene Wood, of Niagara Falls, where I met him two or three years ago. I'm sure you will appreciate it. The poor chap died the other day and might appropriately — as he doubtless will — lie in a neglected grave. You may return the book when you have read it enough. I'm confident you never heard of it.

Enclosed is your sonnet, with a few suggestions of no importance. I had not space on it to say that the superfluity of superlatives noted, is accentuated by the words "west" and "quest" immediately following, making a lot of "ests." The verses are pleasing, but if any villain prefer them to "In Extremis" may he bite himself with a Snake!

If you'll send me that shuddery thing on Fear — with the "clangor of ascending chains" line — and one or two others that you'd care to have in a magazine, I'll try them on Maxwell. I suspect he will fall dead in the reading, or possibly dislocate the jaw of him with a yawn, but even so you will not have written in vain.

Have you tried anything on "Munsey"? Bob Davis is the editor, and we talked you over at dinner (where would you could have been). I think he values my judgment a little. *

I wish I could be blown upon by your Carmel sea-breeze; the weather here is wicked! I don't even canoe.

My "Cynic" book is due in October. Shall send it to you.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., September 28, 1906.]

DEAR GEORGE,

Both your letters at hand.

*

Be a "magazine poet" all you can — that is the shortest road to recognition, and all our greater poets have travelled it. You need not compromise with your conscience, however, by writing "magazine poetry." You couldn't.

What's your objection to *? I don't observe that it is greatly worse than others of its class. But a fellow who has for nigh upon twenty years written for yellow newspapers can't be expected to say much that's edifying on that subject. So I dare say I'm wrong in my advice about the *kind* of swine for your pearls. There are probably more than the two kinds of pigs — live ones and dead ones.

Yes, I'm a colonel — in Pennsylvania Avenue. In the neighborhood of my tenement I'm a Mister. At my club I'm a major — which is my real title by an act of Congress. I suppressed it in California, but couldn't here, where I run with the military gang.

You need not blackguard your poem, “A Visitor,” though I could wish you had not chosen blank verse. That form seems to me suitable (in serious verse) only to lofty, not lowly, themes. Anyhow, I always expect something pretty high when I begin an unknown poem in blank. Moreover, it is not your best “medium.” Your splendid poem, “Music,” does not wholly commend itself to me for that reason. May I say that it is a little sing-songy — the lines monotonously alike in their caesural pauses and some of their other features?

By the way, I’d like to see what you could do in more unsimple meters than the ones that you handle so well. The wish came to me the other day in reading Lanier’s “The Marshes of Glynn” and some of his other work. Lanier did not often equal his master, Swinburne, in getting the most out of the method, but he did well in the poem mentioned. Maybe you could manage the dangerous thing. It would be worth doing and is, therefore, worth trying.

Thank you for the Moody book, which I will return. He pleaseth me greatly and I could already fill pages with analyses of him for the reasons therefore. But for you to say that he has *you* “skinned” — that is magnanimity. An excellent thing in poets, I grant you, and a rare one. There is something about him and his book in the current “Atlantic,” by May Sinclair, who, I dare say, has never heard of *you*. Unlike you, she thinks his dramatic work the best of what he does. I’ve not seen that. To be the best it must be mighty good.

Yes, poor White’s poetry is all you say — and worse, but, faith! he “had it in him.” What struck me was his candid apotheosis of piracy on the high seas. I’d hate the fellow who hadn’t some sneaking sympathy with that — as Goethe confessed to some sympathy with every vice. Nobody’ll ever hear of White, but (pray observe, ambitious bard!) he isn’t caring. How wise are the dead!

*

My friend Howes, of Galveston, has, I think, nearly finished compiling his book of essaylets from my stuff. Neale has definitely decided to bring out “The Monk and the Hangman’s Daughter.” He has the plates of my two luckless Putnam books, and is figuring on my “complete works,” to be published by subscription. I doubt if he will undertake it right away.

Au reste, I’m in good health and am growing old not altogether disgracefully.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, October 30, 1906.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I’m pained by your comments on my book. I always feel that way when praised—”just plunged in a gulf of dark despair” to think that I took no more trouble to make the commendation truer. I shall try harder with the Howes book.

*

I can’t supply the missing link between pages 101 and 102 of the “Word Book,” having destroyed the copy and proofs. Supply it yourself.

You err: the book is getting me a little glory, but that will be all — it will have no sale, for it has no slang, no “dialect” and no grinning through a horse-collar. By the, way, please send me any “notices” of it that you may chance to see out there.

*

I’ve done a ghost story for the January “Cosmopolitan,” which I think pretty well of. That’s all I’ve done for more than two months.

I return your poem and the Moody book. Sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, December 5, 1906.]

DEAR GEORGE,

Your letter of Nov. 28 has just come to my breakfast table. It is the better part of the repast.

*

No, my dictionary will not sell. I so assured the publishers.

I lunched with Neale the other day — he comes down here once a month. His magazine (I think he is to call it “The Southerner,” or something like that) will not get out this month, as he expected it to. And for an ominous reason: He had relied largely on Southern writers, and finds that they can’t write! He assures me that it *will* appear this winter and asked me not to withdraw your poem and my remarks on it unless you asked it. So I did not.

*

In your character of bookseller carrying a stock of my books you have a new interest. May Heaven promote you to publisher!

Thank you for the Moody books — which I’ll return soon. “The Masque of Judgment” has some great work in its final pages — quite as great as anything in Faust. The passages that you marked are good too, but some of them barely miss being entirely satisfying. It would trouble you to find many such passages in the other book, which is, moreover, not distinguished for clarity. I found myself frequently prompted to ask the author: “What the devil are you driving at?”

I’m going to finish this letter at home where there is less talk of the relative military strength of Japan and San Francisco and the latter power’s newest and most grievous affliction, Teddy Roosevelt.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

P.S. Guess the letter is finished.

1907.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., January 27, 1907.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I suppose I owe you letters and letters — but you don't particularly like to write letters yourself, so you'll understand.

*

Hanging before me is a water-color of a bit of Carmel Beach, by Chris Jorgensen, for which I blew in fifty dollars the other day. He had a fine exhibition of his Californian work here. I wanted to buy it all, but compromised with my desire by buying what I could. The picture has a sentimental value to me, apart from its artistic.

*

I am to see Neale in a few days and shall try to learn definitely when his magazine is to come out — if he knows. If he does not I'll withdraw your poem. Next month he is to republish "The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter," with a new preface which somebody will not relish. I'll send you a copy. The Howes book is on its travels among the publishers, and so, doubtless, will long continue.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., February 5, 1907.]

DEAR GEORGE,

Our letters "crossed" — a thing that "happens" oftener than not in my correspondence, when neither person has written for a long time. I have drawn some interesting inferences from this fact, but have no time now to state them. Indeed, I have no time to do anything but send you the stuff on the battle of Shiloh concerning which you inquire.

I should write it a little differently now, but it may entertain you as it is.

*

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

*

[Washington, February 21, 1907]

MY DEAR GEORGE,

If you desert Carmel I shall destroy my Jorgensen picture, build a bungalow in the Catskills and cut out California forever. (Those are the footprints of my damned canary, who will neither write himself nor let me write. Just now he is perched on my shoulder, awaiting the command to sing — then he will deafen me with a song without sense. O he's a poet all right.)

I entirely approve your allegiance to Mammon. If I'd had brains enough to make a decision like that I could now, at 65, have the leisure to make a good book or two before I go to the waste-dump. * Get yourself a fat bank account — there's no such friend as a bank account, and the greatest book is a check-book; "You may lay to that!" as one of Stevenson's pirates puts it.

*

No, sir, your boss will not bring you East next June; or if he does you will not come to Washington. How do I know? I don't know how I know, but concerning all (and they are many) who were to come from California to see me I have never once failed in my forecast of their coming or not coming. Even in the case of *, although I wrote to you, and to her, as if I expected her, I *said* to one of my friends: "She will not come." I don't think it's a gift of divination — it just happens, somehow. Yours is not a very good example, for you have not said you were coming, "sure."

So your colony of high-brows is re-establishing itself at the old stand — Piedmont. * But Piedmont — it must be in the heart of Oakland. I could no longer shoot rabbits in the gulch back of it and sleep under a tree to shoot more in the morning. Nor could I traverse that long ridge with various girls. I dare say there's a boulevard running the length of it,

> "A palace and a prison on each hand."

If I could stop you from reading that volume of old "Argonauts" I'd do so, but I suppose an injunction would not "lie." Yes, I was a slovenly writer in those days, though enough better than my neighbors to have attracted my own attention. My knowledge of English was imperfect "a whole lot." Indeed, my intellectual status (whatever it may be, and God knows it's enough to make me blush) was of slow growth — as was my moral. I mean, I had not literary sincerity.

Yes, I wrote of Swinburne the distasteful words that you quote. But they were not altogether untrue. He used to set my teeth on edge — could *not* stand still a minute, and kept you looking for the string that worked his legs and arms. And he had a weak face that gave you the memory of chinlessness. But I have long renounced the views that I once held about his poetry — held, or thought I held. I don't remember, though, if it was as lately as '78 that I held them.

You write of Miss Dawson. Did she survive the ‘quake? And do you know about her? Not a word of her has reached me. Notwithstanding your imported nightingale (upon which I think you should be made to pay a stiff duty) your Ina Coolbrith poem is so good that I want to keep it if you have another copy. I find no amendable faults in it. *

The fellow that told you that I was an editor of “The Cosmopolitan” has an impediment in his veracity. I simply write for it, *, and the less of my stuff the editor uses the better I’m pleased.

*

O, you ask about the “Ursus-Aborn-Gorgias-Agrestis-Polyglot” stuff. It was written by James F. (“Jimmie”) Bowman — long dead. (See a pretty bad sonnet on page 94, “Shapes of Clay.”) My only part in the matter was to suggest the papers and discuss them with him over many mugs of beer.

*

By the way, Neale says he gets almost enough inquiries for my books (from San Francisco) to justify him in republishing them.

*

That’s all — and, as George Augustus Sala wrote of a chew of tobacco as the price of a certain lady’s favors, “God knows it’s enough!”

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., April 23, 1907.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I have your letter of the 13th. The enclosed slip from the Pacific Monthly (thank you for it) is amusing. Yes, * is an insufferable pedant, but I don’t at all mind his pedantry. Any critic is welcome to whack me all he likes if he will append to his remarks (as * had the thoughtfulness to do) my definition of “Critic” from the “Word Book.”

Please don’t bother to write me when the spirit does not move you thereto. You and I don’t need to write to each other for any other reason than that we want to. As to coming East, abstain, O, abstain from promises, lest you resemble all my other friends out there, who promise always and never come. It would be delightful to see you here, but I know how those things arrange themselves without reference to our desires. We do as we must, not as we will.

I think that uncle of yours must be a mighty fine fellow. Be good to him and don’t kick at his service, even when you feel the chain. It beats poetry for nothing a year.

Did you get the “Shiloh” article? I sent it to you. I sent it also to Paul Elder & Co. (New York branch) for their book of “Western Classics,” and hope it will meet their need. They wanted something, and it seemed to me as good, with a little revision, as any of my stuff that I control. Do you think it would be wise to offer them for republication “In the Midst of Life”? It is now “out of print” and on my hands.

*

I’m glad of your commendation of my “Cosmopolitan” stuff. They don’t give me much of a “show” — the editor doesn’t love me personally as he should, and lets me do only enough to avert from himself the attention of Mr. Hearst and that gentleman’s interference with the mutual admiration game as played in the “Cosmopolitan” office. As I’m rather fond of light work I’m not shrieking.

*

You don’t speak of getting the book that I sent, “The Monk and the Hangman’s Daughter” — new edition. ‘Tisn’t as good as the old. *

I’m boating again. How I should like to put out my prow on Monterey Bay.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., June 8, 1907.]

DEAR LORA,

Your letter, with the yerba buena and the spray of redwood, came like a breeze from the hills. And the photographs are most pleasing. I note that Sloot’s moustache is decently white at last, as becomes a fellow of his years. I dare say his hair is white too, but I can’t see under his hat. And I think he never removes it. That backyard of yours is a wonder, but I sadly miss the appropriate ash-heaps, tin cans, old packing-boxes, and so forth. And that palm in front of the house — gracious, how she’s grown! Well, it has been more than a day growing, and I’ve not watched it attentively.

I hope you’ll have a good time in Yosemite, but Sloots is an idiot not to go with you — nineteen days is as long as anybody would want to stay there.

I saw a little of Phyllis Partington in New York. She told me much of you and seems to be fond of you. That is very intelligent of her, don’t you think?

No, I shall not wait until I’m rich before visiting you. I’ve no intention of being rich, but do mean to visit you — some day. Probably when Grizzly has visited *me*. Love to you all.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., June 25, 1907.]

DEAR GEORGE,

*

So * showed you his article on me. He showed it to me also, and some of it amused me mightily, though I didn't tell him so. That picture of me as a grouchy and disappointed old man occupying the entire cave of Adullam is particularly humorous, and so poetic that I would not for the world "cut it out." * seems incapable (like a good many others) of estimating success in other terms than those of popularity. He gives a rather better clew to his own character than to mine. The old man is fairly well pleased with the way that he has played the game, and with his share of the stakes, thank'ee.

I note with satisfaction *your* satisfaction with my article on you and your poem. I'll correct the quotation about the "timid sapphires" — don't know how I happened to leave out the best part of it. But I left out the line about "harlot's blood" because I didn't (and don't) think a magazine would "stand for it" if I called the editor's attention to it. You don't know what magazines are if you haven't tested them. However, I'll try it on Chamberlain if you like. And I'll put in "twilight of the year" too.

*

It's pleasing to know that you've "cut out" your clerical work if you can live without it. Now for some great poetry! Carmel has a fascination for me too — because of your letters. If I did not fear illness — a return of my old complaint — I'd set out for it at once. I've nothing to do that would prevent — about two day's work a month. But I'd never set foot in San Francisco. Of all the Sodoms and Gomorrahs in our modern world it is the worst. There are not ten righteous (and courageous) men there. It needs another quake, another whiff of fire, and — more than all else — a steady tradewind of grapeshot. When * gets done blackguarding New York (as it deserves) and has shaken the dung of San Francisco from his feet I'm going to "sick him onto" that moral penal colony of the world. *

I've two "books" seeking existence in New York — the Howes book and some satires. Guess they are cocks that will not fight.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

I was sixty-five yesterday.

[Washington, D. C., July 11, 1907.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I've just finished reading proofs of my stuff about you and your poem. Chamberlain, as I apprised you, has it slated for September. But for that month also he has slated a longish spook story of mine, besides my regular stuff. Not seeing how he can run it all in one issue, I have asked him to run your poem (with my remarks) and hold the spook yarn till some other time. I *hope* he'll do so, but if he doesn't, don't think it my fault. An editor never does as one wants him to. I inserted in my article another quotation or two, and restored some lines that I had cut out of the quotations to save space.

It's grilling hot here — I envy you your Carmel.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I guess several of your good letters are unanswered, as are many others of other correspondents. I've been gadding a good deal lately — to New York principally. When I want a royal good time I go to New York; and I get it.

*

As to Miller being "about the same age" as I, why, no. The rascal is long past seventy, although nine or ten years ago he wrote from Alaska that he was "in the middle fifties." I've known him for nearly thirty years and he can't fool me with his youthful airs and tales. May he live long and repent.

Thank you for taking the trouble to send Conan Doyle's opinion of me. No, it doesn't turn my head; I can show you dozens of "appreciations" from greater and more famous men. I return it to you corrected — as he really wrote it. Here it is:

"Praise from Sir Hugo is praise indeed." In "Through the Magic Door," an exceedingly able article on short stories that have interested him, Conan Doyle pays the following well-deserved tribute to Ambrose Bierce, whose wonderful short stories have so often been praised in these columns: "Talking of weird American stories, have you ever read any of the works of Ambrose Bierce? I have one of his books before me, 'In the Midst of Life.' This man (has)[9] had a flavor quite his own, and (is)[9] was a great artist. It is not cheerful reading, but it leaves its mark upon you, and that is the proof of good work."

[9] Crossed out by A. B.

Thank you also for the Jacobs story, which I will read. As a *humorist* he is no great thing.

I've not read your Bohemian play to a finish yet, *. By the way, I've always wondered why they did not "put on" Comus. Properly done it would be great woodland stuff. Read it with a view to that and see if I'm not right. And then persuade them to "stage it" next year.

I'm being awfully pressed to return to California. No San Francisco for me, but Carmel sounds good. For about how much could I get ground and build a bungalow — for one? That's a pretty indefinite question; but then the will to go is a little hazy at present. It consists, as yet, only of the element of desire. *

The "Cosmopolitan," with your poem, has not come to hand but is nearly due — I'm a little impatient — eager to see the particular kind of outrage Chamberlain's artist has wrought upon it. He (C.) asked for your address the other day; so he will doubtless send you a check.

*

Now please go to work at "Lilith"; it's bound to be great stuff, for you'll have to imagine it all. I'm sorry that anybody ever invented Lilith; it makes her too much of an historical character.

*

"The other half of the Devil's Dictionary" is in the fluid state — not even liquid. And so, doubtless, it will remain.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., September 7, 1907.]

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I'm awfully glad that you don't mind Chamberlain's yellow nonsense in coupling Ella's name with yours. But when you read her natural opinion of your work you'll acquit her of complicity in the indignity. I'm sending a few things from Hearst's newspapers — written by the slangers, dialecters and platitudinarians of the staff, and by some of the swine among the readers.

Note the deliberate and repeated lying of Brisbane in quoting me as saying the "Wine" is "the greatest poem ever written in America." Note his dishonesty in confessing that he has commendatory letters, yet not publishing a single one of them. But the end is not yet — my inning is to come, in the magazine. Chamberlain (who professes an enthusiastic admiration of the poem) promises me a free hand in replying to these ignorant asses. If he does not give it to me I quit. I've writ a paragraph or two for the November number (too late now for the October) by way of warning them what they'll get when December comes. So you see you must patiently endure the befouling till then.

*

Did you notice in the last line of the "Wine" that I restored the word "smile" from your earlier draft of the verses? In one of your later (I don't remember if in the last) you had it "sigh." That was wrong; "smile" seems to me infinitely better as a definition of the poet's attitude toward his dreams. So, considering that I had a choice, I chose it. Hope you approve.

I am serious in wishing a place in Carmel as a port of refuge from the storms of age. I don't know that I shall ever live there, but should like to feel that I can if I want to. Next summer I hope to go out there and spy out the land, and if I then "have the price" (without sacrificing any of my favorite stocks) I shall buy. I don't care for the grub question — should like to try the simple life, for I have already two gouty finger points as a result of the other kind of life. (Of course if they all get that way I shan't mind, for I love uniformity.) Probably if I attempted to live in Carmel I should have asthma again, from which I have long been free.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., October 9, 1907.]

MY DEAR MORROW,

Whether you "prosper" or not I'm glad you write instead of teaching. I have done a bit of teaching myself, but as the tuition was gratuitous I could pick my pupils; so it was a labor of love. I'm pretty well satisfied with the results.

No, I'm not "toiling" much now. I've written all I care to, and having a pretty easy berth (writing for The Cosmopolitan only, and having no connection with Mr. Hearst's newspapers) am content.

I have observed your story in Success, but as I never never (sic) read serials shall await its publication in covers before making a meal of it.

You seem to be living at the old place in Vallejo Street, so I judge that it was spared by the fire. I had some pretty good times in that house, not only with you and Mrs. Morrow (to whom my love, please) but with the dear Hogan girls. Poor Flodie! she is nearly a sole survivor now. I wonder if she ever thinks of us.

I hear from California frequently through a little group of interesting folk who foregather at Carmel — whither I shall perhaps stray some day and there leave my bones. Meantime, I am fairly happy here.

I wish you would add yourself to the Carmel crowd. You would be a congenial member of the gang and would find them worth while. You must know George Sterling: he is the high panjandrum and a gorgeously good fellow. Go get thee a bungalow at Carmel, which is indubitably the charmingest place in the State. As to San Francisco, with its labor-union government, its thieves and other impossibilities, I could not be drawn into it by a team of behemoths. But California — ah, I dare not permit myself to remember it. Yet this Eastern country is not without charm. And my health is good here, as it never was there. Nothing ails me but age, which brings its own cure.

God keep thee! — go and live at Carmel.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., October 29, 1907.]

JAMES D. BLAKE, ESQ.,

DEAR SIR:

It is a matter of no great importance to me, but the republication of the foolish books that you mention would not be agreeable to me. They have no kind of merit or interest. One of them, "The Fiend's Delight," was published against my protest; the utmost concession that the compiler and publisher (the late John Camden Hatten, London) would make was to let me edit his collection of my stuff and write a preface. You would pretty surely lose money on any of them.

If you care to republish anything of mine you would, I think, do better with "Black Beetles in Amber," or "Shapes of Clay." The former sold well, and the latter would, I think, have done equally well if the earthquake-and-fire had not destroyed it, including the plates. Nearly all of both books were sold in San Francisco, and the sold, as well as the unsold, copies — I mean the unsold copies of the latter — perished in the fire. There is much inquiry for them (mainly from those who lost them) and I am told that they bring fancy prices. You probably know about that better than I.

I should be glad to entertain proposals from you for their republication — in San Francisco — and should not be exacting as to royalties, and so forth.

But the other books are "youthful indiscretions" and are "better dead."

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., December 28,1907.]

DEAR GEORGE,

*

Please send me a copy of the new edition of "The Testimony." I borrowed one of the first edition to give away, and want to replace it. Did you add the "Wine" to it? I'd not leave off the indefinite article from the title of that; it seems to dignify the tipple by hinting that it was no ordinary tope. It may have been witch-fermented.

I don't "dislike" the line: "So terribly that brilliance shall enhance"; it seems merely less admirable than the others. Why didn't I tell you so? I could not tell you *all* I thought of the poem — for another example, how I loved the lines:

"Where Dawn upon a pansy's breast hath laid

A single tear, and *whence the wind hath flown*
And left a silence."

*

I'm returning you, under another cover (as the ceremonial slangers say) some letters that have come to me and that I have answered. I have a lot more, most of them abusive, I guess, that I'll dig out later. But the most pleasing ones I can't send, for I sent them to Brisbane on his promise to publish them, which the liar did not, nor has he had the decency to return them. I'm hardly sorry, for it gave me good reason to call him a peasant and a beast of the field. I'm always grateful for the chance to prod somebody.

*

I detest the "limited edition" and "autograph copies" plan of publication, but for the sake of Howes, who has done a tremendous lot of good work on my book, have assented to Blake's proposal in all things and hope to be able to laugh at this brilliant example of the "irony of fate." I've refused to profit in any way by the book. I want Howes to "break even" for his labor.

By the way, Pollard and I had a good time in Galveston, and on the way I took in some of my old battlefields. At Galveston they nearly killed me with hospitality — so nearly that Pollard fled. I returned via Key West and Florida.

You'll probably see Howes next Summer — I've persuaded him to go West and renounce the bookworm habit for some other folly. Be good to him; he is a capital fellow in his odd, amusing way.

I didn't know there was an American edition of "The Fiends' Delight." Who published it and when?

Congratulations on acceptance of "Tasso and Leonora." But I wouldn't do much in blank verse if I were you. It betrays you (somehow) into mere straightaway expression, and seems to repress in you the glorious abundance of imagery and metaphor that enriches your rhyme-work. This is not a criticism, particularly, of "Tasso," which is good enough for anybody, but — well, it's just *so*.

I'm not doing much. My stuff in the Cosmo. comes last, and when advertisements crowd some of it is left off. Most of it gets in later (for of course I don't replace it with more work) but it is sadly antiquated. My checks, though, are always up to date.

Sincerely[10] yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[10] I can almost say “sinecurely.”

1908.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., January 19, 1908.]

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I have just come upon a letter of yours that I got at Galveston and (I fear) did not acknowledge. But I've written you since, so I fancy all is well.

You mention that sonnet that Chamberlain asked for. You should not have let him have it — it was, as you say, the kind of stuff that magazines like. Nay, it was even better. But I wish you'd sent it elsewhere. You owed it to me not to let the Cosmopolitan's readers see anything of yours (for awhile, at least) that was less than *great*. Something as great as the sonnet that you sent to McClure's was what the circumstances called for.

"And strict concern of relativity" — O bother! that's not poetry. It's the slang of philosophy.

I am still awaiting my copy of the new "Testimony." That's why I'm scolding.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., April 18, 1908.]

MY DEAR LORA,

I'm an age acknowledging your letter; but then you'd have been an age writing it if you had not done it for "Sloots." And the other day I had one from him, written in his own improper person.

I think it abominable that he and Carlt have to work so hard — at *their* age — and I quite agree with George Sterling that Carlt ought to go to Carmel and grow potatoes. I'd like to do that myself, but for the fact that so many objectionable persons frequent the place: *, * and the like. I'm hoping, however, that the ocean will swallow * and be unable to throw him up.

I trust you'll let Sloots "retire" at seventy, which is really quite well along in life toward the years of discretion and the age of consent. But when he is retired I know that he will bury himself in the redwoods and never look upon the face of man again. That, too, I should rather like to do myself — for a few months.

I've laid out a lot of work for myself this season, and doubt if I shall get to California, as I had hoped. So I shall never, never see you. But you might send me a photograph.

God be with you.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., July 11, 1908.]

N.B. If you follow the pages you'll be able to make *some* sense of this screed.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I am sorry to learn that you have not been able to break your commercial chains, since you wish to, though I don't at all know that they are bad for you. I've railed at mine all my life, but don't remember that I ever made any good use of leisure when I had it — unless the mere "having a good time" is such. I remember once writing that one's career, or usefulness, was about ended when one thought less about how best to do his work than about the hardship of having to do it. I might have said the hardship of having so little leisure to do it. As I grow older I see more and more clearly the advantages of disadvantage, the splendid urge of adverse conditions, the uplifting effect of repression. And I'm ashamed to note how little *I* profited by them. I wasn't the right kind, that is all; but I indulge the hope that *you* are.

No I don't think it of any use, your trying to keep * and me friends. But don't let that interfere with your regard for him if you have it. We are not required to share one another's feelings in such matters. I should not expect you to like my friends nor hate my enemies if they seemed to you different from what they seem to me; nor would I necessarily follow *your* lead. For example, I loathe your friend * and expect his safe return because the ocean will refuse to swallow him.

*

I congratulate you on the Gilder acceptance of your sonnet, and on publication of the "Tasso to Leonora." I don't think it your best work by much — don't think any of your blank verse as good as most of your rhyme — but it's not a thing to need apology.

Certainly, I shall be pleased to see Hopper. Give me his address, and when I go to New York — this month or the next — I'll look him up. I think well of Hopper and trust that he will not turn out to be an 'ist of some kind, as most writers and artists do. That is because they are good feelers and poor thinkers. It is the emotional element in them, not the logical, that makes them writers and artists. They have, as a rule, sensibility and no sense. Except the *big* fellows.

*

Neale has in hand already three volumes of the "Collected Works," and will have two more in about a month; and all (I hope) this year. I'm revising all the stuff and cutting it about a good deal, taking from one book stuff for another, and so forth. If Neale gets enough subscriptions he will put out all the ten volumes next year; if not I shall probably not be "here" to see the final one issued.

*

Glad you think better of my part in the Hunter-Hillquit “symposium.” *I* think I did very well considering, first, that I didn’t care a damn about the matter; second, that I knew nothing of the men I was to meet, nor what we were to talk about, whereas they came cocked and primed for the fray; and, third, that the whole scheme was to make a Socialist holiday at my expense. Of all ‘ists the Socialist is perhaps the damnedest fool for (in this country) he is merely the cat that pulls chestnuts from the fire for the Anarchist. His part of the business is to talk away the country’s attention while the Anarchist places the bomb. In some countries Socialism is clean, but not in this. And everywhere the Socialist is a dreamer and futilitarian.

But I guess I’ll call a halt on this letter, the product of an idle hour in garrulous old age.

*

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., August 7, 1908.]

MY DEAR MR. CAHILL,

Your note inquiring about “Ashes of the Beacon” interests me. You mention it as a “pamphlet.” I have no knowledge of its having appeared otherwise than as an article in the Sunday edition of the “N. Y. American” — I do not recall the date. If it has been published as a pamphlet, or in any other form, separately — that is by itself — I should like “awfully” to know by whom, if *you* know.

I should be pleased to send it to you — in the “American” — if I had a copy of the issue containing it, but I have not. It will be included in Vol. I of my “Collected Works,” to be published by the Neale Publishing Company, N. Y. That volume will be published probably early next year.

But the work is to be in ten or twelve costly volumes, and sold by subscription only. That buries it fathoms deep so far as the public is concerned.

Regretting my inability to assist you, I am sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., August 14, 1908.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I am amused by your attitude toward the spaced sonnet, and by the docility of Gilder. If I had been your editor I guess you’d have got back your sonnets. I never liked the space. If the work naturally divides itself into two parts, as it should, the space is needless; if not, it is worse than that. The space was the invention of printers of a comparatively recent period, neither Petrarch nor Dante (as Gilder points out) knew of it. Every magazine has its own *system* of printing, and Gilder's good-natured compliance with your wish, or rather demand, shows him to be a better fellow, though not a better poet, than I have thought him to be. As a victory of author over editor, the incident pleases.

I've not yet been in New York, but expect to go soon. I shall be glad to meet Hopper if he is there.

Thank you for the article from "Town Talk." It suggests this question: How many times, and covering a period of how many years, must one's unexplainable obscurity be pointed out to constitute fame? Not knowing, I am almost disposed to consider myself the most famous of authors. I have pretty nearly ceased to be "discovered," but my notoriety as an obscurian may be said to be worldwide and apparently everlasting.

The trouble, I fancy, is with our vocabulary — the lack of a word meaning something intermediate between "popular" and "obscure" — and the ignorance of writers as to the reading of readers. I seldom meet a person of education who is not acquainted with some of my work; my clipping bureau's bills were so heavy that I had to discontinue my patronage, and Blake tells me that he sells my books at one hundred dollars a set. Rather amusing all this to one so widely unknown.

I sometimes wonder what you think of Scheff's new book. Does it perform the promise of the others? In the dedicatory poem it seems to me that it does, and in some others. As a good Socialist you are bound to like *that* poem because of its political-economic-views. I like it despite them.

> "The dome of the Capitol roars
> With the shouts of the Caesars of crime"

is great poetry, but it is not true. I am rather familiar with what goes on in the Capitol — not through the muck-rakers, who pass a few days here "investigating," and then look into their pockets and write, but through years of personal observation and personal acquaintance with the men observed. There are no Caesars of crime, but about a dozen rascals, all told, mostly very small fellows; I can name them all. They are without power or influence enough to count in the scheme of legislation. The really dangerous and mischievous chaps are the demagogues, friends of the pee-pul. And they do all the "shouting." Compared with the Congress of our forefathers, the Congress of to-day is as a flock of angels to an executive body of the Western Federation of Miners.

When I showed the "dome" to * (who had been reading his own magazine) the tears came into his voice, and I guess his eyes, as he lamented the decay of civic virtue, "the treason of the Senate," and the rest of it. He was so affected that I hastened to brace him up with whiskey. He, too, was "squirming" about "other persons' troubles," and with about as good reason as you.

I think "the present system" is not "frightful." It is all right — a natural outgrowth of human needs, limitations and capacities, instinct with possibilities of growth in goodness, elastic, and progressively better. Why don't you study humanity as you do the suns — not from the viewpoint of time, but from that of eternity. The middle ages were yesterday, Rome and Greece the day before. The individual man is nothing, as a single star is nothing. If this earth were to take fire you would smile to think how little it mattered in the scheme of the universe; all the wailing of the egoist mob would not affect you. Then why do you squirm at the minute catastrophe of a few thousands or millions of pismires crushed under the wheels of evolution. Must the new heavens and the new earth of prophecy and science come in *your* little instant of life in order that you may not go howling and damning with Jack London up and down the earth that we happen to have? Nay, nay, read history to get the long, large view — to learn to think in centuries and cycles. Keep your eyes off your neighbors and fix them on the nations. What poetry we shall have when you get, and give us, The Testimony of the Races!

*

I peg away at compilation and revision. I'm cutting-about my stuff a good deal — changing things from one book to another, adding, subtracting and dividing. Five volumes are ready, and Neale is engaged in a "prospectus" which he says will make me blush. I'll send it to you when he has it ready.

Gertrude Atherton is sending me picture-postals of Berchtesgaden and other scenes of "The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter." She found all the places "exactly as described" — the lakes, mountains, St. Bartolomae, the cliff-meadow where the edelweiss grows, and so forth. The photographs are naturally very interesting to me.

Good night.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., September 12, 1908.]

MY DEAR MR. CAHILL,

Thank you for your good wishes for the "Collected Works" — an advertisement of which — with many blushes! — I enclose.

Sincerely yours,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

P.S. — The "ad" is not sent in the hope that you will be so foolish as to subscribe — merely to "show" you. The "edition de luxe" business is not at all to my taste — I should prefer a popular edition at a possible price.

[New York, November 6, 1908.]

DEAR GEORGE,

Your letter has just been forwarded from Washington. I'm here for a few days only—"few days and full of trouble," as the Scripture hath it. The "trouble" is mainly owling, dining and booze. I'll not attempt an answer to your letter till I get home.

*

I'm going to read Hopper's book, and if it doesn't show him to be a * or a * I'll call on him. If it does I won't. I'm getting pretty particular in my old age; the muck-rakers, blood-boilers and little brothers-of-the-bad are not congenial.

By the way, why do you speak of my "caning" you. I did not suppose that *you* had joined the innumerable caravan of those who find something sarcastic or malicious in my good natured raillery in careless controversy. If I choose to smile in ink at your inconsistency in weeping for the woes of individual "others" — meaning other *humans* — while you, of course, don't give a damn for the thousands of lives that you crush out every time you set down your foot, or eat a berry, why shouldn't *I* do so? One can't always remember to stick to trifles, even in writing a letter. Put on your skin, old man, I may want to poke about with my finger again.

*

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., December 11, 1908.]

DEAR GEORGE,

*

I'm still working at my book. Seven volumes are completed and I've read the proofs of Vol. I.

Your account of the "movement" to free the oppressed and downtrodden river from the tyranny of the sand-bar tickled me in my lonesome rib. Surely no colony of reformers ever engaged in a more characteristic crusade against the Established Order and Intolerable Conditions. I can almost hear you patting yourselves on your aching backs as you contemplated your encouraging success in beating Nature and promoting the Cause. I believe that if I'd been there my cold heart and indurated mind would have caught the contagion of the Great Reform. Anyhow, I should have appreciated the sunset which (characteristically) intervened in the interest of Things as They Are. I feel sure that whenever you Socialers shall have found a way to make the earth stop “turning over and over like a man in bed” (as Joaquin might say) you will accomplish all the reforms that you have at heart. All that you need is plenty of time — a few kalpas, more or less, of uninterrupted daylight. Meantime I await your new book with impatience and expectation.

I have photographs of my brother’s shack in the redwoods and feel strongly drawn in that direction — since, as you fully infer, Carmel is barred. Probably, though, I shall continue in the complicated life of cities while I last.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

1909.

[Washington, D. C., January 9, 1909.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I’ve been reading your book — re-reading most of it—”every little while.” I don’t know that it is better than your first, but to say that it is as good is praise enough. You know what I like most in it, but there are some things that you don’t know I like. For an example, “Night in Heaven.” It Kipples a bit, but it is great. But I’m not going to bore you with a catalogue of titles. The book is *all* good. No, not (in my judgment) all, for it contains lines and words that I found objectionable in the manuscript, and time has not reconciled me to them. Your retention of them, shows, however, that you agree with me in thinking that you have passed your ‘prentice period and need no further criticism. So I welcome them.

I take it that the cover design is Scheff’s — perhaps because it is so good, for the little cuss is clever that way.

*

I rather like your defence of Jack London — not that I think it valid, but because I like loyalty to a friend whom one does not believe to be bad. (The “thick-and-thin” loyalty never commended itself to me; it is too dog-like.) I fail, however, to catch the note of penitence in London’s narratives of his underlife, and my charge of literary stealing was not based on his primeval man book, “Before Adam.”

As to *, as he is not more than a long-range or short-acquaintance friend of yours, I’ll say that I would not believe him under oath on his deathbed. * The truth is, none of these howlers knows the difference between a million and a thousand nor between truth and falsehood. I could give you instances of their lying about matters here at the capital that would make even your hair stand on end. It is not only that they are all liars — they are mere children; they don’t know anything and don’t care to, nor, for prosperity in their specialties, need to. Veracity would be a disqualification; if they confined themselves to facts they would not get a hearing. * is the nastiest futilitarian of the gang.

It is not the purpose of these gentlemen that I find so very objectionable, but the foul means that they employ to accomplish it. I would be a good deal of a Socialist myself if they had not made the word (and the thing) stink.

Don’t imagine that I’ll not “enter Carmel” if I come out there. I’ll visit you till you're sick of me. But I'd not *live* there and be "identified" with it, as the newspapers would say. I'm warned by Hawthorne and Brook Farm.

I'm still working — a little more leisurely — on my books. But I begin to feel the call of New York on the tympani of my blood globules. I must go there occasionally, or I should die of intellectual torpor. * "O Lord how long?" — this letter. O well, you need not give it the slightest attention; there's nothing, I think, that requires a reply, nor merits one.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., March 6, 1909.]

DEAR GEORGE,

*

Did you see Markham's review of the "Wine" in "The N. Y. American"? Pretty fair, but — if a metrical composition full of poetry is not a poem what is it? And I wonder what he calls Kubla Khan, which has a beginning but neither middle nor end. And how about The Faerie Queene for absence of "unity"? Guess I'll ask him.

Isn't it funny what happens to critics who would mark out meters and bounds for the Muse — denying the name "poem," for example, to a work because it is not like some other work, or like one that is in the minds of them?

I hope you are prosperous and happy and that I shall sometimes hear from you.

Howes writes me that the "Lone Hand" — Sydney — has been commending you.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., October 9, 1909.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I return the poems with a few random comments and suggestions.

I'm a little alarmed lest you take too seriously my preference of your rhyme to your blank — especially when I recall your "Music" and "The Spirit of Beauty." Perhaps I should have said only that you are not so *likely* to write well in blank. (I think always of "Tasso to Leonora," which I cannot learn to like.) Doubtless I have too great fondness for *great* lines — *your* great lines — and they occur less frequently in your blank verse than in your rhyme — most frequently in your quatrains, those of sonnets included. Don't swear off blank — except as you do drink — but study it more. It's "an hellish thing."

It looks as if I *might* go to California sooner than I had intended. My health has been wretched all summer. I need a sea voyage — one *via* Panama would be just the thing. So if the cool weather of autumn do not restore me I shall not await spring here. But I'm already somewhat better. If I had been at sea I should have escaped the Cook-Peary controversy. We talk nothing but arctic matters here — I enclose my contribution to its horrors.

I'm getting many a good lambasting for my book of essays. Also a sop of honey now and then. It's all the same to me; I don't worry about what my contemporaries think of me. I made 'em think of *you* — that's glory enough for one. And the squirrels in the public parks think me the finest fellow in the world. They know what I have in every pocket. Critics don't know that — nor nearly so much.

Advice to a young author: Cultivate the good opinion of squirrels.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., November 1, 1909.]

DEAR GEORGE,

European criticism of your *bête noir*, old Leopold, is entitled to attention; American (of him or any other king) is not. It looks as if the wretch may be guilty of indifference.

In condemning as "revolutionary" the two-rhyme sestet, I think I could not have been altogether solemn, for (1) I'm something of a revolutionist myself regarding the sonnet, having frequently expressed the view that its accepted forms — even the number of lines — were purely arbitrary; (2) I find I've written several two-rhyme sestets myself, and (3), like yours, my ear has difficulty in catching the rhyme effect in a-b-c, a-b-c. The rhyme is delayed till the end of the fourth line — as it is in the quatrain (not of the sonnet) with unrhyming first and third lines — a form of which I think all my multitude of verse supplies no example. I confess, though, that I did not know that Petrarch had made so frequent use of the 2-rhyme sestet.

I learn a little all the time; some of my old notions of poetry seem to me now erroneous, even absurd. So I *may* have been at one time a stickler for the "regular" three-rhymer. Even now it pleases my ear well enow if the three are not so arranged as to elude it. I'm sorry if I misled you. You'd better 'fess up to your young friend, as I do to you — if I really was serious.

*

Of course I should be glad to see Dick, but don't expect to. They never come, and it has long been my habit to ignore every "declaration of intention."

I'm greatly pleased to know that you too like those lines of Markham that you quote from the "Wharf of Dreams." I've repeatedly told him that that sonnet was his greatest work, and those were its greatest lines. By the way, my young poet, Loveman, sends me a letter from Markham, asking for a poem or two for a book, "The Younger Choir," that he (M.) is editing. Loveman will be delighted by your good opinion of "Pierrot" — which still another magazine has returned to me. Guess I'll have to give it up.

I'm sending you a booklet on loose locutions. It is vilely gotten up — had to be so to sell for twenty-five cents, the price that I favored. I just noted down these things as I found them in my reading, or remembered them, until I had four hundred. Then I took about fifty from other books, and boiled down the needful damnation. Maybe I have done too much boiling down — making the stuff "thick and slab." If there is another edition I shall do a little bettering.

I should like some of those mussels, and, please God, shall help you cull them next summer. But the abalone — as a Christian comestible he is a stranger to me and the tooth o' me.

I think you have had some correspondence with my friend Howes of Galveston. Well, here he is "in his habit as he lives." Of the two figures in the picture Howes is the one on top.[11] Good night.

[11] Howes was riding on a burro.

A. B.

1910.

[Washington, D. C., January 29, 1910.]

DEAR GEORGE,

Here are your fine verses — I have been too busy to write to you before. In truth, I've worked harder now for more than a year than I ever shall again — and the work will bring me nor gain nor glory. Well, I shall take a rest pretty soon, partly in California. I thank you for the picture card. I have succumbed to the post-card fashion myself.

As to some points in your letter.

I've no recollection of advising young authors to "leave all heart and sentiment out of their work." If I did the context would probably show that it was because their time might better be given to perfect themselves in form, against the day when their hearts would be less wild and their sentiments truer. You know it has always been my belief that one cannot be trusted to feel until one has learned to think — and few youngsters have learned to do that. Was it not Dr. Holmes who advised a young writer to cut out every passage that he thought particularly good? He'd be sure to think the beautiful and sentimental passages the best, would he not? *

If you mean to write really "vituperative" sonnets (why sonnets?) let me tell you *one* secret of success — name your victim and his offense. To do otherwise is to fire blank cartridges — to waste your words in air — to club a vacuum. At least your satire must be so personally applicable that there can be no mistake as to the victim's identity. Otherwise he is no victim — just a spectator like all others. And that brings us to Watson. His caddishness consisted, not in satirizing a woman, which is legitimate, but, first, in doing so without sufficient reason, and, second, in saying orally (on the safe side of the Atlantic) what he apparently did not dare say in the verses. *

I'm enclosing something that will tickle you I hope—"The Ballade of the Goodly Fere." The author's[12] father, who is something in the Mint in Philadelphia, sent me several of his son's poems that were not good; but at last came this — in manuscript, like the others. Before I could do anything with it — meanwhile wearing out the paper and the patience of my friends by reading it at them — the old man asked it back rather peremptorily. I reluctantly sent it, with a letter of high praise. The author had "placed" it in London, where it has made a heap of talk.

[12] Ezra Pound.

It has plenty of faults besides its monotonous rhyme scheme; but tell me what you think of it.

God willing, we shall eat Carmel mussels and abalones in May or June.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., March 7, 1910.]

DEAR GEORGE,

My plan is to leave here before April first, pass a few days in New York and then sail for Colon. If I find the canal work on the Isthmus interesting I may skip a steamer from Panama to see it. I've no notion how long it will take to reach San Francisco, and know nothing of the steamers and their schedules on the Pacific side.

I shall of course want to see Grizzly first — that is to say, he will naturally expect me to. But if you can pull him down to Carmel about the time of my arrival (I shall write you the date of my sailing from New York) I would gladly come there. Carlt, whom I can see at once on arriving, can tell me where he (Grizzly) is. *

I don't think you rightly value "The Goodly Fere." Of course no ballad written to-day can be entirely good, for it must be an imitation; it is now an unnatural form, whereas it was once a natural one. We are no longer a primitive people, and a primitive people's forms and methods are not ours. Nevertheless, this seems to me an admirable ballad, as it is given a modern to write ballads. And I think you overlook the best line:

> "The hounds of the crimson sky gave tongue."

The poem is complete as I sent it, and I think it stops right where and as it should —

> "I ha' seen him eat o' the honey comb
> Sin' they nailed him to the tree."

The current "Literary Digest" has some queer things about (and by) Pound, and "Current Literature" reprints the "Fere" with all the wrinkles ironed out of it — making a "capon priest" of it.

Fo' de Lawd's sake! don't apologise for not subscribing for my "Works." If you did subscribe I should suspect that you were "no friend o' mine" — it would remove you from that gang and put you in a class by yourself. Surely you can not think I care who buys or does not buy my books. The man who expects anything more than lip-service from his friends is a very young man. There are, for example, a half-dozen Californians (all loud admirers of Ambrose Bierce) editing magazines and newspapers here in the East. Every man Jack of them has turned me down. They will do everything for me but enable me to live. Friends be damned! — strangers are the chaps for me.

*

I've given away my beautiful sailing canoe and shall never again live a life on the ocean wave — unless you have boats at Carmel.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., Easter Sunday.]

DEAR GEORGE,

Here's a letter from Loveman, with a kindly reference to you — that's why I send it.

I'm to pull out of here next Wednesday, the 30th, but don't know just when I shall sail from New York — apparently when there are no more dinners to eat in that town and no more friends to visit. May God in His infinite mercy lessen the number of both. I should get into your neck o' woods early in May. Till then God be with you instead.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

Easter Sunday.
[Why couldn't He stay put?]
[Washington, D. C., March 29, 1910.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I'm "all packed up," even my pens; for to-morrow I go to New York — whence I shall write you before embarking.

Neale seems pleased by your "permission to print," as Congressmen say who can't make a speech yet want one in the Record, for home consumption.

Sincerely,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Guerneville, Cal., May 24, 1910.]

DEAR GEORGE,

You will probably have learned of my arrival — this is my first leisure to apprise you.

I took Carlt and Lora and came directly up here — where we all hope to see you before I see Carmel. Lora remains here for the week, perhaps longer, and Carlt is to come up again on Saturday. Of course you do not need an invitation to come whenever you feel like it.

I had a pleasant enough voyage and have pretty nearly got the “slosh” of the sea out of my ears and its heave out of my bones.

A bushel of letters awaits attention, besides a pair of lizards that I have undertaken to domesticate. So good morning.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Key Route Inn, Oakland, June 25, 1910.]

DEAR GEORGE,

You’ll observe that I acted on your suggestion, and am “here.”

Your little sisters are most gracious to me, despite my candid confession that I extorted your note of introduction by violence and intimidation.

Baloo[13] and his cubs went on to Guerneville the day of their return from Carmel. But I saw them.

[13] Albert Bierce.

I’m deep in work, and shall be for a few weeks; then I shall be off to Carmel for a lungful of sea air and a bellyful of abalones and mussels.

I suppose you’ll be going to the Midsummer Jinks. Fail not to stop over here — I don’t feel that I have really seen you yet.

With best regards to Carrie.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Laguna Vista, Oakland, Sunday, July 24, 1910.]

DEAR GEORGE,

Supposing you to have gone home, I write to send the poem. Of course it is a good poem. But I begin to want to hear your larger voice again. I want to see you standing tall on the heights — above the flower-belt and the bird-belt. I want to hear,

“like Ocean on a western beach,
The surge and thunder of the Odyssey,”

as you *Odyssate*.

I *think* I met that dog * to-day, and as it was a choice between kicking him and avoiding him I chose the more prudent course.

I've not seen your little sisters — they seem to have tired of me. Why not? — I have tired of myself.

Fail not to let me know when to expect you for the Guerneville trip. *

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Laguna Vista, October 20, 1910.]

I go back to the Inn on Saturday.

DEAR GEORGE,

It is long since I read the Book of Job, but if I thought it better than your addition to it I should not sleep until I had read it again — and again. Such a superb Who's Who in the Universe! Not a Homeric hero in the imminence of a personal encounter ever did so fine bragging. I hope you will let it into your next book, if only to show that the "inspired" scribes of the Old Testament are not immatchable by modern genius. You know the Jews regard them, not as prophets, in our sense, but merely as poets — and the Jews ought to know something of their own literature.

I fear I shall not be able to go to Carmel while you're a widow — I've tangled myself up with engagements again. Moreover, I'm just back from the St. Helena cemetery, and for a few days shall be too blue for companionship.

"Shifted" is better, I think (in poetry) than "joggled." You say you "don't like working." Then write a short story. That's work, but you'd like it — or so I think. Poetry is the highest of arts, but why be a specialist?

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., November 11, 1910.]

DEAR LORA,

It is nice to hear from you and learn that despite my rude and intolerant ways you manage to slip in a little affection for me — you and the rest of the folk. And really I think I left a little piece of my heart out there — mostly in Berkeley. It is funny, by the way, that in falling out of love with most of my old sweethearts and semi-sweethearts I should fall *in* love with my own niece. It is positively scandalous!

I return Sloot's letter. It gave me a bit of a shock to have him say that he would probably never see me again. Of course that is true, but I had not thought of it just that way — had not permitted myself to, I suppose. And, after all, if things go as I’m hoping they will, Montesano will take me in again some day before he seems likely to leave it. We four may see the Grand Cañon together yet. I’d like to lay my bones thereabout.

The garments that you persuaded me were mine are not. They are probably Sterling’s, and he has probably damned me for stealing them. I don’t care; he has no right to dress like the “filthy rich.” Hasn’t he any “class consciousness”? However, I am going to send them back to you by express. I’ll mail you the paid receipt; so don’t pay the charge that the company is sure to make. They charged me again for the two packages that you paid for, and got away with the money from the Secretary of my club, where they were delivered. I had to get it back from the delivery man at the cannon’s mouth — 34 calibre.

With love to Carlt and Sloots,

Affectionately yours,
AMBROSE.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., November 14, 1910.]

DEAR LORA,

*

You asked me about the relative interest of Yosemite and the Grand Cañon. It is not easy to compare them, they are so different. In Yosemite only the magnitudes are unfamiliar; in the Cañon nothing is familiar — at least, nothing would be familiar to you, though I have seen something like it on the upper Yellowstone. The “color scheme” is astounding — almost incredible, as is the “architecture.” As to magnitudes, Yosemite is nowhere. From points on the rim of the Cañon you can see fifty, maybe a hundred, miles of it. And it is never twice alike. Nobody can describe it. Of course you must see it sometime. I wish our Yosemite party could meet there, but probably we never will; it is a long way from here, and not quite next door to Berkeley and Carmel.

I’ve just got settled in my same old tenement house, the Olympia, but the club is my best address.

*

Affectionately,
AMBROSE.

[Washington, D. C., November 29, 1910.]

DEAR LORA,

Thank you very much for the work that you are doing for me in photography and china. I know it is great work. But take your time about it.

I hope you all had a good Thanksgiving at Upshack. (That is my name for

Sloots' place. It will be understood by anyone that has walked to it from Montesano, carrying a basket of grub on a hot day.)

I trust Sterling got his waistcoat and trousers in time to appear at his uncle's dinner in other outer garments than a steelpen coat. * I am glad you like (or like to have) the books. You would have had all my books when published if I had supposed that you cared for them, or even knew about them. I am now encouraged to hope that some day you and Carlt and Sloots may be given the light to see the truth at the heart of my "views" (which I have expounded for half a century) and will cease to ally yourselves with what is most hateful to me, socially and politically. I shall then feel (in my grave) that perhaps, after all, I knew how to write. Meantime, run after your false fool gods until you are tired; I shall not believe that your hearts are really in the chase, for they are pretty good hearts, and those of your gods are nests of nastiness and heavens of hate.

Now I feel better, and shall drink a toddy to the tardy time when those whom I love shall not think me a perverted intelligence; when they shall not affirm my intellect and despise its work — confess my superior understanding and condemn all its fundamental conclusions. Then we will be a happy family — you and Carlt in the flesh and Sloots and I in our bones.

*

My health is excellent in this other and better world than California.

God bless you. AMBROSE.

[Washington, D. C., December 22, 1910.]

DEAR CARLT,

You had indeed "something worth writing about" — not only the effect of the impenitent mushroom, but the final and disastrous overthrow of that ancient superstition, Sloots' infallibility as a mushroomer. As I had expected to be at that dinner, I suppose I should think myself to have had "a narrow escape." Still, I wish I could have taken my chance with the rest of you.

How would you like three weeks of nipping cold weather, with a foot of snow? That's what has been going on here. Say, tell Sloots that the front footprints of a rabbit-track

[Illustration: Rabbit tracks]

are made by the animal's hind feet, straddling his forelegs. Could he have learned that important fact in California, except by hearsay? Observe (therefore) the superiority of this climate.

*

AMBROSE.

1911.

[Washington, D. C., January 26, 1911.]

DEAR LORA,

I have just received a very affectionate letter from * and now know that I did her an injustice in what I carelessly wrote to you about her incivility to me after I had left her. It is plain that she did not mean to be uncivil in what she wrote me on a postal card which I did not look at until I was in the train; she just “didn’t know any better.” So I have restored her to favor, and hope that you will consider my unkind remarks about her as unwritten. Guess I’m addicted to going off at half-cock anyhow.

Affectionately,
AMBROSE.

[Washington, D. C., February 3, 1911.]

DEAR LORA,

I have the Yosemite book, and Miss Christiansen has the Mandarin coat. I thank you very much. The pictures are beautiful, but of them all I prefer that of Nanny bending over the stove. True, the face is not visible, but it looks like you all over.

I’m filling out the book with views of the Grand Cañon, so as to have my scenic treasures all together. Also I’m trying to get for you a certain book of Cañon pictures, which I neglected to obtain when there. You will like it — if I get it.

Sometime when you have nothing better to do — don’t be in a hurry about it — will you go out to Mountain View cemetery with your camera and take a picture of the grave of Elizabeth (Lily) Walsh, the little deaf mute that I told you of? I think the man in the office will locate it for you. It is in the Catholic part of the cemetery — St. Mary’s. The name Lily Walsh is on the beveled top of the headstone which is shaped like this:

[Illustration: Headstone]

You remember I was going to take you there, but never found the time.

Miss Christiansen says she is writing, or has written you. I think the coat very pretty.

Affectionately,
AMBROSE.

[Washington, D. C., February 15, 1911.]

DEAR GEORGE,

As to the “form of address.” A man passing another was halted by the words: “You dirty dog!” Turning to the speaker, he bowed coldly and said: “Smith is my name, sir.” *My* name is Bierce, and I find, on reflection, that I like best those who call me just that. If my christen name were George I’d want to be called *that*; but “Ambrose” is fit only for mouths of women — in which it sounds fairly well.

How are you my master? I never read one of your poems without learning something, though not, alas, how to make one.

Don’t worry about “Lilith”; it will work out all right. As to the characters not seeming alive, I’ve always fancied the men and women of antiquity — particularly the kings, and great ones generally — should not be too flesh-and-bloody, like the “persons whom one meets.” A little coldness and strangeness is very becoming to them. I like them to *stalk*, like the ghosts that they are — our modern passioning seems a bit anachronous in them. Maybe I’m wrong, but I’m sure you will understand and have some sympathy with the error.

Hudson Maxim takes medicine without biting the spoon. He had a dose from me and swallowed it smiling. I too gave him some citations of great poetry that is outside the confines of his “definition” — poetry in which are no tropes at all. He seems to lack the *feel* of poetry. He even spoils some of the “great lines” by not including enough of the context. As to his “improvements,” fancy his preference for “the fiercest spirit of *the warrior host*” to “the fiercest spirit *that fought in Heaven*”! O my!

Yes, Conrad told me the tale of his rescue by you. He gave me the impression of hanging in the sky above billows unthinkably huge and rocks inconceivably hard.

*

Of course I could not but be pleased by your inclusion of that sonnet on me in your book. And, by the way, I’m including in my tenth volume my *Cosmopolitan* article on the “Wine” and my end of the controversy about it. All the volumes of the set are to be out by June, saith the publisher. He is certainly half-killing me with proofs — mountains of proofs! *

Yes, you’ll doubtless have a recruit in Carlt for your Socialist menagerie — if he is not already a veteran exhibit. Your “party” is recruited from among sore-heads only. There are some twenty-five thousand of them (sore-heads) in this neck o’ woods — all disloyal — all growling at the Government which feeds and clothes them twice as well as they could feed and clothe themselves in private employment. They move Heaven and Earth to get in, and they never resign — just “take it out” in abusing the Government. If I had my way nobody should remain in the civil service more than five years — at the end of that period all are disloyal. Not one of them cares a rap for the good of the service or the country — as we soldiers used to do on thirteen dollars a month (with starvation, disease and death thrown in). Their grievance is that the Government does not undertake to maintain them in the style to which they choose to accustom themselves. They fix their standard of living just a little higher than they can afford, and would do so no matter what salary they got, as all salary-persons invariably do. Then they damn their employer for not enabling them to live up to it.

If they can do better “outside” why don’t they go outside and do so; if they can’t (which means that they are getting more than they are worth) what are they complaining about?

What this country needs — what every country needs occasionally — is a good hard bloody war to revive the vice of patriotism on which its existence as a nation depends. Meantime, you socialers, anarchists and other sentimentaliters and futilitarians will find the civil-service your best recruiting ground, for it is the Land of Reasonless Discontent. I yearn for the strong-handed Dictator who will swat you all on the mouths o’ you till you are “heard to cease.” Until then — How? (drinking.)

Yours sincerely,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., February 19, 1911.]

DEAR LORA,

Every evening coffee is made for me in my rooms, but I have not yet ventured to take it from *your* cup for fear of an accident to the cup. Some of the women in this house are stark, staring mad about that cup and saucer, and the plate.

I am very sorry Carlt finds his position in the civil service so intolerable. If he can do better outside he should resign. If he can’t, why, that means that the Government is doing better for him than he can do for himself, and you are not justified in your little tirade about the oppression of “the masses.” “The masses” have been unprosperous from time immemorial, and always will be. A very simple way to escape that condition (and the *only* way) is to elevate oneself out of that incapable class.

You write like an anarchist and say that if you were a man you’d *be* one. I should be sorry to believe that, for I should lose a very charming niece, and you a most worthy uncle.

You say that Carlt and Grizzly are not Socialists. Does that mean that *they* are anarchists? I draw the line at anarchists, and would put them all to death if I lawfully could.

But I fancy your intemperate words are just the babbling of a thoughtless girl. In any case you ought to know from my work in literature that I am not the person to whom to address them. I carry my convictions into my life and conduct, into my friendships, affections and all my relations with my fellow creatures. So I think it would be more considerate to leave out of your letters to *me* some things that you may have in mind. Write them to others.

My own references to socialism, and the like, have been jocular — I did not think you perverted "enough to hurt," though I consider your intellectual environment a mighty bad one. As to such matters in future let us make a treaty of silence.

Affectionately,
AMBROSE.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., March 1, 1911.]

MY DEAR RUTH,

It is pleasant to know that the family Robertson is "seeing things" and enjoying them. I hate travel, but find it delightful when done by you, instead of me. Believe me, I have had great pleasure in following you by your trail of words, as in the sport known as the "paper chase."

And now about the little story. Your refusal to let your father amend it is no doubt dreadfully insubordinate, but I brave his wrath by approval. It is *your* work that I want to see, not anybody's else. I've a profound respect for your father's talent: as a litérateur, he is the best physician that I know; but he must not be coaching my pupil, or he and I (as Mark Twain said of Mrs. Astor) "will have a falling out."

The story is not a story. It is not narrative, and nothing occurs. It is a record of mental mutations — of spiritual vicissitudes — states of mind. That is the most difficult thing that you could have attempted. It can be done acceptably by genius and the skill that comes of practice, as can anything. You are not quite equal to it — yet. You have done it better than I could have done it at your age, but not altogether well; as doubtless you did not expect to do it. It would be better to confine yourself at present to simple narrative. Write of something done, not of something thought and felt, except incidentally. I'm sure it is in you to do great work, but in this writing trade, as in other matters, excellence is to be attained no otherwise than by beginning at the beginning — the simple at first, then the complex and difficult. You can not go up a mountain by a leap at the peak.

I’m retaining your little sketch till your return, for you can do nothing with it — nor can I. If it had been written — preferably typewritten — with wide lines and margins I could do something *to* it. Maybe when I get the time I shall; at present I am swamped with “proofs” and two volumes behind the printers. If I knew that I should *see* you and talk it over I should rewrite it and (original in hand) point out the reasons for each alteration — you would see them quickly enough when shown. Maybe you will all come this way.

You are *very* deficient in spelling. I hope that is not incurable, though some persons — clever ones, too — never do learn to spell correctly. You will have to learn it from your reading — noting carefully all but the most familiar words.

You have “pet” words — nearly all of us have. One of yours is “flickering.” Addiction to certain words is an “upsetting sin” most difficult to overcome. Try to overcome it by cutting them out where they seem most felicitous.

By the way, your “hero,” as you describe him, would not have been accessible to all those spiritual impressions — it is *you* to whom they come. And that confirms my judgment of your imagination. Imagination is nine parts of the writing trade. With enough of *that* all things are possible; but it is the other things that require the hard work, the incessant study, the tireless seeking, the indomitable will. It is no “pic-nic,” this business of writing, believe me. Success comes by favor of the gods, yes; but O the days and nights that you must pass before their altars, prostrate and imploring! They are exacting — the gods; years and years of service you must give in the temple. If you are prepared to do this go on to your reward. If not, you can not too quickly throw away the pen and — well, marry, for example.

“Drink deep or taste not the Pierian spring.”

My vote is that you persevere.

With cordial regards to all good Robertsons — I think there are no others — I am most sincerely your friend,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., April 20, 1911.]

DEAR LORA,

Thank you for the pictures of the Sloots fire-place and “Joe Gans.” I can fancy myself cooking a steak in the one, and the other eating one better cooked.

I’m glad I’ve given you the Grand Cañon fever, for I hope to revisit the place next summer, and perhaps our Yosemite bunch can meet me there. My outing this season will be in Broadway in little old New York. That is not as good as

Monte Sano, but the best that I can do.

You must have had a good time with the Sterlings, and doubtless you all suffered from overfeeding.

Carlt's action in denuding the shaggy pelt of his hands meets with my highest commendation, but you'd better look out. It may mean that he has a girl — a Jewess descended from Jacob, with an hereditary antipathy to anything like Esau. Carlt was an Esaurian.

You'll have to overlook some bad errors in Vol. V of the C. W. I did not have the page proofs. Some of the verses are unintelligible. That's the penalty for philandering in California instead of sticking to my work.

*

Affectionately,
AMBROSE.

[Washington, D. C., April 28, 1911.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I've been having noctes ambrosianæ with "The House of Orchids," though truly it came untimely, for I've not yet done reading your other books. Don't crowd the dancers, please. I don't know (and you don't care) what poem in it I like best, but I get as much delight out of these lines as out of any:

"Such flowers pale as are
Worn by the goddess of a distant star —
Before whose holy eyes
Beauty and evening meet."

And — but what's the use? I can't quote the entire book.

I'm glad you did see your way to make "Memory" a female.

To Hades with Bonnet's chatter of gems and jewels — among the minor poetic properties they are better (to my taste) than flowers. By the way, I wonder what "lightness" Bonnet found in the "Apothecary" verses. They seem to me very serious.

Rereading and rerereading of the Job confirm my first opinion of it. I find only one "bad break" in it — and that not inconsistent with God's poetry in the real Job: "ropes of adamant." A rope of stone is imperfectly conceivable — is, in truth, mixed metaphor.

I think it was a mistake for you to expound to Ned Hamilton, or anybody, how you wrote the "Forty-third Chapter," or anything. When an author explains his methods of composition he cannot expect to be taken seriously. Nine writers in ten wish to have it thought that they “dash off” things. Nobody believes it, and the judicious would be sorry to believe it. Maybe you do, but I guess you work hard and honestly enough over the sketch “dashed off.” If you don’t — do.

*

With love to Carrie, I will leave you to your sea-gardens and abalones.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

I’m off to Broadway next week for a season of old-gentlemanly revelry.

[Washington, D. C., May 2, 1911.]

DEAR GEORGE,

In packing (I’m going to New York) I find this “Tidal” typoscript, and fear that I was to have returned it. Pray God it was not my neglect to do so that kept it out of the book. But if not, what did keep it out? Maybe the fact that it requires in the reader an uncommon acquaintance with the Scriptures.

If Robertson publishes any more books for you don’t let him use “silver” leaf on the cover. It is not silver, cannot be neatly put on, and will come off. The “Wine” book is incomparably better and more tasteful than either of the others. By the way, I stick to my liking for Scheff’s little vignette on the “Wine.”

In “Duandon” you — *you*, Poet of the Heavens! — come perilously near to qualifying yourself for “mention” in a certain essay of mine on the blunders of writers and artists in matters lunar. You must have observed that immediately after the full o’ the moon the light of that orb takes on a redness, and when it rises after dark is hardly a “towering glory,” nor a “frozen splendor.” Its “web” is not “silver.” In truth, the gibbous moon, rising, has something of menace in its suggestion. Even twenty-four (or rather twenty-five) hours “after the full” this change in the quality and quantity of its light is very marked. I don’t know what causes the sudden alteration, but it has always impressed me.

I feel a little like signing this criticism “Gradgrind,” but anyhow it may amuse you.

Do you mind squandering ten cents and a postage stamp on me? I want a copy of *Town Talk* — the one in which you are a “Varied Type.”

I don’t know much of some of your poets mentioned in that article, but could wish that you had said a word about Edith Thomas. Thank you for your too generous mention of me — who brought you so much vilification!

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., May 29, 1911.]

MY DEAR RUTH,

You are a faithful correspondent; I have your postals from Athens and Syracuse, and now the letter from Rome. The Benares sketch was duly received, and I wrote you about it to the address that you gave — Cairo, I think. As you will doubtless receive my letter in due time I will not now repeat it — further than to say that I liked it. If it had been accompanied by a few photographs (indispensable now to such articles) I should have tried to get it into some magazine. True, Benares, like all other Asiatic and European cities, is pretty familiar to even the “general reader,” but the sketch had something of the writer’s personality in it — the main factor in all good writing, as in all forms of art.

May I tell you what you already know — that you are deficient in spelling and punctuation? It is worth while to know these things — and all things that you can acquire. Some persons can not acquire orthography, and I don’t wonder, but every page of every good book is a lesson in punctuation. One’s punctuation is a necessary part of one’s style; you cannot attain to precision if you leave that matter to editors and printers.

You ask if “stories” must have action. The name “story” is preferably used of narrative, not reflection nor mental analysis. The “psychological novel” is in great vogue just now, for example — the adventures of the mind, it might be called — but it requires a profounder knowledge of life and character than is possible to a young girl of whatever talent; and the psychological “short story” is even more difficult. Keep to narrative and simple description for a few years, until your wings have grown. These descriptions of foreign places that you write me are good practice. You are not likely to tell me much that I do not know, nor is that necessary; but your way of telling what I do know is sometimes very interesting as a study of *you*. So write me all you will, and if you would like the letters as a record of your travels you shall have them back; I am preserving them.

I judge from your letter that your father went straight through without bothering about me. Maybe I should not have seen him anyhow, for I was away from Washington for nearly a month.

Please give my love to your mother and sister, whom, of course, you are to bring here. I shall not forgive you if you do not.

Yes, I wish that you lived nearer to me, so that we could go over your work together. I could help you more in a few weeks *that* way than in years *this* way. God never does anything just right.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., July 31, 1911.]

DEAR GEORGE,

Thank you for that Times “review.” It is a trifle less malicious than usual — regarding *me,* that is all. My publisher, Neale, who was here last evening, is about “taking action” against that concern for infringement of his copyright in my little book, “Write It Right.” The wretches have been serving it up to their readers for several weeks as the work of a woman named Learned. Repeatedly she uses my very words — whole passages of them. They refused even to confess the misdeeds of their contributrix, and persist in their sin. So they will have to fight.

* I have never been hard on women whose hearts go with their admiration, and whose bodies follow their hearts — I don’t mean that the latter was the case in this instance. Nor am I very exacting as to the morality of my men friends. I would not myself take another man’s woman, any more than I would take his purse. Nor, I trust, would I seduce the daughter or sister of a friend, nor any maid whom it would at all damage — and as to *that* there is no hard and fast rule.

*

A fine fellow, I, to be casting the first stone, or the one-hundredth, at a lovelorn woman, weak or strong! By the way, I should not believe in the love of a strong one, wife, widow or maid.

It looks as if I may get to Sag Harbor for a week or so in the middle of the month. It is really not a question of expense, but Neale has blocked out a lot of work for me. He wants two more volumes — even five more if I’ll make ‘em. Guess I’ll give him two. In a week or so I shall be able to say whether I can go Sagharboring. If so, I think we should have a night in New York first, no? You could motorboat up and back.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.[14]

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[14] Addressed to George Sterling at Sag Harbor, Long Island.

[Washington, D. C., Monday, August 7, 1911.]

DEAR GEORGE,

In one of your letters you were good enough to promise me a motorboat trip from New York to Sag Harbor. I can think of few things more delightful than navigating in a motorboat the sea that I used to navigate in an open canoe; it will seem like Progress. So if you are still in that mind please write me what day *after Saturday next* you can meet me in New York and I’ll be there. I should prefer that you come the day before the voyage and dine with me that evening.

I always stay at the Hotel Navarre, 7th avenue and 38th street. If unable to get in there I'll leave my address there. Or, tell me where *you* will be.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

If the motorboat plan is not practicable let me know and I'll go by train or steamer; it will not greatly matter. A. B.

[Washington, D. C., Tuesday, August 8, 1911.]

DEAR GEORGE,

*

Kindly convey to young Smith of Auburn my felicitations on his admirable "Ode to the Abyss" — a large theme, treated with dignity and power. It has many striking passages — such, for example, as "The Romes of ruined spheres." I'm conscious of my sin against the rhetoricians in liking that, for it jolts the reader out of the Abyss and back to earth. Moreover, it is a metaphor which belittles, instead of dignifying. But I like it.

He is evidently a student of George Sterling, and being in the formative stage, cannot — why should he? — conceal the fact.

My love to all good Californians of the Sag Harbor colony.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., November 16, 1911.]

DEAR GEORGE,

It is good to know that you are again happy — that is to say, you are in Carmel. For your *future* happiness (if success and a certain rounding off of your corners would bring it, as I think) I could wish you in New York or thereabout. As the Scripture hath it: "It is not good for a man to be in Carmel" — *Revised Inversion*. I note that at the late election California damned herself to a still lower degradation and is now unfit for a white man to live in. Initiative, referendum, recall, employers' liability, woman suffrage — yah!

*

But you are not to take too seriously my dislike of *[15] I like him personally very well; he talks like a normal human being. It is only that damned book of his. He was here and came out to my tenement a few evenings ago, finding me in bed and helpless from lumbago, as I was for weeks. I am now able to sit up and take notice, and there are even fears for my recovery. My enemies would say, as Byron said of Lady B., I am becoming "dangerously well again."

[15] Excised by G. S.

*

As to harlots, there are not ten in a hundred that are such for any other reason than that they wanted to be. Their exculpatory stories are mostly lies of magnitude.

Sloots writes me that he will perhaps "walk over" from the mine to Yosemite next summer. I can't get there much before July first, but if there is plenty of snow in the mountains next winter the valley should be visitable then. Later, I hope to beguest myself for a few days at the Pine Inn, Carmel. Tell it not to the Point Lobos mussel!

My love to Carrie.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., December 27, 1911.]

DEAR GEORGE,

As you do not give me that lady's address I infer that you no longer care to have me meet her — which is a relief to me.

*

Yes, I'm a bit broken up by the death of Pollard, whose body I assisted to burn. He lost his mind, was paralyzed, had his head cut open by the surgeons, and his sufferings were unspeakable. Had he lived he would have been an idiot; so it is all right —

> "But O, the difference to me!"

If you don't think him pretty bright read any of his last three books, "Their Day in Court," "Masks and Minstrels," and "Vagabond Journeys." He did not see the last one — Neale brought down copies of it when he came to Baltimore to attend the funeral.

I'm hoping that if Carlt and Lora go to Wagner's mine and we go to Yosemite, Lora, at least, will come to us out there. We shall need her, though Carrie will find that Misses C. and S. will be "no deadheads in the enterprise" — to quote a political phrase of long ago. As to me, I shall leave my ten-pounds-each books at home and, like St. Jerome, who never traveled with other baggage than a skull, be "flying light." My love to Carrie.

Sincerely,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

1912.

[Washington, D. C., January 5, 1912.]

DEAR LORA,

It is good to hear from you again, even if I did have to give you a hint that I badly needed a letter.

I am glad that you are going to the mine (if you go) — though Berkeley and Oakland will not be the same without you. And where can I have my mail forwarded? — and be permitted to climb in at the window to get it. As to pot-steaks, toddies, and the like, I shall simply swear off eating and drinking.

If Carlt is a "game sport," and does not require "a dead-sure thing," the mining gamble is the best bet for him. Anything to get out of that deadening, hopeless grind, the "Government service." It kills a man's self-respect, atrophies his powers, unfits him for anything, tempts him to improvidence and then turns him out to starve.

It is pleasant to know that there is a hope of meeting you in Yosemite — the valley would not be the same without you. My girls cannot leave here till the schools close, about June 20, so we shall not get into the valley much before July first; but if you have a good winter, with plenty of snow, that will do. We shall stay as long as we like. George says he and Carrie can go, and I hope Sloots can. It is likely that Neale, my publisher, will be of my party. I shall hope to visit your mine afterward.

*

My health, which was pretty bad for weeks after returning from Sag Harbor, is restored, and I was never so young in all my life.

Here's wishing you and Carlt plenty of meat on the bone that the new year may fling to you.

Affectionately,
AMBROSE.

[Washington, D. C., February 14, 1912.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I'm a long time noticing your letter of January fifth, chiefly because, like Teddy, "I have nothing to say." There's this difference atwixt him and me — I could say something if I tried.

* I'm hoping that you are at work and doing something worth while, though I

see nothing of yours. Battle against the encroaching abalone should not engage all your powers. That spearing salmon at night interests me, though doubtless the “season” will be over before I visit Carmel.

Bear Yosemite in mind for latter part of June, and use influence with Lora and Grizzly, even if Carlt should be inhumed in his mine.

We’ve had about seven weeks of snow and ice, the mercury around the zero mark most of the time. Once it was 13 below. You’d not care for that sort of thing, I fancy. Indeed, I’m a bit fatigued of it myself, and on Saturday next, God willing, shall put out my prow to sea and bring up, I hope, in Bermuda, not, of course, to remain long.

You did not send me the Weininger article on “Sex and Character” — I mean the extract that you thought like some of my stuff.

*

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., April 25, 1912.]

DEAR GEORGE,

I did not go to Bermuda; so I’m not “back.” But I did go to Richmond, a city whose tragic and pathetic history, of which one is reminded by everything that one sees there, always gets on to my nerves with a particular dejection. True, the history is some fifty years old, but it is always with me when I’m there, making solemn eyes at me.

You’re right about “this season in the East.” It has indeed been penetential. For the first time I am thoroughly disgusted and half-minded to stay in California when I go — a land where every prospect pleases, and only labor unions, progressives, suffragettes (and socialists) are vile. No, I don’t think I could stand California, though I’m still in the mind to visit it in June. I shall be sorry to miss Carrie at Carmel, but hope to have the two of you on some excursion or camping trip. We *want* to go to Yosemite, which the girls have not seen, but if there’s no water there it may not be advisable. Guess we’ll have to let you natives decide. How would the Big Trees do as a substitute?

*

Girls is pizen, but not necessarily fatal. I’ve taken ‘em in large doses all my life, and suffered pangs enough to equip a number of small Hells, but never has one of them paralyzed the inner working man. * But I’m not a poet. Moreover, as I’ve not yet put off my armor I oughtn’t to boast.

So — you’ve subscribed for the Collected Works. Good! that is what you ought to have done a long time ago. It is what every personal friend of mine ought to have done, for all profess admiration of my work in literature. It is what I was fool enough to permit my publisher to think that many of them would do. How many do you guess have done so? I'll leave you guessing. God help the man with many friends, for *they* will not. My royalties on the sets sold to my friends are less than one-fourth of my outlay in free sets for other friends. Tell me not in cheerful numbers of the value and sincerity of friendships.

*

There! I've discharged my bosom of that perilous stuff and shall take a drink. Here's to you.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., June 5, 1912.]
DEAR GEORGE,

*

Thank you for the poems, which I've not had the time to consider — being disgracefully busy in order to get away. I don't altogether share your reverence for Browning, but the primacy of your verses on him over the others printed on the same page is almost startling. *

Of course it's all nonsense about the waning of your power — though thinking it so might make it so. My notion is that you've only *begun* to do things. But I wish you'd go back to your chain in your uncle's office. I'm no believer in adversity and privation as a spur to Pegasus. They are oftener a "hopple." The "meagre, muse-rid mope, adust and thin" will commonly do better work when tucked out with three square meals a day, and having the sure and certain hope of their continuance.

*

I'm expecting to arrive in Oakland (Key Route Inn, probably) late in the evening of the 22d of this month and dine at Carlt's on the 24th — my birthday. Anyhow, I've invited myself, though it is possible they may be away on their vacation. Carlt has promised to try to get his "leave" changed to a later date than the one he's booked for.

*

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

P.S. — Just learned that we can not leave here until the 19th — which will bring me into San Francisco on the 26th. Birthday dinner served in diner — last call!

I’ve *read* the Browning poem and I now know why there was a Browning. Providence foresaw you and prepared him for you — blessed be Providence! *

Mrs. Havens asks me to come to them at Sag Harbor — and shouldn’t I like to! * Sure the song of the Sag Harbor frog would be music to me — as would that of the indigenous duckling.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., December 19, 1912.]

MY DEAR MR. CAHILL,

I thank you for the article from *The Argonaut*, and am glad to get it for a special reason, as it gives me your address and thereby enables me to explain something.

When, several years ago, you sent me a similar article I took it to the editor of The National Geographical Magazine (I am a member of the Society that issues it) and suggested its publication. I left it with him and hearing nothing about it for several months called at his office *twice* for an answer, and for the copy if publication was refused. The copy had been “mislaid” — lost, apparently — and I never obtained it. Meantime, either I had “mislaid” your address, or it was only on the copy. So I was unable to write you. Indirectly, afterward, I heard that you had left California for parts to me unknown.

Twice since then I have been in San Francisco, but confess that I did not think of the matter.

Cahill’s projection[16] is indubitably the right one, but you are “up against” the ages and will be a long time dead before it finds favor, or I’m no true pessimist.

[16] The Butterfly Map of the World.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

1913.

[The Olympia Apartments, Washington, D. C., January 17, 1913.]

MY DEAR RUTH,

It’s “too bad” that I couldn’t remain in Oakland and Berkeley another month to welcome you, but I fear it will “have to go at that,” for I’ve no expectation of ever seeing California again. I like the country as well as ever, but I don’t like the rule of labor unions, the grafters and the suffragettes. So far as I am concerned they may stew in their own juice; I shall not offer myself as an ingredient.

It is pleasant to know that you are all well, including Johnny, poor little chap.

You are right to study philology and rhetoric. Surely there must be *some* provision for your need — a university where one cannot learn one’s own language would be a funny university.

I think your “Mr. Wells” who gave a course of lectures on essay writing may be my friend Wells Drury, of Berkeley. If so, mention me to him and he will advise you what to do.

Another good friend of mine, whom, however I did not succeed in seeing during either of my visits to California, is W. C. Morrow, who is a professional teacher of writing and himself a splendid writer. He could help you. He lives in San Francisco, but I think has a class in Oakland. I don’t know his address; you’ll find it in the directory. He used to write stories splendidly tragic, but I’m told he now teaches the “happy ending,” in which he is right — commercially — but disgusting. I can cordially recommend him.

Keep up your German and French of course. If your English (your mother speech) is so defective, think what *they* must be.

I’ll think of some books that will be helpful to you in your English. Meantime send me anything that you care to that you write. It will at least show me what progress you make.

I’m returning some (all, I think) of your sketches. Don’t destroy them — yet. Maybe some day you’ll find them worth rewriting.

My love to you all.
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Olympia, Euclid and 14th Sts., Washington, D. C., January 20, 1913.]

DEAR MR. CAHILL,

It is pleasant to know that you are not easily discouraged by the croaking of such ravens as I, and I confess that the matter of the “civic centre” supplies some reason to hope for prosperity to the Cahill projection — which (another croak) will doubtless bear some other man’s name, probably Hayford’s or Woodward’s.

I sent the “Argonaut” article to my friend Dr. Franklin, of Schenectady, a “scientific gent” of some note, but have heard nothing from him.

I’m returning the “Chronicle” article, which I found interesting. If I were not a writer without an “organ” I’d have a say about that projection. For near four years I’ve been out of the newspaper game — a mere compiler of my collected works in twelve volumes — and shall probably never “sit into the game” again, being seventy years old. My work is finished, and so am I.

Luck to you in the new year, and in many to follow.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Olympia Apartments, Washington, D. C., I prefer to get my letters at this address. Make a memorandum of it. January 28, 1913.]

DEAR LORA,

I have been searching for your letter of long ago, fearing it contained something that I should have replied to. But I don’t find it; so I make the convenient assumption that it did not.

I’d like to hear from you, however unworthy I am to do so, for I want to know if you and Carlt have still a hope of going mining. Pray God you do, if there’s a half-chance of success; for success in the service of the Government is failure.

Winter here is two-thirds gone and we have not had a cold day, and only one little dash of snow — on Christmas eve. Can California beat that? I’m told it’s as cold there as in Greenland.

Tell me about yourself — your health since the operation — how it has affected you — all about you. My own health is excellent; I’m equal to any number of Carlt’s toddies. By the way, Blanche has made me a co-defendant with you in the crime (once upon a time) of taking a drop too much. I plead not guilty — how do *you* plead? Sloots, at least, would acquit us on the ground of inability — that one can’t take too much. *

Affectionately, your avuncular,
AMBROSE.

[Washington, D. C., March 20, 1913.]

DEAR RUTH,

I’m returning your little sketches with a few markings which are to be regarded (or disregarded) as mere suggestions. I made them in pencil, so that you can erase them if you don't approve. Of course I should make many more if I could have you before me so that I could explain *why*; in this way I can help you but little. You'll observe that I have made quite a slaughter of some of the adjectives in some of your sentences — you will doubtless slaughter some in others. Nearly all young writers use too many adjectives. Indeed, moderation and skill in the use of adjectives are about the last things a good writer learns. Don't use those that are connoted by the nouns; and rather than have all the nouns, or nearly all, in a sentence outfitted with them it is better to make separate sentences for some of those desired.

In your sketch "Triumph" I would not name the "hero" of the piece. To do so not only makes the sketch commonplace, but it logically requires you to name his victim too, and her offense; in brief, it commits you to a *story*.

A famous writer (perhaps Holmes or Thackeray — I don't remember) once advised a young writer to cut all the passages that he thought particularly good. Your taste I think is past the need of so heroic treatment as that, but the advice may be profitably borne in memory whenever you are in doubt, if ever you are. And sometimes you will be.

I think I know what Mr. Morrow meant by saying that your characters are not "humanly significant." He means that they are not such persons as one meets in everyday life — not "types." I confess that I never could see why one's characters *should* be. The exceptional — even "abnormal" — person seems to me the more interesting, but I must warn you that he will not seem so to an editor. Nor to an editor will the tragic element seem so good as the cheerful — the sombre denouement as the "happy ending." One must have a pretty firm reputation as a writer to "send in" a tragic or supernatural tale with any hope of its acceptance. The average mind (for which editors purvey, and mostly possess) dislikes, or thinks it dislikes, any literature that is not "sunny." True, tragedy holds the highest and most permanent place in the world's literature and art, but it has the divvel's own time getting to it. For immediate popularity (if one cares for it) one must write pleasant things; though one may put in here and there a bit of pathos.

I think well of these two manuscripts, but doubt if you can get them into any of our magazines — if you want to. As to that, nobody can help you. About the only good quality that a magazine editor commonly has is his firm reliance on the infallibility of his own judgment. It is an honest error, and it enables him to mull through somehow with a certain kind of consistency. The only way to get a footing with him is to send him what you think he wants, not what you think he ought to want — and keep sending. But perhaps you do not care for the magazines.

I note a great improvement in your style — probably no more than was to be expected of your better age, but a distinct improvement. It is a matter of regret with me that I have not the training of you; we should see what would come of it. You certainly have no reason for discouragement. But if you are to be a writer you must "cut out" the dances and the teas (a little of the theater may be allowed) and *work* right heartily. The way of the good writer is no primrose path.

No, I have not read the poems of Service. What do I think of Edith Wharton? Just what Pollard thought — see *Their Day in Court*, which I think you have.

I fear you have the wanderlust incurably. I never had it bad, and have less of it now than ever before. I shall not see California again.

My love to all your family goes with this, and to you all that you will have.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C., May 22, 1913.]

EDITOR "LANTERN",[17]

[17] The editor was Curtis J. Kirch ("Guido Bruno") and the weekly had a brief career in Chicago. It was the forerunner of the many Bruno weeklies and monthlies, later published from other cities.

Will I tell you what I think of your magazine? Sure I will.

It has thirty-six pages of reading matter.

Seventeen are given to the biography of a musician, — German, dead.

Four to the mother of a theologian, — German, peasant-wench, dead.

(The mag. is published in America, to-day.)

Five pages about Eugene Field's ancestors. All dead.

17 + 4 + 5 = 26.

36 - 26 = 10.

Two pages about Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

Three-fourths page about a bad poet and his indifference to — German.

Two pages of his poetry.

2 + ¾ + 2 = 4¾.

10 - 4¾ = 5¼. Not enough to criticise.

What your magazine needs is an editor — presumably older, preferably American, and indubitably alive. At least awake. It is your inning.

Sincerely yours,
AMBROSE BIERCE.

[Washington, D. C., May 31, 1913.]

MY DEAR LORA,

You were so long in replying to my letter of the century before last, and as your letter is not really a reply to anything in mine, that I fancy you did not get it. I don't recollect, for example, that you ever acknowledged receipt of little pictures of myself, though maybe you did — I only hope you got them. The photographs that you send are very interesting. One of them makes me thirsty — the one of that fountainhead of good booze, your kitchen sink.

What you say of the mine and how you are to be housed there pleases me mightily. That's how I should like to live, and mining is what I should like again to do. Pray God you be not disappointed.

Alas, I cannot even join you during Carlt's vacation, for the mountain ramble. Please "go slow" in your goating this year. I *think* you are better fitted for it than ever before, but you'd better ask your surgeon about that. By the way, do you know that since women took to athletics their peculiar disorders have increased about fifty per cent? You can't make men of women. The truth is, they've taken to walking on their hind legs a few centuries too soon. Their in'ards have not learned how to suspend the law of gravity. Add the jolts of athletics and — there you are.

I wish I could be with you at Monte Sano — or anywhere.

Love to Carlt and Sloots.

Affectionately,
AMBROSE.

[Washington, D. C., September 10, 1913.]

DEAR LORA,

Your letter was forwarded to me in New York, whence I have just returned. I fancy you had a more satisfactory outing than I. I never heard of the Big Sur river nor of "Arbolado." But I'm glad you went there, for I'm hearing so much about Hetch Hetchy that I'm tired of it. I'm helping the San Francisco crowd (a little) to "ruin" it.

*

I'm glad to know that you still expect to go to the mine. Success or failure, it is better than the Mint, and you ought to live in the mountains where you can climb things whenever you want to.

Of course I know nothing of Neale's business — you'd better write to him if he has not filled your order. I suppose you know that volumes eleven and twelve are not included in the "set."

If you care to write to me again please do so at once as I am going away, probably to South America, but if we have a row with Mexico before I start I shall go there first. I want to see something going on. I've no notion of how long I shall remain away.

With love to Carlt and Sloots,

Affectionately,

AMBROSE.

[Washington, D. C., September 10, 1913.]

DEAR JOE,[18]

[18] To Mrs. Josephine Clifford McCrackin, San Jose, California.

The reason that I did not answer your letter sooner is — I have been away (in New York) and did not have it with me. I suppose I shall not see your book for a long time, for I am going away and have no notion when I shall return. I expect to go to, perhaps across, South America — possibly via Mexico, if I can get through without being stood up against a wall and shot as a Gringo. But that is better than dying in bed, is it not? If Duc did not need you so badly I'd ask you to get your hat and come along. God bless and keep you.

[Washington, D. C., September 13, 1913.]

DEAR JOE,

Thank you for the book. I thank you for your friendship — and much besides. This is to say good-by at the end of a pleasant correspondence in which your woman's prerogative of having the last word is denied to you. Before I could receive it I shall be gone. But some time, somewhere, I hope to hear from you again. Yes, I shall go into Mexico with a pretty definite purpose, which, however, is not at present disclosable. You must try to forgive my obstinacy in not "perishing" where I am. I want to be where something worth while is going on, or where nothing whatever is going on. Most of what is going on in your own country is exceedingly distasteful to me.

Pray for me? Why, yes, dear — that will not harm either of us. I loathe religions, a Christian gives me qualms and a Catholic sets my teeth on edge, but pray for me just the same, for with all those faults upon your head (it's a nice head, too), I am pretty fond of you, I guess. May you live as long as you want to, and then pass smilingly into the darkness — the good, good darkness.

Devotedly your friend,

AMBROSE BIERCE.

[The Olympia, Euclid Street, Washington, D. C., October 1, 1913.]

DEAR LORA,

I go away tomorrow for a long time, so this is only to say good-bye. I think there is nothing else worth saying; *therefore* you will naturally expect a long letter. What an intolerable world this would be if we said nothing but what is worth saying! And did nothing foolish — like going into Mexico and South America.

I'm hoping that you will go to the mine soon. You must hunger and thirst for the mountains — Carlt likewise. So do I. Civilization be dinged! — it is the mountains and the desert for me.

Good-bye — if you hear of my being stood up against a Mexican stone wall and shot to rags please know that I think that a pretty good way to depart this life. It beats old age, disease, or falling down the cellar stairs. To be a Gringo in Mexico — ah, that is euthanasia!

With love to Carlt, affectionately yours,

AMBROSE.

[Laredo, Texas, November 6, 1913.]

MY DEAR LORA,

I think I owe you a letter, and probably this is my only chance to pay up for a long time. For more than a month I have been rambling about the country, visiting my old battlefields, passing a few days in New Orleans, a week in San Antonio, and so forth. I turned up here this morning. There is a good deal of fighting going on over on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande, but I hold to my intention to go into Mexico if I can. In the character of "innocent bystander" I ought to be fairly safe if I don't have too much money on me, don't you think? My eventual destination is South America, but probably I shall not get there this year.

Slloots writes me that you and Carlt still expect to go to the mine, as I hope you will.

The Cowdens expect to live somewhere in California soon, I believe. They seem to be well, prosperous and cheerful.

With love to Carlt and Sloots, I am affectionately yours,

AMBROSE.

P.S. You need not believe *all* that these newspapers say of me and my purposes. I had to tell them *something*.

[Laredo, Texas, November 6, 1913.]

DEAR LORA,

I wrote you yesterday at San Antonio, but dated the letter here and today, expecting to bring the letter and mail it here. That's because I did not know if I would have time to write it here. Unfortunately, I forgot and posted it, with other letters, where it was written. Thus does man's guile come to naught!

Well, I'm here, anyhow, and have time to explain.

Laredo was a Mexican city before it was an American. It is Mexican now, five to one. Nuevo Laredo, opposite, is held by the Huertistas and Americans don't go over there. In fact a guard on the bridge will not let them. So those that sneak across have to wade (which can be done almost anywhere) and go at night.

I shall not be here long enough to hear from you, and don't know where I shall be next. Guess it doesn't matter much.

Adios,
AMBROSE.

Extracts from Letters

You are right too — dead right about the poetry of Socialism; and you might have added the poetry of wailing about the woes of the poor generally. Only the second-and the third-raters write it — except "incidentally." You don't find the big fellows sniveling over that particular shadow-side of Nature. Yet not only are the poor always with us, they always *were* with us, and their state was worse in the times of Homer, Virgil, Shakspeare, Milton and the others than in the days of Morris and Markham.

But what's the use? I have long despaired of convincing poets and artists of anything, even that white is not black. I'm convinced that all you chaps ought to have a world to yourselves, where two and two make whatever you prefer that it *should* make, and cause and effect are remoulded "more nearly to the heart's desire." And then I suppose I'd want to go and live there too.

Did you ever know so poor satire to make so great a row as that of Watson? Compared with certain other verses against particular women — Byron's "Born in a garret, in a kitchen bred"; even my own skit entitled "Mad" (pardon my modesty) it is infantile. What an interesting book might be made of such "attacks" on women! But Watson is the only one of us, so far as I remember, who has had the caddishness to *name* the victim.

Have you seen Percival Pollard's "Their Day in Court"? It is amusing, clever — and more. He has a whole chapter on me, "a lot" about Gertrude Atherton, and much else that is interesting. And he skins alive certain popular gods and goddesses of the day, and is "monstrous naughty."

As to *'s own character I do not see what that has to do with his criticism of London. If only the impeccable delivered judgment no judgment would ever be delivered. All men could do as they please, without reproof or dissent. I wish you would take your heart out of your head, old man. The best heart makes a bad head if housed there.

The friends that warned you against the precarious nature of my friendship were right. To hold my regard one must fulfil hard conditions — hard if one is not what one should be; easy if one is. I have, indeed, a habit of calmly considering the character of a man with whom I have fallen into any intimacy and, whether I have any grievance against him or not, informing him by letter that I no longer desire his acquaintance. This, I do after deciding that he is not truthful, candid, without conceit, and so forth — in brief, honorable. If any one is conscious that he is not in all respects worthy of my friendship he would better not cultivate it, for assuredly no one can long conceal his true character from an observant student of it. Yes, my friendship is a precarious possession. It grows more so the longer I live, and the less I feel the need of a multitude of friends. So, if in your heart you are conscious of being any of the things which you accuse *me* of being, or anything else equally objectionable (to *me*) I can only advise you to drop me before I drop you.

Certainly you have an undoubted right to your opinion of my ability, my attainments and my standing. If you choose to publish a censorious judgment of these matters, do so by all means: I don't think I ever cared a cent for what was printed about me, except as it supplied me with welcome material for my pen. One may presumably have a "sense of duty to the public," and the like. But convincing one person (one at a time) of one's friend's deficiencies is hardly worth while, and is to be judged differently. It comes under another rule. *

Maybe, as you say, my work lacks "soul," but my life does not, as a man's life is the man. Personally, I hold that sentiment has a place in this world, and that loyalty to a friend is not inferior as a characteristic to correctness of literary judgment. If there is a heaven I think it is more valued there. If Mr. * (your publisher as well as mine) had considered you a Homer, a Goethe or a Shakspeare a team of horses could not have drawn from *me* the expression of a lower estimate. And let me tell you that if you are going through life as a mere thinking machine, ignoring the generous promptings of the heart, sacrificing it to the brain, you will have a hard row to hoe, and the outcome, when you survey it from the vantage ground of age, will not please you. You seem to me to be beginning rather badly, as regards both your fortune and your peace of mind.

*

I saw * every day while in New York, and he does not know that I feel the slightest resentment toward you, nor do I know it myself. So far as he knows, or is likely to know (unless you will have it otherwise) you and I are the best of friends, or rather, I am the best of friends to you. And I guess that is so. I could no more hate you for your disposition and character than I could for your hump if you had one. You are as Nature has made you, and your defects, whether they are great or small, are your misfortunes. I would remove them if I could, but I know that I cannot, for one of them is inability to discern the others, even when they are pointed out.

I must commend your candor in one thing. You confirm * words in saying that you commented on "my seeming lack of sympathy with certain modern masters," which you attribute to my not having read them. That is a conclusion to which a low order of mind in sympathy with the "modern masters" naturally jumps, but it is hardly worthy of a man of your brains. It is like your former lofty assumption that I had not read some ten or twelve philosophers, naming them, nearly all of whom I had read, and laughed at, before you were born. In fact, one of your most conspicuous characteristics is the assumption that what a man who does not care to "talk shop" does not speak of, and vaunt his knowledge of, he does not know. I once thought this a boyish fault, but you are no longer a boy. Your "modern masters" are Ibsen and Shaw, with both of whose works and ways I am thoroughly familiar, and both of whom I think very small men — pets of the drawing-room and gods of the hour. No, I am not an "up to date" critic, thank God. I am not a literary critic at all, and never, or very seldom, have gone into that field except in pursuance of a personal object — to help a good writer (who is commonly a friend) — maybe you can recall such instances — or laugh at a fool. Surely you do not consider my work in the Cosmopolitan (mere badinage and chaff, the only kind of stuff that the magazine wants from me, or will print) essays in literary criticism. It has never occurred to me to look upon myself as a literary critic; if you *must* prick my bubble please to observe that it contains more of your breath than of mine. Yet you have sometimes seemed to value, I thought, some of my notions about even poetry. *

Perhaps I am unfortunate in the matter of keeping friends; I know, and have abundant reason to know, that you are at least equally luckless in the matter of making them. I could put my finger on the very qualities in you that make you so, and the best service that I could do you would be to point them out and take the consequences. That is to say, it would serve you many years hence; at present you are like Carlyle's "Mankind"; you "refuse to be served." You only consent to be enraged.

I bear you no ill will, shall watch your career in letters with friendly solicitude — have, in fact, just sent to the * a most appreciative paragraph about your book, which may or may not commend itself to the editor; most of what I write does not. I hope to do a little, now and then, to further your success in letters. I wish you were different (and that is the harshest criticism that I ever uttered of you except to yourself) and wish it for your sake more than for mine. I am older than you and probably more “acquainted with grief” — the grief of disappointment and disillusion. If in the future you are convinced that you have become different, and I am still living, my welcoming hand awaits you. And when I forgive I forgive all over, even the new offence.

Miller undoubtedly is sincere in his praise of you, for with all his faults and follies he is always generous and usually over generous to other poets. There’s nothing little and mean in him. Sing ho for Joaquin!

If I “made you famous” please remember that you were guilty of contributory negligence by meriting the fame. “Eternal vigilance” is the price of its permanence. Don’t loaf on your job.

I have told her of a certain “enchanted forest” hereabout to which I feel myself sometimes strongly drawn as a fitting place to lay down “my weary body and my head.” (Perhaps you remember your Swinburne:

“Ah yet, would God this flesh of mine might be
Where air might wash and long leaves cover me!
Ah yet, would God that roots and stems were bred
Out of my weary body and my head.”)

The element of enchantment in that forest is supplied by my wandering and dreaming in it forty-one years ago when I was a-soldiering and there were new things under a new sun. It is miles away, but from a near-by summit I can overlook the entire region — ridge beyond ridge, parted by purple valleys full of sleep. Unlike me, it has not visibly altered in all these years, except that I miss, here and there, a thin blue ghost of smoke from an enemy’s camp. Can you guess my feelings when I view this Dream-land — my Realm of Adventure, inhabited by memories that beckon me from every valley? I shall go; I shall retrace my old routes and lines of march; stand in my old camps; inspect my battlefields to see that all is right and undisturbed. I shall go to the Enchanted Forest.

The Criticism

AMBROSE BIERCE by Vincent Starrett

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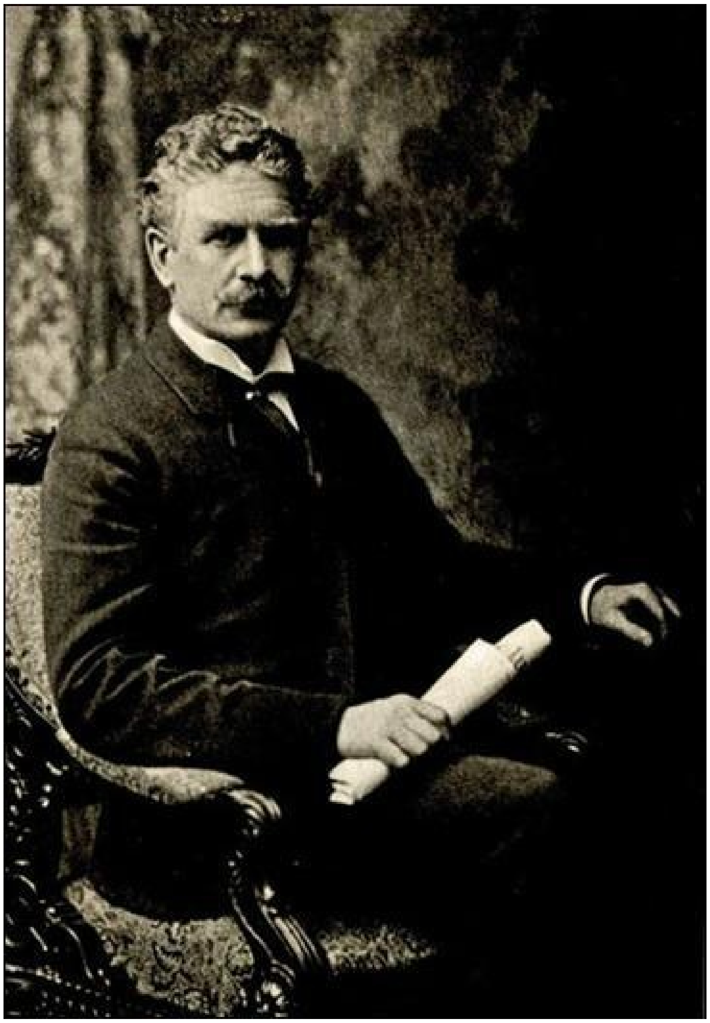


Bierce, c.1900

TO
W. C. MORROW
AMBROSE BIERCE’S FRIEND AND MINE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For valuable reminiscences and suggestions, extremely helpful in the preparation of this volume and its contents, I am indebted to many persons; particularly to W. C. Morrow, to Miss Carrie Christiansen, to Mrs. Josephine Clifford McCrackin, to Helen Bierce Isgrigg, and to Walter Neale, Major Bierce's publisher. I am happy here to give public utterance to my gratitude. A number of characteristic anecdotes are quoted from Bierce's autobiographic vignettes, in his "Collected Works."

V. S.

NOTE

More than six years of speculation and apprehension have passed since the disappearance of Ambrose Bierce. Sanguine hopes long have dwindled, and only the frailest possibility survives that he yet lives in some green recess of the Mexican mountains, or some tropical Arcadia in South America. Assuming that he is dead, as we must assume who do not look for a miracle, he has fulfilled a prophecy made years ago by a writing man of his acquaintance:

"Some day he will go up on Mount Horeb and forget to come down. No man will see his death-struggle, for he'll cover his face with his cloak of motley, and if he sends a wireless it will be this: ''Tis a grave subject.'"

There has been no wireless.

In the circumstances, it is perhaps presumptuously early to attempt an estimate of the man and his work; but already both fools and angels have rushed in, and the atmosphere is thick with rumor and legend. The present appraisal, at least is not fortuitous, and its stated facts have the merit of sobriety and authority.

I. THE MAN

There are many persons who do not care for the writings of Ambrose Bierce, and thousands — it is shocking to reflect — who never have heard of him. The Hon. Franklin K. Lane, erstwhile Secretary of the Interior, has gone on record as thinking him “a hideous monster, so like the mixture of dragon, lizard, bat, and snake as to be unnameable,” a characterization almost Biercian in its cumulative invective. When Mr. Lane made this remark, or wrote it down (whichever may have been the case), he said it with pious horror and intense dislike; but when Gertrude Atherton asserted that Bierce had the most brutal imagination she had encountered in print, she was paying him a compliment, and she intended to. Out of those two appraisals we may extract the truth — that Bierce was a mighty artist in his field, with little or no concern for the reactions of weaker vessels to his art.

A great many persons knew Ambrose Bierce, and some loved him, and some hated and feared him. All, from their own point of view, had excellent reason for their quality of regard. Save for those who made up this catholic and vari-minded assemblage, few persons can speak of Ambrose Bierce, the man. The story of Ambrose Bierce the novelist, the satirist, the humorist, and the poet, is to a large degree the story of Ambrose Bierce the man; but to a larger degree is the story of Ambrose Bierce the man the story of Ambrose Bierce the novelist, satirist, humorist, and poet.

It is generally known that he served throughout the Civil War. He emerged a Major, brevetted for distinguished services, and with an honorable scar upon his body. Twice he had rescued wounded comrades from the battlefield, at the risk of his life; at Kenesaw Mountain he was severely wounded in the head. He came out of the conflict a soldier, with a decided leaning toward literature, and the story goes that he tossed up a coin to determine his career. Instead of “head” or “tail” he may have called “sword” or “pen,” but the story does not so inform us. Whatever the deciding influence may have been, Bierce commenced journalist and author in San Francisco, in 1866, as editor of the *News Letter*. Then, in 1872, he went to London, where, for four years, or until 1876, he was on the staff of *Fun*, edited by the younger, Tom Hood.

In London, the editors of *Fun*, amazed at the young man’s fertile ability, conceived the notion that he could write anything, and accordingly piled his desk with a weird assortment of old woodcuts, minus their captions; they requested that he “write things” to fit them. The “things” Bierce wrote astonished England, and Pharisees squirmed beneath his lash as they had not done since the days of Swift. A cruel finger was on secret ulcers, and the American’s satires quickly gained for him, among his colleagues, the name of “Bitter Bierce.” The stinging tales and fables he produced to order are those found in the volume called *Cobwebs From an Empty Skull,* reputed to be by Dod Grile, and published in 1874. A year previously, he had published *The Fiend’s Delight,* and *Nuggets and Dust,* caustic little volumes largely made up of earlier diabolisms from California journals. His intimates of the period included such joyous spirits as Hood, George Augustus Sala, and Capt. Mayne Reid, the boys’ novelist; this quartette, with others, frequented a taproom in Ludgate Station, and gave itself over, as Bierce humorously confesses, “to shedding the blood of the grape.”

Thus Bierce:

We worked too hard, dined too well, frequented too many clubs and went to bed too late in the forenoon. In short, we diligently, conscientiously and with a perverse satisfaction burned the candle of life at both ends and in the middle.

He relates some delightful episodes of the period in his *Bits of Autobiography*, the first volume in his Collected Works; the funniest and one of the most typical, perhaps, is that concerning his difficulties with John Camden Hotten, a publisher with whom Mark Twain was having trouble of his own at about the same time — although at a greater distance. Hotten owed Bierce money for certain work, and Bierce, usually financially embarrassed, hounded Hotten for it until the publisher, in despair, sent the implacable creditor to negotiate with his (Hotten’s) manager. Bierce talked vividly for two hours, at the end of which time the crestfallen manager capitulated and produced a check already made out and signed. It bore date of the following Saturday. The rest of the story belongs to Bierce: Before Saturday came, Hotten proceeded to die of a pork pie in order to beat me out of my money. Knowing nothing of this, I strolled out to his house in Highgate, hoping to get an advance, as I was in great need of cash. On being told of his demise I was inexpressibly shocked, for my cheque was worthless. There was a hope, however, that the bank had not heard. So I called a cab and drove furiously bank-ward. Unfortunately my gondolier steered me past Ludgate Station, in the bar whereof our Fleet Street gang of writers had a private table. I disembarked for a mug of bitter. Unfortunately, too, Sala, Hood, and others of the gang were in their accustomed places. I sat, at board and related the sad event. The deceased had not in life enjoyed our favour, and I blush to say we all fell to making questionable epitaphs to him. I recall one by Sala which ran thus:

Hotten,

Rotten,
Forgotten.

At the close of the rites, several hours later, I resumed my movements against the bank. Too late — the old story of the hare and the tortoise was told again! The heavy news had overtaken and passed me as I loitered by the wayside. I attended the funeral, at which I felt more than I cared to express.

The appearance of his *Cobwebs From an Empty Skull* made Bierce for a time the chief wit and humorist of England, and, combined with his satirical work on *Fun*, brought about his engagement by friends of the exiled Empress Eugenie to conduct a journal against her enemies, who purposed to make her refuge in England untenable by newspaper attacks. It appeared that James Mortimer, who was later to found and edit the *Figaro*, was in the habit of visiting the exiled Empress at Chislehurst, and he it was who learned of a threat by M. Henri Rochefort to start his paper, *La Lanterne*, in England; Rochefort, who had persistently attacked the Empress in Paris. Mortimer suggested the founding and registering in London of a paper called *The Lantern*, which was done and Bierce was made its editor. But the struggle never came; Rochefort, outwitted, knew the game was up, and did not put his threat into execution, although Bierce, for a few numbers, had the delight of abusing the Frenchman to his heart’s content, a pursuit he found extremely congenial.

Bierce the satirist was for a time in his element; but there was little material wealth to be gained in London, and at times he was pretty hard up. He revived his failing fortunes for a short period by writing and publishing his series of “Little Johnny” stories — humorous, misspelled essays in zoology, supposed to be the work of a small boy. These were popular and added color to his name; but Bierce’s mind was now turning backward to the country he had deserted, and in 1876 he returned to San Francisco.

He remained then on the coast for a quarter of a century, save for a brief period of mining near Deadwood, South Dakota, where his adventures with road-agents and other bad men were hair-raising. On a night in 1880 he was driving in a light wagon through a wild part of the Black Hills. The wagon carried thirty thousand dollars in gold belonging to the mining company of which he was manager, and beside him on the wagon seat was Boone May, a famous gunman who was under indictment for murder. May had been paroled on Bierce’s promise that he would see him into custody again. The notorious gunman sat, huddled in his rubber poncho, with his rifle between his knees; he was acting as guard of the company’s gold. Although Bierce thought him somewhat *off* guard, he said nothing.

There came a sudden shout: “Throw up your hands!”

Bierce reached for his revolver, but it was needless. Almost before the words had left the highwayman’s lips, with the quickness of a cat May had hurled himself backward over the seat, face upward, and with the muzzle of his weapon within a yard of the bandit’s throat, had fired a shot that forever ruined the interrupter’s usefulness as a road-agent.

Bierce returned again to San Francisco. Through the warp and woof, then, of certain California journals, for many years, ran the glittering thread of his genius, and to this period belongs much of his finest and strongest work. He became a mighty censor who made and unmade men and women, a Warwick of the pen. It is no exaggeration to say that corrupt politicians, hypocritical philanthropists and clergymen, self-worshipers, notoriety seekers, and pretenders of every description trembled at his name. He wielded an extraordinary power; his pen hung, a Damoclean sword, over the length and breadth of the Pacific coast. Those who had cause to fear his wrath opened their morning papers with something like horror. He wrote “epitaphs” to persons not yet dead, of such a nature — had they been dead — as to make them turn in their graves. Many of his poetic quips were venomous to a degree, and he greeted Oscar Wilde, on the poet’s arrival in America, in 1882, with a blast of invective that all but paralyzed that ready wit. His pet abominations were James Whitcomb Riley and Ella Wheeler Wilcox. In the earlier days of his power an assault in print was believed sufficient cause for a pistoled reply, and Bierce was always a marked man; but he was utterly fearless, and as he was known to be a dead shot, himself, his life always was “spared” by the victims of his attacks. His vocabulary of invective was the widest and most vitriolic of any modern journalist, but it was not billingsgate; Bierce never penned a line that was not impeccable. His wit was diabolic — Satanic — but he was always the scholar, and he always bowed politely before he struck. The suave fierceness of his attack is unique in contemporaneous literature.

He cherished no personal enmities, in the ordinary sense, for his attacks were largely upon principles promoted by men, rather than upon the men themselves. One who knew him once said: “I look upon Bierce as a literary giant. I don’t think he really means to walk rough-shod over people, any more than a lion means to be rough with a mouse. It is only that the lion wonders how anything so small can be alive, and he is amused by its antics.” With his clairvoyant vision, his keen sense of justice, and his extraordinary honesty, what an international fool-killer he would have made!

Yet this fierce and hated lampooner had his softer side, which he displayed to those he loved and who loved him; and these were not too few. One of his oldest friends writes, in a letter: “His private gentleness, refinement, tenderness, kindness, unselfishness, are my most cherished memories of him. He was deeply — I may say childishly — human... It was in these intimate things, the aspects which the world never saw, that he made himself so deeply loved by the few whom he held close. For he was exceedingly reserved. Under no circumstances could he ever be dragged into physical view before the crowds that hated, feared or admired him. He had no vanity; his insolence toward the mob was detached, for he was an aristocrat to the bottom of him. But he would have given his coat to his bitterest enemy who happened to be cold.”

His humor, as distinct from his wit, was queer and picturesque, and was a distinguished quality. In his column of “Prattle” in the *San Francisco Examiner*, he once remarked that something was “as funny as a brick ship.” A friend giggled with delight at the conception, and repeated it to others; but to his dismay he could find none who would enjoy it. “A brick ship!” they repeated. “That isn’t funny; it’s simply foolish.” At another time, Bierce announced that he regarded every married man as his natural enemy; and the Philistines raved, saying he was evil, nasty, and a hopeless beast. The boyish fun of his remarks seemed always lost on the crowd. Again, when the missing-word nonsense was going on, he began to say obscure things, in his column, about a poem which Dr. David Starr Jordan had just published. At length he inaugurated a missing-word contest of his own, somewhat as follows: “Dr. Jordan is a — , and a — , and a — .” He invited the public to send him its guesses. Heaven knows what replies he received; but the Professor was worried, and asked Bierce’s friends why the writer was getting after him. Finally the missing words were supplied: “Dr. Jordan is a gentleman, and a scholar, and a poet.” Bierce supplied and published them himself.

Once a lawyer, whose remarkable name was Otto Tum Suden, broke out with some public matter that Bierce didn’t like. Accordingly, he wrote a little jingle about Tum Suden, the burthen of which was “Turn Suden, tum duden, tum dey!” It completely silenced poor Tum.

It is not unnatural, however, that Bierce should have been misunderstood, and people always were misunderstanding him. Standing, one day, with a friend, on a high elevation at a midwinter fair, he looked down at a vast crowd swarming and sweating far below him. Suddenly, coming out of a reverie, he said: “Wouldn’t it be fun to turn loose a machine gun into that crowd!” He added a swift and droll picture of the result, which sent his friend into convulsions, the latter knowing perfectly well that Bierce would not have harmed a single hair on a head in that swarm. But suppose his friend had been no friend at all — had just met the writer, and did not know him for what he was! That was Bierce’s way, however, and it ran into print. People could never understand him — some people.

Even his friends did not escape his lash. However deep his affection for them, he never spared them in public if they stepped awry. But they were inclined to think it an honor when he got after them in print, and, naturally, there was an admiring literary coterie that hailed him as master. I suspect they flattered him, although I cannot imagine him accepting their flattery. And he *was* a Master. One of this group, perhaps the closest of his literary friends, once sent him a story for criticism. Bierce returned it with the laconic remark that his friend "must have written it for the *Waverly Magazine* when he was a school-girl."

Among his friends and pupils were the poets, George Sterling and Herman Scheffauer, and he was on the best of terms with the Bohemian crowd that made old San Francisco a sort of American Bagdad; but I believe he never participated in their café dinners, where they were gazed at and marveled over by the fringing crowd. He was unconscious of his own greatness, in any offensive sense, and either ignored or failed to see the startled or admiring looks given him when people were told, "'That is Ambrose Bierce." He was not a showman. I have heard it said that women adored him, for he was cavalierly handsome; but he was not much of a ladies' man. As I have suggested, however, he was always a gentleman and gentlemen are none too plentiful.

An especially interesting chapter in his journalistic career began in 1896, when a great fight was being waged in the nation's capital. The late Collis P. Huntington was conducting a powerful lobby to pass his "refunding bill," releasing him and his associates of the Central Pacific Railroad from their obligations to the government. Bierce was asked by William Randolph Hearst to go to Washington for the *Examiner*, to give what aid he might in defeating the scheme. A Washington newspaper man said to Huntington: "Bierce is in town."

"How much does he want?" cynically asked Huntington.

This insult was reported to Bierce, who replied: "Please go back and tell him that my price is about seventy-five million dollars. If, when he is ready to pay, I happen to be out of town, he may hand it to my friend, the Treasurer of the United States."

The contest was notable. As in the Eugenie case, Bierce was in his element. He wrote so fast and so furiously that it became a whimsical saying that he wrote with a specially prepared pencil, because his pens became red hot and his ink boiled. The result was happy, whatever he used, for he drove the corruptionist gang out of the Capitol, and forced a withdrawal of the insolent measure. It was not so long ago that the last installment of the entire debt was handed to Bierce's "friend," the Treasurer of the United States.

Later, Bierce removed to Washington, where he spent his last years. He was already a celebrity when he came there to live, and was more or less of a lion; but his anger always was great when he fancied anyone was showing him off. It is said that he indignantly declined to attend a theater with a friend, in New York, because seats had been procured in a box for the party that was to accompany them. Another story tells of an alleged scene he made in a Washington drawing-room, when his host presented a street railway magnate. The car baron extended his hand.

"No!' thundered Bierce, in magnificent rage. "I wouldn't take your black hand for all the money you could steal in the next ten years! I ride in one of your cars every night and always am compelled to stand — there's never a seat for me."

And the story goes that the black hand was speedily withdrawn. I do not vouch for the tale; but it sounds a bit tru-ish, if not entirely so.

It has been remarked time and again that Bierce was embittered by failure of the world to appreciate his work, by his "obscurity." That is untrue. Recognition was slow, but he was certainly not unknown; indeed if a multiplicity of attacks upon a man may make him famous, Bierce was famous. It is the critics who are to blame for this myth; many attacked him, and many, eager to help him, spoke mournfully of his great and unappreciated genius; and after a time the story stuck. In a breezy jingle, Bierce himself summed up this aspect of the case, as follows:

My, how my fame rings out in every zone —
A thousand critics shouting, "He's unknown!"

It is probably true, also, that the foreword to his first book of stories, *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*, had something to do with the legend:

Denied existence by the chief publishing houses of the country, this book owes itself to Mr. E. L. G. Steele, merchant, of this city [San Francisco], In attesting Mr. Steele's faith in his judgment and his friend, it will serve its author's main and best ambition.

But, as the years went by, the *cognoscenti* came to know him very well indeed. And those who knew him best, in his later years, assert that he was not morose and unhappy, although he was a considerable sufferer from asthma, and had tried various climates without result.

Despite all his scoffings at clergymen and church folk, and despite his so-called heterodox opinions, Bierce made profession of a profound Christian faith. Even so, the orthodox will frown at it, but the man who wrote so exalted a tribute to Jesus of Nazareth could hardly have been the hopeless agnostic he was often pictured.

"This is my ultimate and determinate sense of right," he wrote. "'What under the circumstances would Christ have done?' — the Christ of the New Testament, not the Christ of the commentators, theologians, priests, and parsons."

And his friend, Edwin Markham, said of him: "He is a composite mind — a blending of Hafiz the Persian, Swift, Poe, Thoreau, with sometimes a gleam of the Galilean."

II. THE MASTER

It seems likely that the enduring fame of the most remarkable man, in many ways, of his day, will be founded chiefly upon his stories of war — the blinding flashes of revelation and interpretation that make up the group under the laconic legend, “Soldier,” in his greatest book, *In the Midst of Life.* In these are War, stripped of pageantry and glamor, stark in naked realism, terrible in grewsome fascination, yet of a sinister beauty. Specifically, it is the American Civil War that furnishes his characters and his texts, the great internecine conflict throughout which he gallantly fought; but it is War of which he writes, the hideous Thing.

Perhaps it is the attraction of repulsion that, again and again, leads one to these tales — although there is a record of a man who, having read them once, would not repeat the experiment — but it is that only in part. There is more than mere terror in them; there is religion and poetry, and much of the traditional beauty of battle. Their author was both soldier and poet, and in the war stories of Ambrose Bierce, the horror and ugliness, the lure and loveliness of war are so blended that there seems no distinct line of demarcation; the dividing line is not a point or sign, but a penumbra. Over the whole broods an occult significance that transcends experience.

Outstanding, even in so collectively remarkable a group, are three stories, “A Horseman in the Sky,”

“A Son of the Gods,” and “Chickamauga.” The first mentioned quietly opens with a young soldier, a Federal sentry, on duty at a point in the mountains overlooking a wooded drop of a thousand feet. He is a Virginian who has conceived it his duty to join the forces of the North, and who thus finds himself in arms against his family. It is imperative that the position of the camp guarded by the young soldier be kept secret; yet he is asleep at his post. Waking, he looks across the gorge, and on the opposite height beholds a magnificent equestrian statue — a Confederate officer on horseback, calmly surveying the camp beneath.

The young soldier, unobserved by his enemy, aims at the officer’s breast. But suddenly his soul is in tumult; he is shaken by convulsive shudders. He cannot take life in that way. If only the officer would see him and offer battle! Then he recalls his father’s admonition at their parting: at whatever cost he must do his duty. The horseman in gray turns his head. His features are easily discernible now. There is a pause. Then the young soldier shifts his aim from the officer's breast and, with stony calm, fires at the horse. A moment later, a Federal officer, some distance down the side of the cliff, sees an amazing thing — a man on horseback, riding down into the valley through the air.

Here is the conclusion to that story:

Ten minutes had hardly passed when a Federal sergeant crept cautiously to him on hands and knees. Druse neither turned his head nor looked at him, but lay without motion or sign of recognition.

"Did you fire?" the sergeant whispered.

"Yes."

"At what?"

"A horse. It was standing on yonder rock — pretty far out. You see it is no longer there.

It went over the cliff."

The man's face was white but he showed no other sign of emotion. Having answered, he turned away his face and said no more. The sergeant did not understand.

"See here, Druse," he said, after a moment's silence, "it's no use making a mystery. I order you to report. Was there anybody on the horse?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"My father."

The sergeant rose to his feet and walked away. "Good God!" he said.

It may be claimed that the *idea* of this story — its conclusion — is not original with Bierce. I don't know, although for all anyone can say to the contrary the episode may be a transcript from life. Certainly, in this form it is original enough. De Maupassant contrives the same sense of "shock" in the tale of a sailor who, after years of wandering, returns to the village to find his old home vanished, and who, in consequence, betakes himself to a shadier section of town. In the midst of his maudlin carousing, he discovers in the half-naked creature he is fondling, his sister. Remotely, the idea is the same in both stories, and, I fancy, it antedates De Maupassant by hundreds of years. Since publication of Bierce's tale, young writers in numbers deliberately have sought the effect (Peccavi!) with tales that are strangely reminiscent; and Billy Sunday rhetorically tells a "true story" of the same sort, which might have been taken directly from the French master. Thus does life plagiarize from literature, in later days, after literature first has plagiarized from life.

At any rate, it is a situation that was never better handled, an idea never more cleanly distorted, than by Bierce. "A Horseman in the Sky" is one of the most effective of his astonishing vignettes, and is given first place in the volume. It has one objection, which applies to all terror, horror, and mystery tales; once read, the secret is out, and rereading cannot recapture the first *story* thrill. It may be, however, that all literature, of whatever classification, is open to the same objection. Fortunately, as in the case of Bierce, there is more to literature than the mere "story."

There is less of this *story* in "A Son of the Gods," but as a shining glimpse of the tragic beauty of battle it is, I believe, unique; possibly it is Bierce's finest achievement in the art of *writing*. He calls it a "study in the historical present tense." In order to spare the lives of the skirmishers, a young staff officer rides forward toward the crest of a bare ridge crowned with a stone wall, to make the enemy disclose himself, if the enemy is there. The enemy *is* there and, being discovered, has no further reason for concealment. The doomed officer, instead of retreating to his friends, rides parallel to the wall, in a hail of rifle fire, and thence obliquely to other ridges, to uncover other concealed batteries and regiments...

The dust drifts away. Incredible! — that enchanted horse and rider have passed a ravine and are climbing another slope to unveil another conspiracy of silence, to thwart the will of another armed host. Another moment and that crest too is in eruption. The horse rears and strikes the air with its forefeet. They are down at last. But look again — the man has detached himself from the dead animal. He stands erect, motionless, holding his sabre in his right hand straight above his head. His face is toward us. Now he lowers his hand to a level with his face and moves it outward, the blade of the sabre describing a downward curve. It is a sign to us, to the world, to posterity. It is a hero's salute to death and history.

Again the spell is broken; our men attempt to cheer; they are choking with emotion; they utter hoarse, discordant cries; they clutch their weapons and press tumultuously forward into the open. The skirmishers, without orders, against orders, are going forward at a keen run, like hounds unleashed. Our cannon speak and the enemy's now open in full chorus; to right and left as far as we can see, the distant crest, seeming now so near, erects its towers of cloud, and the great shot pitch roaring down among our moving masses. Flag after flag of ours emerges from the wood, line after line sweeps forth, catching the sunlight on its burnished arms...

Bierce has been called a Martian; a man who loved war. In a way, I think he did; he was a born fighter, and he fought, as later he wrote, with a suave fierceness, deadly, direct, and unhastening. He was also an humane and tender spirit. As typical as the foregoing paragraphs are the following lines, with which the narrative concludes:

The skirmishers return, gathering up the dead. Ah, those many, many needless dead! That great soul whose beautiful body is lying over yonder, so conspicuous against the sere hillside — could it not have been spared the bitter consciousness of a vain devotion? Would one exception have marred too much the pitiless perfection of the divine, eternal plan?

In his more genuinely *horrible* vein, “Chickamauga” is unrivaled; a grotesquely shocking account of a deaf-mute child who, wandering from home, encountered in the woods a host of wounded soldiers hideously crawling from the battlefield”, and thought they were playing a game. Rebuffed by the jawless man, upon whose back he tried to ride, the child ultimately returns to his home, to find it burned and his mother slain and horribly mutilated by a shell. There is nothing occult in this story, but, with others of its *genre*, it probes the very depths of material horror.

“An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” is better known than many of Bierce’s tales, and here again is a form that has attracted imitators. Like a pantoum, the conclusion brings the narrative back to its beginning. A man is engaged in being hanged, in this extraordinary tale, and preparations are proceeding in a calm and businesslike manner. An order is given, and the man is dropped.

Consciousness returns, and he feels the water about him; the rope has broken, he knows, and he has fallen into the stream. He is fired upon, but escapes. After days of travel and incredible hardship, he reaches his home. His wife is in the doorway to greet him, and he springs forward with extended arms. At that instant, he feels a stunning blow on the back of his neck, a blaze of light is about him — then darkness and silence. “Peyton Farquhar was dead; his body, with a broken neck, swung gently from side to side beneath the timbers of the Owl Creek bridge.”

Again there is the sense of shock, at the end, as we realize that between the instant of the hanged man’s drop and the succeeding instant of his death, he has lived days of emotion and suspense.

The tales of civilians, which make up the second half of Bierce’s greatest book, are of a piece with his war stories. Probably nothing more weirdly awful has been conceived than such tales as “A Watcher by the Dead,”

“The Man and the Snake,” and “The Boarded Window,” unless it be Stevenson’s “The Body Snatcher.” The volume entitled *Can Such Things Be?* contains several similar stories, although, as a whole, it is apocryphal. In “The Mocking Bird” we find again the *motif* of “A Horseman in the Sky;” in “The Death of Halpin Frayser” there is a haunting detail and a grewsome imagery that suggest Poe, and in “My Favorite Murder,” one of the best tales Bierce ever wrote, there is a satirical whimsicality and a cynical brutality that make the tale an authentic masterpiece of *something* — perhaps humor!

"A literary quality that is a consecration," remarked one critic, of Bierce's method and method-results. That is better than speaking of his "style," for I think the miracle of Bierce's fascination is as much a lack of what is called *style* as anything else.

The clarity and directness of his thought and expression, and the nervous strength and purity of his diction, are the most unmistakable characteristics of his manner.

Bierce the satirist is seen in nearly all of his stories, but in *Fantastic Fables*, and *The Devil's Dictionary* we have satire bereft of romantic association; the keenest satire since Swift, glittering, bitter, venomous, but thoroughly honest. His thrusts are at and through the heart of sham. A beautiful specimen of his temper is the following fable:

An Associate Justice of the Supreme Court was sitting by a river when a traveler approached and said:

"I wish to cross. Would it be lawful to use this boat?"

"It would," was the reply, "it is my boat."

The traveler thanked him, and pushing the boat into the water, embarked and rowed away. But the boat sank and he was drowned.

"Heartless man!" said an Indignant Spectator, "why did you not tell him that your boat had a hole in it?" —

"The matter of the boat's condition," said the great jurist, "was not brought before me." The same cynical humor is revealed in the introductory paragraphs of the story already referred to, called "My Favorite Murder." The solemn absurdities of the law were Bierce's frequent target; thus, in his *Devil's Dictionary*, the definition of the phrase "court fool" is, laconically, "the plaintiff." His biting wit is nowhere better evidenced than in this mocking lexicon. Bacchus, he conceives to be "a convenient deity invented by the ancients as an excuse for getting drunk;" and a Prelate is "a church officer having a superior degree of holiness and a fat preferment. One of Heaven's aristocracy. A gentleman of God." More humorously, a Garter is "an elastic band intended to keep a woman from coming out of her stockings and desolating the country."

In the same key are his collected epigrams, in which we learn that "woman would be more charming if one could fall into her arms without falling into her hands."

With all forms of literary expression, Bierce experimented successfully; but in verse his percentage of permanent contributions is smaller than in any other department. His output, while enormous, was for the most part ephemeral, and the wisdom of collecting even the least of his jingles may well be called into question. At least half of the hundreds of verses contained in the two volumes of his collected works given over to poetry, might have been left for collectors to discover and resurrect; and some delightful volumes of *juvenilia* and *ana* thus might have been posthumously achieved for him by the collecting fraternity. But, “someone will surely search them out and put them into circulation,” said their author, in defense of their publication in the definitive edition, and there they are, the good, the bad, and the indifferent.

Happily, in the ocean of newspaper jingles and rhymed quips there is much excellent poetry. Kipling, by some, is asserted to have derived his “Recessional” from Bierce’s “Invocation,” a noble and stately poem; and in “The Passing Show,”

“Finis Æternitatis,” and some of the sonnets we have poetry of a high order. Maugre, we have much excellent satire in many of his journalistic rhymes. Like Swift and Butler, and Pope and Byron, Bierce gibbeted a great many nobodies; but, as he himself remarks, “satire, like other arts, is its own excuse, and is not dependent for its interest on the personality of those who supply the occasion for it.” If many of Bierce’s *Black Beetles in Amber* seem flat, many too are as virile and keen as when they were written; and if he flayed men alive, just as certainly he raised the moral tone of the community he dominated in a manner the value of which is perhaps measureless.

The best example of poetry, however, left us by Bierce, *me judice*, is that great prose poem, *The Monk and the Hangman s Daughter*. This work is the joint production of Bierce and G. Adolphe Danziger. The latter translated it from the German of Prof. Richard Voss and, I believe, elaborated it. Being unsure of his English, Danziger gave it over to Bierce for revision. Bierce, too, elaborated it, practically rewriting it, he testified, as well as changing it materially. There was discussion about authorship honors; but the book is a bit of literary art that is a credit to all three men, and that would be a credit to six. The world would be poorer without this delicate and lovely romance. Saturated with the color and spirit of the mediaeval days it depicts, it is as authentic a classic as *Aucassin and Nicolette;* and its *denouement* is as terrible as it is beautiful. The strange story of Ambrosius the monk, and the outcast girl Benedicta, “the hangman’s daughter,” is one of the masterpieces of literature.

Ambrose Bierce was a great writer and a great man. He was a great master of English; but it is difficult to place him. He is possibly the most versatile genius in American letters. He is the equal of Stevenson in weird, shadowy effect, and in expression he is Stevenson’s superior. Those who compare his work with that of Stephen Crane (in his war stories) have not read him understandingly. Crane was a fine and original genius, but he was, and is, the pupil where Bierce is Master. Bierce's "style" is simpler and less spasmodic than Crane's, and Bierce brought to his labor a first-hand knowledge of war, and an imagination more terrible even than that which gave us *The Red Badge of Courage*. The horrors of both men sometimes transcend artistic effect; but their works are enduring peace tracts.

It has been said that Bierce's stories are "formula," and it is in a measure true; but the formula is that of a master chemist, and it is inimitable. He set the pace for the throng of satirical fabulists who have since written; and his essays, of which nothing has been said, are powerful, of immense range, and of impeccable diction. His influence on the writers of his time, while unacknowledged, is wide. Rarely did he attempt anything sustained; his work is composed of keen, darting fragments. His only novel is a redaction. But who shall complain, when his fragments are so perfect?

III. THE MYSTERY

In the fall of the year 1913, Ambrose Bierce, being then some months past his seventy-first birthday anniversary, started for Mexico. He had for some time, and with keen interest, followed the fortunes of the revolutionary cause headed by Francisco Villa; and he believed that cause a just one. From various points along the line of his journey, before he reached the southern republic, Bierce wrote to his friends. In December of 1913 the last letter he is known to have written was received by his daughter. It was dated the month of its receipt, and from Chihuahua, Mexico. In it Bierce mentioned, casually enough, that he had attached himself, unofficially, to a division of Villa’s army — the exact capacity of his service is not known — and spoke of a prospective advance on Ojinaga. The rest is silence.

No further word, bearing the unmistakable stamp of authenticity, ever has come out of Mexico. There have been rumors without number, even long categorical accounts of his death at the hands of the revolutionists, but all must be called false. There is in them not the faintest ring of truth. They represent merely the inevitable speculation, and the inevitable “fakes” of unscrupulous correspondents. Typical of the innumerable “clews” offered is the following: One newspaper correspondent in El Paso reported that a second correspondent had told him that he (the second correspondent) had seen and talked with Bierce before the author passed into Mexico; that Bierce had declared he would offer his services to the revolutionary cause, and that, failing to make such a connection, he would “crawl into some out-of-the-way hole in the mountains and die.” The author of these pages hastily communicated with the second correspondent, and the second correspondent, in a positive communication, vowed that he had never seen Bierce, nor had he heard the story of Bierce’s reported utterance.

The most elaborate account of Bierce’s “death” was quoted in full from the *Mexican Review,* by the *Washington Post,* under date of April 27, 1919. Its extraordinary detail gives it a semblance of truth that other accounts have lacked, and, without intending to perpetuate a story which Bierce’s friends and relatives do not for a moment believe, I reproduce it in its ungrammatical entirety:

A short time since the *Review* editor was conversing with a friend, a former officer in the constitutionalist army, and casually asked him if he had ever heard of an American named Ambrose Bierce. To his surprise he replied that he had met him several times and had become quite well acquainted with him. This was due to the fact that Bierce could speak little if any Spanish, while the officer is well educated and speaks English fluently.

The latter declared that he saw and talked with Bierce several times in the vicinity of Chihuahua late in 1913 or early in 1914. Later — 1915 — he met a sergeant of Villa's army, an old acquaintance, and this man told him about having witnessed the execution of an American who corresponded in every manner with Bierce's description.

This affair took place near Icamole, a village in the region of Monterey and Saltillo, east of Chihuahua state, in August, 1915. The constitutionalists occupied that village while Gen. Tomas Urbina, one of Villa's most bloodthirsty fellows, was nearby and between that place and the border.

One day an American, accompanied by a Mexican, convoying four mules, on one of which was a machine gun, while the others were loaded with ammunition, was captured on the trail, headed toward Icamole, and taken before Urbina. The Mexican told Urbina that he had been engaged by another Mexican to guide the mules and the American to the constitutionalist camp at Icamole. That was all he knew. The American apparently could not speak or understand any Spanish, and made no intelligent reply to the questions asked him.

The bloodthirsty Urbina, who was never so happy as when killing some one himself or ordering it to be done, wearied of questioning the prisoners and ordered them to be shot at once.

The two were stood up in front of a firing squad, where the Mexican threw himself on his knees, stretched out his arms, and refused to have his eyes bandaged, saying he wanted to "see himself killed." All he asked was that his face be not mutilated, which was not done.

Seeing his companion on his knees, the American followed suit, but the Mexican told him to stand up. He did not understand what was said, but remained on his knees, arms outstretched, like his companion, and with unbandaged eyes he met his death at the hands of the firing squad. The two victims were buried by the side of the trail.

The sergeant who witnessed the affair described Bierce exactly, though he had never seen him to his knowledge. Incidentally it may be stated that Urbina himself soon after met his death by Villa's orders at the hands of the notorious "Matador Fierro."

It is to be doubted whether Villa ever knew about this double execution, such affairs being common enough at that time.

Inquiry is now being made for the sergeant in question, in order that further details of the affair may be secured, as well as information regarding the exact locality of the execution and the burial place of the two victims.

Only two things need to be considered in refuting the foregoing narrative. First, this is only one of a great many stories, despite its painstaking vraisemblance; and, second, the execution is dated in the fall of 1915, approximately two years after Bierce's last letter. Had Ambrose Bierce been alive in 1915, had he been living at almost any time between the date of his last letter and the reported date of his death, he would have sent some communication to his friends and relatives. This is recognized by all who knew him best, and is the final answer to the extravagant chronicle in the *Mexican Review*. It may be remarked, however, in passing, that the carefully detailed account is just such a tale as might have been constructed by a press agent eager to lift the onus of Bierce's disappearance from official Mexican shoulders; and of such paid press agents there have been many. It will be noted that care is taken to report also the execution of Urbina, and even to "whitewash" Villa, although I believe the propaganda to have been Carranzista.

This careful piece of imagination was followed closely by a still more carefully elaborated account of the same story. Written by James H. Wilkins, it appeared in the *San Francisco Bulletin* of March 24, 1920. Wilkins quotes George F. Weeks, who was probably responsible for the former story, since he was editor of the *Mexican Review,* speaks of Major Bierce as having been military advisor to Carranza, and dwells at length on Bierce's alleged expressed desire to "die in battle." One Edmundo Melero, an associate editor of the *Mexican Review,* is declared to have been with Bierce almost from the moment of his arrival in Mexico, but as Melero died of pneumonia the day after Wilkins arrived in Mexico City (I am quoting Wilkins's story), Wilkins could not interview him. Fortunately, Weeks knew all that Melero could have told, and Weeks told Wilkins that Melero had been seeking a Mexican, then in Mexico City, who had been present at the attack on the mule train when Bierce was "captured" and "executed."

To find this Indian in a city of a million souls was no trick for Wilkins, and the discovered eyewitness repeated the story I have already quoted, with unimportant variations. The convenient Indian then produced a *photograph* of Ambrose Bierce, which had been among the effects taken from the "body." Wilkins identified it at once. But the Indian would not part with it; he preferred to destroy the photograph, believing it had served its purpose, and fearing consequences to himself when the Wilkins revelation was published. This photograph was the sensation of the Wilkins story, which otherwise was the same story as formerly told.

A friend of mine in California fairly rushed this article to me, saying, "Wilkins is an old and reliable journalist." I shall not attempt to deny either his age or his reliability, but I will casually suggest that *if* he is reliable he is extraordinarily gullible, whatever his age.

One remarkable story came privately to me, and was to the positive effect that Ambrose Bierce had been alive and well in San Luis Potosi, as late as December of 1918, five years after his disappearance and after his last letter to his friends. The narrator of that tale believed him to be still living (May, 1920), and ready to come back and astound the world when his "death" had been sufficiently advertised. There were many details to the story, and another Mexican figured. This Mexican had seen a portrait of Bierce in the story-teller's office, had exclaimed at sight of it, and had told of knowing the original; Bierce and this Indian, it developed, had parted company in San Luis Potosi in December of 1918! The Major was known to the Mexican as "Don Ambrosio." But *this* Mexican was murdered in Los Angeles, in a triangular love scrape, as was attested surely enough by a newspaper account of his murder, so the narrator's chief witness had vanished. This investigator, too, was, at least, too credible; although he was shrewd enough to see through the Weeks and Wilkins stories, and to tear them to pieces. Certainly he knew better than to accuse Bierce of seeking morbid publicity.

Other extraordinary tales there have been, and a dispatch to the *New York World* of April 3, 1915, dated from Bloomington, Illinois, soberly recited that Mrs. H. D. Cowden of that city, Bierce's daughter, had received a letter from her father which entirely cleared the mystery of his disappearance. He was even then in France, it seemed, an officer on Lord Kitchener's staff, had escaped injury, and was in good health. Yet from Mrs. Cowden's own lips I have had it that no such letter, no such information conveyed in whatever manner, had ever reached her. A later story reported that Bierce had perished with Kitchener, when the great soldier was drowned.

This is all sensational journalism. There is every reason to doubt that Bierce ever left Mexico; that he long survived his last bit of letter-writing — the brief communication to his daughter, in December of 1913. The manner of his passing probably never will be known, but it is to be recalled that he suffered from asthma, and that he was more than seventy-one years of age when he went away. Were he alive in the year 1920 he would be 78 years old.

There is one further consideration: Did Bierce, when he went into Mexico, expect to return? Did he go, calmly and deliberately, to his death? Did he, indeed, seek death? The question has been raised, and so it must be answered. In support of the contention, two highly significant letters have been offered. These were received by Mrs. Josephine Clifford McCrackin of San José, California, long a warm friend of the vanished author, and there is not the slightest doubt of their authenticity. The first, chronologically, is dated from Washington, September 10, 1913, and is as follows: Dear Joe: The reason that I did not answer your letter sooner is — I have been away (in New York) and did not have it with me. I suppose I shall not see your book for a long time, for I am going away and have no notion when I shall return. I expect to go to, perhaps across, South America — possibly via Mexico, if I can get through without being stood up against a wall and shot as a gringo. But that is better than dying in bed, is it not? If Dune did not need you so badly I'd ask you to get your hat and come along. God bless and keep you.

The faint suggestion in this letter is more clearly defined in the second and last letter received by Mrs. McCrackin, three days later:

Dear Joe: Thank you for the book. I thank you for your friendship — and much besides. This is to say good-by at the end of a pleasant correspondence in which your woman's prerogative of having the last word is denied to you. Before I could receive it I shall be gone. But some time, somewhere, I hope to hear from you again. Yes, I shall go into Mexico with a pretty definite purpose, which, however, is not at present disclosable. You must try to forgive my obstinacy in not "perishing" where I am.

I want to be where something worth while is going on, or where nothing whatever is going on. Most of what is going on in your own country is exceedingly distasteful to me.

Pray for me? Why, yes, dear — that will not harm either of us. I loathe religions, a Christian gives me qualms and a Catholic sets my teeth on edge, but pray for me just the same, for with all those faults upon your head (it's a nice head, too), I am pretty fond of you, I guess. May you live as long as you want to, and then pass smilingly into the darkness — the good, good darkness. Devotedly your friend. He goes "with a pretty definite purpose;" his "obstinacy" will not allow him to perish in Washington, and death at the hands of the Mexicans is "better than dying in bed." He wishes to be where something worth while is going on, or "where nothing whatever is going on;" and, finally, there is the reference to the "good, good darkness."

Yet also he had announced his intention, if possible, to cross South America.

It is difficult to get away from the hints in those two letters; and the assumption that Bierce knew he would not return is inescapable. But to assume that he cordially sought death is another matter. He would be ready for it when it came, he would pass smilingly into the "good, good darkness," but does anyone who knows Ambrose Bierce or his work suppose that he would encourage, let us say, his own murder? That he would rush into battle, let us say, hoping for a friendly bullet through his heart?

That his passing was, in effect, a suicide, although the hand may have been another than his own? Ambrose Bierce's friends do not think so, and they are right. His "good-by" to his friends was real enough, but all he certainly knew was that somewhere, some time, perhaps in a few months, perhaps in a year or two, death would overtake him, and that he would not have returned to his home. That death did come to him, not long after he wrote the last letter received by his daughter, we must believe.

If he was murdered by bandits, and had a chance for life, it is safe to assume that there was a fight. If he died of disease, which is not at all improbable, he regretted his inability to write. Bierce was not cruel to his friends.

It is likely that the disappearance is complete, that the mystery never will be solved. The United States government's investigation has come to nothing, and indeed it has been lax enough.

Ambrose Bierce was born in Meiggs County, Ohio, June 24, 1842, son of Marcus Aurelius and Laura (Sherwood) Bierce. He died — where? And when? Or is he dead? The time for hope would seem to have passed. One thinks of that grim prophecy, years ago; and there has been no wireless.

Setting aside the grief of friends and relatives, there is something terribly beautiful and fitting in the manner of the passing of Ambrose Bierce; a tragically appropriate conclusion to a life of erratic adventure and high endeavor. Soldier-fighter and soldier-writer. Scotson Clark's well-known caricature of Bierce dragging a pen from a scabbard is the undying portrait of the man.

AMBROSE BIERCE: AN APPRAISAL by Frederic Tabor Cooper

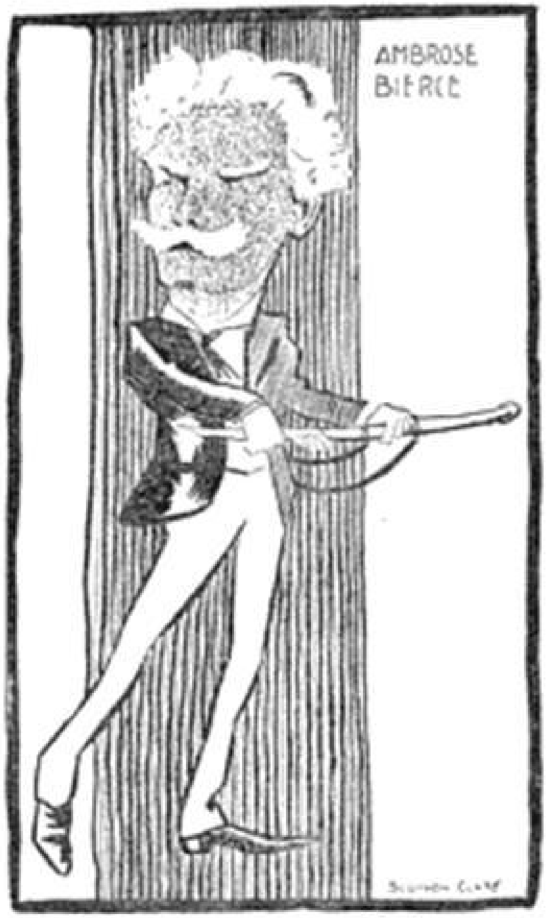
From: *The Bookman,* July 1911, pages 471-480

In the preface to the fourth volume of his collected works, the volume containing under the title of *Shapes of Clay* the major portion of purely satirical personal verse, Mr. Ambrose Bierce emphatically expresses his belief in the right of any author "to have his fugitive work in newspapers and periodicals put into a more permanent form during his lifetime if he can." No one is likely to dispute Mr. Bierce's contention; but it is often a grave question as to what extent it is wise for the individual to exercise his inalienable rights. And in the question of authors the question comes down to this: How far is it to their own best interests to dilute their finer and more enduring work with that which is mediocre and ephemeral? For it is unfortunately true that no author is measured by his high lights alone, but by the resultant impression of blended light and shade; and there is many a writer among the recognised classics who to-day would take a higher rank had a kindly and discriminating fate assigned three-quarters of his life work to a merciful oblivion.

To the student of American letters, however, the comprehensive edition of Ambrose Bierce's writings now being issued in ten portly and well-made volumes cannot fail to be welcome. It places at once within convenient reach a great mass of material which, good, bad or indifferent, as the case may be, all helps to throw suggestive side lights upon the author, his methods, and his outlook upon life. It forces the reader who perchance has hitherto known Mr. Bierce solely as a master of the short story, to realise that this part of his work has been, throughout a long and busy life, a sort of side issue and that the great measure of his activities has been expended upon social and political satire. And similarly, those who have known him best as the fluent producer of stinging satiric verse suddenly recognise how versatile and many sided are his literary gifts. The ten volumes are divided as follows: three volumes of prose fiction; two volumes of satiric verse; two volumes of literary and miscellaneous essays; and three volumes consisting mainly of satiric prose, including a greatly amplified edition of that curiously caustic piece of irony, *The Cynic's Word Book,* now for the first time published under the title of Mr. Bierce's own choosing, *The Devil's Dictionary.* It seems, therefore, most convenient to consider Mr. Bierce, the Man of Letters, under three separate aspects: the Critic, the Satirist and the Master of the Short Story.

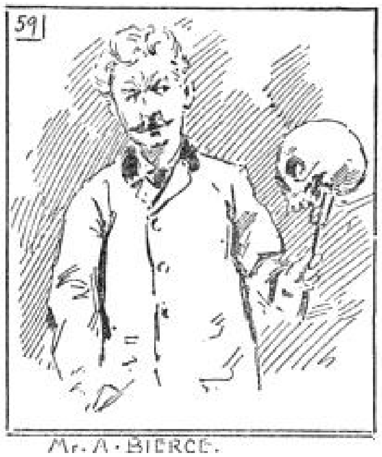
I. THE CRITIC

Regarding literary criticism, Mr. Bierce says quite frankly “the saddest thing about the trade of writing is that the writer can never know, nor hope to know, if he is a good workman. In literary criticism, there are no criteria, no accepted standards of excellence by which to test the work.” Now there is just enough truth in this attitude of mind to make it a rather dangerous one. If there were literally no accepted standards in any of the arts, no principles to which a certain influential majority of critical minds had given their adhesion, then literature and all the arts would be in a state of perennial anarchy. But of course any writer who believes in his heart that there are no criteria will necessarily remain in lifelong ignorance regarding his own worth; for it is only through learning how to criticise others sanely and justly that one acquires even the rudiments of self-criticism.



FROM “BLACK AND WHITE” (LONDON)

And incidently, it may be observed that no better proof of Mr. Bierce’s fundamental lack of this valuable asset could be asked than the retention in these ten volumes of a considerable amount of journalistic rubbish side by side with flashes of undoubted genius. Mr. Bierce’s entire essay on the subject of criticism is a sort of literary agnosticism, a gloomy denial of faith. He has no confidence in the judgment of the general public nor in that of the professional critic. He admits that “in a few centuries, more orless, there may arrive a critic that we call ‘Posterity;’ “ but Posterity, he complains, is a trifle slow. Accordingly, since the worth of any contemporary writer is reduced to mere guess work, he, Ambrose Bierce, has scant use for his contemporaries. He has very definite ideas regarding the training of young writers and tells us at some length the course through which he would like to put an imaginary pupil, but he adds: If I caught him reading a newly published book, save by way of penance, it would go hard with him. Of our modern education he should have enough to read the ancients: Plato, Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius, Seneca and that lot – custodians of most of what is worth knowing.



A CARICATURE OF A PAINTING BY THE LATE J. H. E. PART1NGTON

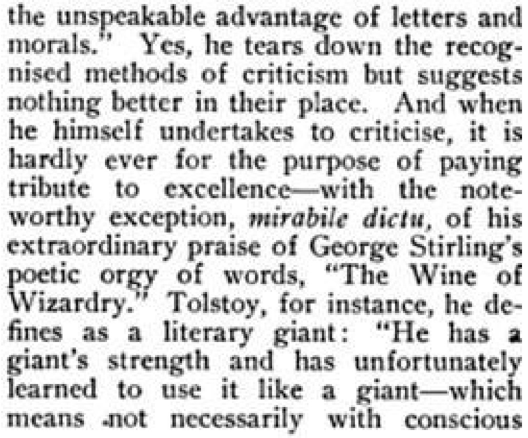
In spite of the pains to which Mr. Bierce goes to deny that he is a *laudator temporis acti*, the term fits him admirably — and nowhere is this attitude of mind more conspicuous than in his treatment of the modern novel. It is important, however, to get clearly in mind the arbitrary sense in which he uses the word novel as distinguished from what he chooses to call romance. His occasional half definitions are somewhat confusing; but apparently by the novel he means realistic fiction as distinguished from romantic fiction — a distinction complicated by the further idiosyncrasy that by realism he understands almost exclusively the commonplaces of actuality and by romanticism any happening which is out of the ordinary. The novel, then, in his sense of the word is “a snow plant; it has no root in the permanent soil of literature, and does not long hold its place; it is of the lowest form of imagination.” And again: “The novel bears the same relation to literature that the panorama bears to painting; with whatever skill and feeling the panorama is painted, it must lack that basic quality in all art, unity, totality of effect.” He seems utterly unaware that the great gain in modern fiction, the one indisputable factor that separates it from the fiction of half a century ago, is precisely the basic quality of unity. The modern novel whose technique most nearly approaches perfection is the one which when read rapidly with “a virgin attention at a single sitting” — to borrow Mr. Bierce’s own phrase — gives an impression of as single-hearted a purpose as one finds in the most faultless of Maupassant’s three-thousand word masterpieces. It is quite possible for any well-trained reader to go through even the longest of novels at a single sitting. The present writer would feel himself grievously at fault if he interrupted his first reading of any novel that had been given him for the purpose of review; and he well remembers that in only two recent cases did he become conscious of the prolonged strain: namely, Mr. Kipling’s *Kim,* which required an uninterrupted attention of eight and one-half hours, and *The Golden Bowl,* of Mr. James, which required somewhat more than eleven. Mr. Bierce’s attitude, however, is partly explained by his *obiter dictum* that “no man who has anything else to do can critically read more than two or three books in a month” — and of course, if you make your way through books at the snail’s pace of one in ten days, the most perfect unity of purpose is inevitably going to drop out of sight. All of this helps us to understand how it happens that Mr. Bierce, otherwise a man of intelligence, can say in all seriousness that “in England and America the art of novel writing is as dead as Queen Anne.” Listen also to the following literary blasphemy: So far as I am able to judge, no good novels are now “made in Germany,” nor in France, nor in any European country except Russia. The Russians are writing novels which so far as one may venture to judge ... are in their way admirable; full of fire and light, like an opal . . . ; in their hands the novel grew great — as it did in those of Richardson and Fielding, and as it would have done in those of Thackeray and Pater if greatness in that form of fiction had been longer possible in England.

Or again: Not only is the novel ... a faulty form of art, but because of its faultiness it has no permanent place in literature. In England it flourished less than a century and a half, beginning with Richardson and ending with Thackeray, sines whose death no novels, probably, have been written that are worth attention.

Think for a moment what this means. Here is a man who has ventured to speak seriously about the modern novel, and who confessedly is unaware of the importance of Trollope and Meredith and Hardy, of Henry James and Rudyard

Kipling and Maurice Hewlett — and who deliberately ignores the existence of Flaubert and Maupassant and Zola, Galdos and Valdes, Verga and d'Annunzio! It is not astonishing after that to find Mr. Bierce seriously questioning the value of epic poetry: "What more than they gave," he asks, "might we not have had from Virgil *(sic)*, Dante, Tasso, Camoens and-Milton if they had not found the epic poem ready to their misguided hands?"

The fact is that Mr. Bierce as a critic is of the iconoclastic variety. He breaks down but does not build up. He has no patience with the historical form of criticism that traces the intellectual genealogy of authorship showing, for instance, Maupassant's debt to Poe or Bourget's debt to Stendhal. He is equally intolerant of that analytical method — the fairest of them all — that judges every written work by its author's purpose as nearly as this may be read between the lines. Nothing is more certain, he says, than if a writer of genius should bring to his task the purposes which the critics trace in the completed work "the book would remain forever unwritten, to the unspeakable advantage of letters and morals." Yes, he tears down the recognised methods of criticsm but suggests nothing better in their place. And when he himself undertakes to criticise, it is hardly ever for the purpose of paying tribute to excellence – with the noteworthy exception, *mirabile dictu*, of his extraordinary praise of George Stirling's poetic orgy of words, "The Wine of Wizardry." Tolstoy, for instance, he defines as a literary giant: "He has a giant's strength and has unfortunately learned to use it like a giant – which means not necessarily with conscious cruelty, but with stupidity." The journal of Marie Bashkirtseff — the last book on earth that one would expect Mr. Bierce to discuss — he sums up as "morbid, hysterical and unpleasant beyond anything of its kind in literature." Among modern critics he pronounces Mr. Howells "the most mischievous, because the ablest, of all this sycophantic crew."



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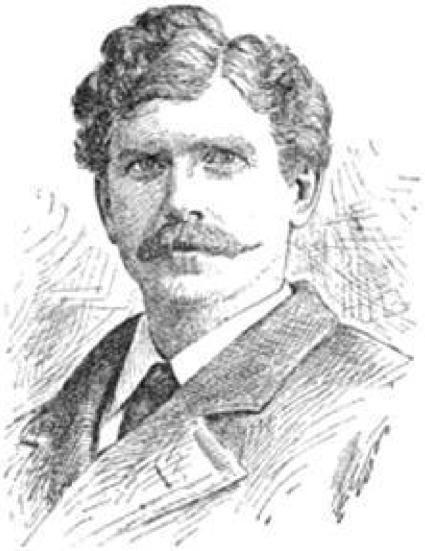


AMBROSE BIERCE (in 1869) The truth is that the value of Mr. Bierce as a critic lies solely in his fearlessness and downright sincerity, his unswerving conviction that he is right. He has to a rather greater extent than many a better critic the quality of consistency; and no matter how widely we are forced to disagree with his conclusions there is not one of them that does not throw an interesting side light upon Mr. Bierce, the man.

II. THE SATIRIST

The short stories and the serious critical papers of Mr. Bierce have appeared in a spasmodic and desultory way, but from first to last he has been at heart a satirist of the school of Lucilius and Juvenal, eager to scourge the follies and the foibles of mankind at large. The fact that Mr. Bierce is absolutely in earnest, that he is destitute of fear and confessedly incorruptible accounts for the oft repeated statement that he was for years the best loved and the most hated man on the Pacific Coast. Now the ability to use a stinging lash of words is all very well in itself; it is a gift that is none too common. But to be effective it must not be used too freely. The two ample volumes of Mr. Bierce's poetical invectives form a striking object lesson of the wisdom in Hamlet's contention that unless you treat men better than they deserve none will escape a whipping. And when fresh from a perusal of the contents of *Shapes of Clay* and *Black Beetles in Amber,* one has become so accustomed to seeing men flayed alive that a whole skin possesses something of a novelty. Now there is no question that there is a good deal wrong with the world, just as there always has been, if one takes the trouble to look for it. But when any one man takes upon himself the task of reprimanding the universe it is not unreasonable that we should ask ourselves in the first instance: What manner of man is this? What are his standards and beliefs? And if he had his way what new lamps would he give us in place of the old? In the case of Mr. Bierce it is a little difficult to make answer with full assurance. Somewhere in his preface he has said that he has not attempted to classify his writings under the separate heads of serious, ironical, humorous and the like, assuming that his readers have sufficient intelligence to recognise the difference for themselves. But this is not always easy to do, because in satire these different qualities and moods overlap each other so that there is always the danger of taking too literally what is really an ironical exaggeration. Here, however, is a rather significant passage taken from a serious essay entitled "To Train a Writer;" it sets forth the convictions and the general attitude toward life which Mr. Bierce believes are essential to any young author before he can hope for success — and it is only fair to infer that they represent his own personal views: He should, for example, forget that he is an American and remember that he is a Man. He should be neither Christian nor Jew, nor Buddhist, nor Mahometan, nor Snake Worshipper. To local standards of right and wrong he should be civilly indifferent. In the virtues, so called, he should discern only the rough notes of a general expediency; in fixed moral principles only time-saving predecisions of cases not yet before the court of conscience. Happiness should disclose itself to his enlarging intelligence as the end and purpose of life; art and love as the only means to happiness. He should free himself of all doctrines, theories, etiquettes, politics, simplifying his life and mind, attaining clarity with breadth and unity with height. To him a continent should not seem wide, nor a century long. And it would be needful that he know and have an ever-present consciousness that this is a world of fools and rogues, blind with superstition, tormented with envy, consumed with vanity, selfish, false, cruel, cursed with illusions — frothing mad!

Now this strikes the average fair-minded person as a rather wholesale indictment of what on the whole has proved to be a pretty good world to live in. In fact, it is difficult to conceive of any one honestly and literally holding such an extreme view and yet of his own volition remaining in such an unpleasant place any longer than the time required to obtain the amount of gunpowder or strychnine needed to make an effective exit. But of course Mr. Bierce does not find life half so unpleasant as he makes out: in fact, he gives the impression of hugely enjoying himself by voluntarily looking out upon a world grotesquely distorted by the lenses of his imagination. He has of course a perfect right to have as much or as little faith as he chooses in any human religion or philosophy, moral doctrine or political code — only it is well when studying Mr. Bierce as a satirist and reformer to understand clearly his limitations in this respect and to discount his views accordingly. It is well, for instance, to keep in mind, when reading some of his scathing lines directed at small offenders who at most have left the world not much worse off for having lived in it, that Mr. Bierce has put himself on record as proclaiming Robert Ingersoll "a man who taught all the virtues as a duty and a delight — who stood, as no other man among his countrymen has stood, for liberty, for honour, for good will toward men, for truth as it was given him to see it."

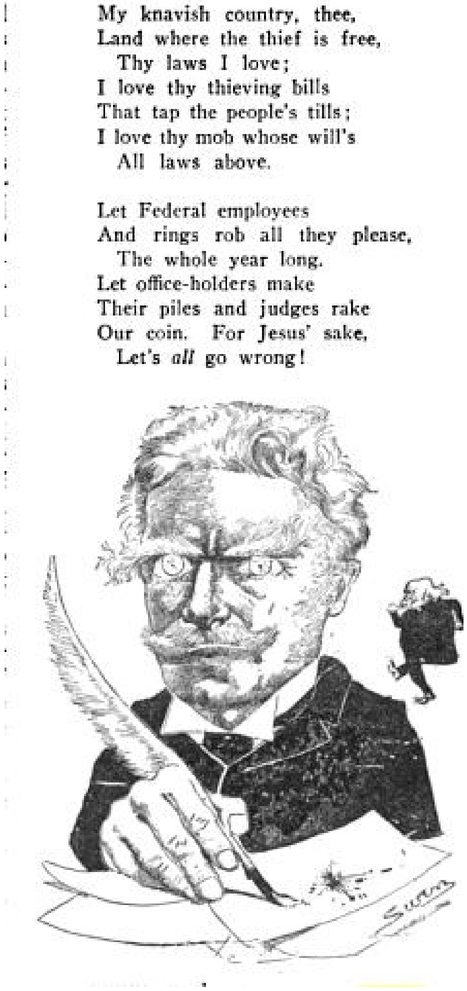
To the present writer there is much that is keenly irritating in Mr. Bierce's satiric verse for the reasons above implied. It is, of course, highly uncritical to find fault with a writer for no better reason than because you find yourself out of harmony with 'his religious and moral faith, or his lack of it — for an author's personal beliefs should have no bearing upon the artistic value of what he produces. But putting aside personal prejudice, it may be said in all fairness that Mr. Bierce made a mistake in giving a permanent form to so large a body of his fugitive verses. It is not quite true that satiric poetry is read with the same interest after the people at whom it was directed are forgotten. Aristophanes and Horace and Juvenal cannot be greatly enjoyed to-day without a good deal of patient delving for the explanation of local and temporal allusions; and in modern times Pope's *Dunciad*, for instance, is probably to-day the least important and the least read of all his writings. It is impossible to take much interest in vitriolic attacks made twenty years ago upon various obscure Californians whose names mean nothing at all to the world at large. But on the other hand, any one can understand and enjoy the sweeping irony as well as the sheer verbal cleverness of a parody like the following: A RATIONAL ANTHEM

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of felony,   Of thee I sing —

Land where my fathers fried
Young witches and applied
Whips to the Quaker’s hide   And made him spring.

My knavish country, thee, Land where the thief is free,   Thy laws I love; I love thy thieving bills, That tap the people’s tills; I love thy mob whose will’s All laws above Let Federal employees And rings rob all they please,   The whole year long.

Let office-holders make Their piles and judges rake Our coin. For Jesus’ sake,   Let’s *all* go wrong!



My knavish country, thee,
Land where the thief is free,
  Thy laws I love;
I love thy thieving bills
That tap the people's tills;
I love thy mob whose will's
  All laws above.

Let Federal employees
And rings rob all they please,
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Let office-holders make
Their piles and judges rake
Our coin. For Jesus' sake,
  Let's *all* go wrong!

SWINNERTON S CONCEPTION OF BIERCE

One is tempted to devote considerably more space than is warranted to that extremely clever collection of satiric definitions, *The Devil’s Dictionary.* It represents a deliberate pose consistently maintained, it is pervaded with a spirit of what a large proportion of readers in a Christian country would pronounce irreverent, it tells us nothing new and can hardly be conceived of as an inspiration for higher or nobler living. But it is undeniably entertaining reading. Almost any one must smile over such specimens as the following, taken almost at random: Monday, n. In Christian countries, the day after the base-ball game.

Bacchus, n. A convenient deity invented by the ancients as an excuse for getting drunk.

Positive, *adj*. Mistaken at the top of one's voice.

III. THE STORY TELLER

But it is as a writer of short stories that Mr. Bierce's future fame rests upon a firm foundation. It is not too much to say that within his own chosen field — the grim, uncompromising horror story, whether actual or supernatural — he stands among American writers second only to Edgar Allan Poe. And this is all the more remarkable when we consider his expressed scorn of new books and modern methods and his implied indifference to the development of modern technique. He does understand and consciously seeks for that unity of effect which is the foundation stone of every good short story; yet in sheer technical skill there is scarcely one among the recognised masters of the short story today, Mr. Kipling, for instance, and the late O. Henry, Jack London and a score of his contemporaries, from whom he might not learn something to his profit. What Mr. Bierce's habits of workmanship may be the writer does not happen to know; it is possible that he has always striven as hard to build an underlying structure, a preliminary scaffolding, for each story as ever Edgar Allan Poe did. But if so he has been singularly successful in practising the art which so artfully all things conceals. He gives the impression of one telling a story with a certain easy spontaneity and attaining his results through sheer instinct. .He seldom attempts anything like a unity of time and place; and many of his short tales have the same fault which he criticises in the modern novel, namely, that of having a panoramic quality, of being shown to us in a succession of more or less widely separated scenes and incidents.

Nevertheless, in most cases his stories are their own best justification. We may not agree with the method that he has chosen to use, but we cannot escape from the strange, haunting power of them, the grim, boding sense of their having happened — even the most weird, most supernatural, most grotesquely impossible of them — in precisely the way that he has told them.

The stories, such of them at least as really count and represent Mr. Bierce at his best, divide themselves into two groups: first, the Civil War stories, based upon his own four years' experience as a soldier during the rebellion, and unsurpassed in American fiction for the unsparing clearness of their visualisation of war. And secondly, the frankly supernatural stories contained in the volume entitled *Can Such Things Be?* — stories in which the setting is immaterial because if such things could be they would be independent of time and space. The war stories range through the entire gamut of heroism, suffering and carnage. They are stamped in all their physical details with a pitiless realism unequalled by Stendhal in the famous Waterloo episode in the *Chartreuse de Parme* and at least unsurpassed by Tolstoy or by Zola. Indeed, there is nothing fulsome or extravagant in the statement that has more than once been made that Mr. Bierce is a sort of American Maupassant. And what is most remarkable about these stories is that they never fail of a certain crescendo effect. Keyed as they are to a high pitch of human tragedy, there is always one last turn of the screw, one crowning horror held in reserve until the crucial moment. Take, for example, “A Horseman in the Sky.” A sentinel whose duty it is towwatch from a point of vantage overlooking a deep gorge and a vast plain beyond, to see that no scout of the Southern army shall discover a trail down the precipitous sides of the opposite slope, suddenly perceives a solitary horseman making his way along the verge of the precipice within easy range of fire. The sentinel watches and hesitates; takes aim and delays his fire. The scene shifts with the disconcerting suddenness of a modern moving picture and we see the sentinel back in his Southern home at the outbreak of the war; and we overhear the controlled bitterness of his parting with his Southern father after declaring his intention to fight for theUnion. A modern story teller would consider this shifting of scene bad art; nevertheless, Mr. Bierce, in theatrical parlance, “gets it over.” Back again he shifts us with a rush to the lonely horseman, shows him for a moment motionless upon the brink and the next instant launched into space, a wonderful, miraculous, awe-inspiring figure, proudly erect upon a stricken and dying horse, whose legs spasmodically continue their mad gallop throughout the downward flight to the inevitable annihilation below. This in itself, told with Ambrose Bierce’s compelling art, is sufficiently harrowing, but he has something more in reserve. Listen to this: “Did you fire?” the sergeant whispered.

“Yes.”

“At what?”

“A horse. It was standing on yonder rock — pretty far out. You see it is no longer there. It went over the cliff.”

The man’s face was white, but he showed no other signs of emotion. Having answered, he turned away his eyes and said no more. The sergeant did not understand.

“See here, Druce,” he said, after a moment’s silence, “it’s no use making a mystery. I order you to report. Was there anybody on the horse?”

“Yes.”

“Well?”

“My father.”

And again, there is that extraordinary *tour de force* entitled “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge.” It is the story of a spy caught and about to be hanged by the simple expedient of allowing the board on which he stands to tilt up and drop him between the cross beams of the bridge. The story is of considerable length. It details with singular and compelling vividness what follows from the instant that the spy feels himself dropped, feels the rope tighten around his neck and its fibres strain and snap under his weight. His plunge into the stream below, his dash for life under cover of the water, his flight, torn and bleeding through thorns and brambles, his miraculous dodging of outposts and his passing unscathed through volleys of rapid fire, all read like a hideous nightmare — and so in fact they are, because the entire story of his rush for safety lasting long hours and days in reality is accomplished in a mere fraction of time, the instant of final dissolution — because, as it happened, the rope did not break and at the moment that he thought he had attained safety his body ceased to struggle and dangled limply beneath the Owl Creek Bridge. Variations upon this theme of the rapidity of human thought in the moment of death are numerous. There is, for instance, a memorable story by Morgan Robertson called, if memory is not at fault, “From the Main Top,” in which a lifetime is crowded into the fraction of time required for the action of gravity. But no one has ever used it more effectually than Mr. Bierce.

But it is in his supernatural stories that Mr. Bierce shows even more forcefully his wizardry of word and phrase, his almost magnetic power to make the absurd, the grotesque, the impossible, carry an overwhelming conviction. He will tell you, for instance, a story of a man watching at night alone by the dead body of an old woman; a cat makes its way into the room and springs upon the corpse; and to the man’s overwrought imagination it seems as though that dead woman seized the cat by the neck and flung it violently from her. “Of course you imagined it,” says the friend to whom he afterward tells the tale. “I thought so, too,” rejoins the man, “but the next morning her stiffened fingers still held a handful of black fur.”

For sheer mad humour there is nothing more original than the tale called “A Jug of Syrup.” A certain old and respected village grocer who through a lengthy life has never missed a day at his desk dies and his shop is closed. One night the village banker and leading citizen on his way home drops in from force of habit at the grocery, finding the door wide open and buys a jug of syrup, absentmindedly forgetting that the grocer who served him has been dead three weeks. The jug is a heavy weight to carry; yet when he reaches home he has nothing in his hand. The tale spreads like wildfire through the village and the next night a vast throng is assembled in front of the brightly lit up grocery, breathlessly watching the shadowy form of the deceased methodically casting up accounts. One by one, they pluck up courage and make their way into the grocery — all but the banker. Riveted to the spot by the grotesque horror of the sight he stands and watches, while pandemonium breaks loose. To him in the road the shop is still brilliantly lighted but to those who have gone within it presents the darkness of eternal night and in their unreasoning fear they kick and scratch and bite and trample upon one another with the primordial savageness of the mob. And all the while the shadowy figure of the dead grocer continues undisturbed to balance his accounts.

It is a temptation to linger beyond all reason over one after another of these extraordinary and haunting imaginings, such for instance, as “Moxon’s Master,” in which an inventor having made a mechanical chess-player makes the mistake of beating it at the game and is promptly strangled to death by the revengeful being of his own creation. But it is impossible to do justice to all these stories separately and it remains only to single out one typical example in which perhaps he reached the very pinnacle of his strange, fantastic genius, “The Death of Halpin Frayser.” The theme of this story is this: it is sufficiently horrible to be confronted with a disembodied spirit, but there is one degree of horror beyond this, namely, to have to face the reanimated body of some one long dead from whom the soul has departed — because, so Mr. Bierce tells us, with the departure of the soul all natural affection, all kindliness has departed also, leaving only the base instincts of brutality and revenge. Now in the case of Halpin Frayser, it happens that the body which he is fated to encounter under these hideously unnatural conditions is that of his own mother; and in a setting as curiously and poetically unreal as any part of “Kubla Kahn” he is forced to realise that this mother whom he had in life worshipped as she worshipped him is now, in spite of her undiminished beauty, a foul and bestial thing intent only upon taking his life. In all imaginative literature it would be difficult to find a parallel for this story in sheer, unadulterated hideousness.

Mr. Ambrose Bierce as a story teller can never achieve a wide popularity, at least among the Anglo-Saxon race. His writings have too much the flavour of the hospital and the morgue. There is a stale odour of mouldy cerements about them. But to the connoisseur of what is rare, unique and very perfect in any branch of fiction he must appeal strongly as one entitled to hearty recognition as an enduring figure in American letters. No matter how strongly he may offend individual convictions and prejudices with the flippant irreverence of his satiric writings it is easy to forgive him all this and much more besides for the sake of any single one of a score or more of his best stories.

ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO BOOST BIERCE INTO IMMORTALITY

From: *Current Opinion*, September 1918, pages 184-185

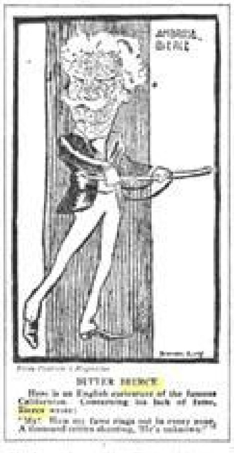
ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO BOOST BIERCE INTO IMMORTALITY

FOR the third time in three decades, an American publisher has rediscovered the genius of Ambrose Bierce, and a new effort is being made, with the new edition of “In the Midst of Life” (Boni & Liveright), to establish the great San Francisco satirist as one of the supreme storytellers of America. In 1890 Bierce’s volume of tales of soldiers and civilians was refused by every publishing house to which it was offered. It was finally brought out in 1892 by an obscure printer, under the patronage of E. L. G. Steele, a merchant. In, 1898 it was issued again, under the imprint of a prominent New York publishing house. In 1909, Bierce’s complete works were published by the Neale Company in a limited and expensive edition. And now,- practically ten years later, the new house of Boni & Liveright is making a valiant attempt to secure for Bierce his own particular niche among the immortals of American literature.

The persistent obscurity of Ambrose Bierce’s genius is the more puzzling because of the praise that has been lavished upon his work by the most discriminating critics of England and America. His works have been translated into every European language, including Russian and Norwegian. Henry Irving, Austin Dobson, Clement Scott, Arthur Machen and Arnold Bennett all eulogized his genius. Joel Chandler Harris, Gertrude Atherton, Edwin Markham, the late Percival Pollard, Owen Wister and a score of other critics and writers swore to his supremacy in the field of satire and the short story. But for years his work was out of print in this country or unavailable at popular prices. This anomaly is to be corrected at last by Messrs. Boni & Liveright.

When, in 1909, a limited edition of 250 copies of the complete works of Bierce was published, Arnold Bennett, writing as “Jacob Tonson” in the London *New Age,* declared that Bierce’s was the most striking example of the “underground reputation” that he knew of. Admitting the superb power of Bierce’s imagination, Bennett nevertheless declared that all of these stories were composed according to the same recipe. “His aim, in his short stories, is to fell you with a single blow. And one may admit that he succeeds. In the line of the startling — half Poe, half Merimee — he cannot have many superiors.” Bennett continues:

“A story like ‘An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge’ — well, Edgar Allan Poe might have deigned to sign it. And that is something. It Mr. Bierce had had the wit to write only that tale and ‘A Horseman in the Sky’ he might have secured for himself the sort of everlasting reputation that, say, Blanco White enjoys. But, unfortunately, he has gone and imitated himself, and, vulgarly, given the show away. He possesses a remarkable style — what Kipling’s would have been had Kipling been born with any understanding of the significance of the word ‘art’ — and a quite strangely remarkable perception of beauty. There is a feeling for landscape in ‘A Horseman in the Sky’ which recalls the exquisite opening of that indifferent novel, *‘Les Freres Zemganno’* by Edmond de Goncourt, and which no English novelist except Thomas Hardy, and possibly Charles Marriott, could match. It is worthy of W. H. Hudson (another recipient of belated appreciation). Were Ambrose Bierce temperamentally less violent — less journalistic — and had he acquired the wisdom of a wider culture, he might have become the great creative artist that a handful of admirers believe him to be. As it is, he is simply astonishing. It occurs to me that Stephen Crane must have read him.”



The imagination that goes into Bierce’s most successful tales, asserts a critic in the New York *Evening Post,* is the imagination of genius, no less. Had this genius been adequately recognized during the period of its virility, this critic discerningly notes,

“The story of the soldier who, about to fire his cocked rifle at the retreating Confederates from an abandoned house, is caught in its ruins as it is demolished by a shell; who returns to consciousness to find the apparently loaded rifle pointing straight at his forehead, and so fixed in the debris that his slightest movement will fire it; and who dies of fright as he finally makes a convulsive effort to escape, the rifle, which had been previously discharged, falling harmlessly by his side — this is admirably effective. Pierre Mille has done it the honor of appropriating its plot for one of his French volumes. A finer fancy goes into the ‘Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,’ where a Confederate spy, executed by having a fastened rope tied about his neck and being pushed from a bridge, has a vision of an escape and a return home that seem to last for days, in the instant before his neck is broken.

“In the tales of the supernatural the narrowness of range, which annoys us slightly if we read a dozen of the war stories, is even more evident. The same motives, or more correctly, similar motives, recur in one tale after another: there are too many abandoned houses and too many sheeted corpses. But some striking effects are nevertheless achieved. The story which bears some such title as ‘The Middle Toe of the Right Foot’ — unfortunately not included here — shows remarkable ingenuity in compounding all the elements of horror possible in Southwestern lawlessness and a ghostly setting. The story of the weary pioneer who sat at night in his solitary cabin with his dead wife, and, worn by days of nursing, fell asleep till he was awakened by a panther which had entered to carry the body off, might have been written by Poe. But the breadth of Poe’s imagination, and its finer delicacy, is in general wanting.”

In his war stories, writes “A. Non” (Cowley Brown) in the Chicago *Musical Leader,* Bierce blazed a path where few may follow. “The fact that Stephen Crane, attempting that path, reached a sort of passing notoriety, has bearing only on the history of our amateurish, ludicrous crowd of American criticasters, not of literature.” Bierce’s fame, this critic writes, will rest Gibraltar-like upon the nineteen stories included in “In the Midst of Life.” He explains why:

“The grimmest of subjects combined with psychologic analysis of the clearest, the method of realism, a style crystal-clear, went with imaginative vision of the most searching and the most radiant. Death, in warfare and in the horrid guise of the supernatural, was painted over and over. Man’s terror in the face of each death gave the artist the cue for his wonderful physical and psychologic microscopies. You could not pin this work down as realism, or as romance; it was the greatest human drama — the conflict between life and death — fused through genius. Not Zola in the endless pages of his ‘Debacle,’ not the great Tolstoi in his great ‘War and Peace,’ had ever painted war, horrid war, more faithfully than any of the war stories in this book; not Maupassant had invented out of war’s terrible truths more dramatically imagined plots. The very color and note of war itself are in those pages. There painted an artist who had seen the thing itself, and, being a genius, had made of it art still greater.

“Death of the young, the beautiful, the brave, was the closing note of every one of the ten stories of war in this book. The brilliant, spectacular death that came to such senseless bravery as Tennyson hymned for the music-hall intelligence in his ‘Charge of the Light Brigade’; the vision-starting, slow, soul-drugging death by hanging; the multiplied, comprehensible death that makes rivers near battle-fields run red; the death that conies from sheer terror — death actual and imagined — every sort of death was in these pages, so painted as to make Pierre Loti’s ‘Book of Pity and of Death’ seem but feeble fumbling.”

In the field of satire, Bierce can be compared only with the most daring of the ages. Edwin Markham once described him as “a blending of Hafiz the Persian, Swift, Poe, Thoreau, with sometimes a gleam of the Galilean.” His literary career in London, where, under the pseudonym of “Dod Grile,” his astonishing power of invective was revealed, stirred London as no writer had done since Swift. But this satire was too savage, too relentless, for the politer tastes. It would be impossible to-day for anyone to express the misanthropic thought Bierce gave vent to in his “column” in the San Francisco *Examiner*. As the *Evening Post* reviewer notes:

“Bierce’s satirical work will not catch the taste of the moment as his Civil War tales may; he was too fierce a hater of our democratic society, and declared too insistently that republican government does not govern. A characteristic contribution to thought on international questions is his cynical comment that ‘International arbitration may be defined as the substitution of many burning questions for a smouldering one.’ He remarked even before the first Balkan war that ‘All languages are spoken in hell, but chiefly those of Southeastern Europe.’ The volume entitled ‘The Shadow on the Dial’ — the well-phrased title is typical — was a labored but not very coherent Or thoughtful contention that the shadow on the dial of civilization is receding. ‘The men and women of “principle,” he declared, ‘are a pretty dangerous class, generally speaking — and they are generally speaking.’”

It was Ambrose Bierce’s misfortune, Wilson Follett writes in the *Dial*, to be a satirist alone. His wit was perhaps the most brilliant of its kind since Voltaire, but it coruscates in *vacuo.* Unlike the first Samuel Butler, he found no sharp social contrast to draw; all he could see in America was a perfect homogeneity of smugness, and, like the second Samuel Butler, he was forced to create fictitious worlds to be the media of his criticism of the real one. “If in one sense he is unmodern, it is because, with Lucian and Juvenal, Dryden and Pope, Swift and Voltaire, he chose to explore the possibilities of hate as a form of creative energy.”

His savagery, as exemplified in such overwhelming satire as “My Favorite Murder,” is every bit as devastating as that of the Frenchman Octave Mirbeau. And Bierce had the same power as Leon Bloy to kill a reputation or to destroy a “masterpiece” in a few vitriolic words. This type of literary power is never conducive to popularity. And yet Bierce was not only one of the best - known litterateurs of California in his own time but the object almost of what one critic rather unjustly terms “provincial adulation.” It cannot be said of Bierce that he was without honor in his own country. At a certain period California children were almost “brought up” on Bierce and Biercisms. He was the critic and dynamic inspiration of scores of California writers, many of a wider popularity than he ever himself attained. He was the literary “pope” for a period out there; his faults may have been pontifical. As a journalist he was too soon forgotten; but with the new wave of permanent recognition now coming to him and the example France is giving us in the naming of streets, there may yet be an Ambrose Bierce Avenue in San Francisco!

The mystery of Ambrose Bierce’s final disappearance in 1912-13, at the age of 70, has never been adequately cleared up. He was reported in Texas, on his way to Mexico. It is believed that, despite a severe illness, he did go into Mexico, where he may have been killed in the revolutionary fighting of the Villistas. He never returned.

THE UNDERGROUND REPUTATION OF AMBROSE BIERCE

From: *Current Literature*, September 1909, pages 279-281

THE UNDERGROUND REPUTATION OF AMBROSE BIERCE

AMBROSE BIERCE, whose collected works have recently been recently issued in a luxurious edition, occupies a unique position in the literature of the world, being apparently both a cult and an author. California, mother of many eminent authors, regards him as one who enjoys "the full wide world's testimony of his worth." His fellow writers nurtured in the same soil speak of him in terms of hyperbolic laudation. Says Edwin Markham: "Bierce is our-literary Atlas. His is a composite mind — a blending of Hafiz, the Persian; Swift, Poe, Thoreau, with sometimes a gleam of the Galilean." Gertrude Atherton affirms that Bierce has "the best brutal imagination of any man in the English-speaking race." J. O'Hara Cosgrove, formerly editor of *The Wave*, now editor of *Everybody's*, speaks in awestruck tones of Mr. Bierce's stylistic attainments. "Here," he says, "is a literary quality that is a consecration. A perfect arrangement of words expressing an idea, an attitude, a form as imperishable as stone." The Hearst papers idolize Bierce; he is the oracle of Hearst's monthly, *The Cosmopolitan.* Promising young Californians like George Sterling dedicate their books to him as one lays precious offerings at the feet of some idol. His publishers' literary notes are apotheoses; they are honestly convinced that in the history of American literature no more important announcement has been made than that the collected works of Ambrose Bierce, edited and arranged by himself, and representing the best of his life's work, have been published by them in ten gorgeous volumes.

Yet, in spite of all these distinguished spokesmen, the literary reputation of Ambrose Bierce is confined to a narrow circle. America, as well as England, has turned a deaf ear to his verbal cascades. The complete edition of Mr. Bierce's works, significantly enough, is limited to 250 expensive sets.

Mr. Bierce has been writing for a good many years; he is no longer a young man; he has addressed through his journalism a vast number of people. And yet, Jacob Tonson remarks in *The Mew Age* (London), the question that starts to the lips of ninety nine readers out of a hundred, even the best informed, will assuredly be: Who is Ambrose Bierce? "I scarcely know," Mr. Tonson admits, "but I will say that among what I may term 'underground reputations' that of Ambrose Bierce is perhaps the most striking modern example. You may wander for years through literary circles and never meet anybody who has ever heard of Ambrose Bierce, and then you may hear some erudite student whisper in awed voice: ‘Ambrose Bierce is the greatest living imaginative prose writer.’ I have heard such an opinion expressed. I think I am in a position to deny it. Altho I have read little of Ambrose Bierce, I have read what is probably his best work, to wit, his short stories. After I had read the first I was almost ready to arise and cry with that erudite student: ‘This is terrific’ But after I had read a dozen I had grown calmer. For they were all composed according to the same recipe, and they all went off at the end like the report of the same pistol. Nevertheless,” Mr. Tonson goes on to say, “he is a remarkable writer. His aim, in his short stories, is to fell you with a single blow. And one may admit that he succeeds. In the line of the startling — half Poe, half Merimee — he cannot have many superiors.” To quote further:

“A story like ‘An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge’ — Well, Edgar Allan Poe might have deigned to sign it! And that is something. If Mr. Bierce had had the wit to write only that tale and ‘A Horseman in the Sky,’ he might have secured for himself the sort of everlasting reputation that, say, Blanco White enjoys. But, unfortunately, he has gone and imitated himself, and, vulgarly, given the show away. He possesses a remarkable style — what Kipling’s would have been had Kipling been born with any understanding of the significance of the word ‘art’ — and a quite strangely remarkable perception of beauty. There is a feeling for landscape in ‘A Horseman in the Sky’ which recalls the exquisite opening of that indifferent novel ‘Les Freres Zemganno’ of Edmond de Goncourt, and which no English novelist except Thomas Hardy, and possibly Charles Marriott, could match. It is worthy of W. H. Hudson (whose new book of English travel I urge upon you). Were Ambrose Bierce temperamentally less violent — less journalistic — and had he acquired the wisdom of a wider culture, he might have become the great creative artist that a handful of admirers believe him to be. As it is he is simply astonishing. It occurs to me that Stephen Crane must have read him. If you demand why Ambrose Bierce is practically unknown in England, and why an expensive edition of him should suddenly appear as a bolt from the blue of the United States, I can offer no reply. I do not even know if he is living or dead, or where he was born, or if any of his books are published in England.”

THE ENIGMA OF AMERICAN LETTERS

Ambrose Bierce's works have been translated into every European language, including Russian and Norwegian, yet are out of print and almost unknown in his native land.

This article called forth a letter from Mr. William Purvis, from which it appears that Bierce never attained the distinction of book publication in England, altho Robert Barr and James Payne have praised him. In vain, Mrs. Atherton, years ago, tried to work up a London interest in Bierce. Ml. Cowley Brown coupled Bierce with Bret Harte, Joaquin Miller and Mark Twain as the pride of the Golden Gate, and, to the best of his power, blew the Bierce trumpet across the sea. Nevertheless, Bierce failed not only of recognition but even of a livelihood in London, where some of his earlier stories were written.

The comparative obscurity of the Californian seems all the more surprising if we consider the range of his work. He is a poet and an essayist, a short-story writer, a critic, a political writer, and, above all, a powerful satirist. Like Poe, he has dwelt with the occult and the terrible; like Poe also, he has been fascinated by science, and, again like Poe, he has depicted in a grotesque satirical tale the downfall of the American republic. He has tried his hand at everything that Poe has tried, but, unlike Poe, he always seems to fall short of finality. As some English critic has pointed out, there is a journalistic streak| even in his most ambitious productions. In “Bits of Autobiography” he tells of his experiences as a soldier in the Civil War, as a treasury official in the South, and as a journalist in London in the early seventies. “Mr. Bierce,” remarks the London *Athenaeum*, in connection with his residence in London, “seems to have taken very seriously the somewhat raffish celebrities of Fleet Street to the honor of whose acquaintance and orgies he was admitted; and would have us think that not Jamshyd himself gloried and drank deep as he and they. As a fact, we do not believe that they did his morals any material harm, but we suspect that they influenced his literary standards for life, and that, conscious of it or no, his aim ever since has been to write what any one of these judges would have declared to be ‘damned good stuff.’ The commodity which can be justly so described contains many elements admired in literature; but it is doubtful whether it ever ceases to be journalism.”

The admirers of Mr. Bierce are no doubt prepared to crucify the reviewer of the English periodical; they seem to clothe the figure of their idol with glory even when it is hardly deserved. Thus Mr. S. O. Howes, in his introduction to Bierce’s essays, recently published, hails Mr. Bierce as a prophet. “The note of prophecy,” he boldly exclaims, “sounds sharp and clear in many a vibrant line, in many a sonorous sentence of the essays herein collected for the first time.” President Hadley, we are told, attracted wide-spread attention to himself by his recommendation of social ostracism for „ malefactors of great wealth; Edwin Markham made a stir by advancing the application of the Golden Rule to temporal affairs as a cure for evils arising from industrial discontent; and Mr. Sheldon, it will be remembered, created a nine days’ wonder by undertaking to conduct for a week a newspaper as Christ would have conducted it; — but all these things, it seems, have been foreshadowed by Mr. Bierce. “I am sure,” concludes Mr. S. O. Howes, “that Mr. Bierce does not begrudge any of these gentlemen the acclaim they have received by enunciating his ideas, and I mention this instance here merely to forestall the folly of any other claim to priority.” The introducer’s attitude and his hero worship strike one as distinctly provincial.

Mr. Bierce is undoubtedly to be regarded as one of the vital personalities in the world of American letters; he seems to have been critic and inspirer of many Californian writers of wider popularity than he has ever attained. His personal fascination has evidently hypnotized those who have been in immediate contact with him. He seems to be the living center of the Bohemian Club in San Francisco. His works, however, while striking, are not extraordinary; and his genius has been warped by provincial adulation. If he were as great as his admirers maintain, it is almost unthinkable that his fame and fortune should never have penetrated beyond the esoteric coterie of those who have made him a cult.

AMBROSE BIERCE by Ella Sterling Cummins

From: *The Story of the Files: A Review of California Writers and Literature*, World's Fair Commission of California, 1893

AMBROSE BIERCE. 1866-1893.

By Ella Sterling Cummins

In the files of certain Californian journals and magazines there runs a peculiar strain and quality of English which belongs to one man alone. It runs through the warp and woof like a glittering thread. First it appeared in the "Town Crier" of the *News Letter*, next in the ‘‘ Grizzly Papers’’ of the *Overland Monthly*, then in the early pages of the *Argonaut*, in a department called "Prattle," and others called "Little Johnny" and ‘‘ Zambri, the Parsee.’’ In the *Wasp* this same pen leaves its glittering trail. And now in the *Examiner* there is a place set apart where this mind may sparkle and gleam at its own free will. While every one reads these epigrammatic sentences and witty paragraphs, and enjoys the keen, rapier-like cuts of satire and the masterly English, yet there are some who tremble and are afraid. Corrupt politicians not yet uncovered to the sight ol their fellow men, hypocritical philanthropists who are working for notoriety, self-worshiping egotists, pretenders of every description, and some times, poor little creatures, the ephemera of the hour, are caught on the point of this pen and thrust through. As there is more or less vanity abounding, and no one knows when his turn is coming next, it is no wonder these utterances are read with vague terror and fascination.

A mighty censor of Californian journalism has been Ambrose Bierce. His name is a power. He can make or unmake men and women by a word. In his writing he represents that standard which is required of the community in morals, manners, English and good taste. He extols the modest and brings down a pile-driver upon the head of the blatant. He proclaims what he considers to be genuine merit, and pours abhorrence upon what he considers to be pretension. Perhaps, sometimes, being only a mortal, he may use his power to "do up" a personal enemy. And perhaps, sometimes, being only human, he may flay the wrong person. But as a whole he represents in Californian journalism the nearest approach to a standard of opinion which is unbought and unsubsidized.

From this point of view, therefore, Mr. Bierce occupies a position in which he stands alone and unapproached. He was born in Ohio, and came to California in 1866. Of him Charles Edwin Markham says: Bierce is our literary Atlas.

Mrs. Adele Chretien of the dramatic department of the *Examiner* says: I look upon Bierce as a literary giant. I don't think he really means to walk rough-shod over people any more than a lion means to be rough with a mouse. It is only that the lion wonders how anything so small can be alive, and he is amused at its antics.

To the volume of short stories entitled "Soldiers and Civilians," the expression ‘‘sculptured description" has been applied. In his review of the work George Hamlin Fitch says: This book is full of power, brimful of creative imagination, but it is absolutely lacking in pathos and tenderness. * Endowed with splendid, though morbid imagination, Mr. Bierce forces you to take an interest in subjects which would be simply repulsive without the glamor of his style and the charm of his narrative.

Of the volume entitled "Black Beetles in Amber," Arthur McEwen says in review: Ambrose Bierce has found San Francisco a microcosm, and in flaying the fools and pretenders and villains of this one town, he has flayed the fools and villains and pretenders of the world.

In review of this same volume J. O'Hara Cosgrave says: The volume is without a replica in literature. Never has any one written such scathing satire. He exhausts the verbal possibilities of vituperation, and does so in verse that has the crystalline polish of Pope's. Think of being gibbeted for posterity. That is what he has done for a handful of venial millionaires and corrupt officials. The form and style of these verses is so polished, so graceful, that they must live, and the day will come when they will form a commentary to the history of the State." As a criticism he adds, That there is genius in the poems admits of no contradiction; but why immortalize pigmies? One might as well shoot at a mouse with a Winchester.

The beautiful tale of "The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter" is a collaboration by G. A. Dantziger and Ambrose Bierce, Dr. Dantziger translating the germ of the story from the German of Richard Voss and elaborating upon it, and Mr. Bierce revising the context. Of this book George Hamlin Fitch says in review: Great literary art is shown in the naive story of how the young neophyte unconsciously falls in love with the social pariah, the daughter of the hangman, and the tragic climax of this love is told in a way that will move even the careless reader.

That the same pen which is thrust through "the fools and villains and pretenders" of San Francisco, and which maintains a sustained note of condemnation from the first page to the last in "Black Beetles in Amber," has moved through the pages of "The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter," seems at first sight unbelievable. And yet what is more natural after all than that the mind which extols the modest and flays the arrogant should be all the more capable of appreciating the charm of youth and innocence and purity. For of such a kingdom is Benedicta, the child of the brain of these two writers and the German across the seas — and a more beautiful character has never come into being within the covers of a book.

In regard to the subject of this sketch, Mrs. Atherton says in her sketch in the *Cosmopolitan:*

Ambrose Bierce sits alone on the top of a mountain and does work which twenty years ago would have given him instant fame. He has the best brutal imagination of any man in the English-speaking race; his sonnets are exquisitely dainty and tender; his fables are the wittiest that have been written in America. Poe never wrote anything more weirdly awful than “Chicamauga,’’ “My Favorite Murder” and “The Watcher by the Dead.” The reserve and cynical brutality of these stories produce an impression never attained by the most riotous imagination.

From E. H. Clough is quoted the following: Brevity is the essential of modern literature. The American takes the lead in this nineteenth century characteristic, and the Californian who follows writing as a trade has always been pre-eminent in this literary method. And of all Californian writers Ambrose Bierce is beyond all cavil the best exponent of this manner. Mr. Bierce’s satire is purely intellectual. It depends upon no extraneous impulse. His sentences are permeated with the essence of his individuality, and every word he uses conveys a meaning that no other word could express so aptly. His virile power is apparent in his slightest effort, and it is the regret of his friends and admirers that he wastes so much time, energy and splendid ability upon the petty concerns of very small people. As a short story writer Mr. Bierce is unequaled. He is the peer of Robert Louis Stevenson in weird, shadowy effect, and the superior of that writer in expression. He is a master of English in everything and his vocabulary is as copious as that of any living writer. Moreover, he is an even writer. Judged by the standard of his best work, nothing that he publishes is poor. Some day Ambrose Bierce will be appreciated at the true worth of his genius — but not now — the light is too close — we cannot discern the form and substance distinctly.

As contrast to the other paragraphs a few are here quoted from W. C. Morrow: About twenty years ago a young American went to London, having served as an officer in the war of the Rebellion, and was engaged as a writer on *Fun.* Very soon the editors, amazed at the young man’s ability, conceived the idea that he “could write anything.” Accordingly they piled before him a great assortment of old wood cuts and asked him to “write things” to fit them. As a result he wrote a strange assortment of “things” that amazed and mystified Great Britain — wrote them to fit the old wood-cuts. The mysterious power of this extraordinary young man stirred higher London as no writer had done since the days of Swift. Behind the outlandish tales and fables of “Dod Grile,” written to fit old wood-cuts, every politician saw a teller of secrets, and every Pharisee of whatever kind felt a cruel finger upon a hidden ulcer. So great was the interest which “Dod Grile” aroused, that selections from his contributions to *Fun* were made and were published in a little boot entitled “Cobwebs From an Empty Skull,” embracing fables by “Zambri the Parsee,” queer dialogues conducted by the Philosopher, the Soldier and the Fool, and sundry stories. This remarkable book, which had a great sale in those days, is now out of print. There are probably less than half a dozen copies in California now, and one of them is in a great library in San Francisco. In all literature there is nothing like that extraordinary book; there is nothing whatever to compare with its humor, its wit, its satire, its elusive and shadowy philosophy — it would be pleasant to find the critic who can tell what the book is. We have “Dod Grile” here with us, and are so lacking in pride as to writhe when he makes mouths at us. His right name is Ambrose Bierce. — *W. C. Morrow.*

A still greater contrast, however, is here presented in several quotations from Mr. Bierce himself. Some one said of him the other day: “Oh, you can’t find his double anywhere.” But that he is of a dual nature himself there is no doubt. He can be as gentle as he is vindictive; he can be as sweet as he is bitter. To express this idea Charles Edwin Markham says: His is a composite mind — a blending of Hafiz the Persian, Swift, Poe, Thoreau, with sometimes a gleam of the Galilean.

An instance of this contrasting quality of mind is here quoted — his epitaph upon a friend.

TO RALPH SMITH.

Light lie the earth upon his dear dead heart, And dreams disturb him never;
Be deeper peace than Paradise his part, Forever and forever.

Without eulogy or analysis or further explanation, is here presented a a poem which is great enough to speak for itself and for its author as well: INVOCATION.

Goddess of Liberty! Lo, thou   Whose tearless eyes behold the chain,   And look unmoved upon the slain,
Eternal peace upon thy brow, — Before whose shrine the races press,   Thy perfect favor to implore   (The proudest tyrant asks no more,
The ironed anarchist no less), — Whose altar-coals that touch the lips

Of prophets kindle, too, the brand
By Discord flung with wanton hand
Among the houses and the ships, — Upon whose tranquil front the star Burns bleak and passionless and white, Its cold inclemency of light More dreadful than the shadows are, — Thy name we do not here invoke
Our civic rites to sanctify:
Enthroned in thy remoter sky,
Thou heedest not our broken yoke.

Thou carest not for such as we:
Our millions die to serve thee still
And secret purpose of thy will.
They perish — what is that to thee?

The light that fills the patriot’s tomb
Is not of thee. The shining crown
Compassionately offered down
To those who falter in the gloom And fall, and call upon thy name,
And die desiring—’tis the sign
Of a diviner love than thine,
Rewarding with a richer fame.

To Him alone let freemen cry Who hears alike the victor’s shout, The song of faith, the moan of doubt, And bends Him from His nearer sky.

God of my country and my race!
So greater than the gods of old —
So fairer than the prophets told
Who dimly saw and feared Thy face, — Who didst but half reveal thy will
And gracious ends to their desire,
Behind the dawn’s advancing fire
Thy tender day-beam veiling still, — To whom the unceasing suns belong, And deed is one with consequence, — To whose divine inclusive sense The moan is blended with the song, — Whose laws, imperfect and unjust, Thy just and perfect purpose serve: The needle, howsoe’er it swerve, Still warranting the sailor’s trust, — God, lift Thy hand and make us free: Perfect the work Thou hast designed.
O strike away the chains that bind Our souls to our idolatry!

The liberty Thy love hath given We thank Thee for. We thank Thee for Our great dead father's holy war Wherein our manacles were riven.

We thank Thee for the stronger stroke Ourselves delivered and incurred When — Thine incitement half unheard — The chains we riveted we broke.

We thank Thee that beyond the sea The people, growing ever wise, Turn to the west their serious eyes And dumbly strive to be as we.

As when the sun's returning flame Upon the Egyptian statue shone, And struck from the enchanted stone The music of a mighty fame, Let Man salute the rising day Of liberty, but not adore.
'Tis Opportunity — no more — A useful, not a sacred, ray.

It bringeth good, it bringeth ill, As he possessing shall elect.
He maketh it of none effect
Who worketh not within Thy will.

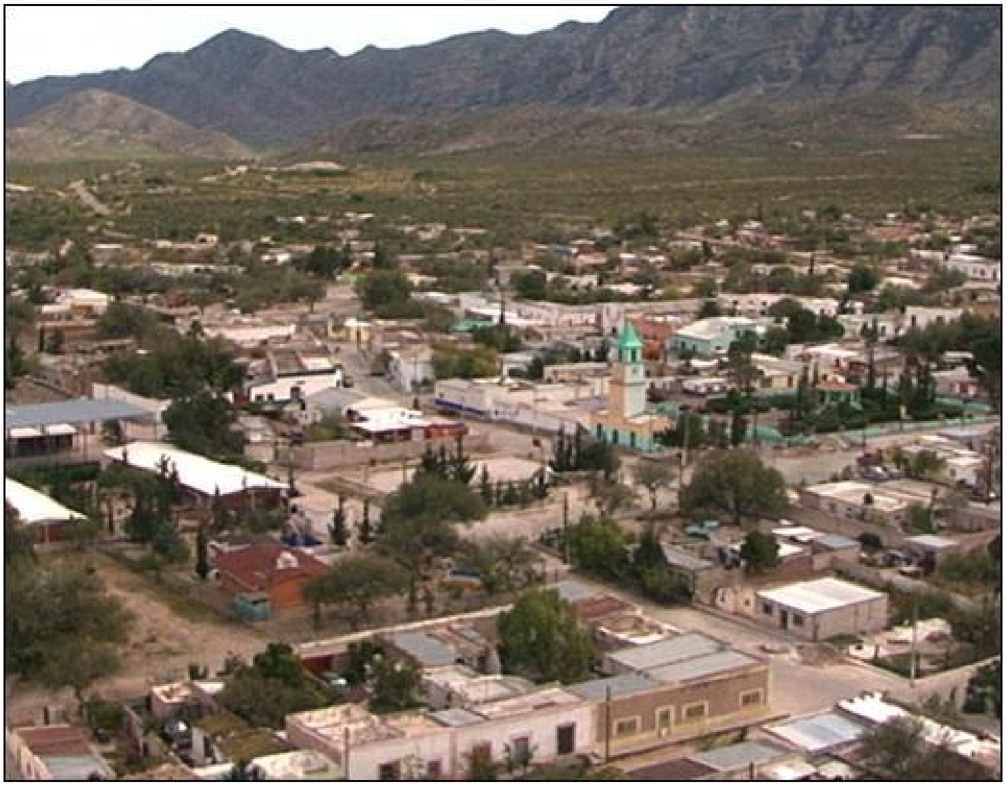
O give us more or less, as we Shall serve the right or serve the wrong.
Confirm our freedom but so long As we are worthy to be free.

But when (O distant be the time I) Majorities in passion draw Insurgent swords to murder Law, And all the land is red with crime, Or — nearer menace ! — when the band
Of feeble spirits cringe and plead
To the gigantic strength of Greed,
And fawn upon his iron hand: Nay, when the steps to power are worn
In hollows by the feet of thieves,
And Mammon sits among the sheaves
And chuckles while the reapers mourn — Then stay Thy miracle! replace The broken throne, repair the chain,
Restore the interrupted reign
And veil again thy patient face.

Lo! here upon the world's extreme We stand with lifted arms and dare
By thine eternal name to swear
Our country, which so fair we deem — Upon whose hills — a bannered throng —
The spirits of the dawn display

  Their flashing lances all the day
And hears the sea's pacific song — Shall be so ruled in right and grace
  That men shall say: "O drive afield
  The lawless eagle from the shield,
And call an angel to the place!"
 — *Ambrose Bierce.*

Biercian Texts



Sierra Mojada, a Mexican city in the north-eastern state of Coahuila. Oral tradition in the area claims that Bierce was executed by firing squad in the town cemetery. In October 1913, Bierce, aged 71, departed Washington, D.C., for a tour of his old Civil War battlefields. His sudden vanishing in Coahuila has since become one of the most famous disappearances in literary history.

LIST OF BIERCIAN ARTICLES AND REVIEWS

New England Magazine Article, 1893
Personal Memories of Ambrose Bierce by Bailey Millard
Ambrose Bierce by R. F. Dibble
Ambrose Bierce by Forrest Crissey
The Mystery of Ambrose Bierce by Richard Barry
The Mystery of Ambrose Bierce
Bierce: The Warrior Writer by H. M. East, Jr.
The Mexican Review. I.
The Mexican Review. II.
Ambrose Bierce’s Death Charged to Villa Band

New England Magazine Article, 1893

From: *New England Magazine*, May 1893, page 7

AMBROSE BIERCE, the brilliant author of “Tales of Soldiers and Civilians,” which was published last year by the United States Book Company, and in London by Chatto & Windus under the title of “Stories of Life and Death,” is just beginning to take his proper rank in contemporary American literature, as the master of all American short story writers. “Tales of Soldiers and Civilians” was not so widely read in the Eat last year as it should have been, because it was not sufficiently extant, and because the Eastern press failed to recognize the genius in these stories. But in London, where after all, every reputation is confirmed, the cliques have dissolved in the face of merit, and “Stories of Life and Death” is the talk of the town. Bierce’s London career some twenty years ago is recalled, and the critics, who usually review without reading have been cajoled into reading this wonderful book, and the result is, that in London Bierce, almost unknown in Eastern literary circles here, is given his true status as one of the few significant artists in his line in either England or America. The London *Chronicle*, a journal whose critical judgments are in striking contrast to those of the *Saturday Review* and other organs of the cliques, for their impartiality and justice, devotes several columns of careful analysis and praise to the “Stories of Life and Death,” and the book is receiving quite a “boom.” This ought to give an impetus to the sale in this country of “Tales of Soldiers and Civilians,” which is the same book with a different title. It is strange if one of the greatest of American short story writers since Poe and Hawthorne can only obtain proper recognition in England. Ambrose Bierce is really the only man of true genius in America who is writing short stories — except Rudyard Kipling who seems to have settled down here — and yet we have to read a London paper to find a true estimate of his genius; and his name never appears in our current literature.

Personal Memories of Ambrose Bierce by Bailey Millard

From: *The Bookman*, February 1915, pages 653-658

PERSONAL MEMORIES OF AMBROSE BIERCE

Great poets fire the world with faggots big
    That make a crackling racket,
But I'm content with but a whispering twig
    To warm some single jacket.

Thus sang Ambrose Bierce in his old San Francisco days when, as the licensed lampooner of everybody that happened to displease him, he made his *Examiner* "Prattle" the most wickedly clever, the most audaciously personal and the most eagerly devoured column of causerie that probably ever was printed in this country. "Prattle," the sub-title of which was "A Transient Record of Individual Opinion," bristled with cynical sallies against the great and the small in public and private life, ridiculed nearly every pretension to morality, particularly of a churchly sort, and made ducks and drakes of all the popular idols. And this railing against people who upheld the established order of things he continued in one paper or another during the rest of his career on earth.

It seems strange to one who knew Bierce so well during his restless, red-corpuscled life to be writing of him in the past tense, and yet any other is hardly admissible, for after nine months of anxious waiting for any sort of word from him his friends and relations have given him up as lost. He was serving upon the staff of General Villa in the Mexican insurrection and has been missing since the terrible battle of Torreon, so the daily journals have recorded. He was ever a fighter — in the Civil War, where he was brevetted major for gallantry in action, as in civic life — so this "one fight more" was naturally sought by him, and he went into it with all the fierce joy of the old soldier who loves war for war's sake.

Cavalierly handsome of face, Bierce's singularly expressive, keen, grey eyes, his visage so full of vigour, freshness and refined power, his strong, erect, military figure, which revealed no sign of decrepitude, even at seventy-two — the age of his passing — marked him for a man of power — a power amply exhibited in his writings, especially in his critical essays and stories.

It was Bierce the satirist that we Californians first knew, not Bierce the poet or Bierce the story-teller, as he is more generally recognised, wherever he *is* recognised, though the limits to the recognition of him, once merely parochial, are widening with the years. He came to us from London, where he had gone from his Ohio home after the war. In his anecdotage, as he used to term his later period of table-talk, he used to tell of his adventures among the London literati, by whom, because of his caustic satires, he was known as "Bitter Bierce." He frequented a certain tap-room in Ludgate Station, where regularly gathered such rare spirits as George Augustus Sala, young Tom Hood and Captain Mayne Reid. When Joaquin Miller went to England in the early 'seventies he joined this convivial set, which was greatly addicted, as Bierce expressed it, "to shedding the blood of the grape." "We worked too hard," he confessed, "dined too well, frequented too many clubs and went to bed too late in the forenoon. In short, we diligently, conscientiously and with a perverse satisfaction burned the candle of life at both ends and in the middle." As the fact that he afterward enjoyed robust health would seem to indicate, this life did Bierce no permanent injury, but once it resulted in his financial downfall. There was a certain London publisher named John Camden Hotten, who for a long time had owed Bierce a considerable sum, and, being without tangible assets, the young satirist hounded Hotten day and night for his due. Finally the implacable creditor got the publisher at a disadvantage and Bierce was sent to negotiate with Hotten's manager, Mr. Chatto, who afterward, as a member of the publishing firm of Chatto and Windus, succeeded to his business. After two mortal hours of "Bitter Bierce" in his most acidulated mood, Chatto pulled out a cheque for the full amount, ready signed by Hotten in anticipation of defeat. The cheque bore date of the following Saturday.

"Before Saturday came," said Bierce in telling the story, "Hotten proceeded to die of a pork pie in order to beat me out of my money. Knowing nothing of this, I strolled out to his house in Highgate, hoping to get an advance, as I was in great need of cash. On being told of his demise I was inexpressibly shocked, for my cheque was worthless. There was a hope, however, that the bank had not heard. So I called a cab and drove furiously bank-ward. Unfortunately my gondolier steered me past Ludgate Station, in the bar whereof our Fleet Street gang of writers had a private table. I disembarked for a mug of bitter. Unfortunately, too, Sala, Hood and others of the gang were in their accustomed places. I sat at board and related the sad event. The deceased had not in life enjoyed our favour, and I blush to say we all fell to making questionable epitaphs to him. I recall one by Sala which ran thus:

Hotten,
Rotten,
Forgotten.

At the close of the rites, several hours later, I resumed my movements against the bank. Too late — the old story of the hare and the tortoise was told again! The heavy news had overtaken and passed me as I loitered by the wayside.

“I attended the funeral, at which I felt more than I cared to express.”

In London Bierce wrote over the signature of “Dod Grile,” and that name appeared on the cover of two books of his published in the ‘seventies. One of these books was called *Cobwebs from an Empty Skull.* Years later Gladstone fished up one of the “Dod Grile” books from the table of a second-hand dealer, read it through, was delighted with it and helped to revive in England the identity of Ambrose Bierce. Gladstone, the maker of literary reputations, also assisted the author not a little by sounding the praises of his stories of the occult — tales that were, however, a trifle too strong for the tea-drinking bourgeoisie of modern Britain.

While Bierce was in London the Empress Eugenie, then in exile in England, employed him to write for her several numbers of the *Lantern,* a journal she began to publish there to forestall her bitter enemy, Henri de Rochefort, who, like herself, had been banished from France after the Prussian conquest of 1870. Rochefort, who had persistently attacked the Emperor and Empress in *La Lanterne,* of Paris, going to the length of denying the legitimacy of the Prince Imperial, was outwitted by Eugenie when he announced his intention of reviving his paper in London. Before he could do so she had copyrighted the title, the *Lantern,* and herself proceeded to publish a paper bearing that name, though at the time she was not known to be connected with it in any way. Not only did she thus win a great triumph over her enemy, but she employed Bierce to flagellate him. This he did in number after number. And as he afterward said, he never was employed in so pleasant and congenial a pursuit. But the *Lantern* did not last long and there were times when Bierce, for lack of employment, was destitute of funds. His “Little Johnny” essays on zoology which a London journal “featured” as rare bits of humour, were the means by which he refilled his purse. These essays contained amazing descriptions of actual as well as inconceivable animals and afforded an attractive vehicle for his satire.

He went from London to San Francisco for no particular reason save that he thought he would like the Far West. And he did like it — liked it so well thathe lived there twenty-five years, save for a brief period during which he was mining near Deadwood, South Dakota, where he had some hair-raising adventures with road-agents and other bad men. One night in 1880 he was driving in a light wagon through the wildest part of the Black Hills. In the wagon was thirty thousand dollars in gold belonging to the mining company of which he was manager. Beside him on the wagon scat was Boone May, a famous gunman of those days, who was under indictment for murder, but had been paroled from jail on Bierce's promise that he would see him into custody again. May sat doubled up in rubber poncho, his rifle between his knees. Bierce thought him a trifle off guard, but said nothing. Suddenly they heard a shout, "Throw up your hands!" Bierce reached for his revolver, but it was quite needless. Quick as a cat, almost before the words were out of the highwayman's mouth, May had thrown himself backward over the seat, face upward, and with the muzzle of his rifle within a yard of the robber's throat, had fired a shot that put an end to his usefulness as a highwayman.

Bierce had many adventures with bad men in the West, and his assaults in print upon citizens who were inclined to underscore their resentment by a flourish of firearms, occasionally got him into trouble, but the fact that he was famous as a dead shot generally acted as a damper upon the ambition of those* who harboured the fancy of effacing him. In San Francisco he made the *News Letter* and the *Wasp* conspicuous examples of personal journalism, some of his philippics against prominent men and women being of the most biting nature. It is safe to say that his vocabulary of acrimonious invective exceeded in volume that of any other modern journalist. You stood aghast at his bold characterisations and yet, being human, you read on with a grim smile. He was particularly happy in his poetic quips, though some of these were of the most contumelous nature. His idea of attack was to fell you at a single blow. One must apologise for quoting some of them, as in the case of the following quatrain aimed at a gentle popular poet of national reputation whom it pleased Bierce to hold in contempt:

His poems says that he indites
  Upon an empty stomach. Heavenly Powers,
Feed him throat-full, for what he writes
  Upon his empty stomach empties ours!

And mind you, the name was not a blank in the original stanza.

Once when a great English novelist visited San Francisco and ran afoul of Bierce who proceeded to show in “Prattle” that the man’s reputation was based upon utterly false claims, the surprised and indignant Briton, heedless of the advice of his friends, replied in print. The delighted Bierce, affecting to disdain the retort, slapped the great man in the face with this:

Dispute with such a thing as you,
  Twin show to the two-headed calf?
  Why, sir, if I repress my laugh,
‘Tis more than half the world can do.

In his serious essays Bierce always took the most unconventional and often the most cynical views of life. He revered nobody’s opinion but his own, and in this idea of his greatness he was upheld by a flattering literary coterie who acknowledged him as master. These constituted an esoteric cult whose adulation Bierce accepted as a matter of course. They laid their literary work before him, rejoiced in his praise, however stinted, and received his harshest criticism without murmur. He dominated many young literary lives, but if by his criticism he smothered whatever tenderness they sought to convey in their writings and thereby restricted and hardened them, he also helped them to clarity of expression and to more nearly perfect diction. For technically his pencraft was of the purest, as is shown on nearly every page. He prided himself upon being ruled wholly by intellect, never by emotion. But being, after all, human, he could not successfully live up to his vaunt, and occasionally we see him lapsing into tender passages in spite of himself. On the whole, however, his philosophy worked itself out according to his own hard rule. Of civilisation, for example, he was the sternest critic. He declared that it made the race no better and that the cant of it was boresome.

“We have,” he said, “hardly the rudiments of a true civilisation. Compared with the splendours of which we catch dim glimpses in the fading past, ours are as an illumination tallow candles. We know no more than the ancients; we only know other things, but nothing in which is an assurance of perpetuity and little that is truly wisdom.”

When a disciple of Bierce broke his leading-strings and dared to declare his independence the wrath of the master was terrible to see and the loyal ones would echo it and help to put down the apostate. And yet as the years passed nearly all of the cult deserted him or were deserted by him. The reason for this is plain. No dominant factor in literature ever gave himself such liberty of expression as Bierce. This expression extended even to the personal conduct of the members of his flock, and in some cases concerned itself with their most sacred family affairs. In time this came to rankle. Here and there an insurgent spirit manifested itself and there was a cleavage of the cult. But while his primacy lasted — and it lasted a long time — his ego made itself felt not only in the inner circle, but throughout a nebular outer ring which included many who were not under his personal influence. Whatever of import came up for discussion the question invariably would be asked, “What does Bierce think of it?”

When literary California rang with the bugle note of “The Man with the Hoe,” the literati turned to Bierce as to one who should say whether the poem should be permitted to live or die. Probably for no other reason in the world than that the Markhamic strain was tremendously popular Bierce turned down his thumbs. He admitted that Markham previously had written good poetry, but now he had become an anarchist and no true work might be expected of him. He hammered hard and long with his journalistic gavel to drown the chorus of approval of “The Man with the Hoe,” and his thunder strokes of condemnation convinced his disciples; but the poem went abroad into a field where his words could not follow. Once Markham was told to his face by this modern Dr. Johnson that his famous poem was merely a cheap bid for popularity and that as a poet he had killed himself by publishing it.

“The mistake you make is a common one,” observed Bierce. “You let your heart get into your head. No great artist ever did that.”

“Well,” said the urbane Markham, “I do not profess to be a great artist; but to me it seems that the heart always should rule rather than the intellect, and what confirms me in the belief are the finer passages of Keats, Shelley, Tennyson and other true poets.”

But Bierce would not be convinced, and ever after in print made sport of “The Man with the Hoe.”

Intense and inexorable were his literary prejudices, extending even to the most venerated of authors. Once when the present writer mentioned to him the fact that French scholars considered Poe and Whitman our greatest voices, he said: “Poe, yes; but Whitman never. There isn’t a line of poetry in *The Leaves of Grass.*

“Not in ‘Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking?’ “ he was asked.

“Sentimental twaddle of the worst order,” he replied with Johnsonian curtness.

One thing that tended to embitter . Bierce was his neglect at the hands of the publishers. Beginning in the early ‘eighties he wrote story after story, but nearly all were considered by magazine editors to be impossible for their pages; and when he sent a lot of manuscript tales to book publishers they would have none of them. These men admitted the purity of his diction and the magic of his haunting power, but the stories were regarded as “revolting.” Bierce revelled in the horrible. His tales of war make the reader see red for weeks. His stories of the occult freeze the spinal marrow and set the flesh a-shiver. With his fetching method of realism went a crystal-pure style in which words were chosen as a jeweller chooses diamonds for the necklace of an empress. His imagination was of the most riotous, nay, of the most brutal order. His psychological effects did not fall short of Maupassant’s. His surprise of climax always was complete.

Bierce, as has been said, loved war, and often dilated upon “the horrors of peace,” which, he held, were more terrible than the carnage of battle. Such army tales as “Chickamauga,” “A Son of the Gods,” “A Horseman in the Sky” and “An Affair of Outposts” afford a feast in which one may sup full of horrors. But let us not look altogether upon the gory and grisly side of his fiction. His tales of war celebrated such heroism as thrills the pulses and makes the reader forget that he is a mere reader; he feels himself an onlooker, if not a participant. Death, death, death! is the note sung over and over in a deep, compelling, almost pitiless cadence. Knowing war so well and the art of depicting it even better Bierce could give the colour and tone of it with the terrible effect of a Verestchagin. And yet, in spite of that cold aloofness which he contended to be the true attitude of the artist, occasionally he would give a glimpse of the compassion he really felt for war’s victims. Take this finale of that amazing exploit described in “A Son of the Gods,” where a single officer charges a whole battalion of the enemy:

> The skirmishers return, gathering up their dead.
>
> Ah, those many needless dead! That great soul whose body is lying over yonder, so conspicuous against the sere hillside — could it not have been spared the bitter consciousness of a vain devotion? Would one exception have marred too much the pitiless perfection of the divine, eternal plan?

Such tales as this, from *In the Midst of Life* and those stories of the occult in *Can Such Things Be?* were enough to establish any author’s reputation, and it seems strange that Bierce, as a writer of fiction, did not sooner find his public. A San Francisco merchant, E. L. G. Steele, who was a great admirer of his work, finally defrayed the expenses of the publication of *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians,* afterward republished in England and America as *In the Midst of Life.* The book, though it awed and compelled the Biercean cult, enjoyed nothing that might be termed vogue. Reviewers shook their heads over such stories as “The

Affair at Coulter's Notch," in which an officer of artillery feels it his duty to train his guns upon a house that shelters his own wife and children, and the *debacle* of "Chickamauga" challenged resentment for its bloody detail. Even when *Can Such Things Be?* and *The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter* made their appearance in book form the critics were slow to give their approval. But where a reviewer dared to let himself become a champion he generally was a fierce one. Never was an author more discussed in a private way than Bierce, and yet it is hardly fair to say, as has been averred, that his was simply an "underground" reputation. As the years went by the *cognoscenti* came to know him very well and to say good words of him. This counted by way of publicity, but he never had a popular audience. That he was "unknown" even up to his death, as many writers will tell you, is a statement not to be seriously accepted. In his latter years he took exception to this curious manner of reference to him, and wound up a breezy journalistic jingle about himself with the satirical line:

Five thousand critics crying "He's unknown!"

To him his trunkful of clippings established the fact that he was not only not unknown, but very well known and recognised. In truth it was easy for him to assume the character of a celebrated literary personage. Once he accepted an invitation from a wealthy New Yorker, who received him very hospitably in his Fifth Avenue home. After dinner, when Bierce was told that he was expected to go with his host and a number of others to the theatre where a box had been engaged for them, he declared hotly:

"Do you think I'll let you show me about like a monkey in a cage? No, sir! I'm going home."

And home he went in high dudgeon, leaving his friend the most amazed man in New York that night.

Perhaps he enjoyed making a scene, as this story tends to show: At a large gathering in a Washington drawing-room the host presented Bierce to a street railway magnate, who extended his hand cordially.

"No!" thundered Johnson the Second, drawing back in magnificent rage. "I wouldn't take your black hand for all the money you could steal in the next ten years! I ride in one of your cars every night and always am compelled to stand — there's never a seat for me."

The black hand was speedily withdrawn.

For over thirty years Bierce enjoyed an income of five thousand dollars a year, besides which he received a pension of thirty dollars a month from the Government—"cigar money" as he termed it. He was a good liver. About twenty years ago he told the writer that in his old age he wanted to look like "one of those red-faced, full-blooded English squires." In this he had his wish. He was liberal with those who made demands upon him for charity. Several outworn hack writers in Washington where he lived during the fifteen years preceding his fateful campaign in Mexico, knew where to go to “borrow” five dollars or so when their pockets were empty. They knew, too, that Bierce would promptly forget the indebtedness. Although he was rather inclined to prodigality, Bierce was possessed of a goodly estate. Before going to Mexico he made his will and left nearly all of his property, which consisted of stocks, money and real estate, in the hands of a trustee. It is said that the bulk of his estate will go to his daughter, who lives in Ohio.

There are those who believe that General Villa and the Constitutionalists owe much of their military success to Bierce, who was well skilled in the art of war. He was much stirred by the cause of the Constitutionalists, and on leaving Washington for Mexico to join them in the fray, he said he could not understand why thousands of liberty-loving Americans did not take up arms against the tyrannical Huerta.

Yes, this strange and seemingly hard and cold philosopher loved liberty, and his greatest poem, “An Invocation,” from which Kipling is said to have received inspiration for his “Recessional,” was addressed to that benign goddess. But he fulminated against the American idea of freedom, which he called “blind idolatry.” The most illustrative though by no means the best stanza of his “Invocation” is this:

Let man salute the rising day
  Of Liberty, but not adore.
  ‘Tis Opportunity — no more —
A useful, not a sacred ray.

That despite all his scoffings at churchly folk and despite all that they regarded as his heterodoxy, he should still have made profession of a profound Christian faith seems paradoxical, and yet he made such profession. And this paper can have no fitter or more significant finale than the following exalted tribute to Jesus of Nazareth from his pen:

This is my ultimate and determinate sense of right—”What under the circumstances would Christ have done?” — the Christ of the New Testament, not the Christ of the commentators, theologians, priests and parsons.

The orthodox will frown at this, but in any scale of logic it seems clear that no man holding such a view of Christ could have been the hopelessly agnostic and altogether Mephistophelean being which some of the critics of Ambrose Bierce have pictured him.

Ambrose Bierce by R. F. Dibble

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Ambrose Bierce

By R. F. Dibble SOMEWHERE, probably on the tawny, cactus-covered sands of Mexico, the bones of Ambrose Bierce are blanching under the torrid rays of the sun, while the ominous vulture flaps lazily along glimmering dully beneath the coppery moon as the gaunt, gray wolf, “whose howl’s his watch,” glides silently, intent on some murderous design, and the skulking coyote yelps his plaintive cry upon the slumbrous, nocturnal air. Or, if by chance some uncouth though kindly hand afforded his body the final service of pickaxe and spade, even so, but little consolation would result therefrom to his friends, for of Bierce, as of Moses, it can be said that “no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.” Prom the time of the battle of Torreon in 1914, when Bierce was on the staff of Villa, his fate has been clouded in mystery, and since he had then already exceeded the limit of days which the Psalmist set for man’s mortal pilgrimage, there can be but little question that he has passed into the uncharted regions of the everlasting silence. If his immortality might put on mortality for a brief space of time so that he could return from that undiscovered country, it is probable that he would assure his friends that nothing in his life became him more than the mysterious manner in which he left it; for mystery in a thousand diverse shapes meant more than anything else to him while he lived. So, possibly, Hawthorne, too, might say that fate was very gracious in permitting him to glide softly from the gentle embrace of dreams into that spirit world which was always so much more real to him than mere sensuous existence.

And to Ambrose Bierce, as to Hawthorne, the life of the senses meant comparatively little. His imagination was forever roving through the boundless, untrammeled stretches of an unearthly, super-sensuous country — “A wild weird clime that lieth, sublime, Out of Space, out of Time.”

His critical writings were indeed pungent and pitiless; he preferred to open wounds rather than to cauterize them; he was an iconoclast, not a constructive reformer; his searing satire, aimed at a multitude of hostile contemporaries, at the fidelity of woman, at church and State, and in general at what he believed to be the many sins of modern society, never admitted of let or hindrance. But because of their very nature, those portions of his writings which were concerned distinctively with social matters of his day are bound to have less and less appeal, and whatever his final rank may be, after the tribulations of several decades have winnowed out all that was strictly ephemeral in his works, he is quite certain to be remembered primarily as an artist who dealt with the uncanny forces that lie outside of life rather than with life itself. He will live, if he lives at all, not as one who had some moral message, some doctrinaire preachment, for his generation, but rather as one who, largely unconcerned with theories of amelioration of any kind whatever, beguiled his life’s day by constructing a world almost wholly out of his own fantastic imagination.

Since this world is to a large extent singularly his own, it is fitting that its composition, even though in some degree shapeless and indeterminate, should be subjected to as definite an analysing process as is possible. Right here is where inveterate lovers of literary influences and of the general heritage of the past as it affects our modern writers may have their fling, and dally with such matters to their hearts’ desires. With commendable accuracy they may point out that Gothic Romance, initiated in England more than a century and a half ago by Horace Walpole in his crudely supernatural and bloody “Castle of Otranto,” which innocently fathered a host of bawling English, Continental and American children during the next few decades, is the literary pigeon-hole in which the works of Ambrose Bierce may be filed for the benefit of gaping college classes forced to endure the pangs of despised required courses in the history of literature. And these critics would be perfectly right in so doing; as right, that is, as are physicists who explain the rainbow to their own satisfaction by affirming that it is merely the result of the refraction of rays of light passing through drops of water. But, though the product of explicable scientific laws, the rainbow is still essentially as much a thing of baffling, poetic splendor as it was when first it leaped across the clouds that covered the vaporous, inchoate mass we now call earth; and the writings of Bierce, indubitably the product of a definite tendency in literature, would still hold the mind in a fascinating grip even if their literary parentage were unknown.

There is, to be sure, some reason for thinking that in Poe and Hawthorne the art of Gothic Romance reached its highest possibilities and that little or nothing of novelty in method or subject matter remains. Certainly the number of present-day pseudo-scientific romanticists, almost all of whom have knelt before the throne of Poe, have given us practically nothing more than countless variations of themes first introduced by him; the great advance in scientific knowledge since Poe’s time has surely been accompanied by no similar increase in artistic ability to utilize this new material for fiction. Nor have Hawthorne’s tales of the Puritanic conscience working usually amid direful situations been surpassed, and probably not equalled; though it is quite certain that only a very bold person would claim that the morality of the world has advanced, since Hawthorne’s time, equally with scientific discovery. But it is just here that Ambrose Bierce must be reckoned with as one who accomplished something that Hawthorne and Poe each did in part, though seldom or never wholly: he took the omnipresent but rarely appalling supernaturalism of Hawthorne, combined with it the almost purely physical horrors of Poe, and thus produced what is virtually a new type of fiction — a type which others have occasionally used, but which perhaps no one previously has made specifically his own. In his best stories he created a world whose beings are absolutely dominated by unreasoning, aboriginal, cosmic fear.

This fear, which constitutes the warp and woof of Bierce's most significant tales, grips the reader almost, if not quite, as powerfully as do Poe's ghastly creations, but it springs from as unearthly sources as do the milder terrors of Hawthorne. At times it manifests itself in at least partially tangible form, but it is most effective when strictly impalpable. It is the fear that twisted the hearts of our most primitive progenitors when first they realized that there were phenomenal forces far more to be shunned and fled from than the ponderous foot of the mammoth or the scimitar-like claws of the cave-lion. It is the fear that left their bodies unscathed, but clutched their minds with paralyzing force. It leaped upon them infinitely swifter than their arboreal enemies. They may have scorned the arrow that flieth by day, but of the terror by night they were woefully afraid. Brute strength and cunning availed them nothing, for it was not a part of the sensuous world. It is the fear and trembling that came upon Eliphaz, the Temanite, in the visions of the night when deep sleep falls upon men, and made all his bones to shake; for a spirit passed before his face. It is the penalty which all mankind must pay for being elevated above the brute world into a sphere where intellectual and emotional processes usurp the place of mere thews and sinews of physical strength. It is a part of the primal curse which, according to the fable, fell upon man because he inquisitively tasted the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Neither adamantine barriers of imponderable granite or marble, nor any "unswept stone besmeared with sluttish time" can fortify man against it, for it is the fear of the unseen.

The art of Bierce may be seen at its best in the two volumes entitled "Can Such Things Be?" and "In the Midst of Life (Tales of Soldiers and Civilians", the latter book having been "denied existence by the chief publishing houses in the country" — a significant commentary on the financial wisdom our publishers show in catering to our deeply ingrained, Anglo-Saxon antipathy to literature or other work done for art's sake only, and our immaculately chaste delight in witnessing the triumphant victory of vapidly orthodox virtues over the sinister forces of iniquity. The works of Bierce, like those of Poe and Whitman, have been read far more sedulously in Europe than in America — another testimonial to the wiser charity of peoples who care less for esoteric morality than they care for eclectic art. It needs no connoisseur of literature to see, in these two books, plenteous traces of ideas garnered from many modern writers. Thus in "A Psychological Shipwreck" the theme is prescience granted in a dream; in "The

Realm of the Unreal" it is hypnotism; "One Summer Night," a story less than four pages long, captivates by reason of the horror aroused by premature burial, grave-robbing and murder; and reincarnation is the motif of several tales. Bierce apparently followed De Maupassant, though independently as to subject matter, in the employment of deliberately unconventional beginnings, extremely bizarre situations and smashing climaxes. Thus, "A Jug of Sirup" opens with the laconic statement, "This narrative begins with the death of the hero;" "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" details, with a minuteness worthy of Henry James, the introspections of a criminal on the scaffold during the short interval between the adjusting of the noose and the springing of the trap; in "Chickamauga" a child, deaf and mute, wanders through a battlefield splotched with decaying corpses; in "One of the Missing" a soldier, imprisoned by fallen timbers, finds himself staring into the muzzle of his own cocked rifle, and, unable to release himself finally dies because of the hypnotic fear inspired by the "menacing stare of the gun barrel," which actually is empty and harmless; in "The Man and the Snake" a man is literally frightened to death by the "unspeakable malignant" eyes of a snake which, as the closing sentence pithily states, was "a stuffed snake; its eyes were two shoe buttons." In "The Boarded Window" a man, alone at night with his supposedly dead wife, suddenly hears a panther trying to drag away the body, but it fails, and the terse ending sentence suggests why, for "between the teeth was a fragment of the animal's ear." Best of all, perhaps, is that superb tour de force in staggering situation, "The Eyes of the Panther," in which prenatal influence, as well as "the menace of those awful eyes," plays a ghastly part. Moreover, the drab realism of Flaubert, and perhaps of the Russian school, is to be seen in such a sentence as this, taken from "Chickamauga": "The greater part of the forehead was torn away, and from the jagged hole the brain protruded, overflowing the temple, a frothy mass of gray, crowned with clusters of crimson bubbles — the work of a shell." There are crudities in these tales, even in the best of them: Bierce is too fond of the emotion mechanically stirred by the exclamation point, he often strives for shocks at the expense of even remote plausibility; he takes a ghoulish delight in dishing up carrion banquets for his readers; he piles horror on horror, after the manner of those Elizabethan masters of diablerie, Tourneur, Webster, and Ford; but at his best he has an austere reserve and a power of creating an atmosphere of all-enveloping ill unsurpassed, probably, by any writer who has specialized in these two particular literary devices. Furthermore, his stories are commonly interspersed with bursts of humor which, grimly sardonic as it is, still furnishes the emotional relief that the exponents of Gothic art have quite generally failed to give.

It is, however, in those tales which portray the workings of wholly immaterial

powers of darkness and evil that Bierce is most original and thrilling, tales in which the usual theme is the return of menacing wraiths for venegeance denied them in the flesh. In these stories there is practically no use made of sensuous terrors that palsy the senses only; rather, the motivation springs from the infinitely more dreadful horror that arises from the presence of “supernatural malevolences,” which far excel the pigmy forces of mere material fright. Bierce is, of course, compelled to use physical metaphors in describing these “invisible existences” — for he regards them as such, and far more powerful than are matter and energy. He portrays a universe shadowed by “one primeval mystery of darkness, without form or void,” in which there is “a portentous conspiracy of night and solitude.” In “A Watcher By the Dead” and “The Suitable Surroundings,” death comes solely from fear of these “supernatural malevolences.” In “The Damned Thing,” “The Moonlit Road,” “Stanley Fleming’s Hallucination,” “The Secret of Macarger’s Gulch,” and in “The Death of Halpin Prayser,” however, the “accursed beings” work their will by temporarily using physical force. “The Death of Halpin Frayser” is perhaps the best of all Bierce’s stories in creating an impression of the incarnate verisimilitude of those “invisible existences that swarm” about the earth. The following poem, taken from this story, is possibly as powerful a piece of unalloyed morbidity as poetic pen ever produced: “Enthralled by some mysterious spell, I stood In the lit gloom of an enchanted wood.
The cypress there and myrtle twined their boughs.
Significant, in baleful brotherhood.

“The brooding willow whispered to the yew; Beneath, the deadly night shade and the rue, With immortelles self-woven into strange Funereal shapes, and horrid nettles grew.

“No song of bird nor any drone of bees.
Nor light leaf lifted by the wholesome breeze: The air was stagnant all, and Silence was A living thing that breathed among the trees.

“Conspiring spirits whispered in the gloom.
Half-heard, the stilly secrets of the tomb.
With blood the trees were all adrip the leaves Shone in the witch-light with a ruddy bloom.

“I cried aloud! — the spell, unbroken still.
Rested upon my spirit and my will.

Unsouled, unhearted, hopeless and forlorn,
I strove with monstrous presages of ill!”

The world of Ambrose Bierce, as pictured in a score or so of his best tales, is a phantasmagorical world, teeming with terrific hallucinations and illusory shades; a world where all familiar things seem to have been swallowed up in some prodigious cataclysm. It is born of an imagination that cared nothing for conventional traditions of right and wrong, but only for pure, disinterested art; an imagination that was totally untouched by any fervor for pragmatic or ethical codes. This world is never subject to principles of cause and effect; it transcends all the properties of physics and chemistry; it cannot be mapped by the aid of compass and surveying instruments. It can be compacted within a single brain, yet it stretches immeasurably beyond the confines of the known universe. Only one form of government it knows — the autocracy of forever enthroned Fear, who rules with diabolical pitilessness. No ray of light, save the “darkness visible” that comes from fitful gleams of baleful lightning, ever penetrate the vast funereal gloom that encompasses all its domain; murky night, sable as crape, enshrouds all its labrinthine mazes. Its sere, blasted wolds and bleak plains seem to have suffered a blight more drear and deadly than that wrought by a plague of locusts. It is peopled only by gibbering imps, frantic fiends, sheeted apparitions, ogreish goblins, pallid spectres and wan ghosts, who protrude their idiotically grinning countenances on every side, hoarsely croak forth in hiccoughing gasps and rasping screeches lugubrious mutterings of imminent destruction, utter derisive, mocking jeers, and shoot basilisk glances as death-dealing as Medusa’s snaky tresses: till finally, after this babbling hubbub has risen to a veritable pandemonium of doleful shrieks, these frenzied demons, wearying of malicious leers and ferocious gnashings of rage, change their riotous tones to subdued howls of anger, wail and moan their sorrow in mournful ululating dirges, and at last conclude their maniacal concert with a tumultuous surge of delirious convulsive cachinnations. Clanking skeletons, which have wrenched away from hideous gibbets or come from corrupt charnel-houses reeking with miasmatic vapors distilled from noisome pollutions, thrust forth gruesome, clammy fingers; stark corpses, hearsed in dank cerements of death or just risen from coffins immured in the pestilential putrefactions of the tomb, stalk along their dismal way, mumbling in hollow, sepulchral tones presages of impending doom, and stare blankly around with blear eyes that pour rheum down ashen, cadaverous cheeks. The very air murmurs portents of disaster, and all things seem crushed beneath a sweeping anathema. It is an infernal world, filled with heinous beings and damned with everlasting desolation.

Ambrose Bierce by Forrest Crissey

From: *The Inland Printer,* February 1894, page 406

THE winning of sudden literary fame through the medium of the great eastern magazines has been so frequently accomplished that it is no longer a novelty; but to make a literary reputation, coextensive with the English-speaking race, by means of routine work upon a daily newspaper published in a city of second rank in population and comparatively isolated from the literary world, is a feat which but few writers have accomplished. Among this meager number, Ambrose Bierce, of San Francisco, stands in the first rank. He is an Englishman and began his newspaper work in London ; but ill-health caused him, some twenty years ago, to desert the fogs of the great metropolis for the sunshine of the Golden Gate city. His work has appeared almost exclusively in the San Francisco *Examiner,* in the form of editorials, short sketches and stories and a column of caustic comment upon current events, local celebrities, etc., under the caption of "Prattle."

Some idea of the gentle pensiveness which has pervaded Mr. Bierce's "prattle" may be gained from the following lines taken from a metrical eulogy of the late Senator Sharon:

"Sharon, ambitious of immortal shame.
Fame's dead-wall daubed with his illustrious name —
Served in the Senate, for our sins, his time,
Each word a folly and each vote a crime."

This would pass for a dollar-a-line obituary poem when compared with the language in which he pays his respects to M. H. De Young, proprietor of the San Francisco *Chronicle.* In a volume entitled "Black Beetles in Amber," published by the Western Author's Publishing Company, New York, nearly two hundred of these tender compliments to his fellow San Franciscoans have been preserved in permanent form. It will, consequently, be worth while to observe the return of these compliments when Mr. Bierce passes to his reward.

Fortunately, however, this feature of his work is the least known and the least deserving.

In the brief limits of one or two newspaper columns, Mr. Bierce has produced a half-dozen sketches which give him rank, in the realm of the weird and grotesque, alongside such masters as Poe and Hoffman.

“Chicamauga” and “My Favorite Murder” are perhaps the most famous of these etchings of the horrible; but “The Watcher by the Dead” and “The Coup de Grace “ are scarcely less powerful.

In these and scores of other fugitive pieces which have been copied into thousands of papers and many magazines, there is a grim and almost brutal strength and vividness which bears the mark of absolute genius. Some of these sketches were published in book form by the London firms of Chatto & Windus and John Camden, under the titles of “Nuggets and Dust” and “Friends’ Delight,” but both volumes are practically unobtainable on the market, although much sought for by the bibliomaniac.

The most pretentious volume by Mr. Bierce yet issued is the adaptation of a German legend entitled “The Monk and the Hangman’s Daughter,” issued by F. J. Schulte & Co., Chicago. While in this book the author gives freer rein to his poetic instincts, the same penchant for the grotesque is ever present. It is scarcely to be hoped that Mr. Bierce will give to posterity a fair representation of his peculiar genius, as he is hopelessly indifferent to fame and settled in the rut of daily newspaper work.

The Mystery of Ambrose Bierce by Richard Barry

From: *The Mentor*, June 21, 1921

THE “cosmic journalist” we have in many incarnations. His chief embodiment was Voltaire — bitter as gall, powerful as picric, and prince of worldlings, defier of the mob whose servant he was, darling of kings whose menace he never ceased to be. His present manifestation is Arthur Brisbane, with tongue in his cheek surveying the passing show, flanked by a bust of Voltaire and a signed photograph of John L. Sullivan, beneath which he writes his phillipics against prize fighting.

However, on the American continent there was never but one cosmic journalist in the superlative sense — Ambrose Bierce.

Bierce alone stalked through this life with the superb poise, the impenetrable mystery of the Master. Already around his memory gather the myths of a legendary character. Despite the fact that he lived but yesterday and that many now here knew him fairly well the facts of his life are shrouded in mist. Edgar Allan Poe was the most romantic figure in American letters, but, in some ways, no more so than Bierce.

Chiefly, there is the mystery of his death. Or, is he dead? Out of Mexico, where he was last seen, came a year ago an account of his supposed execution in 1914 — a hurried execution by a casual marauding band. This is now the accepted version of his exit. We are asked to picture this erect, thin, white-haired esthete, well over seventy years of age, facing the ragged firing party calmly (of course) and with — shall we say ? — a hint of the perpetual sneer on the firm pressed lips. So be it. Thus he went from a life for which he never had much use.

Did he go consciously to such a death?

There is reason to believe so, for to the last person who saw him (except his anonymous traveling companions and the rough peons of his final days) a poetess whom he had fostered, he said, “I shall never return.”

All his life he sought death rather than evaded it. In the Civil War, during which he rose from private to the rank of Major, he exposed himself with what has been described as almost a fanatical willingness to die. Ever after he constantly sought peril. He might have said “as human life is the cheapest thing on earth, why defy Nature’s prodigality with our petty thrift?” But it took him over seventy years of wandering and suffering, and he finally had to seek the jungle of Mexico to snuff out one of the most brilliant brains of his generation.

The real mystery of Ambrose Bierce transcends the apocryphal account of his death, or the query as to the reason for his withdrawn and sheltered life in his middle years. The real question concerning him is: why was he a rebel from first to last? For he was consistent. He died as he had always lived; defiantly obscure, yet brilliantly provocative of inquiry.

He was without a rival in wielding the poniard of irony. In his hands the scalpel of cynicism penetrated every hidden recess with unerring skill. He was Juvenal, sharpened; and Swift, dramatized. De Maupassant, Poe, O. Henry, were not rivals but colleagues of equal rank in mastery of the short story. His literary skill equaled theirs, but his incisive mind cut deeper. In summoning sheer terror no one was in his class. He was the arch prince of Literary Darkness. His light shines with clinging phosphorescence, mysterious as the night, and, like it, eternal.

The Mystery of Ambrose Bierce

From: *Munsey's Magazine,* June 1917, pages 71-72

The Mystery of Ambrose Bierce

Reported Killed in Mexico,
He Writes from the Front in France

THIS is about a man who went out to seek the great adventure when he should have been thinking about the life he had led and considering obedience to the scriptural law that threescore and ten years constitute the normal span of existence. Ambrose Bierce is — or was — the name of the man, and his habitat, if he is still alive, is "somewhere in France." For when he was past his seventy-fourth birthday, and it was supposed that he had been killed in a Mexican skirmish two years before, his daughter in this country received a letter from him, telling her that he was serving in the British army, and was alive and happy and fighting. How he got there he didn't say — which was very like him. Probably the story will not be told until the great struggle is over at last, and the youthful old soldier comes home again, as his friends are sure he will, no matter how thick the bullets fly.

It was early in 1913 that Ambrose Bierce, then seventy years of age, decided that he was entirely too young to be put on the shelf permanently. He had just collected the products of a lifetime of story-writing in a set of twelve thick volumes, and his friends supposed that he was settling into a pleasant niche as one of the deans of American letters, and preparing to spend his declining days peacefully and comfortably. One day, however, without warning to a soul, he packed a bag and hiked away to Mexico to see what Villa and the Constitutionalists had to offer in the way of excitement.

Those he left behind him were amazed. It had not occurred to them that a man like Ambrose Bierce could never be content to dwell upon the past, and that advancing years meant to him principally that there was less and less time left in which to increase his store of knowledge of the world.

There came letters telling of his travels down in Chihuahua, and of his intention of getting to a point of advantage when the American army went in, as he was sure it would eventually have to do. Then, after one of those brawls that the Mexicans are accustomed to call battles, he dropped out of sight. Some of his friends asked the War Department to search for him. Inquiries were made, and Villa’s people were enlisted in the hunt, but to all intents and appearances Ambrose Bierce had vanished from the face of the earth, and he was mourned as dead.

Some six months later came the letter from France, bringing information of his whereabouts and occupation. After that, apparently, he passed into the silences again, and all efforts to find him have been in vain. This is not strange, for very probably he has taken an assumed name. He may have an idea that if people knew where he was they would tell the British authorities how old he is, and then he wouldn’t be allowed to fight any more. Possibly, now that the United States has entered the war, he will come home to offer his services to his own flag.

“The American Swift,” as Bierce has been called, long hesitated whether to make letters or war his profession. He tried the latter first, during the Civil War, from which he emerged a major after numerous displays of courage and daring, at the age of twenty-three. Then he resigned from the army and began a literary career that brought him much fame and a modest fortune. For a time he was in California; then he spent a few years in London, where he attracted attention by a vigorous defense of the deposed French Empress Eugenie, which brought him into conflict with the militant Henri Rochefort.

After he returned to California he delved into politics, and was in the thick of many public controversies. Time passed, and his hair whitened, but his spirit he kept young and his body strong and erect.

“As long as a man is not disabled, he can go forward. Can it be anything but fear that makes him stop and finally retire? Are there signs by which he can infallibly know the struggle to be hopeless?”

That was Bierce’s creed. It was in obedience to it — and perhaps to see whether courage had crumbled with the years — that this strenuous veteran left comfort and safety behind him and placed his life once more in the hands of fortune.

Bierce: The Warrior Writer by H. M. East, Jr.

From: *Overland Monthly*, June 1915, pages 507-509

Bierce: The Warrior Writer

By H. M. East, Jr.

Ambrose Bierce, the storyteller, poet, novelist, essayist and lampooner, was a warrior writer. I say "was," because it looks as if he had died on the battlefield. He joined the staff of General Villa, and has been missing since the fierce battle of Torreon, and friends have given up the old soldier scribe as dead.

Ambrose Bierce was a gallant fighter. He served in the Civil War, and was brevetted Major for bravery "in action." Not only did he acquit himself as a brave soldier, but he looked the ideal man who can fight for the cause of his country and for an opinion or principle. He had a fine fighting face, in which glowed a pair of sharp gray eyes. His carriage was erect and military, and even after he had attained the age of over three score years and ten, he sought the battlefield, when most men would have preferred to spend their declining years by the fireside.

He was an unique man, and his books are a valuable addition to American literature, in spite of the fact that much of the material is unpleasant reading. In fact, Bierce took a certain perverse delight in being devilish. His writings have a flavor all of their own. His satirical skits, printed a decade ago, in the San Francisco Examiner and News Letter, are the fiercest lampoons ever published. He scored and scorned every one, regardless of position, whom he thought should be criticised. He did not fear to be frankly impersonal, either.

Leaving his placid Ohio home after the Civil War, he went to London, and joined some Bohemians who gathered together in a cafe in Ludgate Station. Here, with such gay dogs as Captain Mayne Reid, George Augustus Sala, and later Joaquin Miller, Ambrose Bierce drank social glasses and discussed literature and life. He confessed with his usual frankness that they "went to bed too late in the forenoon. In short, we diligently, conscientiously, and with a perverse satisfaction, burned the candle of Life at both ends — and in the middle." His cynical satire created a stir, and his writer friends called him "Bitter Bierce.' Fortunately he had a rugged constitution, and his Bohemian life did not seriously impair his health.

He made an uncertain living by writing. For a time he was in hard luck, especially when John Hotten, a London publisher, died owing him a good sum. Bierce, through Chatto, secured a check from Hotten, but it was dated in advance, and when it became due, Hotten very ungraciously died. Bierce, however, thought it was still time to get the check cashed, went to the bank, but dropped in at his club, and over a mug of bitters related his tale of tribulation. By the time he reached the bank the news of Hotten's death was known, and Bierce was stung! Sala wrote a brief epitaph on Hotten:

"Hotten, Rotten, Forgotten."

And Bierce attended the funeral, where he felt more than he cared to express.

While in London, Bierce wrote a series of humorous essays on zoology, and published two books, one entitled "Cobwebs from an Empty Skull." Gladstone discovered one of these books some years later at a secondhand shop. It was signed "Dod Grile," and was a collection of weird occult tales, written in a fine style; for whatever faults critics may find in Bierce's works, they admit the literary quality of his style. Gladstone praised the book, and London was interested for a space.

Meanwhile the warrior writer returned to California. This was in 1880. He soon experienced enough adventures to fill several books. Most of the time he lived in San Francisco, but he also did some mining near Deadwood, South Dakota. Here he met plenty of unique characters, including "bad men," whose favorite weapon was the six-shooter, an arm in which Bierce himself became an expert.

One night, accompanied by an armed guard, Bierce set out in a wagon to deliver $30,000 in gold which belonged to the mining company, of which he was the manager. A highwayman's shout "Hands up!" startled them in the darkness. The guard, who was armed with a rifle, was equal to the sudden dramatic situation, for he promptly threw himself over the seat, shot and put the bad man out of commission.

In San Francisco Bierce became the master of a group of young writers, who fairly worshiped him, being attracted by his powerful personality, his robust originality, and his clear-cut style and artistic craftsmanship. He originated a kind of occult cult, and it is in the psychic phenomena that he made some of his most daring and interesting excursions. From musings in this mystic realm came the unique story, "The Damned Thing," which belongs to the category of such mystery stories as Fitz-James O'Brien's "What Was It?" and Maupassant's "Le Horla."

Bierce always took a unique point of view of things, and declared that the horrors of peace were more terrible than the carnage of war, a view, enpassant, which seems to be popular in Europe just now! However, no one knew better than Bierce the pathos growing out of the inexorable irony of war, and for pure shudder-producing and sickening effect and hopeless protest, nothing outside of Poe can equal that grisly, blood-dripping tale, “Chickamauga.” It is about a little boy who strays into the woods, plays soldier with a wooden sword, and is lost. Becoming weary, he falls asleep. Meanwhile, all unheard by the sleeping child, the terrible battle of Chickamauga is fought in the neighborhood. When the boy awakes he is surprised to see a number of grewsome things — for they are humans no longer — creeping, dragging themselves on hands and knees, through the woods. On and on they come, a seemingly endless procession of weird beings, many mortally wounded, many with their faces shot away. In their delirium they are prompted by thirst to go on and on, and so they drag themselves to a stream in the woods. Some drink, but many others are so weak from loss of blood that they fall in and drown. The boy, not understanding the meaning of war, thinks the wounded men would play horse with him. He leaps upon the back of a soldier, and is rudely thrown off. Finally the child returns home. He finds that his mother has been shot dead.

In many of his stories Bierce has achieved that impersonal attitude toward his characters that is so characteristic of Maupassant. However, this is rather an artistic and not a personal trait. Though seemingly cold and hard, Bierce was generous and sympathetic. In another powerful story, “A Son of the Gods,” in describing the dead on a battlefield, he cries out: “Oh, those many needless dead!”

Though Bierce wrote many books, he is generally only known as the author of a novel, “The Monk and the Hangman’s Daughter.” As a poet, his verse is clever and satirical, and he wrote at least one good poem, “An Invocation,” which is said to have inspired Kipling’s “Recessional.” It is an address to the Goddess of Liberty. The most representative stanza runs:

“Let man salute the rising day
  Of Liberty, but not adore.
  ‘Tis opportunity, no more,
A useful, not a sacred, ray.”

Bierce has been misunderstood, because of his intense and paradoxical nature. He was a great satirist, and an original artist. He has been characterized as a human devil, but like all cynics, he sometimes revealed a warm heart. Doubtless he concealed much concerning himself, and wrote and spoke and acted often with perverse superficiality.

He was vain as well as egotistical, and liked to create a stir. His writings have not attained anything like the popularity that their literary merits warrant. He had been bitterly criticised, because he was fearless in his own opinion, and dearly loved a good fight for itself. He acted, in an unique way, a valiant part, being consistently inconsistent. He was not so cold and hard as he would have the world believe. In fact, there are some people living who can attest that Ambrose Bierce could be generous, and then promptly forget the assistance that he had rendered.

The Mexican Review. I.

From: *The Mexican Review,* September 1917, page 12

Then there is the still unsolved mystery of the fate of Ambrose Bierce, the well-known California writer. Every little while some admirer or friend asks as to his fate. Circumstantial accounts have been published purporting to give the details of his death, but they have had no foundation. The last seen of Bierce was in one of the El Paso hotels in the winter of 1913-14, when he announced to a number of newspaper correspondents that he was going across the river into Mexico, where he intended to join Villa, not caring whether he lost his life or not, but in the event of not being able to carry out that plan he intended to "crawl into some quiet hole somewhere in the mountains and pass his last days in peace and quiet."

He never joined Villa, for if he had, the newspaper men with that army would surely have been cognizant of the fact, as it would have been impossible for him to have concealed his identity.

It is true, an unknown American supposed to be a newspaper man was reliably reported to have been killed in the trenches before Torreon in the ten days' fighting in the spring of 1914, but the body was never found, while the description given by a negro officer of Villa's army did not answer to that of Bierce in any way. It is probable that he passed away in some remote spot without his identity being known, but there is always the possibility that he may still be living in some out-of-the-way spot in the Sierra Madre, a region which he seemed to fancy.

The Mexican Review. II.

From: *The Mexican Review,* March 1918, page 12

The friends of Ambrose Bierce, the well-known American author and correspondent, are very desirous of securing some definite information regarding his present whereabouts, or his fate. Mr. Bierce had lived in California for many years. He was an ardent sympathizer with the Madero revolution, and afterwards with the movement under President Carranza against the traitor Huerta. He went to El Paso in the latter part of 1913, with the intention of joining the Constitutional forces. The last that was heard from him was in a letter mailed at Chihuahua in October of that year, in which he stated that he was then sojourning at a point some eight or ten miles from the City of Chihuahua. He did not specify the locality, however. Since that time nothing has been heard from him, although many efforts have been made to secure some definite information. The accompanying photograph was taken not long before he went to Mexico and it is published in the hope that some one may recognize it and send the information which is so much desired by his multitude of friends. If any one recognizing the portrait, or knowing anything of Mr. Bierce will communicate with the Mexican News Bureau, 613 Riggs Bldg., Washington, D. C, it will be a very great favor.

Ambrose Bierce's Death Charged to Villa Band

From: The Publisher's Weekly, April 3, 1920, page 1103

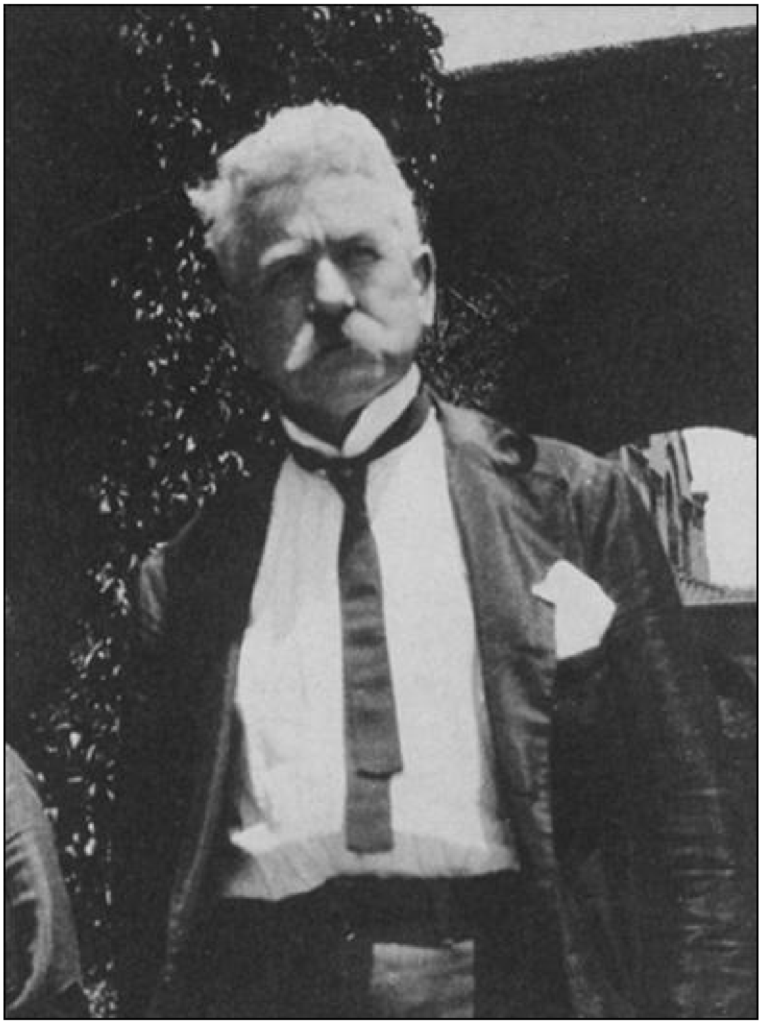
Ambrose Bierce's Death Charged to Villa Band

SAN FRANCISCO, March 24. — A signed statement that he has evidence that Ambrose Bierce. noted writer, who disappeared in 1915, was put to death by a Villista firing squad near the village of Icamoli, on the trail to Monterey, was made in The San Francisco Bulletin, dated March 24 by J. H. Wilkins, a special writer, who has returned from Mexico after a search for evidence as to Bierce's fate.

Wilkin's informant, he said, was a member of the band that executed Bierce and showed the writer a picture of Bierce, taken from his clothing after the execution.

After the split between Villa and Carranza. Bierce was attached to the Carranza forces as a military expert, Wilkins said, and was captured while directing a mule train bearing a shipment of arms out of Torreon and shot.

The Biography



The last known photograph of Ambrose Bierce, taken in June 1913, before disappearing in Mexico

AMBROSE BIERCE: A BIOGRAPHY by Carey McWilliams

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INTRODUCTION. THE BIERCE MYTH

IT was the unique distinction of Ambrose Bierce to be referred to as dead when he was living, and to be mentioned as living when he was indubitably dead. His reputation is based on a series of elaborately interwoven paradoxes. Even to attempt a biographical study of his life requires a preliminary analysis of this critical confusion. His name is already a legend and his reputation is almost mythical so far has it been divorced from the central values of his work. Time has crystallized the mistaken opinions of his contemporaries into a generally accepted theory of his work. Such is the fate that befalls the “obscure” type in letters. Myth becomes imposed on myth, legend is interlaced with legend, so that in the course of time it becomes necessary to remove one layer of misunderstanding after another until at least the outline of the original may be traced over the pattern of errors that time has somewhat erased. Perhaps the “myth” is already a tradition and that a dissociation of ideas is impossible. It is a doubt which has often troubled me.

Some men are predestined to be the subject of misunderstanding, as though some quality about their lives invited absurd comment and irrelevant observation. Such a man was Ambrose Bierce. It is seriously to be doubted if there exists another figure in American literature about whom as much irregular and unreliable critical comment has been written. He has been characterized as great, bitter, idealistic, cynical, morose, frustrated, cheerful, bad, sadistic, obscure, perverted, famous, brutal, kind, a fiend, a God, a misanthrope, a poet, a realist who wrote romances, a fine satirist and something of a charlatan. Surely such misunderstanding is not an inevitable condition of fame. There exists no such wildness about the literature on Emerson, on Melville, or on Twain. If his admirers had realized that Bierce was a complex figure and that only by the use of paradox could they make any progress in definition, much confusion might have been avoided. Had his critics been able to move in both directions, first into his work and then back to the facts of his life, they might have succeeded in arriving at a more intelligent appreciation of his work.

To suggest the quality of this bulky literature devoted to a consideration of Bierce’s writings, a few illustrations will suffice. J. S. Cowley-Brown wrote that “Bierce is as interesting as a kangaroo”; while Mr. Laurence Stallings has announced that “he has the kick of a zebra mule.” Franklin H. Lane spoke of him as “a hideous monster, so like the mixture of dragon, lizard, bat, and snake as to be unnameable," but to William Marion Reedy he was "a man of silent generosities, a fellow of tenderness." One journalist in San Francisco always referred to him as "that rascal of the sorrel hair," but to Mrs. Ruth Guthrie Harding, who perhaps may be pardoned a sentimental tear or two, "Mr. Boythorn-Bierce" was always "a childlike person." Bierce has been listed by such critics as Alfred C. Ward and Harold Williams exclusively as a writer of the short story; others have considered him solely as a satirist. He has been named as a propagandist against war and as a friend of war; as an aristocrat with principles that were fundamentally democratic; as a satirist of great powers who was at the same time a hired libelist. To some his political views are impossibly trite while others think he was a philosopher of great acumen.

It is amazing to find even such an able journalist as George West writing in *The American Mercury*, July, 1926, that "Bierce, a veteran of the Civil War, came to California with his bent fixed and his talent developed.... With his negative answers he was a death-man, a denier of life, of a genuine but slight talent, and hence the last writer in the world to inspire others." Bierce had not written a line for print when he came to California; he actually learned to write in San Francisco, and as to inspiring others, he was the direct inspiration for many of the men Mr. West proceeds to list in his catalogue of California literati. How account for such writing? Bierce seems to have always inspired such inaccuracy, even from writers with such fine opportunities for observation as Mr. West.

In an effort to prove that the motivation for his short stories was subconscious, Dr. Isaac Goldberg has spoken of Bierce as "sadistic-masochistic!" Dr. Louis J. Bragman finds indications of the abnormal in all his work and sums him up as "a purveyor of morbidities." Mr. Walter Neale, with malicious ingenuity, discusses at length *the possibility* that Bierce may have been a sexual pervert! Of course, with elaborate precaution against criticism, Mr. Neale comes to the conclusion, as well he might, that there was no basis whatever for such a thought. But the list of absurdities does not cease here. Perversion and sadism are rather fashionable nowadays and Mr. Neale was probably clever to spice his book with such hypothetical misdemeanors. The suggestion has even been made that Bierce was a lunatic! Whispers to this effect circulate in the west to-day, because Bierce was known to visit a sanitarium at Livermore, California, and it has actually been rumored that he never went into Mexico at all but died in an asylum at Napa. What, one may well inquire, inspired all this nonsense, this pyramiding of misinformation, this repetition of error, this maze of conjecture and hearsay?

In attempting an explanation one must be patient and begin as far back as 1868 and gradually work forward through the veils of comment to 1913, and then a coroner's inquest must be conducted on the even more ludicrous situation since that date. In 1868 a young writer who conducted a page called "The Town Crier" on *The San Francisco News Letter and California Advertiser* began to acquire considerable fame in the west. He was, of course, quite a character in San Francisco. But in the east the New York journals began to quote his comments and to speculate as to his identity. Finally it became known that the Town Crier was a young fellow whose name was A. G. Bierce. At this early date there was little misunderstanding. Bierce was just a witty young journalist who wrote original copy. Some shrewd newspaper men began to note that his journalism was occasionally great satire, possessing peculiarly personal qualities and animated by great force and energy. But just when his reputation was beginning to be established on an understandable basis, the Town Crier left San Francisco and went to London.

It is of the first importance in dealing with the Myth to keep in mind the interruption in Bierce's career occasioned by this early change of residence. While Bierce was in England he was forgotten in this country and only a few journalists, such as James Watkins and Mr. Laffan, kept in touch with his work and knew that the Passing Showman of *Figaro* was the former Town Crier of the *News-Letter.*

But during these years, Bierce was making a reputation for himself in England. He published three books during his residence in London and became a well-known literary figure. His fame was considerable and he was remembered by many writers and critics who were able, in 1892, to associate Ambrose Bierce, the author of "Tales of Soldiers and Civilians," with the immensely interesting and provocative A. G. Bierce who was a friend of James Mortimer, Tom Hood, and Henry Sampson. Robert Barr, of *The Idler,* made this association very quickly and his comments stirred the recollections of his countrymen. But it was a long span of years from 1872 to 1892, so that England had to rediscover Bierce, and in the process many errors of perception occurred. This slight blur began to color the otherwise shrewd comment of the English critics. During Bierce's entire career, he was constantly being the subject of little flurries of critical comment in the English press, at intervals of from ten to fifteen years. Mr. Gladstone picked up a copy of "Cobwebs from an Empty Skull" one day and announced in an interview that he remembered the sensation the book had made on its first appearance and the pleasure its reading had given him. Such incidents, occurring at irregular intervals through the years, kept Bierce's reputation alive but imperfectly understood. Then, too, he wrote under the name of "Dod Grile" in England and this came to cause no little confusion and error. Every time he published a book in this country, the press of England would dig back into old files and there would be another series of reminiscent paragraphs and letters to the editor about this fellow who had once lived in London. The American press would occasionally notice these comments in the English papers and would only become more confused as to who Bierce really was and what he had written. The situation was an international complication and was the beginning of a Myth.

On his return to America, Bierce was made the subject of elaborate discoveries and had to reëstablish his reputation on the Pacific Coast. But the reputation which he soon acquired on *The Argonaut* was checked before it could attain national significance by his mining expedition into the Black Hills. After this venture, he was lost until his emergence as author of "Prattle" in the San Francisco *Examiner.* With the first issues of the *Examiner* containing "Prattle" he began to be recognized as one of the most unique figures in American journalism. The New York *Sun* would frequently quote his comments and the Australian newspapers, notably the Sydney *Bulletin,* followed his work with great interest. But as yet he had published no books in America; his reputation was merely that of a brilliant journalist.

With the publication of "Tales of Soldiers and Civilians" in 1891 a new situation arose. Contrary to many dearly cherished illusions the book was not "neglected," but was the subject of a great deal of critical comment which was, with scarcely a single exception, enthusiastic. The author of any book in a new *genre* is immediately the subject of speculation, inquiry and comment. Novelty always provokes uneven critical comment and Bierce's book was shockingly different. It surprised critics; they were taken aback by its excellence. But they were uncertain what to write about it or its author. At this time, as is generally the case with a new author of originality, a few left wing critics, with a great preliminary blaring of trumpets, began to proclaim the new God. Percival Pollard and Walter Blackburn Harte, who were both familiar with Bierce's work in *The Examiner* and thus had an advantage over other eastern critics, sounded their praise at least three octaves too high. Rather, I should say, they were uncritical and struck the wrong note of praise. They could not, as a matter of fact, have praised the book too highly, *at that time,* for its appearance in 1891 was as phenomenal as the appearance in *Graham's Magazine,* April, 1841, of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." The critical situation that existed in 1891 remained essentially the same throughout Bierce's lifetime, that is, excessive praise on the left and a long swing of the pendulum through intervening nuances of opinion over to the sharp disapproval at the right.

This tangential situation was one that naturally fostered misunderstanding. Bierce's personality was warped to fit the critical opinion of his various commentators. Those who liked his work manufactured a God; those who disapproved had no difficulty in imagining a Devil. What they wanted to believe they created, and when meeting Bierce in the flesh they found at least sufficient justification for their views to warrant their confirmation. Reading this body of literature, which for scientific purposes should be gathered into a Library of Error, one cannot help being vastly amused with the entire affair. There are elements of the farcical in the Bierce Myth; the thing takes on the aspects of high comedy. But, amusing as the situation most assuredly is, there is grave danger that Bierce's reputation may be sacrificed by it. Readers become confused; they sense a hoax and then hastily conclude that Bierce was a second-rate individual and a hack journalist.

Various minor elements have colored the legend. The "collectors" adopted Bierce at an early date, bidding high prices for his books and quarreling in angry voices, the strident notes of which reached general circulation, over debated points of authorship. The literary magazine on the fringe of the intellectual world always makes a fetish of figures which its editors think are "obscure" and which, by the very fact of their mention in such journals, could not be other than notorious. Bierce has always been a favorite of local reviews and "quarterlies." The articles published in these esoteric journals have been uniformly misleading and have spread confusion about his work like a fatal contagion. There has been much shrewd comment about Bierce's work, as I will have occasion to show, but it usually has come from unexpected sources and has been dismissed as incredible by the few who noticed it.

In the course of a Fourth of July oration in 1898, a western statesman invoked "the shades of Ambrose Bierce" to support some point in his argument. Referring to this inaccuracy the ghost wrote in his column of "Prattle" that "I am still on this side of the Styx. Moreover, I do not expect, even when reposing on beds of amaranth and moly, to have more than one shade." Arthur Conan Doyle made a similar contribution to the legend in "Through the Open Door" (1908), when he ended an interesting paragraph with the phrase that Ambrose Bierce "*was* a great artist in his day." The comment of such men as Conan Doyle and Arnold Bennett, while sound enough as criticism, could not be other than inaccurate as to Bierce's life. These men belonged to another generation and did not remember Dod Grile of *Fun.*

And it must be borne constantly in mind that there was not a sound magazine article in print about Bierce's life until George Sterling's, "The Shadow Maker," appeared in *The American Mercury*, in September of 1925. Mr. Vincent Starrett's little book published in 1920, while interesting and valuable, did not contain much biographical information. Practically the entire body of criticism devoted to Bierce was written before the facts of his life and experience were known. When biographical information did not appear it was partial and fragmentary, and, while clearing up some points, left others in darker confusion than before the momentary illumination. Many people, for example, accepted all that George Sterling wrote about Bierce as true, when, as a matter of fact, Sterling's article left much to be desired, even as a magazine summary. The new interest in Bierce, the interest of the present generation, rests on two pillars of comment: Mr. Mencken's in this country and Arnold Bennet's, written under the nom de plume of Jacob Tonson for *The New Age,* in England. This modern interest is sound and genuine and any book about Ambrose Bierce should be primarily addressed to the audience it represents.

There are many other factors that require analysis. The geographical isolation of Bierce (and to be an author in San Francisco in the seventies virtually amounted to exile), is important. Bierce was never present where he was being discussed. Critics seldom saw him and it is not surprising to find newspaper articles and stories that question his very identity and which suggest that Ambrose Bierce was a Myth and his reputation a hoax. When his name was a byword in San Francisco, he was living at San Rafael, or St. Helena, or Auburn, so that he was read but not seen. Once his reputation as a satirist on the *Examiner* began to assume national proportions, Mr. Hearst very cleverly took advantage of the situation by sending him East. There his comment was read by people who were already familiar with his work as it had been reprinted in the eastern papers for some time, but they continued to associate him with San Francisco, even when he was living in their midst. When he was available for inspection, so to speak, at Washington, the sound modern interest in his work had not been born, and, as a result, he was merely a curiosity for such men as Mr. Mencken and Mr. Horton who were delighted with his wit and amused by his cynicism.

Just as Bierce's literary career was interrupted because of his untimely changes of residence, so were his books published. They never could be obtained when they were in demand. The three English volumes soon became collectors' items, and, while they were frequently mentioned by Bierce's admirers, they were never available, so that one could whisper that they were prodigious masterpieces without fear of refutation. His two volumes of verse and his most important collection of stories were published in the West in editions that were, more or less, limited and that were virtually destroyed by the great fire. These volumes were always difficult to obtain and when small eastern houses attempted to re-issue them, they failed and nothing came of their efforts. "The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter" was hailed as a masterpiece by scores of critics whose familiarity with it must have been vicarious. This condition resulted in uncertainty and doubt. It was not until Mr. Neale brought out the handsome “de luxe” edition that Bierce’s writings became definitely available in the libraries. Even then the very appearance of such an edition was a source of mystery. There was absolutely no demand for a collected edition at the time it was published; it was out of all relation to Bierce’s fame or importance and remained a publishing curiosity for years. Who was this magnificently printed author? He must be some one, a person of transcendent importance. Professor Fred Lewis Pattee, whose frankness must have characterized the silent doubt of many, wrote to Mr. Neale asking: “Is Bierce really a great writer?”

So far only those elements which might be termed “impersonal” have been considered. But an equally important element in the creation of the Myth was the purely personal. Bierce was a master of gestures and his mockery was compound of echoes and shadows. He was regarded as something of a *poseur;* his downright candor was mistaken in some quarters for unnecessary arrogance. Just as Baudelaire did little to correct the legends current about his life, so would Bierce, with perverse satisfaction, permit the shadows to deepen. He became the phantom figure in some epic yarns: he slept in cemeteries; exhumed cadavers; spent long hours in the morgues studying the features of the disintegrating; hated dogs; loved reptiles; fought duels; and struck down his friends with great cruelty. He was so vital a personality, such an extraordinary man (and this is one point on which all forces converge in agreement), that he provoked an inordinate amount of comment and interest. Some people very shrewdly sensed that his writings inadequately expressed his personality, not in the sense that he was “frustrated by his environment,” but that he could find no subject adequate for his purposes. This disparity was of itself a source of mystification. The so-called “gloomy” stories were not subconsciously motivated, as I will have occasion to prove, and were written deliberately with an eye on a carefully established formula and with a definite end in view.

Then, too, from 1881 until his disappearance into Mexico he was always “the master” of a group of young writers. After the work of these pupils began to appear in print, thanks to Bierce’s interest and tutelage, they never lost an opportunity to sing their Master’s praise in strophes that were as far off-key as the early criticism had been. Just as Percival Pollard and Walter Blackburn Harte had overpraised the greatness of Bierce’s art, so these pupils excessively extolled his personality. This condition must have puzzled many readers for it was difficult to understand at the time. There was no comparison too grandiose for these pupils; Bierce was verily their God. George Sterling’s last letters to Bierce, written after an intimate acquaintance of twenty years, were still addressed to

"Mr. Bierce" or "Dear Master" and written in the formal style of one accepting an invitation to appear before omnipotence itself. When Gertrude Atherton announced, at a time when she had a considerable reputation in England and France, that Bierce had "the best brutal imagination of any man in the English-speaking race" (whatever "best" and "brutal" may mean), it naturally provoked considerable comment and ultimate dissension.

Then, to seal the "mystery" of his life, Bierce made that dramatic exit into Mexico. Psychologically, nothing he ever did was more fortunate so far as his fame was concerned. Here was a man who not only wrote of mysterious disappearances but was one. Here was a cynic who yawned with disdain and had become so disgusted with his countrymen that he ventured south to escape boredom. A great silence engulfed his name and his fate was the subject of endless speculation. Every time a new story entitled "What Became of Ambrose Bierce?" would appear in print, it would release the pent-up imaginations of innumerable critics who would flounder anew in a problem that was not a problem and attempt to solve doubts that were certainties. The bibliography of the wild yarns attendant on his disappearance is reserved for a later section. But it is apparent, without an examination of them at this time, that they only spread confusion upon confusion so far as arriving at an sensible understanding of Bierce's personality was concerned. His work was broken up into contradictory fragments and his personality became a Faust or Hamlet for any one to play improvisations upon. As George Sterling melodramatically remarked: Bierce's enemies went into Mexico to feast on his bones.

In the wake of the War came the wave of disillusion that brought Bierce's work into exact focus with public opinion, for he anticipated modern thought at many points. A later chapter has been added with the publication of volumes by C. Hartley Grattan, Dr. Danzinger, and Walter Neale, along with Vincent Starrett's bibliography which, had it appeared years earlier, might have done much to avoid misunderstanding. These volumes are adequate testimony of the extent of Bierce's latter-day fame and reputation, and, whether they succeed in throwing much light on his life or not, they at least emphasize an important consideration, although tacitly and by indirection, that he was much more interesting as a personality than he was important as a writer. To this one might add, as a corollary, that his personality was itself of the first importance; that the very appearance of such a man in America during his lifetime was an anachronism and a promise. His was a personality strangely prophetic of what one might expect from the America of another generation, in its rebellion under the leadership of Mr. Mencken. And, with the course of time, it can be hopefully forecast that the Myth surrounding his career will be dissolved, that his writings will be appreciated for their inherent values, and that the hard, bright, shining core of his illumination will become a part of our tradition.

CHAPTER I. MOSTLY GENEALOGICAL

ONE would imagine that the easiest task in connection with writing a biography about even so “mysterious” a character as Ambrose Bierce would be to state the pronunciation and spelling of his name with unqualified accuracy. And such is the case, if one is not too curious, but, historically, the name is shrouded in uncertainties. The first Bierce to arrive in this country was not a “Bierce” but was Austin Bearse, who sailed in the “Good Shippe *Confidence”* in 1638 from Southampton and landed at Barnstable (Cape Cod), Massachusetts.

According to ancient records, Austin Bearse was a small land owner. His farm consisted of twelve acres of very rocky land, which was bounded “easterly by John Crocker’s land, northerly by the meadow, easterly by Isaac Robinson’s land, and southerly into ye woods.” A road from his home to Hyannis is still known as “Bearse’s Way.” He was quite religious, having joined “Mr. Lothrop’s” church in 1643. His name stands at the head of the list of those converted after the church moved to Barnstable. He was very exact in the performance of religious duties, and insisted that children be baptized on the day of their birth, if Sunday, or on the next Sabbath. His son Joseph was born on a Sunday, and Austin carried him two miles to the church through a snowstorm so that he might receive a scriptural baptism. There is no record, unfortunately, whether Joseph survived his father’s act of faith, but if he died of exposure it was a holy and orthodox death.

So far as the records may be checked and verified, all members of the family in this country who spell their names Bearse, Bearce, Barss or Bierce, are descendants of Austin Bearse. But no two of these factions can agree on the correct spelling or pronunciation of what is admittedly a common family name. This condition of uncertainty is not, of course, an unusual occurrence with family names in America, where many of the early settlers were so illiterate that they could only remember the sound of their names, and had no knowledge of spelling. Some branches of the Bierce family pronounce the name as though it were spelled “Beerce”; another group spell the name “Bearse” and pronounce it as though it were spelled “Burse”; and there is even some authority for the theory that it is a derivative of “Pierce.” Originally the name was pronounced as if spelled “Barse” and many of the descendants still pronounce it in the ancient manner, even those who spell it “Bearss.” One branch of the family that lived at New Fairfield and New Milford, Connecticut, changed the spelling to “Barse,” while a group that emigrated to Canada changed the spelling to “Barss,” and still another branch residing at Port Clinton, Ohio, spell it “Bearss” but pronounce it as if spelled “Barse.” Such, then, is the history of the name.

As to the history of the family and its origin, a state of similar uncertainty prevails. Miss J. M. Ames, one of the family’s genealogists, believes there is some basis for the theory that the Bierces originally came from Holland. But the better hypothesis, since it bears substantiation by a prominent member of the family who had a personal flair for historical vanities, would indicate that the family was of ancient Norman-French lineage. Such was the conviction of General Lucius Verus Bierce, and, from a sketch of his life by L. Moore, published at Akron, Ohio, in 1874, this information may be gleaned: “The family were originally Norman French, but long ago emigrated to, and settled in, England. The earliest historical account of the family and name that is accessible, is found in an old family Bible, printed in 1599, and still in the possession of General Bierce, in which is recorded on a fly-leaf the following incident:

“‘Marquis,’ said Louis XIV to Marquis de Bierce, ‘you make puns upon all subjects, make one on me.’

“‘Sire,’ replied the courteous Marquis, ‘you are *no subject’!”*

Wit and repartee would thus seem to be ancestral traits. Coupled with this Norman-French verve and wit and mental agility, there was a strong strain of the proudest Highland blood in the later Bierces. The wife of William Bierce was Abigail Bell, and she was the grandmother of Ambrose. Abigail was the daughter of Ketchal and Sarah (Whitney) Bell of Cornwall, Connecticut. The Bells were an old, proud, arrogant Scottish family. They were famous in Scotland and in Britain during several generations for their eminence as physicians and surgeons, numbering among their better known members, Sir Charles Bell, the distinguished anatomist, who enjoyed considerable fame and reputation in his day. Whatever ability Bierce inherited, it is quite apparent that it came to him from his father’s side of the family, for very little is known of Laura Sherwood, his mother. This inference is fortified by the fact that in Bierce both dominant ancestral traits, wit and arrogance, came to a fine flower.

One of Austin Bearse’s sons, whose name was James, moved from Pembroke, Massachusetts, to Connecticut, in 1739, and settled on the road east of Burnham Place, afterwards known as Cornwall Bridge. James’ name appears in the old records and documents of the period as “Bierce” and it is probable that he was the first of the family to adopt this spelling. It seems to have been definitely adopted by all his descendants. Cornwall, in Litchfield County, was the center of this branch of the family for many years and some members of the family still reside there. The old Revolutionary War records contain numerous references to Bierces in the Connecticut regiments, and James (the younger), William, Ezekiel, Nathan and Stephen were prominently figured in the local annals of Connecticut's participation in the War of Independence.

The lineage of Ambrose Bierce may be traced directly back to Austin Bearse, the succession running: Austin, James, Shubael, Hezekiah, William, Marcus Aurelius. William Bierce was the son of Hezekiah Bierce and Deborah Sturtevant. He was born at Halifax, Massachusetts, March 26, 1753, and married Abigail Bell. The records show that he belonged to Col. Herman Swift's regiment of Connecticut troups during the Revolutionary War, and Henry Newell Bierce has in his possession a powder horn on which is carved the following inscription: "William Bierce's horn, made at Ticonderoga, April 27, *I775."* The soldierly tradition in the family was unbroken for three generations and it is interesting to note that William was an orderly sergeant at Ticonderoga, and fought in the battles of Monmouth, White Plains, and Fort George. During the dreary winter spent at Valley Forge, every officer in his company higher than himself was either killed or died of starvation or disease, leaving him in command. It is said that during his years in the service, William clothed himself and laid by all his pay, including the amount paid him for clothing, so that he might have a competence to start life anew when the war was over. But, with the inevitable disillusion that came *après le guerre*, he found that he had nothing but a considerable pile of worthless Continental bills. He finally gave these bills to his children for playthings and forgot the frugality of seven years of soldiering. This circumstance probably tinged the minds of both William and his son, Lucius Verus, on the subject of paper money. It was always a red flag to General Lucius Bierce, and he never lost an opportunity to flay its advocates. He once remarked, with characteristic Biercian terseness, "If we must have monied incorporations to control the currency, and regulate the exchanges of the country, let us have a United States Bank. For my part, I had rather be swallowed by a whale than nibbled to death by minnows." However, it should be noted that William did receive some compensation for his services, for along with his honorable discharge he was given a hundred acres of land in Muskingum, Ohio, which he later sold for two dollars an acre.

William Bierce had quite a large family. His children were: Lucretia, Hanna Bell, Columbus, William Whiting, Lucinda, and the two favorites, Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius. These two sons were born in Cornwall, Marcus Aurelius on August 16, 1799, and Lucius Verus on August 4, 1801. They were the bright particular stars of the family and were, moreover, inseparable companions. Where one went, the other followed. They were of nearly the same age and both seemed to have possessed a flair for the grand manner, particularly Lucius Verus, who was destined to be referred to as “illustrious” from early manhood. His life was a succession of orations, presentation speeches, and memorial odes. Marcus Aurelius was of a more somber disposition and lacked the verve of his younger brother. Both received a rather good education, for those times, at Litchfield, but they were not destined to follow in the same lines of quiet activity that characterized the lives of their brothers and sisters, and in this they foreshadowed the parallel situation of Ambrose and Albert.

Even before finishing his rudimentary schooling, Lucius Versus had his eyes trained on the broad horizon of the West. This was but natural. His father owned land out in Ohio. Moreover, Connecticut at that time was making rather pretentious claims to all the lands, parallel with its boundaries, to the west. This far outpost of Litchfield was called the Western Reserve and Connecticut’s more adventuresome sons were looking to it as their future home. When Lucius Verus was only fifteen years of age, he journeyed west to Nelson, Portage County, Ohio. Marcus Aurelius remained at Cornwall until he could receive news of his brother’s fortune, particularly as he had married Laura Sherwood. (Feb. 26, 1822.) But it was not long until he, too, was en route for the Western Reserve.

Lucius, however, lost no time in going west and in becoming a famous character. He decided to go to Ohio University, and arrived at Athens ill and possessed of only one-fifth of a quarter of a dollar (this was during the “cut” money days). He prepared for the University by studying under the Rev. Jacob Lindley, President of Ohio University for many years, and he soon matriculated, and by 1822 had received his degree. He then decided to seek his fortune in the South, and persuaded the Hon. Amos Crippen, a prominent citizen of Athens, to loan him the money for his journey. He went south to Yorkville, South Carolina, and then to Lancaster, where he studied law in the offices of Robert J. Renill, and later, in Alabama, with Dr. Sterne Houghton, being admitted to practice in 1823.

He soon returned to Ohio and entered the practice of the law at Ravenna, in Portage County. He had only been admitted to the bar a year when he was elected district attorney, an office which he held for eleven years, resigning at the end of that period to move to Akron. There he quickly became the town’s “leading citizen” and remained such until his death. His activities were so numerous and varied that it is difficult to summarize them, but a few of his exploits will be mentioned because of the important influence he was to exercise on his nephew, Ambrose Bierce.

In 1837 the “Patriot War,” so-called, was organized by a firebrand whose name was William McKenzie. It was a movement intended to free the Canadians from the despotic government headed by Sir John Colburn. McKenzie soon counted among his most ardent supporters, Lucius Verus Bierce of Akron. With Colonel Von Schultz, a Polish officer, who was a refugee in America and along with some three hundred veterans who had been ordered from their country for participation in a revolution, Bierce organized the "Grand Eagles," a secret society designed to give McKenzie military support in his movement.

While the work of organization was being perfected, the British struck Col. Von Schultz and his force at Detroit. The little band of liberators was annihilated and Von Schultz met death on the scaffold. Bierce, who was now "General," hastened to the assembled refugees at Swan Creek and told the remnant of the army that the fate of Canadian liberty depended on them. Would they disband, after this reversal by the tyrant, or would they fight on to the bitter end? One can imagine that the oration was accompanied with appropriate gestures. The appeal, however, was not an unqualified success, for all but 180 of the liberators fled to their homes. With the remaining "army," General Bierce left Detroit for Windsor, captured the town, and burned the barracks. Just as the revolution was getting into full swing, Col. John Prince arrived with a company of British regulars and decimated the "Grand Eagles" with a few rounds of musket fire. Most of the remaining rebels were killed, many of them being stood against a wall at Windsor and shot down, and only about thirty escaped. Among this group was "General" Bierce. His troubles were not yet at an end, for on returning to Ohio he was called before the United States Court at Columbus to answer for a violation of the Neutrality Law of 1818. But Judge McLean was virtually forced to direct the grand jury not to bring in a free bill, so great was the popular sentiment in favor of General Bierce. The authorities, however, summoned him again before the court, but between that date and the day of the hearing an old friend of Bierce's was appointed by Van Buren as district attorney, and through his agency the matter was dismissed. The General was, of course, a great popular hero in Ohio. He later organized the "Bierce Cadets" and was, for several years, Grand Master of the Masonic Lodge in Ohio.

When the Mexican War broke out, the General volunteered for service, but his company disbanded soon after its organization, as the government did not desire further troops after the first call. He then devoted himself to public works, being on the board of education and mayor of Akron. Among his literary "masterpieces" was the composition of an ode which he read on the occasion when he presented a sword, which he had captured from a Britisher during the Patriot War, to Buchtel College. The grandiloquent lines of this ode were only slightly more rhetorical than his nephew's "Invocation." To have heard the General declaim these lines must have been a memorable experience:

THE BATTLE OF WINDSOR

The sun had set on Erie’s wave,
The snow-clad hills on which the brave
Reposed, were silent as the grave,
Or Soldiers’ Sepulchre.

No martial sound, nor busy hum,
No clarion clang, nor rattling-drum,
Gave signal that the time had come
For daring feats of chivalry.
The soldier took his hasty meal,
Then fixed the deadly burnished steel,
Which soon the tyrant’s fate would seal,
When joined in war’s dread revelry.

The Patriot band was soon arrayed,
Their hearts beat high, but none dismayed,
As each one drew his battle blade
And shouted “Death or victory!”

Then foe to foe, in contest view;
Fierce flashed the fire, the rockets flew
And death was revelling ‘mid the few
Who bared their breast courageously.

The Patriot cry of deadly war
“Remember Prescott!” sounds afar,
And lurid flames and crashing jar,
Push on the dreadful tragedy.

The warrior foe in contest slain,
The wounded strewed upon the plain,
Make fuel for the burning claim
Of Barracks burning rapidly.

Now fiercer grew the dreadful fight,
Now fiercer rose the lurid light,
And shouts, and groans, as morning light
Appeared, were mingled horribly.

Ah, dreadful sight! as morn arose,
The mingled corpse of friends and foes,
Bestrewed the ground amid the snows
That formed their only sepulchre.

Among the General's other literary efforts were "An Epitome of the History of the Western Reserve from 1862 to the Formation of the State Constitution in 1802," written expressly for the Akron *Daily* and *Semi-Weekly Argus;* "Home Reminiscences for the Portage County *Democrat,"* including data about the towns of "Atwater, Aurora, Deerfield, Freedom, Hiram, Mantua, Palmyra, Randolph." This material, published in the newspapers, was designed as a history of the Western Reserve, but was never compiled in book form. Among the numerous addresses of the General, the following were printed as pamphlets: "Centennial Historical Address delivered at Ravenna, Portage County"; and an address delivered before the Historical Society of Tallmadge, Ohio, Oct. 6, 1868, published by Fairbank, Benedict & Company in 1872 at Cleveland.

But during this period when Lucius Verus Bierce was entertaining his fellow citizens with fine orations and presentation speeches, Marcus Aurelius was lost in obscurity. It is difficult to trace his movements. It seems that he first came to Meiggs County, and located at a settlement of emigrants known as Horse Cave. There was never a town in Ohio by this name and none exists to-day. "Horse Cave" was simply the name of a settlement of very religious and pious emigrants from Connecticut, and got its name from the fact that the settlement was located on the "Horse Cave" stream, which is a tributary of Shade River, and has three branches — Gilmore Fork, Aumiller Fork and the main branch. The Horse Cave settlement, so-called, was about eight miles from the mouth of the stream, and it was here that Marcus Aurelius settled, and it was here, on the site of many a revivalist meeting, where prayers for the riddance of demon spirits made the nights vociferous, that Ambrose Bierce was born, on June 24, 1842. It was a strange circumstance that out of this settlement of the pious should come the scourge of piety, the arch-enemy of reverence and the author of a devil's dictionary.

Marcus Aurelius, following the herculean example set by his father, had a large family of children. Possessed of the same fondness for alliteration that graced his brother's orations, and, incidentally, not without a modicum of wit, he gave his children names the first letter of which began with "A." They were named: Abigail Bell, Amelia Josephine, Ann Maria, Addison Byron, Aurelius, Almeda Sophia, Albert Sherwood, Augustus, and Ambrose Gwinett. Marcus Aurelius, with his innumerable brood of children, moved from place to place in an effort to find a community so fertile that labor would be superfluous. They went from Meiggs County to a farm near Circleville, Ohio, where they lived for several years, and then finally drifted to Indiana, where they lived, first at Warsaw, and later at Elkhart. Marcus Aurelius died in 1876, and was buried at Elkhart.

It is apparent from even a casual examination of the history of the Western Reserve that its community life, particularly around Tallmadge and Akron, was intensely religious. To read such a volume as "Life in the Western Reserve" with its reiterated emphasis on missionary work and experience in salvation, would alone sufficiently indicate the evangelical tone of the community. To fortify this premise, one need only look at the harsh-featured faces, outlined in the old daguerreotypes, to know the character of the people who chanted their catechisms with the same high seriousness that they broke the soil. Little need be said of the early colonies at Pembroke and Cornwall. They were outposts of puritanism, and it was probably of some of his own ancestors that Ambrose Bierce wrote the lines:

"My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of felony,
Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers fried
Young witches and applied
Whips to the Quaker's hide,
And made him spring."

The Western Reserve was merely a replica of Connecticut. Its favorite university was modeled after Yale and its theology was that of the Connecticut divines. Not only was General Bierce typical of the military daring of his family, and its ardent espousal of the cause of popular liberty, but he was also representative of its deep religious convictions. The General would often cease his deliverance of patriotic orations long enough to drop a tear or two, and an hour of rhetoric, anent a fallen drunkard. In March of 1848, early in his forensic career, he delivered two orations at Akron over the remains of a drunkard, Peach, who was frozen to death on the banks of a canal. Another victim of demon rum who was also the victim of General Bierce’s flowery periods was a wretch by the name of Horace Darby, who died (God rot the thought!) of *delirium tremens* at Akron. Both of these discourses are in the archives of the Western Reserve Historical Society, and they would have furnished Ambrose great reading in the days when he lived within a hundred yards of the Graystone Winery at St. Helena, California, where the enormous vats were always redolent of that which the Crime Commission has now decreed is unfit for man to drink. Poor Bierce! his satire and wit, and taste for good Napa County wines, were forgotten with his disappearance, and the shadowy outline of General Bierce’s ghost must bow with approval when modern statesmen echo his words delivered over the bodies of Peach and Darby.

Ambrose Bierce’s first experiences were those of a boy on a Middle Western farm. He was on more intimate terms with his brother Albert than with any of his other brothers and sisters. He seems to have shown no feeling for the other members of his family, and to have made no pretense whatever of keeping in communication with them after leaving home. Consequently, very little is known of the other brothers and sisters. “Gus,” or “Dime” as he was called, stayed on the farm at Elkhart. One sister died in far-away Africa, where she was a missionary. The cause of her death is unknown, but it is altogether likely that some one may have given her a copy of “Fantastic Fables.” Addison, another brother, was a veritable colossus. He could perform great muscular feats, and was the “strong man” in a circus for some time. Albert alone was a congenial companion for Ambrose. They were inseparable during their boyhood and always entertained a genuine affection for each other, although in later years they quarreled.

Both Albert and Ambrose rather resented the religious atmosphere in which they were reared, and two more confirmed agnostics never came out of Indiana. Albert used to tell a story about how he and his brother took an old white horse down to the edge of a camp ground where a revival meeting was in process of generating considerable spiritual steam. They wrapped the old horse in straw, set it afire, and headed the blazing animal in the direction of the seekers for salvation. Perhaps this was the singular “white horse” apparition that Bierce wrote about and that Flora MacDonald Shearer made the subject of a poem in “The Legend of Aulus.”

Bierce was troubled in early life by fantasies, or apparitions, that passed darkly across his dreams. Some of them dated from childhood. One in particular that haunted his memory had the following setting: it was night; he was traveling in darkness through a fire-swept region. Pools of water occupied shallow depressions, as if the fire had been followed by rain. Dark clouds passed and revealed stars glittering in the sky. A crimson light burned in the West, which reminded him in later years of one of Doré’s paintings. As he approached this light, battlements loomed up on the horizon. Within this monstrous building, desertion reigned. Wandering around the building, he finally came to a large room where the same phantasmagorical light was gleaming. He sensed eternity in the light and tried to express the feeling later in the lines:

“Man is long ages dead in every zone,
The angels all are gone to graves unknown;
The devils, too, are cold enough at last,
And God lies dead before the great white throne!”

Upon a bed in the room a figure lay. He gazed down into its staring eyes and found that the eyes and features were his own! It was a singular experience and troubled him by its recurrence.

His early schooling was very rudimentary. With his brother Albert he attended a rural school where education was an improvised process. Each pupil was supposed to bring a book; seldom was a student able to bring more than one book, and it mattered not at all what type of volume he brought. It was from the library, gathered in this haphazard manner, that education was doled out to the pupils. The Bierce brothers contributed a volume, significant in the light of the younger Bierce’s writings in later years: “The Three Spaniards.” Both brothers, however, remembered that their father was a rather well read man and that he possessed a good library for a man of his circumstances.

But the influence of their father was always secondary to that of General Lucius Verus Bierce, their “illustrious” uncle, with his military gestures, gorgeous rhetoric, and fiery idealism. He it was who inspired Ambrose Bierce. In later years Bierce frankly admitted that he had modeled his career after that of his uncle. Marcus Aurelius, the father of the boys, was dogged by a remorseless fate and a prolific spouse. Undoubtedly a man of native intelligence, courage and ability equal to that of his brother Lucius, he was never other than a poor farmer. His career, after leaving Connecticut for Ohio, might be summed up as consisting of meager acres and many children. Ambrose naturally resented this state of affairs; he was proud and haughty, even as a boy, and was rather contemptuous of his parents. This natural bent was fostered by the days which he spent with his uncle, who was interested in him. Later, when Ambrose was about seventeen, his uncle arranged for his attendance at Kentucky Military Institute. It is impossible to verify the duration of Bierce’s stay at Kentucky, for the early records of the institute have been destroyed by fire. But that he did attend during the year 1859 is borne out by correspondence in my possession with a former classmate of Bierce's, William E. Guy.

It is scarcely necessary to point out the character of Kentucky Military Institute, particularly during the years immediately following its establishment in 1847. It was one of the highest class institutions of its kind in this country, and it was there that Bierce acquired his fine military bearing, always so impressive, and it was there that he was drilled in military fundamentals. Those who have had occasion to examine the maps that Bierce prepared during the Civil War have invariably been amazed by their fine draftsmanship. The maps were not the work of a novice, and it is apparent that he acquired at least the first principles of topographical engineering while at the academy. The years at the school only emphasized Bierce's sense of superiority; they only alienated him further from his family and early life. When he returned to Indiana in 1860, he was charged with impatience and eager for adventure.

Bierce always resented the limitations of his youth, although he never wasted much time over the incidents of fate. After the war he became a new individual and determined to forget the squalid landscape of his youth. During the summer months, and at odd moments, he had worked on the farm, in a saloon, and in a brickyard. This brickyard story was one that Joaquin Miller had heard and he would occasionally repeat it to people in the West, much to Bierce's annoyance. Some suggestion of the privations and meagerness of Bierce's early life may be found in the memoirs collected by Mr. Maurice Frink. ("A Sidelight on Ambrose Bierce," *Book Notes,* August-September, 1923.) Bierce never hesitated to speak spitefully of his boyhood, and never loathed anything quite so much as the horrors of a small, rural community, encased, as such Middle Western communities are, in a cocoon of finely spun, impenetrable limitations. Such a life was provincial to an almost unbelievable degree, and it left its imprint on American character of the period. The war came just in time for Bierce. He was fortunate in escaping so soon to the war and in leaving immediately for California at its close, for whatever may have been the limitations of San Francisco in the sixties, it must be conceded that the life there was infinitely more interesting than the life at Elkhart, Indiana, *circa,* 1850.

Bierce's own record of his boyhood is perhaps best summed up in some lines, taken from *The Wasp,* November 3, 1883:

"With what anguish of mind I remember my childhood,
Recalled in the light of a knowledge since gained;
The malarious farm, the wet, fungus grown wildwood,
The chills then contracted that since have remained.

The scum-covered duck pond, the pigstye close by it,
The ditch where the sour-smelling house drainage fell,
The damp, shaded dwelling, the foul barnyard nigh it,” *etc.*

The specific character of the images, the sharpness of the recollection after a period of forty years, sufficiently show the repellence which he felt for every vestige of that early experience that lingered in his memory.

His attitude towards his youth was characteristic of the man: he calmly decided to forget about the experience, and not to mention or refer to it again. It was a closed chapter. He did not whine or sniffle about early limitations; he ignored them and went his way. Of course, in later years, he was rather bitter about his entire life. He once remarked to George Sterling that his parents had been “unwashed savages.” This opinion was undoubtedly a passing irritation. But however unpleasant and uninteresting the early days may have been, the war was to destroy all memory of them, and the trip across the plains was to mitigate their recollection. The dazzling, shimmering splendor of the Shoshone falls and the swift, sharp beauty of the Golden Gate, would obliterate these images of farmyards. It was a fortunate escape. Whatever the horrors of the war may have been, they were nothing when compared with the horrors of an Indiana farm in 1850.

CHAPTER II. WAR DAYS 1861

“1861-
Armed year! year of the struggle!
Hurrying, crashing, sad, distracted year.”

WHITMAN

THERE was indeed something sad and distracted about the year 1861. All the wild, hurried rumors that had been gathering force and momentum during the preceding years broke with a resounding roar in the firing on Fort Sumter. Throughout the late fifties, abolitionist propaganda had been actively circulated in the North, and it is not surprising to find that General Lucius V. Bierce, who had so vigorously championed the patriots of Canada, was in the vanguard of the movement to strike the shackles from the slaves. John Brown was a friend of General Bierce and had gone to Akron to receive arms and supplies for his expeditions in Kansas. General Bierce managed to gain possession of the arms and ammunition of a disbanded company of militia of the State of Ohio. He turned these supplies over to Brown, and, as a personal talisman, gave to Brown the pistols and broadswords which he had used in the “Grand Eagles” and on which were engraved the emblem of that organization. These were the identical weapons used in the Pottawatomie affair. The violence of General Bierce’s abolitionist sentiments must have reached the ears of his admiring nephew, for the General left doubt in the minds of none as to where he stood on the issue of slavery. As an attorney he had occasion, not infrequently, to confer with abolitionists, and he participated, as counsel, in several of the leading cases involving the status of fugitive slaves. He was known throughout the Middle-West as a fearless abolitionist.

On the fatal 2nd day of December, 1859, when John Brown was executed, General Bierce appeared before the Court of Common Pleas at Akron, Ohio, and moved its adjournment. Court adjourned forthwith. At twelve o’clock noon all the stores were closed, bells tolled for an hour, and a flag, draped in mourning, was suspended from Empire Hall. That evening an enormous mass meeting was held in the Hall, at which General Bierce delivered an oration on the death of John Brown. His impassioned, violently emphatic denunciation of the events which had preceded the Harper's Ferry tragedy left nothing to be desired. Aside from its rhetorical manner, the address shows careful preparation and no little skill in the art of mobbaiting. The General could be as brusque and harsh in his utterance as his nephew came to be cruelly satirical. In exposing the so-called "valor" of the Virginians, the General said, during the course of his oration: "The dead of Brown's army lay unburied, and the citizen soldiery exhibited their feats of valor on the dead bodies. The head of one seen floating in the Potomac drew a general fire from a Volunteer Company of the 'first families,' exhibiting a surplus of heroism conclusively proving that they feared no foe more than three days after he was dead." In red-white-and-blue periods that waved and almost fired, the General swept forward to the climax of his plea. Partisan in his viewpoint, bitterly unjust and dogmatic in certain passages, the old warrior was undeniably eloquent in his vehement demand that justice be done. He closed his oration with these lines:

"The tragedy of Brown's is freighted with awful lessons and consequences. It is like the clock striking the fatal hour that begins a new era in the conflict with slavery. Men like Brown may die, but their acts and principles will live forever. Call it fanaticism, folly, madness, wickedness, but until virtue becomes fanaticism, divine wisdom folly, obedience to God madness, and piety wickedness, John Brown, inspired with these high and holy teachings, will rise up before the world with his calm, marble features, more terrible in death, and defeat, than in life and victory. It is one of those acts of madness which history cherishes and poetry loves forever to adorn with her choicest wreaths of laurel."

Whether it was with a sense of the impending catastrophe in mind or not, Ambrose left military school, as nearly as can be ascertained, during this same year, 1859. His early, pre-war state of mind was entirely idealistic. What boy would be other than idealistic with an uncle making fervid speeches to excited mobs who seemed to sense that the clouds of war were inevitably gathering? The fiery zeal of the old General was reflected in the boy of nineteen, who thought that the war was utterly a war of ideals and that the might of right was invincible.

Nor was the General entirely a forensic patriot. On April 15, 1861, when President Lincoln rather calmly announced that the enforcement of the laws of the Union was meeting with some opposition in the states of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, and requested a volunteer force of seventy-five thousand to secure respect for the Union of the states and its laws, General Bierce was one of the first to respond. Although he was over sixty years of age, he organized and equipped two companies of marines at his own expense, supervised their drill work himself, and personally delivered them over to the government officials at the Washington navy-yards. On returning to Ohio, he organized two companies of artillery and would have led them into action himself but for his appointment as assistant adjutant-general of volunteers by President Lincoln.

The interest with which his nephews were following his work is attested by the fact that Albert Bierce enrolled in the 18th Ohio Field Artillery, one of the companies organized by General Bierce. Ambrose, however, had not waited for his uncle to return from Washington, but had enlisted immediately upon the call for volunteers, the date of his enrollment being April 19, 1861. He volunteered for the “three months” service at Elkhart and was assigned to Company C, 9th Indiana Infantry. His regiment trained at Camp Colfax and drilled in civilian clothes. It was a flushed and feverish period of pre-war — *The Summit Beacon*, Akron, Ohio, December 7, 1859. activity. Hostilities had broken out, to be sure, but no one realized the consequences; it was a period of bugles and drums, flashing colors, and the high promise of glory. It was confidently boasted that three months alone would suffice to down the rebel. The young men of the 9th Indiana were still raw recruits, when, in May of 1861, they were ferried across the Ohio River and received their baptism of fire at the engagement of Philippi under Capt. George McClellan.

At the end of the three months’ period of service the Confederates were still at large. It was then rather somberly forecast that three years would be required for the task of subduing the rebellion. Accordingly, Bierce reënlisted at LaPorte, Indiana, on August 27th, 1861, in the same company he had joined in April. He was enrolled this time, however, as sergeant of Company C. The date of his actual muster into service was September 5, 1861. He was to remain sergeant until one year later, when he was infinitely promoted to the rank of sergeant-major.

During the three months’ service, the 9th Indiana was sent into Virginia. Years later Bierce spent a summer at Aurora, West Virginia, near the Maryland line, overlooking the Cheat River Valley in the Allegheny Mountains. He wrote an account of the experience which was read to the veterans of his regiment who assembled at Logansport, Indiana, October, 1904, in reunion. Of this Cheat River Valley, the scene of their early soldiering, he wrote: “That region had ever since been to me, as I suppose it has to you, a kind of dreamland. I was reluctant to descend into it for fear of dispelling the illusion, but finally I did so, and passed a few of the most interesting Weeks of my life, following the track of the Ninth, visiting its camps, the forts that it helped to build, those that it assisted to take, or try to take, the graves of the fallen and those of the misguided gentlemen whom it sent to their long rest, and who, doubtless, sleep not less soundly than the others." It was an enchanted land for Bierce, and he often revisited the scenes of his first soldiering. It is the background for two of his stories: "A Horseman in the Sky" and "The Story of a Conscience."

If, years later, it was still so fascinating, what must have been its charm at nineteen?

The first engagements of the war were sham battles; *opéra bouffe* affairs. At Philippi the Ninth came charging down a road into the little town, thinking it had the enemy surrounded, when, as a matter of fact, it was charging into his arms. A battery of guns posted on a hill began to shell the town, and, incidentally, to shell its own men. This was an incident that Bierce was later to use in a dramatic story: "One Kind of Officer." About the only effect the shelling had, however, in real life, was to take the leg off a Confederate. Bierce found the gentleman in 1903 still living near Philippi, but, as he added, "still minus the leg; no new one had grown on."

In this region, too, was the town of Belington, then just a village crossroads with a blacksmith shop. Two or three miles out from this town the regiment engaged in a sharp exchange of arms known as the Battle of Laurel Hill. Garnett, a Confederate officer, had erected some breastworks and the Union forces peppered away without any definite plan of attack, and, for the most part, without orders. It was in a forest, and Bierce found a clump of trees where, "just before nightfall one day occurred the one really sharp little fight that we had. It has been represented as a victory for us, but it was not. A few dozen of us, who had been swapping shots with the enemy's skirmishers, grew tired of the resultless battle, and by a common impulse, and I think without orders or officers, ran forward into the woods and attacked the Confederate works. We did well enough, considering the hopeless folly of the movement, but we came out of the woods faster than we went in, a good deal. This was the affair in which Corporal Dyson Boothroyd of Company 'A' fell with a mortal wound. I found the very rock against which he lay. *Our camp is now a race track."* Bierce never failed to record the ironies that time invariably worked. The field of a heroic battle in ten years became a race track. Where monuments marked the graves of fallen heroes, cowards had fled the ground. Time was an echoing irony.

Bierce's account of the engagement at Belington was written, however, with his customary modesty, for it omitted an act of heroism on his part. It seems that during the fighting, which lasted for several days, Company C charged forward and took an advanced position known as Girard Hill, where they were exposed to a deadly fire. When about fifteen steps from the fortifications of the enemy, Corporal Dyson Boothroyd was shot through the neck and fell, unable to move.

Bierce was near, picked Boothroyd up and carried him more than one hundred yards in the open under a galling fire, and succeeded in getting to safety. No officer was in sight to report the rescue, and Bierce always refused to mention the occurrence, but it was recorded in an Indiana history of the War, and was remembered by his old friend, Judge C. F. Moore.

Upon the reorganization of the regiment for the three years' service, it returned to the same region. The Cheat River Valley was a strategic point and both armies guarded the old Staunton and Parkersburg turnpike, the Confederates at the southern outlet and the Union forces at the north. The young soldiers of the Ninth were so anxious lest they be encircled that they built their camp and fortress straddling the road. Here, during the months of'61, they could gaze across the valley and watch the blue smoke of Confederate camp fires curling lazily towards heaven in a perfect sky.

It was on the return of the Ninth, after the three months' service, that the affairs of Green Brier and Buffalo Mountain occurred. Green Brier was fought while they were encamped at Huttonsville, near the foot of the Cheat Mountains. The Confederates had erected breastworks near Green Brier River and an attack was planned which resulted in the Union forces being repulsed with heavy losses. These early years of the war were not entirely a matter of pleasant marching through forests, for Green Brier took the first heavy toll of the war. Then, too, Buffalo Mountain was a sharp battle. It occurred at the southern end of the valley. "Here," as Bierce wrote, "the regiment had its hardest fight in Western Virginia, and was most gloriously thrashed. When I saw the place (with better opportunities for observation than we had then), I knew why. The works are skillfully constructed and nearly a half mile in length, with placements for several batteries. They are built on a narrow ridge and are hardly more than one hundred and fifty yards wide at any point. At the rear, where our attack was made, (after the garrison having defeated our cooperating force in front, and got 'good and ready for us to surprise them), there was but one approach and that by way of a narrow road, through acres of slashed timber, impenetrable to a cat. The trunks of the trees are still there, all pointing away from the fort, all decaying and none of them having even their largest branches. A big head-log across the embrasure commanding the road is so rotten that one can pick it to pieces with the fingers. I fancy the Yankee bullets have all been picked out of it; I found none. The slashed timber, which prevented us from attacking in line, saved our lives, — most of them — when we attacked in column. We took cover in it and pot-shotted the fellows behind the parapet all day, as I recollect it, and then withdrew and began our long retreat in a frame of mind that would have done credit to an imp of Satan. The road that penetrated the slashed timber is easily traced; I recognize the spot where Capt. Madden fell, at the extreme head of the column. Lord! how close to the works it was — I had thought it farther away.” Always something of a professional militarist, as well he might be with such a soldierly tradition, Bierce took a keen interest in recounting manoeuvers, attacks, strategies and campaigns. The memories of action were always more vividly recalled, in later years, than the impressions of the imagination. Strange as it may seem, his war writing grew more concerned with the details and mechanics of war the older he grew. His best imaginative work about the war was done early in his career.

It was a magical interlude for these young soldiers, this year among the pines and firs. Full of the dreams of valorousness inspired by a not-too-dangerous war (they were to know a very different form of fighting at Shiloh), they talked excitedly of promotion, honor and glory. It was an almost idyllic period. The setting was perfect and life was charged with a pleasant anticipation of danger. Bierce always referred to the Cheat Mountains as the “Delectable Mountains” and they were touched in his imagination with the bright colors of romance. Life was an unsheathed sword, brilliant in the sun with its sharp edge cutting the blue of the sky. How could he have helped being romantic, this nineteen-year-old sergeant? To these young farmer boys (and the men of his company were quite young), fresh from the low, flat regions of Indiana and Ohio, there was magic in the mountains. Many of them had never seen a mountain before, and now they were perched at the crest of the Alleghenies watching the “faint graying of the blue above the main range — the smoke of an enemy’s camp.” As Bierce wrote of the experience later *(Collected Works*, Volume I, Page 228): “The flatlanders who invaded the Cheat Mountain country had been suckled in another creed, and to them western Virginia — there was, as yet, no West Virginia — was an enchanted land. How we reveled in its savage beauties! With what pure delight we inhaled its fragrances of spruce and pine! How we stared with something like awe at its clumps of laurel! — real laurel, as we understood the matter, whose foliage had been once accounted excellent for the heads of illustrious Romans and such — mayhap to reduce the swelling. We carved its roots into finger-rings and pipes. We gathered spruce-gum and sent it to our sweethearts in letters. We ascended every hill within our picket lines and called it a ‘peak’.”

Throughout the winter of’62, they stayed on in this Enchanted Land, hunting and drilling and playing at war. There were bear and deer in quantity and the snow came in flurries about the pines. It was not entirely a desultory winter. To make a little excitement, the regiment would occasionally engage in “affairs of outposts.” They would make miniature “campaigns” against the enemy, and were invariably driven back across the snow-carpeted valley. Bierce wrote an account of their return from one of these periodic forays for his *Collected Works* (Volume I, Page 232). “All one bright wintry day we marched down from our eyrie; all one bright wintry night we climbed the great ridge opposite. *How romantic it was;* the sunset valleys full of visible sleep; the glades suffused and interpenetrated with moonlight; the long valley of the Green Brier stretching away to we knew not what silent cities; the river itself unseen under its ‘astral body’ of mist!” (The italics are mine.) This is a typical bit of Biercian reminiscence; flooded with romantic sentiment for the “glad” days of the war, when the quality of life was pitched higher and there was a spice of danger and daring and romance to life. But it was not all romance, even during the halcyon days of the war. On returning from one of these expeditions, they found that the faces were gone from the dead bodies of their fallen comrades — eaten away by the wild swine of the mountains!

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WITH the coming of spring, the regiment was ordered west, and it said farewell to the Enchanted Land for many a day, some to see it never again. Sergeant Bierce was not to see it until nearly fifty years later, when all life had swept past and he romantically wished that he had fallen with the brave chaps like Captain Madden and Corporal Boothroyd, who met violent deaths and escaped the “contracting circle” of boredom and spiritual disintegration. Gone were the beautiful days in the mountains and in their stead:

“By Pittsburg Landing, the turbid Tennessee
Sucks against black, soaked spiles with soil-colored waters.
Country of muddy rivers, somber and swollen,
Country of bronze wild turkeys and catfish-fries
And brushpile landings going back to the brush.”

The face of War was no longer averted. The hour of revealment had struck.

Camped on a triangle of land was General Grant’s Army of the Tennessee. Eight or ten miles distant at Savannah was General Buell with the rest of the Union forces of the West, and attached to his division was the Ninth Indiana. Grant had not waited for Buell to arrive from Savannah, but had impatiently crossed the river at Pittsburg Landing and was camped on the enemy’s side of the river, with his army backed against the rushing, turbulent waters of the Tennessee. It was springtime and the river was roaring to its banks. Thus the scene. The date was April 6, 1862, and it was Sunday morning, but no church bells were ringing at Shiloh Chapel. The sky was still indolent with sleep when General Johnston's swarming hordes of gray Confederates, furious with recent defeats, fell upon Grant's slumbering army. Men rushed out naked from tents to die on waiting bayonets; a roaring confusion supplanted the tranquillity of an April dawn.

Far away at Savannah, General Grant realized his folly and rushed to join his men huddled up against the banks of the Tennessee. That morning at Savannah, Bierce noted that "the flag hanging limp and lifeless at headquarters was seen to lift itself spiritedly from the staff. At the same instant was heard a dull, distant sound like the heavy breathing of some great animal below the horizon. The Flag lifted its head to listen." Men instinctively rushed to arms; mess-cooks lifted camp kettles off the fire before breakfast; mounted orderlies disappeared in the distance; headquarters was a swarming hive of activity. Within a few seconds General Buell's army was running, actually running, the eight miles to Pittsburg Landing. As they approached they heard "the strong, full pulse of the fever of battle," the "assembly call of the bugles" which "goes to the heart as wine and stirs the blood like the kisses of a beautiful woman. Who that has heard it calling to him above the grumble of great guns can forget the wild intoxication of its music?" They were nearing Shiloh. Such a race was not to be run again during the war. Some regiments lost a third of their number from fatigue. As they rushed nearer and nearer the Landing, the rumble of the guns shook the earth with a slow, terrific energy.

Rushing breathless, arms flying, they topped the last intervening hill and a strange sight met their gaze. "Before us ran the turbulent river, vexed with plunging shells and obscured in spots by blue sheets of low-lying smoke. The two little steamers were doing their duty well. They came over to us empty and went back crowded, sitting very low in the water, apparently on the point of capsizing. The farther edge of the water could not be seen; the boats came out of obscurity, took on their passengers and vanished in the darkness. But on the heights above, the battle was burning brightly enough; a thousand lights kindled and expired every second of time. There were broad flushings in the sky, against which the branches of the trees showed black. Suddenly flames burst out here and there, single and in dozens. Fleeting streaks of fire crossed over to us by way of welcome." It was dusk now. Buell's forces had arrived just in time. Left alone for two hours more, the remainder of General Grant's army would have been annihilated. Against the red flare at the bluff's edge "could be seen moving black figures, singularly distinct but apparently no longer than a thumb. They seemed to me ludicrously like the fingers of demons in old allegorical prints of hell."

This, then, was Bierce's first glimpse of Shiloh. The quotations are taken from "What! Saw of Shiloh," a paper that he began in England, printed in *The Wasp*, reprinted in *The Examiner*, and later carried over into his "Collected Works" (Volume I, page 234). It represents some of his best war writing, although it is slightly marred by that elegant diction which he inherited from a pompous age and just succeeded in saving from the purple emptiness of the rhetorical flourish.

At night "we could just discern the black bodies of the boats, looking very much like turtles. But when they let off their big guns there was a conflagration. The river shuddered in its banks, and hurried on, bloody, wounded, terrified." The regiment was ferried across the river on board a little steamboat. Crossing the river in the rays of a "sad, red, splendid sunset," Bierce noticed the figure of a woman standing on the upper deck. "She stood on the upper deck with the red blaze of battle bathing her beautiful face, the twinkle of a thousand rifles mirrored in her eyes; and displaying a small ivory-handled pistol, she told me in a sentence punctuated by the thunder of great guns that if it came to the worst she would do her duty like a man! I am proud to remember that I took off my hat to this little fool."

Such was the sense of battle that Bierce knew and loved. The sketch was written prior to the series of war stories that were to make his fame as a "realist." Whether it was a result of his military training, or whether the idea was simply a part of the times, Bierce firmly believed in a universe of rigid and immutable law. The principles of morality were to be determined with mathematical certainty, and since they could be calculated with such certainty, their violation would not be tolerated. Poetry was to be written only in accordance with the strictest "laws" of prosody. Art was a matter of fixed principles. The writer must hue to the formula. He must create a "dominant" impression; he must be dramatic. It was a theory of life and art that emphasized the formal; existence was a pattern that could be unerringly traced. There was no understanding of convictions as merely psychological states of mind; the world was a hard and fast equation and the idea of its appearance as discontinuous phenomena was unthinkable. Hence Bierce's short stories are warped to fit a pattern. The very meagerness of his work is attributable to the fact that he could obtain few incidents sufficiently dramatic to fit his theory. His war stories are seldom realistic. But so great was his force as a personality, that one can almost *feel* him trying to escape from the hard framework of his stories. Thus it becomes necessary to turn to such pieces as "Shiloh" to get his genuine reaction to war; the stories are misleading, colored as they are by artifice and made to a pattern.

Reverting to his picture of Shiloh, he noticed the thousands of men huddled under the bluff on the other side of the river as the boat neared the shore. These men who huddled in abject terror were beaten and cowed. They were paralyzed by the shock of that early morning attack; no force could have driven them up the bluff and onto the fatal plateau above. When the boat landed, the disembarking Ninth had to beat these poor devils back with rifle stocks. By the time the regiment reached the plateau, the firing had largely ceased for the day. Occasionally there would be a blaze of firing or a shell would pass overhead. The gunboats continued to shell the enemy. The regiments marched through the night, shifting position, not knowing where they were going, hearing much whispering from the smoke-grimed faces of the men who had been on the plateau during the day. And then it began to rain. They marched through a rain-drenched forest, and at dawn were arrayed in battle formation facing a clearing. Then came “assembly.”

“It was directly before us. It rose with a low, clear, deliberate warble, and seemed to float in the gray sky like the note of a lark. — As it died away I observed that the atmosphere had suffered a change; despite the equilibrium established by the storm, it was electric. Wings were growing on blistered feet. Bruised muscles and jolted bones, shoulders pounded by the cruel knapsacks, eyelids leaden from lack of sleep, — all were pervaded by the subtle fluid, all were unconscious of their clay.”

The last vestiges of the forest were passed and they came upon the open fields where the battle had raged the previous day. It had been a clearing, slightly forested, but the battle had stripped it of vegetation; not a tree had escaped. Pools of rainwater filled the depressions of the earth, “discs of rainwater tinged with blood.” The force of the battle was shown by the leafless trees, the blackened stumps. Knapsacks were strewn about and the débris of battle littered the field. The bodies of dead horses were pitched against trees and cannon cases; ammunition wagons were capsized; and broken timbers dotted the ground as though thrown about by the wind of a hurricane. Men? “There were men enough; all dead, apparently, except one, who lay near where I halted my platoon to await the slower movements of the line — a Federal sergeant, variously hurt, who had been a fine giant in his time. He lay face upward, taking in his breath in convulsive, rattling snorts, and blowing it out in sputters of froth which crawled creamily down his cheek, piling itself alongside his neck and ears. A bullet had clipped a groove in his skull, above the temple; from this the brain protruded in bosses, dropping off in flakes and strings.”

Still they encountered none of the enemy; the word ran along the line that the Confederates had left in the night. The line surged forward across the clearing. “Then, — I can’t describe it — the forest seemed all at once to flame up and disappear with a crash like that of a great wave upon the beach — a crash that expired in hot hissings, and the sickening ‘spat’ of lead against flesh.” Back across the clearing they retreated, spattered with the mud tossed up by bullets and shells. Some field pieces were rushed into position and had to be guarded. No more charges into the smoking jungle of the battle, but a seemingly interminable period of crouching beside the guns that roared away with unabating fury. Finally, when the last of the guns had been demolished by the fire of the enemy, Bierce’s company moved into a nearby wood.

He obtained leave to visit a ravine where a company of Illinois soldiers had been surrounded, and, refusing to surrender, had been shot to the man. The woods had caught fire and the bodies had been cremated. “They lay, half buried in ashes; some in the unlovely looseness of attitude denoting sudden death by the bullet, but by far the greater number in postures of agony that told of the tormenting flames. Their clothing was half burnt away — their hair and beard entirely; the rain had come too late to save their nails. Some were swollen to double girth; others shriveled to manikins. According to degree of exposure, their faces were bloated and black or yellow and shrunken. The contraction of muscles which had given claws for hands had cursed each countenance with a hideous grin. Faugh! I cannot catalogue the charms of these gallant gentlemen who had got what they enlisted for.”

When he rejoined his company, his “reprehensible curiosity” satisfied, he found that the battle raged on, with charge after charge rolling in irregular waves across the field only to be driven back by deadly rifle fire. It was always to be so: the heroic giving way to the prosaic. Suddenly a great lull came. “Had we become stone deaf? See; here comes a stretcher-bearer, and there a surgeon! Good heavens! a chaplain! The battle indeed was at an end.” Thus closed the day at Shiloh.

Bierce never forgot that first major battle. It was imperishably etched in his memory. He never could shake the grip that those fifteen hours had on his soul. He made war story after war story based on some incident garnered from his experience at Shiloh. The battle meant something more to him than just a shocking experience. He had participated in many engagements before and the following years were replete with battles equally severe. But Shiloh came to signify the turning point in his life. He wrote of it sadly, lovingly, as though upon its blood-drenched fields he had lost the perishable illusion of youth. In those hours of battle he saw the pageantry of the heroic go down to unutterable defeat before the ruthless idiocy of chance. The dark rioting forces of an unseen fate rolled across that plateau. Men and mules were reduced to a mass of burning and indistinguishable flesh; arms and legs, bits of steel, smoked-grimed rifles, and blood-soaked uniforms, were covered with the ashes of a great, blind impartiality. The experience seared a white-hot streak across his memory, like the trace of the scalp-wound he received at Kenesaw Mountain.

Whatever he was to do or be, the memory of Shiloh would not fade. It would serve forever as a token to his mind that forces were at work in the world, subtle elements of the tragic, that spelt the inevitable and eternal undoing of the brave, the valiant and the heroic. It might mean the sharp, swift, accidental thrust of a bayonet, or the malice of a friend, the embittering neagerness of experience, or the shocking loneliness of death. But it was all a game dealt out by this hand unseen, this face averted, that mocked at animate and inanimate alike. It was not the thought of Death, for its image was lovely and kind. It was the sense of an indescribable malevolence that was mixed up in a strangely inseparable manner with the good and beautiful. Life was a battle of imponderables in which nothingness triumphed. Here was the "waste land" that he could never cross; this was the experience that wedded horror and beauty forever and inseparably in his thoughts. No matter what historians might say, Confederate victory or Union triumph, Shiloh meant to Bierce the triumph of chance. As he wrote years later in *The Examiner,* (Aug. 31, 1889): "I believe that in the word 'chance,' we have the human name of a malign and soulless intelligence bestirring himself in earthly affairs with the brute unrest of Euceladus underneath his mountain."

Later Bierce transposed the experience. In the course of time the war became a pleasant memory. Wearying of thrusting at shadows, he waxed poetical over Shiloh and saw in it the trivial lifted to the grandeur of tragedy. The recollection of it tasted sweet and he could write:

> "O days when all the world was beautiful and strange; when unfamiliar constellations burned in the Southern midnights, and the mocking-bird poured out his heart in the moon-gilded magnolia; when there was something new under a new sun; will your fine, far memories *ever cease* to lay contrasting pictures athwart the harsher features of this later world, accentuating the ugliness of the longer and tamer life?
>
> Is it not strange that the phantoms of a blood-stained period have so fair a grace and look with so tender eyes? — that I recall with difficulty the danger and death and horrors of the time, and without effort all that was gracious and picturesque?"

It was ever so, this recollection of the war typified by "Shiloh," that tormented ("will your memories *ever cease")* his thoughts with contrasting images of horror and beauty. He never thought of the one without thinking of the other. Then, too, the memory created through the years an ever present consciousness of death, a mocking well of echoes that belittled every effort to which he turned his hand. What mattered ambitions, love, honor, gratitude, friends? Is it to be marveled by any sane or thoughtful person, that this man was something of a cynic? Must the eminent doctors of abnormal psychology make a “sadist” of this man who sometimes thought of severed limbs, broken skulls and the agonies of death? In his experiences during the war, prior to his majority, may be found the origin of his sense of an engulfing futility, a belittling fate, of the horrible allied with the beautiful. He was shocked into an attitude which became a habit. He could no more relax the tension of his mind, after that experience, than he could remove the scar from his scalp. If Dr. Goldberg had suggested that he was a “poet” instead of a sadist, he would have come much closer to the facts.

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FAR down the Tennessee River a woman was seeing something of Shiloh. Josephine Clifford, the “Jo” of those most charming of Bierce letters, was on board a steamer which her brother, Albert, piloted up and down the river, bringing the wounded from Shiloh. Of these scenes, she wrote to Bierce in later years: “it was a long procession of litters and stretchers moving from the steamer lying at the levee at St. Louis to the hastily erected military hospital farther uptown. Most of the wounded soldiers had their faces covered; but wherever a hand was seen, the skin on it was shriveled and wrinkled, from the rain that had fallen on these poor fellows so long.” She wrote this long afterwards, when these two strange souls came to know each other in the twilight of their lives at Wrights. They met and talked in the deep quiet of the Santa Cruz Mountains, when they were white with age. He argued to her, with studied disdain and implacable certainty, that nothing mattered, but he could never shake her beautiful belief that tenderness would have its triumph. It was a far cry from Shiloh to Wrights, as though the currents that had so nearly touched in 1862 were finally to drift close enough together in 1898 to permit of a final and belated whispering. But by 1898 they were both victims of the tragedy of time and rather regretted that they had survived Shiloh, for it had touched them deeply and unforgettably.

CHAPTER III. WAR DAYS 1862-1865

After Shiloh both armies were shocked into a state of watchful waiting, with minor engagements throughout the summer. In the fall of 1862, General Beauregard was removed from command of the Confederate forces in the West and the energetic Braxton Bragg replaced him. General Bragg immediately carried into execution the campaign which resulted in the sacking of Kentucky and the determination, on the part of the North, to close up the west. The Ninth Indiana participated in the severe fighting around Corinth and Perryville, leading up to the fall of Nashville. When Thomas and his army were besieged in Nashville, General Hood's army was in the precarious position of having to shell a Southern city. Every shell fired might mean the demolition of the gunner's home. That Bierce appreciated the horror of the situation is shown by "The Major's Tale" ("Collected Works," Vol. VIII, page 65), and by "The Affairs at Coulter's Watch."

Shortly after the Battle of Corinth, Bierce had been commissioned Second Lieutenant (November 25th, 1862), and during the Nashville campaign he was assigned to the staff of General Sam Beatty of Ohio. One day while Beatty's forces were scattered in pursuit of the enemy, it was discovered that a detached brigade held a peculiarly exposed position some ten miles from headquarters. General Beatty saw that the brigade was imperiled, or so he thought, and dispatched some reserves to its assistance. Bierce was directed to pilot this expedition to the rescue. As he told the story:

"I never felt so brave in all my life. I rode a hundred yards in advance, prepared to expostulate single handed with the victorious enemy at whatever point I might encounter him. I dashed forward through every open space into every suspicious looking wood and spurred to the crest of every hill, exposing myself recklessly to draw the Confederate fire and disclose their position. I told the commander of the relief column that he need not throw out any advance guard as a precaution against the ambuscade — I would myself act in that perilous capacity, and by driving in the rebel skirmishers gain time for him to form his line of battle in case I should not be numerically strong enough to scoop on the entire opposition at one wild dash. I begged him, however, to recover my body if I fell."

When the reserves arrived, however, it was found that the danger was over and that their heroic movement had been in vain. Despite the superfluous heroism, Bierce was mentioned in general orders for his gallantry on this occasion. It is interesting to note that out of this incident he evolved, “A Son of the Gods,” perhaps his most popular story. But with what changes! The story is romanticized to an unbelievable degree; the young officer who rides in advance of the command to draw the enemy’s fire is shot down and rises to salute his comrades while two armies stand breathless and agog at his heroism! The gallant fellow then dies and our hearts are broken. It is a good illustration of how Bierce invariably chose the wrong incident for his stories. To see his great energy and vitality being cramped and beaten into the obsolete riggings of the story form is a pitiful sight. After Poe the story must be “unusual”; it must be weird. All of Mr. Bierce’s western imitators, W. C. Morrow, R. D. Milne, E. H. Clough and Emma Frances Dawson, were of the same opinion. The short story became a mechanical toy, devoid of grace, ease and charm. The characters spoke with an elegance not of this earth. There was never a more flagrant offender on the score of unnatural dialogue than Bierce. In his fanatical effort to escape the commonplace, he made his characters talk in a diction that suggests nothing so much as the sepulchral conversation of very elegant and romantic ghosts.

The day after Christmas, having permitted his soldiers to muse over the birth of their Lord and Savior twenty-four hours, General Rosecrans left Nashville with a large force and set out to drive Bragg south. The movement culminated in the Battle of Stone River, which proved to be one of the fiercest battles of the year. Towards the end of that day of hard fighting, the Ninth Indiana was stationed behind a railroad embankment. As dusk descended on the scene, Major Braden, who was commanding the regiment, fell seriously wounded. Sergeant N. V. Bowers remembered that it was Bierce who caught the Major in his arms and carried him back to a place of safety. Stone River, or Murfreesboro, as it was sometimes called, was a holocaust of slaughter: General Breckenridge lost two thousand men in the space of a few minutes. It became a dark memory for Bierce.

He revisited the scene in the winter of his life, and was amazed to stand in the enveloping and unbelievable silence of the night on a ridge that had once been trampled with the feet of marching armies. He could read, through the dim unreality of twilight, the inscription on an elaborate monument in the center of the field: “Hazen’s Brigade, To the Memory of Its Soldiers Who Fell at Stone River, December 31, 1862.” It was like reading the inscription on his own tomb. It was such an amazing experience to stand on this field of death alone, that he suddenly felt all the sensations of the battle come surging upon him. Had it actually happened? But this period of fifty intervening years, was it not really the part that was grotesquely unreal? He could not be sure about these shifting scenes, and he wrote “A Resumed Identity.” It is the story of a lieutenant on Hazen’s staff, who awoke on the battlefield years later and thought that the fighting still raged. That the experience, with its feeling of a lost reality, was genuine and personal is borne out by the fact that the story did not appear in the early editions. It was written after his residence in Washington and after he had made his first visit to the old battlefields. Time had strange gaps, there were air pockets in its continuity, and those years after the war seemed as unreal as a nightmare. He had seen the face of death with the mask removed at Stone River in 1862, and the years that followed failed to impress him with even the substantiality of a dream. Such experiences are not forgotten: they become more vivid with time and blot out the meaningless. The story closes with this sentence: “His arms gave way; he fell, face downward, into a pool and yielded up *the life that had spanned another life.”*

It was at Murfreesboro that an incident occurred which Bierce often related. The army was paraded to witness a hanging. Two men had committed a particularly atrocious murder outside of the issues of war; they were all murderers, but whether they were publicly shot as such depended on whether they were obedient assassins or free lances. These gentlemen were free lances. To instill in the soldiers a proper fear of the consequences of such irregular murders, the army was assembled to witness the punishment. At the critical moment, as one of the men mounted the scaffold, he began to shout that he was “going home to Jesus.” As the words left his mouth, the engineer on a nearby railroad track emitted a loud, unmistakably derisive, “Hoot! Hoot!” It expressed, as Bierce remarked, “‘the sense of the meeting better than a leg’s length of resolutions; and when the drop fell from beneath the feet of that picnic assassin and his mate, the ropes about their necks were practically kept slack for some seconds by the gusts of laughter ascending from below. They are the only persons I know in the other world who enjoyed the ghastly distinction of leaving this to the sound of inextinguishable merriment.”

It was in the same issue of *The Argonaut* that he told the incident of the cavalry officer who was to be shot for desertion. The man was blindfolded and placed astride his own coffin. The firing squad was ready to fire the fatal volley, when the doomed man spoke to the officer in charge of the execution. No one heard what was said. Later Bierce questioned the officer and was informed that the unfortunate deserter had requested that a saddle be placed on the coffin!

On February 14th, 1862, Bierce was commissioned First Lieutenant of Company C, Ninth Indiana. His fellow officers and comrades said that they remembered the date because he was commissioned shortly after Captain Risley, who had mustered Bierce into the service, was captured. During the confusion that followed, Bierce commanded the company with precision and competency. It was for his courage and resourcefulness on this occasion that he was made a first lieutenant at twenty-one. But he was not long for Company C, as he was soon transferred to General Hazen's staff to act as topographical engineer. The Ninth Indiana had been assigned to Hazen after Nashville.

General W. B. Hazen became more than just Bierce's chief: he was another hero, a model, such as General Lucius V. Bierce had been. Hazen and Bierce were close personal friends during the war, crossed the plains together, and in after years always corresponded. The two figures who most influenced Bierce during his twenties, Hazen and General Bierce, were soldiers and such ardent, bellicose militarists at that! The early ideal with Bierce was the military; the pen did not supplant the sword until he was nearly thirty. This matter of heroes is not unimportant and it is doubtful if Bierce had even heard of Swift or Voltaire until he reached San Francisco. Hazen lacked the poetic, idealistic cast of General Lucius Bierce. He was taciturn, grim, and adamant. Famed throughout the service as a great disciplinarian, he was feared and respected wherever he was known. He was proud and sensitive and suspicious. His career was blotched by bad luck, his ugly disposition, and the jealousy of rivals. Instead of turning politician and getting better opportunities, he cursed darkly to himself and became more saturnine. As a strategist and commander, he was probably the equal of Sherman or Thomas, but he was always falling into unfortunate quarrels. His junior officers felt, and with some justification perhaps, that other Generals who knew and feared his ability, deliberately forced impossible tasks upon him to ruin his chances of promotion. His habit of bickering did not cease with the war, as he became involved in a rather notorious dispute with a "brother" officer in later years. It is altogether likely that this old campaigner rather disillusioned Bierce about the integrity of generals and the altruism of brother officers who have relatives in politics.

Bierce was serving on Hazen's staff in the fall of 1863, at the Battle of Chickamauga. This was another ghastly battle which, like Shiloh, could have been avoided if the Union commander had been more alert. It was a battle for a road, and for years the argument raged among strategists as to whether it was necessary for Rosecrans to offer battle or not. The better opinion seems to be that the battle could have been avoided, if he had used his wits. The battle occurred Sept. 20, 1863, and was, of course, one of the great engagements of the war. Shortly after the firing began, the Union force was cut in two. Bierce happened to be in the middle of the line when the Confederates came crashing through. He rushed to the left and joined General Thomas' brigade which was holding the ground with that remarkable tenacity which made for its commander the title of "rock of Chickamauga." Not having sufficient troops to sustain a general attack, General Thomas withdrew his right wing and was in danger of being completely surrounded. Bierce noticed the gleam of arms in the distance, and called Thomas' attention to the fact. He was dispatched to ascertain what force approached. He dashed off and soon reported back that it was General Gordon Granger with his brigade. Granger, alone of the Union field commanders, had kept his senses. Without waiting for orders, he had moved to join Thomas on the left at a time when Rosecrans had fled the field, wiring complete defeat to Washington. The discussion of such costly blunders as Chickamauga must have dealt Bierce's fine anti-slavery idealism a severe blow.

But if the blunders were appalling, incidents occurred which served to restore one's sense of humor. In reporting back to General Hazen's headquarters later in the day, Bierce noticed General Negley in hot retreat, and volunteered to escort him back to the scene of battle. The General indignantly refused the assistance and rushed to the rear. Bierce said that there was something absent-minded about Negley on this occasion, as though his mind were back in Chattanooga behind a breastwork!

While Bierce was cut off from Hazen's staff, he galloped away to visit his brother Albert, who was now a first lieutenant in the 18th Ohio Field Artillery in Granger's command. Chatting quite casually while the battle raged — Ambrose astride his horse and Albert directing the fire of the field pieces — their visit was momentarily interrupted by a rebel bullet that killed one of Albert's gunners. Not at all daunted, these young veterans propped the dead man up against a tree and went on talking, probably observing that it was a rather warm day. Albert's battery was to perform gallant service for the Union before the day was over, as will be noted in "The Truth About Chickamauga," (Archibald Gracie, Houghton Mifflin & Company, 1911). Old "Sloots," as Ambrose called his brother, was rather shy about relating his feats of gallantry, but he finally wrote an account of what he saw of Chickamauga for Mr. Gracie, who was his brother's friend. Ambrose was rather shocked at the document and forwarded it to Mr. Gracie with a word of apology for the style!

The battle raged all day. Towards evening General Brannan was in dire need of assistance on the left of Thomas' line, near what came to be called Snodgrass Hill. In response to his call for help, General Hazen detached the Ninth Indiana under the command of Colonel Suman, along with the 18th Ohio Field Artillery in which Albert Bierce was an officer. The fighting that took place late that evening at Snodgrass Hill was perhaps the bitterest of the day. It occurred in a cornfield at the crest of a hill, and the fighting was at close range, without orders, and with no opportunity for formations. It degenerated into a regular gang fight in the dark. Colonel Suman was momentarily captured and it looked like the entire regiment had surrendered, when, upon the magical reappearance of Suman in their midst again, they took up the fight anew. The Confederates later indignantly argued that the Ninth Indiana had actually surrendered and then, when they saw they had a chance to win, had picked up their arms and caught them off guard. In any event, the Ninth was the last regiment to leave the field that day, and the two brothers must have exchanged some great yarns next morning. The Park Commission allowed the Ninth Indiana to mark five places on the field at Chickamauga, and it was there, too, that a statue was erected in honor of General W. B. Hazen. Years later Major Henry S. Foote, a Confederate, author of "Recollections of the Chickamauga Campaign," and Bierce incarnadined the walls of Judge Boalt's law offices in San Francisco with their tales of gory Chickamauga. The Judge finally silenced the debate by remarking that they would both be talking about Chickamauga when he was a "celestial musician."

It is interesting to compare Bierce's description of Chickamauga, written in 1898, with his account of Shiloh, which was begun as early as 1875. The difference in time had a marked effect on Bierce's attitude. The trembling indignation, the flashes of poetry, that make Shiloh a fine bit of writing, are absent from Chickamauga. In the latter piece he merely set down the facts with yawning indifference. It is in even sharper contrast with his story about Chickamauga, to be found in "Tales of Soldiers and Civilians." This story is one of the most successful of all Bierce's fiction pieces, if only for the reason that it manages to escape, after a fashion, from his conception of the short story as an iron corset with dramatic buckles, — something that fitted together like the parts of a puzzle, a matter of manufacture rather than of imaginative creation. It is the story of a child who is playing in the woods at Chickamauga, or "river of death," as it is called in the Indian language. The child encounters the wounded and dying remnant of a regiment, creeping away to the rear, and struts in front of this grotesque army:

"Instead of darkening, the haunted landscape began to brighten. Through the belt of trees beyond the brook shone a strange red light, the trunks and branches of the trees making a black lacework against it. It struck the creeping figures and gave them monstrous shadows, which caricatured their movements on the lit grass. It fell upon their faces, touching their whiteness with a ruddy tinge, accentuating the stains with which so many were freaked and maculated. It sparkled on buttons and bits of metal in their clothing. Instinctively the child turned toward the growing splendor and moved down the slope with his horrible companions; in a few moments he had passed the foremost of the throng, — not much of a feat, considering his advantages. He placed himself in the lead, his wooden sword still in hand, and solemnly directed the march, conforming his pace to theirs and occasionally turning as if to see that his forces did not straggle. (Surely such a leader never before had such a following.)”

In 1898 Bierce could only sigh, after the manner of a Reunion Day Orator, with the veteran’s professional sadness: “God’s great angels stood invisible among the heroes in blue and the heroes in gray, sleeping their last sleep in the woods of Chickamauga.”

It was shortly after this engagement, in fact on October 13th, 1863, that General Hazen wrote a note to Colonel Starling, requesting that M. G. Sherman, surgeon, and Ambrose Bierce, topographical engineer, be allowed to remain on his staff where they had been serving for some time. After considerable meandering, the order was returned with the notation of Starling: “I am instructed by General Palmer to say that he has a high appreciation of both officers named, considering them among the very best in the service, yet entertaining a sincere desire to gratify and accommodate both them and you your request is most cheerfully complied with.” Old Hazen probably chewed his mustache and cursed the “highfalutin” rhetoric of certain “damned smart-alecks,” when he read that order. In any event, his young lieutenant got the order and filed it away among his papers. He was apparently not altogether displeased with its tone.

It is remarkable to observe the accuracy, fine detail, and general competency of the maps that Bierce made during the Civil War. His early training must have been very thorough, or else he picked up the art of cartography with amazing facility after his enlistment. His topographical map of the Battle of Brown’s Ferry, which is the largest and most elaborate of the maps that he saved, reveals the hand of a highly skilled draftsman. His two Civil War notebooks, although meager in detail, are yet remarkably neat, precise and orderly. It is interesting to note that many of the Bierces were engineers. Bierce himself always had a feeling for order, outline and proportion. Engineering met his innate insistence upon precision. He could draw and sketch with considerable skill and his handwriting was always a model of neatness and accuracy. His favorite sciences were astronomy, logic and engineering.

On May 27th, 1864, General Hazen was ordered to lead his brigade through an almost impenetrable forest against a strongly entrenched division of General

Johnston’s army. He swore very elaborately to his staff, mentioned the rotten souls of certain jealous rivals, and then ordered his men forward in a charge that he knew was suicidal. The engagement was known as “Pickett’s Mill.” None of the major texts on the war refer to it, and it is just a note in the reports, — yet it was a battle of great fury and vigor. The entire dead numbered fourteen hundred, of whom nearly one-half fell killed and wounded in Hazen’s brigade in less than thirty minutes of actual fighting. Yet of this arduous afternoon, nothing remains, save these scattered notes in the official volumes. Later Ambrose Bierce came to feel that life was a rather futile enterprise, full of mocking events and absurd ideals. He has been charged with being superficial for entertaining such heretical notions. Perhaps an afternoon at Pickett’s Mill might have convinced his specious critics that there was more to his cynicism than the attacks of asthma, or the loss of a sweetheart or two, would explain. Men fought bravely, and honorably, for an ideal. They were snuffed out in a wood to abate the jealousy of an ambitious commander and history forgot their dying. There was really something rather fatuous in the working out of an omnipotent will in this eccentric fashion. “Nothing matters,” Bierce dogmatized, and people actually had the audacity to question him! From his viewpoint, there was no other possible conclusion. Mrs. Bertha Clark Pope, in her introduction to the “Letters of Ambrose Bierce,” published by the Book Club of California, 1922, finds it highly unreasonable of Mr. Bierce to state that “this is a world of fools and rogues, blind with superstition, tormented with envy, consumed with vanity, selfish, false, cruel, cursed with illusions — frothing mad!” It would seem that there would be more cause to wonder about the character of a man who had undergone such experiences and not found life “frothing mad, — *cursed with illusions.*” This was precisely what life had been for Bierce. The fine tension of the Civil War was succeeded by a flood of miscellaneous filth, a débris of ideas, the flotsam and jetsam of a world broken away from its moorings. Who that fought in 1861 could do other than curse when confronted with the spectacle of Grant’s administration? He could hardly be expected to smile.

The Army of the Cumberland had now routed the Rebels and the campaign that ensued was a duel of strategy between General Sherman and General Johnston. Engagement after engagement followed in which the two wily old foxes tried to cut each other’s throats. For the most part these affairs were sudden, swift, and contested with the perfection in deadliness that came with four years’ training. It was a hundred miles in a direct line from Chattanooga to Atlanta and Sheridan was now en route, marching along in circus style. In May there was a vigorous exchange of arms at Resaca and Bierce saw gallant Lieutenant Brayle meet death in the manner described in “Killed at Resaca.”

Years later, Bierce called on a lovely lady on Rincon Hill in San Francisco and presented the Russian-leather pocket-book which had been found among the effects of Herman Brayle. It contained a letter from this charming creature in which she accused Brayle of cowardice. His insane, breath-taking heroism at Resaca had drawn every eye to his figure until he fell mortally wounded. The expatiation was superfluous. The lady attempted to toss the letter into the fire as she noted it was stained with blood! “The light of the burning letter was reflected in her eyes and touched her cheek with a tinge of crimson like the stain upon its page. I had never seen anything so beautiful as this detestable creature. ‘He was bitten by a snake,’ I replied.”

*

BIERCE played a rather important part in the famous charge at Missionary Ridge. As topographical engineer, he had surveyed the field and outlined the strategic points of attack. Then, too, as staff officer, he carried the order to Colonel James C. Foy, of the 23rd Kentuckians, in Wood’s Division, to make the charge. A few months previous, Foy had got lost with his command during a minor engagement, and Bierce was sent to locate them. As he told the story: “It was found about one-half mile away, utterly isolated and marching straight to kingdom come. Foy had not the slightest notion of where he was going to. ‘What are you doing here, Colonel?’ I asked, biting my lips to keep from laughing. He looked at me for a moment in a helpless and bewildered way, then pulled on a grave face and replied: ‘Oh, I’m sort o’ flankin”em.’”

As staff officer, Bierce had a splendid chance to observe, at close range, some of the great figures of the war, and it is a pity that he did not write more extensive memoirs. During one battle he was stationed for about six or seven hours at general headquarters. To be seen around camp, on that occasion were General Grant, and Generals Thomas, Granger, Sheridan, Wood and Hazen. These worthies were not entirely absorbed in the study of military strategy. War must have its anodyne and “They looked upon the wine when it was red, these tall fellows — they bit the glass. The poisoned chalice went about and about. Some of them did not kiss the dragon; my recollection is that Grant commonly did. I don’t think he took enough to comfort the enemy — not more than I did myself from another bottle — but I was all the time afraid he would, which was ungenerous, for he did not appear at all afraid I would. This confidence touched me deeply.” In the same issue of “Prattle,” Bierce summed up his impressions of Grant as follows: “When the nation’s admiration of Grant, who was really an admirable soldier, shall have accomplished its fermentation and purged itself of toadyism, men of taste will not be ashamed to set it before their guests at a feast of reason."

The Army of the Cumberland continued south in its march of destruction. The enemy crossed its path at Kenesaw Mountain and a battle raged throughout one day in the forests and along the slopes of the hillside. During this engagement, which occurred on the 23rd day of June, 1864, Bierce was wounded. In an affidavit, General Hazen related the circumstances in this manner: "I was ordered by my division commander, Brigadier General Thomas J. Wood, to advance my skirmish line, which I — attempted to do, sending my topographical engineer, Lieut. Bierce, to direct it and cause it to be done. While engaged in this duty, Lieut. Bierce was shot in the head by a musket ball which caused a very dangerous and complicated wound, the ball remaining within the head from which it was removed sometime afterwards. This wound caused Lieut. Bierce to be unfit for and absent from his duties for a considerable period of time, when he joined his command and reported for duty."

Bierce was dangerously wounded. A bullet had entered the scalp near the temple and had coursed its way around the side of his head. He was carried back from station to station to Chattanooga, where he was confined in Hospital No. I until he was discharged from care, sometime in July, and given a leave of absence. He never forgot the journey of that hospital train back to Chattanooga. They were loaded on flat-cars, covered with tarpaulin and left alone for hours with only the moon to commiserate their agonies. He once told his daughter that he always retained a vivid and unforgettable picture of that trip. Would they never reach the hospital? The skies were overcast at times with clouds, but a turn in the road would reveal the moon shining down with its cold, ageless clarity. The train cautiously made its way over miles of doubtful tracks; it barely managed to keep in motion at times; its movement was almost imperceptible. The journey was made at night and the heavy summer humidity finally condensed in a drizzling rain.

After being discharged from the hospital, Bierce left immediately for Elkhart. Before his enlistment in 1861, while at Elkhart, he had written some romantic lines of verse to one "Fatima," ending with the phrase:

"Fatima is divine,
For I have kissed her twice
And she is surely mine."

He had sent them to his love, unsigned, thinking the lovely creature, who probably had freckles, pigtails and a penchant for long flannel drawers, would name the writer with that unerring accuracy born of an immortal affection. On his furlough, he called on the lady and asked if she had received the verses. She replied: “Oh, was it you!” According to the sentimental psychoanalysts, this thwarted passion was probably the cause of his cynicism.

“Gus” Bierce said that Ambrose rode out to his farm one day for a visit. He remembered that his brother’s head “was all tied up” and that soon after the visit he left for the front. Wherever he went he probably did not remain long in Elkhart. He saw the country thereabouts with a new eye. It was flat, and dull, and unbearably warm. The farms were rundown; the towns were deserted; and even a returned hero had a hard time to find amusement. He scoffed at the place very indignantly and left to spend the rest of his leave in more congenial surroundings. He was through with Elkhart; quite finished with Indiana, for, as will be shown in a later chapter, it is doubtful if he ever returned to his home after this furlough. He went back to the front with a feeling rather akin to eagerness. It was better than the unnameable desuetude of an Indiana farm in war-time.

In October, after his return to headquarters, Bierce still complained of his wound. As he wrote: “In truth, I had done no actual duty since, being then, as for many years afterward, subject to fits of fainting, sometimes without assignable immediate cause, but mostly when suffering from exposure, excitement or excessive fatigue.” During the time he was injured, when his head was “broken like a walnut,” he did not draw any pay from the government. There was a period of approximately five months during which the government exacted the last cent for the price of his clothing but refused to pay him a wage. There were, of course, many instances of such oversights during the war. In later years it was proposed by his friends in Washington that he recover compensation for this period of inactivity under the provisions of an Act of Congress permitting such special cases to be investigated and relief granted. The sum to which he would then have been entitled would have been quite a considerable bonus. His reply, addressed to Congressman Hepburn in the basement of the Hotel Willard, was: “When I hired out as an assassin to my country that wasn’t part of the contract.”

When he reported back for service at East Point, Georgia, on September 30, 1864, General Hazen asked W. C. Whitaker, Brigadier-General, again to transfer Bierce to his staff. To this request for transfer is affixed the report of a physician that “from effects of wounds Lieutenant Bierce is disqualified from marching on foot.” Bierce served throughout the remainder of the war with General Hazen, in the command of Sherman, who was sweeping up the Atlantic coast towards Richmond. There are fragmentary notes in Bierce’s war book that one can wish had been amplified into regular diary entries, such as, "Beaufort, S. C. January 21, 1865. Then marched to Whitehall. Ward's plantation, aristocratic secesh," or "Guest of plantation — overseer." He must have seen some interesting sights during these last months of the war.

In October of 1864, after he had rejoined the army a few weeks, he became bored with the tedious nature of life around camp and crossed the Coosa River, in the vicinity of Gaylesville, Alabama, for a look at the enemy. He was captured but finally managed to make his escape, and in November he witnessed the last great battle of his military career at Franklin.

His description of Franklin, published first in "Prattle" and then in his "Collected Works" (Vol. I, page 321), is a good illustration of the association that beauty and horror came to have in his mind. One passage will suffice:

"Sleep was in the very atmosphere. The sun burned crimson in a gray-blue sky through a delicate Indian-summer haze, as beautiful as a day-dream in paradise. If one had been given to moralizing one might have found material a-plenty for homilies in contrast between that peaceful autumn afternoon and the bloody business that it had in hand."

He was finally mustered out of the army at Huntsville, Alabama, at the expiration of this term of service, on January 16th, 1865. There seems to be a wild divergence of opinion as to this date. Mr. Grattan would have it February 16th, 1865, at Huntsville, Louisiana, but the reliable "Atlas of the World" discloses that Huntsville is not in Louisiana. Dr. Danziger has the place correctly stated, but fixes the date as "June 22, *1867,*" which is obviously inaccurate. Bierce was in San Francisco in the spring of 1867. I have been unable to locate any text that would support the statement that Bierce was mustered out of the service in Louisiana or that the date was in 1867. Bierce was brevetted major in August of 1865, by President Andrew Johnson, for "distinguished service during the war," and the brevet was made, *nunc pro tunc,* as of March 13th, 1865. The brevet was, of course, purely honorary. The power of appointment in such cases rests with the President, and the rank assigned is merely nominal. On October 22nd, 1866, J. C. Kelton, Assistant Adjutant General, at Washington, signed a commission for Bierce as Brevet Major. The character of Bierce's service during the war was really "distinguished." He was mentioned in the dispatches for gallantry about fifteen or sixteen times; I have referred to only a few of the occasions for lack of space. General Hazen, who was not given to egregious praise, always spoke of Bierce as "that brave and gallant fellow."

Bierce was brought up in a military tradition; his early ambition was to enter the army. General Hazen had taken the place of his uncle, Lucius Bierce, as the ideal type which he desired to emulate. After he was in the service, he thoroughly relished his soldiering. He took a lively interest in the soldiers under his command and even wrote sentimental pieces for their annual reunion pamphlet. It was the nearest he ever came to a feeling of solidarity with people and, even then, the democratic impulse was checked by a system that admits of little informality. His association with the fellows in his command was always a real pleasure. He once wrote that:

> “It was once my fortune to command a company of soldiers — real soldiers. Not professional life-long fighters, the product of European militarism — just plain, ordinary, American, volunteer soldiers, who loved their country and fought for it with never a though of grabbing it for themselves; that is a trick which the survivors were taught later by gentlemen desiring their votes.”

His observations about the nature of war were exceptionally keen and sharp. To be sure, his writing was spoiled by the attitude of the professional militarist, but even with this limitation he seemed to divine the nature of the focalizing forces at work in the Civil War. There were times when he perceived the true significance of that terrible welding, that profoundly revolutionary war, born in smoke and blood and the high cries of battle. The sense of sharp precision in a battle thrilled him, probably because it suggested form and order and symmetry in which his early experience had been so deficient. He envisaged this tendency to concentration and order in one of his stories as follows:

> “An army in line-of-battle awaiting attack, or prepared to deliver it, presents strange contrasts. At the front are precisions, formality, fixity, and silence. Toward the rear these characteristics are less and less conspicuous, and finally, in point of space, are lost altogether in confusion, motion and noise. The homogeneous becomes heterogeneous. Definition is lacking; repose is replaced by an apparently purposeless activity; harmony vanishes in hubbub, form in disorder. Commotion everywhere and ceaseless unrest. The men who do not fight are never ready.”

The tension of the battle line, its suburb orderliness, gave Bierce a feeling of definiteness and a sense of harmony that the hopeless disorder and endless confusion behind the lines could not possibly have given. The strange elation of battle was dear to his heart, however much the details revolted his sensitive nature. The war acted in a two-fold manner: it liberated him from the trivial, and brought him face to face with the great dark music of death; and it stung him into an awareness of the dull edges and slothfulness of life. He sensed the duality of the experience in one of his stories, when he wrote:

"The exhilaration of battle was agreeable to him, but the sight of the dead, with their clay faces, blank eyes and stiff bodies, which when not unnaturally shrunken were unnaturally swollen, had always intolerably affected him. He felt toward them a kind of reasonless antipathy that was something more than the physical and spiritual repugnance common to us all. Doubtless this feeling was due to his *unusually* acute sensibilities — his keen sense of the beautiful, which these hideous things outraged. Whatever may have been the cause, he could not look upon a dead body without a loathing which had in it an element of resentment."

Most of his war stories are romantic but occasionally he would become horribly facetious, writing of death in a manner that would shock the cruelest jester. His heartlessness on such occasions would indicate something of the great resentment he felt towards death; his unwillingness to be reconciled to experience. This resentment, growing out of the war, took two forms of expression: a sharp, pungent criticism of the world of corruption and emptiness that grew out of the collapse of idealism, and, second, a resentment at the gruesomeness of the struggle itself. There is really nothing contradictory about his writing; the stories and his satire both sprang from the same experience. With particular reference to his stories, the war created in his mind an image of beauty as being, in some strange way, an aspect of horror. The thrilling exultation of a far-flung battle line with the sweet assembly call running like music down the ranks of blue, was always shattered by the unforgettable image of the burning bodies at Shiloh. This vision came to be fixed in his imagination and he wrote of beauty and horror as one.

The other type of resentment was purely mental and found expression in his satire. He keenly resented the bombastic heroes of peace: such men, for example, as General W. H. L. Barnes and General Salomon, and the other "Generals" and "Colonels" whose very presence made one feel ashamed of having been a soldier. One of these gentlemen actually claimed to have been the true hero of the charge at Missionary Ridge, and it remained for Bierce to point out, in his "Prattle," the nature of a lie. Of General Salomon, who was always making speeches, he wrote: "General Salomon drew his tongue, marched against the Confederate dead and laid down his honor for his country." And when Salomon spoke against the fallen rebels, Bierce wrote:

“What, Salomon! such words from you
Who call yourself a soldier? Well
The Southern brother where he fell
Slept all your base oration through.

Are you not he who makes to-day
A merchandise of old renown
Which he persuades this easy town
He won in regions far away?”

Illustrations of the same sort of satire may be found in all his journalism. His abuse of scoundrels, of the whole period of stagnation that followed the war, is traceable to this same influence. The war gave him a background against which to measure the petty puppets of peace. The violence of his satire was a survival of pre-war idealism.

Only a few of the more important influences of the war on Bierce’s character have been traced. It would be impossible to catalogue the ramifications of this experience. One cannot overestimate the importance of those years of soldiering; they must be kept constantly in mind. He was only nineteen when he enlisted and his services extended over practically six years, considering his post-war work in the South. During these years, he witnessed some of the hardest fighting of the war. He was captured and seriously wounded. He had actively participated in four of the most important engagements of the war: Shiloh, Stone River, Chickamauga and Franklin, not to mention a list of other engagements. Moreover, he had seen the show from a very interesting viewpoint, that of a staff officer, which permitted of some objectivity. He was always a soldier.

During these wild, mad years, Bierce was leading a life of intense action. There were few intervals for rest or reflection during his enlistment. The rhythms that such a life stressed became unalterable. Bierce was always restless when physically inactive; he longed, in old age, for the unrestricted, strenuous, and unpredictable life of a military campaign. It meant movement, new scenes and excitement. He had soldiered in the mountains of West Virginia, along the Mississippi, and had marched through Georgia. It was his initiation into life, for his soldiering came when he was a fit age for preparatory school. There was no preliminary schooling in irony: his awakening came like a slap in the face, the irritation and shock of which were unforgettable. Overnight he became a soldier and remained such for six impressionable years. Fetid swamps and ambling fences and the indescribable despair of makeshift farming, were replaced by the crimson precision of battle. It was an experience that made him restless and impatient under physical inactivity; leisure annoyed him; he sometimes wrote, like he had soldiered, for excitement and danger. His sentences were neat, orderly and obedient. There was, literally, a swordlike thrust to his wit. His column of “Prattle” sounded, on occasions, like it had been written under fire. After he had reached sixty, Bierce’s views were easily recognizable as those of an “old soldier” (a very intelligent old soldier, of course). All that was most distinctive about the man in after life was a carry-over from his military career. There was something of the cold informality and unquestionable finality of the court-martial in his judgment on men and events. It is interesting to compare his writings of the war with Harold Frederic’s “Marsena and Other Stories of the Wartime” and Francis Grierson’s “The Valley of Shadows.” The difference is that between a soldier and civilians. Frederic and Grierson were young men who caught the distant rumble of war behind the lines: naturally their work was slow, rather mystical, and full of the soft lights. Bierce never thought of war without becoming excited.

The war was a troubling memory. It never left him; he mused and puzzled about it all his life. He was still thinking about it when, an old man over seventy, he made that last inspection of the old battlefields. Reading his journalism from its inception to the day of its last appearance, one is impressed with the frequency of his references to war, the constant presence in his mind of its images, and the color that it gave his thinking and even his vocabulary. On more than one occasion, he would drop the castigating of rascale long enough to write, in that ornate poetic style of his, such lines as:

“Along the troubled valley
The evening shed its rest;
A last faint troubled gleam of day
Sank slowly down the west.

The river of the valley
Crept sighing to the sea;
And crimson with the red, red blood
That ran for victory.

The stars lean’d from their chambers,
And through a rain of light
They quiver’d, shiver’d, in amaze
And watch’d the dead all night.”

He suddenly ceased, in the days of the Spanish-American War, from lambasting Sampson and the other militarists of the day, to sigh: “Jo Wheeler!” A news dispatch had mentioned the name of General Joseph Wheeler, late of the Confederate Army. Suddenly the Spanish-American fiasco was forgotten; gone, too, were the memories of London, of San Rafael, of San Francisco. Everything slipped away into the obscurity of time and only that one experience stood forth, and he exclaimed:

“Is it not all a dream — all these thirty-odd years of peace and reconciliation, ending in a fantastic Federal-Confederate War with Spain? Shall I not be waked in a few hours by the shuffling feet of the men as they form silently in line and stand at arms in the dark of the morning to repel an expected attack by Jo Wheeler?”

The war was a great emotional adventure that carried Bierce from his early life on an Indiana farm deep into the darkest recesses of experience. It was an adventure that swept him to the stars and then left him on a high note to drift in a narrowing circle of small things, petty details, withering and fetid atmospheres, down to the zero hour of his final jest with death in Mexico. It was a long span of years that stretched like a miraculous bridge from the homely, earthly prose of Abraham Lincoln, to the majestic nonsense of Dr. Woodrow Wilson, at whom Bierce sniffed suspiciously, and, with great good fortune, escaped into Mexico as though he had some premonition of the maudlin days to follow. There was much in the years 1914-1918 that would scarcely have made him smile. “Ideas run recurrent on an endless track,” he once said, and it was an act of divine justice and grace to spare him the agony of witnessing Warren G. Harding enacting the role of a latter-day Rutherford Hayes. His friends should rejoice in his disappearance into Mexico in 1914. He saw enough of this world in seventy years for an eternity of sleeping, and Bierce was “sleepy for death” when he turned his back on his country, with magnificent disdain, on the eve of its adoption of prohibition, Wilsonian idealism and the doctrine that silent men are inevitably wise, and went south to see what death was like among the operatic scenes near Chihuahua. If he had lived to compare “The Backwash of War” by Ellen N. LaMotte, with his “Tales of Soldiers and Civilians,” it would only have increased his loneliness and impressed him more deeply with the nature of man’s sorry plight. It was better that he should forget the endless mimicry of man and turn to the “sacred steep unconsciousness” of Robinson Jeffers, “the great kingdoms of dust and stone, the blown storms, the stream’s-end ocean.”

CHAPTER IV. NEW SCENES

IT has been frequently stated that Bierce returned to Indiana after the war and that he remained there until he left for San Francisco and the West. But the known facts would indicate that he never revisited his home after the war. When he was mustered out of the service, he immediately accepted a post in the Treasury Department, as a minor official, in charge of captured and abandoned property. He was stationed in Alabama, but the headquarters of the division was in New Orleans.

At the close of the war there was, of course, no semblance of government in the South. Military officials took charge of the situation and attempted, after a fashion, to restore order. The national government had placed treasury officials throughout the South to take charge of "captured, abandoned or confiscable" property. In the last days of the war the Confederacy had floated a Produce Loan in which huge quantities of cotton had been pledged to the government. This property was, of course, subject to confiscation. It was the duty of the treasury agents to seize all confiscable cotton and to collect a duty of twenty-five per cent on all sales of cotton made by owners after the war. The commissions of the agents were paid out of the proceeds of sales. Naturally a most deplorable condition resulted. Practically all of the confiscable cotton was centered in Alabama, where Bierce was stationed as a treasury agent. It was found in the reports of the Ku Klux Klan that millions of dollars were filched and stolen from southerners by dishonest treasury agents. To show the value of such posts as Treasury Inspector, prices as high as $25,000 would sometimes be paid for the appointment. Huge quantities of cotton were actually stolen and spirited north to Mellen, a large broker at Cincinnati. Two treasury officials in Alabama, T. C. A. Dexter and T. J. Carver, were actually indicted by Federal grand juries. S. B. Eaton, the inspector in whose division Bierce was an agent, was moderately honest, but even some of his accounts to the government are rather amusing. One reads:

Cotton sold — $15,963.01
Total Receipts —— 27,799.48
Total Expenses —— 27,799.48

Such clever accounting can only be described as ingenuous and typical of the time. The conduct of these inspectors resulted in a grave scandal; every report that was made, as, for example, the report of Ben Truman to the President, only darkened the guilt of these unscrupulous agents. Of course, much of the damage was done by men who merely represented themselves to be treasury agents, so that it was difficult to fix responsibility. The life of even the honest agents was most exciting. A state of actual war existed between the agents and the cotton planters. Agents were driven out of Choctaw County and had to receive the support of cavalry units. It was this régime of irresponsible, disorderly, and chaotic administration that Bierce had to witness and to help enforce. It gave a fatal pause to his idealism.

Not only was the entire system of the treasury agent wrong — for the government profited nothing by the system, as the rascally agents stole the revenue collected — but it kept the South in a state of delayed and arrested reconstruction for years. It would have been difficult enough to rebuild the South under the circumstances that existed at the close of the war, without the handicap of this system of espionage and graft. Selma, Alabama, where Bierce was stationed for a time, had been the scene of a raid by General Wilson’s cavalry in the last days of the war. Wilson had sacked the valley. The disorderly conduct of his drunken soldiers was a scandal even in war time. His raid was eloquently denounced in every history of reconstruction in the South. He not only destroyed the town of Selma but he drove 800 horses and mules into the town and killed them, so that the roads leading into the village could not be traversed for months because of the dreadful stench. The trail of his raid could be marked for years afterwards by the charred ruins of villages, burned stumps that once were homes, and the miscellaneous débris of destruction. Bierce lived in this valley of death at a time when the fires kindled by the union raiders were still smoldering. It is small wonder, then, that he wrote such a story as “An Inhabitant of Carcosa,” which might have been a memoir of his experiences in Coosa County, Alabama. It is the story of a man who returns to his homeland and finds it empty of life:

> “No signs of human life were anywhere visible nor audible; no rising smoke, no watch-dog’s bark, no lowing of cattle, no shouts of children at play — nothing but *that dismal burial-place,* with its air of mystery and dread, due to my own disordered brain. Was I not becoming again delirious, there beyond human aid? Was it not all an illusion of my madness? I called aloud the names of my wives and sons, reached out my hands in search of theirs, even as I walked among the crumbling stones and in the withered grass.”

During his occasional trips to New Orleans to report to his chief, S. B. Eaton, Bierce had occasion to see something of the notorious “Ben Butler” régime, an experience that never ceased to cause him mortification and annoyance. He once remarked that, at the outbreak of the Civil War, his imagination drew him irresistibly to the Union cause and that he was convinced beyond doubt or skepticism of the ideals of the antislavery faction. After witnessing the depredations of Ben Butler in Louisiana, he regretted his zeal in fighting so strenuously for the North. His understanding of the carpetbag régime in the South came as the first shock to his illusions about the war. He was to see the soldiers whose lives had been devoted to “principles” loot the people their comrades had offered their lives to bring back into the Union. Some died that others might rob. Bierce once expressed his feeling in his column of “Prattle”: “Time was, in that far fair world of youth where I went a-soldiering for Freedom, when the moral character of every thought and word and deed was determined by reference to a set of infinitely precious ‘principles’ — infallible criteria — moral solvents, mordant to all base metals, and warranted by the manufacturers and vendors to disclose the gold in every proposition submitted to its tenets. I have no longer the advantage of their service, but must judge everything on its own merits — each case as it comes up.”

The period may be summarized in several stories that Bierce told of his experiences. Once, in company with several comrades, a number of whom had been rebel soldiers, he was returning from a tavern. They noticed that a man kept shadowing them. Not heeding their warning to stop, he kept on following the group and was shot dead by one of Bierce’s companions. A Justice of the Peace heard the complaint and at once dismissed the charges against all defendants except as against the man who fired the fatal shot. He was fined five dollars and costs! While bringing some confiscated cotton down the Tombigbee River, Bierce was fired upon from ambush and a battle royal ensued in which he narrowly escaped with his life. His days were full of such adventures and the experience was not altogether unpleasant, yet the tenor of the reconstruction period disgusted him beyond measure.

Bierce continued to work as a treasury agent throughout the spring and summer of 1865. His duties were not arduous and he was seeing new scenes and experiencing new adventures daily. The monotony of the work was broken by frequent trips to New Orleans. The old St. Charles Hotel was a special delight; it was his first introduction to the grand manner of living. Even if New Orleans suffered from post-war depression it yet had certain charms which one cannot associate with Elkhart, Indiana. It was not the New Orleans that Walt Whitman visited in 1848, but the outline of its loveliness still lingered about the town. To the young treasury agent it was probably as exotic as Tahiti.

In the fall of 1865, while he was in New Orleans on a holiday, he suddenly decided to take a boat to Colon, or Aspinwall, as it was then called. The trip was a vital experience; he saw such scenes as his imagination had never conceived. His interest was aroused, and, with the instinct of an artist, he began to draw sketches and make notes. In the back of his Civil War notebook are a few pages of notes about this expedition, into which he crowded his impressions. The notes are written in a legible script but reveal a meager education. Because it is perhaps the earliest specimen of his style, it will be quoted in full:

"After witnessing some of the phenomena of a tropic sea, we arrived at Aspinwall on the 10th day of September at daylight and found ourselves at once in the heart of the tropics. The first object that attracted my attention after going ashore was a groop of Cocoa Palms with the nutes thick upon them. The next thing that impressed me was the free and easy impudence of the native black boys asking to carry my luggage. I noticed the gardian of the Washington full of roses and brillant blossoms. Coming out of the companies grounds I could glance down the main street of the town. It was filled with a throng of natives, mostly women, peddling fruits and confctionory. I walked back and forward through the crowd to enjoy the strange sights and sounds. Buy oranges calls a tall tawny mulatto girl, 'good lemoneed honey,' cries another. Not satisfied with what I saw on the main street, I went round to explore the back part of the town. Aspinwall is built on a coral reef. Hollows in all directions form malarious swamps. Filith universal the rude cleanliness in the dresses of the woman formed a pleasing contrast. The main part of the town is buildt of slovenly wooden houses back of those are Palm hutts. Some pleasant houses are on the esplanade. Palm trees of different kinds I found growing all through the town, unknown plants on every side. The throngs of great black buzzards sitting on every roof and tree, and opping fearlessly about the offal strewn streets was in keeping with the general appearance. The people cut beaf into long stripes and hang it on racks in the sun to dry. One of these racks I noticed the buzzards were watching suddenly a daring old fellow hopped towards it; flapping up amongst the long tempting slices commenced a ravenous attack; at this a half nude old woman rushed out upon him with cries and after repeatedly walloping him over the head with a towl succeeded in dring him off.

They have a respectable episcopal Church here. The principal fruit vended in the street were oranges from Jamaica, large and fresh Lemons, Limes, Alagator Pairs, Pomagranits, Mauva Peirs, Mangos, Cocoa Nuts, Pineapples, Agauvas. I procured an indifferent meal at the Howard House for one Dollar in silver. The train started at 12:30. We went dashing along through the midst of tropical swamps. Tropical in earnest. Scarcely a single plant or three had I seen before. And every thing growing so luxurious and on so jigantic a scale. From Aspinwall the first 10 or 11 miles of road is mostly through swamps. Near Panama Hills and Mountains predomenate.

All along the R R the ground is covered with the sensitive plants, prospate, prickley, compound leaved, and very sensitive. Cane grew in the swamps, the same we have in the South, only it was 80 or 100 feet in length and from 4 to 6 inches in diamiter. Palmettos grow but not plenty. Four different kinds of Palms I noticed. Besides the broad fruit tree with fruit well matured, I plucked some of the fruit and punctured it, a milky sap jeted out, which rapidly thickened like starch, tasted like sage. The stevenst — I saw many parots and one ring-tailed monkey.

Panama is a quaint old town almost crowded into the sea. By the Mountains, sentinells were stationed at each car as we halted. They were slovenly negroes and looked quite unservisable. The Bay of Panama is full of Islands — is very shole so that Steamers have to lie out miles. Passengers are taken out in a kind of steamferry. The bay is full of large fish, sharks, etc., that dashing about make a beautiful display of its phosphoresence.”

If Aspinwall gave Bierce fresh images and new interests, an even more important adventure awaited him on his return to New Orleans. There he found a letter from his old commander, W. B. Hazen, offering him the post of engineering attaché to an expedition of exploration, survey and inspection that the General was to conduct through the Indian Territory. The government had directed General Hazen to map the Indian region, and to inspect the fortresses that gave protection to settlers and emigrants. Bierce was tired of his work as treasury agent and he welcomed the chance to see new lands and to seek even more romantic adventures. He was the more eager to join the expedition, as Hazen suggested that he might obtain a commission, perhaps a captaincy, in the regular army. Without waiting for the commission to be issued, and, apparently without returning to Indiana, he left to meet Hazen in Nebraska where the little party was assembling. This is borne out by the circumstances. His commission, a second lieutenancy in the Fifth U. S. Infantry, was actually issued. I. C. Kelton, Assistant Adjutant General, wired to Bierce, care of Lafayette Burr, former adjutant to the Ninth Indiana, offering the commission. But the wire was returned to Washington by Burr; apparently Bierce was not in Indiana. It was then sent to Hazen in Nebraska, but by that time the expedition was already on its way west. It did not catch up with Bierce until the spring of 1867 in San Francisco. From these circumstances it is obvious that his family in Indiana did not know his whereabouts, or at least that they did not know his exact address. How Bierce could have been a free-lance writer for the newspapers in Indiana after the war, as Dr. Danziger suggests, is a rather difficult problem to solve.

In fact, Bierce's attitude towards his family and towards his early life is shown by the brusque and peremptory manner in which he dropped all former associations and jumped at the chance to go west. There was no reason why he should return to Indiana. "I was one of those poor devils born to work as a peasant in the fields, but I found no difficulty in getting out," he once remarked. His home life was never congenial. His brother, Albert, was the only agreeable companion of all his innumerable brothers and sisters. One sister early evinced symptoms of the missionary impulse and Bierce knew that it was time to leave before shame took the place of affection. Moreover, Indiana meant a flat country, literally and figuratively, and such an inflated experience was unthinkable. After the glamour of the war, culminating in the starry honor of Brevet Major, and after the levees of New Orleans at dusk, he could never be content with swamps and corn fields and barnyards. The war saved Bierce from Indiana and turned his face westward. He did not follow his brother Albert to the coast, as has so often been stated. Upon receiving his discharge, Albert returned to Indiana and married. He did not arrive in San Francisco until Christmas Day, 1869. approximately three years after Ambrose reached the coast.

When Bierce joined Hazen, the little Nebraska village was dotted with the white canvassed emigrant wagons leaving for the West. The days of'49 were over, and the real westward movement was now in full swing after the interruption caused by the war. The number of stray dogs, herds of cattle, and mule-teams, indicated that the great trek was in progress. Through the unmarked streets of this outpost on the fringe of civilization, General Hazen rode at the head of his expedition. They were soon lost in a brown immensity of earth. The trip that followed was a great liberating force in Bierce's life. The scenes were new, fresh and unknown. The strange atmosphere jolted him out of his habit of complacency and opened new vistas. The trip gave him a chance to recover his health, too, for he suffered from the disease of asthma which he had inherited from his mother. It had not bothered him much during the war, but it had sorely harassed him in the South. No sooner had the expedition started west than he began to feel better with every change in climate.

The expedition was really a camping trip. There were few duties to perform. Bierce made topographical maps of much of the territory through which the party passed, and kept them in a notebook. The first maps were drawn in the Dakotas where the party journeyed to inspect a few forts. Bierce was particularly impressed with the Black Hills country and noted its topography with care. He was interested, too, in the rumors of gold in the hills, but the territory was not then open for settlement. Years later he was to make good use of this information. As the little caravan trotted along its route, they would occasionally see an impromptu grave or the ashes of a hastily extinguished fire. It was like revisiting an old scene for Bierce. As a boy he had devoured the romances of Capt. Mayne Reid and to be actually traveling through the "Indian Country" was as pleasurable as it was "romantic." Along the North Platte, the party passed before the great Court House Rock, the famous landmark of the western emigrants. Of it Bierce wrote in later years, the memory saddened and romanticized: "What a gracious memory I have of the pomp and splendor of its aspect, with the crimson glories of the setting sun fringing its outlines, illuminating its western walls like the glow of Mammon's fires for the witches' revel in the Hartz, and flung like banners from its crest."

It was not long before the Dakotas were lost and they entered a region that was new, and therefore marvelous, to them all. Something of the exuberance of their spirits is indicated by the sketches and drawings, and data for maps, recorded in the journal that Bierce kept. These blurred lines on fading paper were symbols to Bierce and represented the wild grandeur of the Rockies. Some of them actually look as interesting as pictures. There were penciled maps with notations of the Big Horn Mountains, Crazy Woman's Flat, Clear Fork, Tongue River, Little Big Horn, and a map of the Judith Mountains. Nothing seems to have escaped his eye: the book opens with a large drawing of a bison's head; interpolated with the maps are copies of Indian inscriptions seen on the rocks at Powder River and on the stumps of trees in the Yellowstone Valley. The party moved rapidly on horseback and Bierce had little time to draw, but he captured every significant scene and landmark and tried to express the lovely contour of a hill by hasty shadings in a tencent notebook. To him all these lines, dots, and circles were the symbols by which he could recreate the memory of the foaming waters that roared over the Shoshone Falls and drifted into glistening mists that floated soundless to the rocks below, lost in a roar that seemed to come from a distance.

Hard and disagreeable as some of their experiences were, they yet had time for amusement and sport. Just as some of the maps are significant of the romantic glamour in which the valleys were veiled for Bierce, so are the penciled notations interspersed throughout the book full of their own potential amplification into accounts of amusing enterprises. Fort Benton brought this note: "Improvised Program. The Ladies, H. Beveridge, Enthusiastic single man. 'The Ladies, God Bless Her.' Labored effort (painful one) in response by Whatisname Gomer Evans. Song, Mary of Argyle, Sam Mayer. Bloom is on the

Rye encore. R. Kohler, Cornet Solo, The Last Rose of Summer.” It must have been a maudlin carousal ending with that music so dear to the heart of the inebriate: a sad cornet solo. But they were marching fast: Fort Fetterman, Fort McPherson, Fort Kearney, and Fort Bridger passed in swift succession. They were stern little outposts where army officers taught Hardee’s tactics to the uninitiated. The great log gates rolled back, and the little cavalcade trotted through into the fort. The garrison was prepared for General Hazen’s inspection, and the place was a model of orderliness: arms glistened. uniforms were spotless, flags resplendent, and headquarters was decked for the occasion. After the inspection was made, there were moments of entertainment and leisure, and, over the glasses and cigars, reminiscences. These fellows lost in the wilderness guarding Indian braves had been in the Civil War, too. “Orchard Knob? That afternoon? Of course!”

The expedition was ordered to return to Washington, via Salt Lake City, San Francisco and Panama. At Salt Lake, Bierce had an opportunity to inspect the Mormon experiment in colonization, and he was most enthusiastic. He never failed to raise his voice in defense of the Mormons, when, in later years, people still permitted the peccadillo of polygamy to blind them to the undeniable evidence of fine economy, industry and genius in government. One excerpt is sufficient to show how Bierce reacted to the settlement at Salt Lake: “I have no religious convictions. I do not care a copper for the Mormons. But I do care a good deal for truth, reason and fair play; and whenever I cease to be indignant at the falsehood, stupidity and injustice that this harmless people have suffered at the hands of the brutal and harmless mob of scribblers and tonguesters who find profit in denouncing them, I shall have had a longer life than I merit.”

On this western trip he had occasion to see something of Indian warfare, and he always scoffed at the bravery of the pioneer. Part of his denunciation of the pioneer as a warrior, sprang from his deep-seated admiration for the regular army. He once wrote in “Prattle”: “I have marked the frontiersman’s terror-stricken hordes throng tumultuous into the forts before the delusive whoops of a dozen lurking braves. I have observed his burly carcass scuttling to the rear of the soldiers he defames, and kicked back into position by the officers he insults. I have seen his scruffy scalp lifted by the hands of squaws, the while he pleaded for his worthless life, his undischarged weapon fallen from his trembling hands. And I have always coveted the privilege of a shot at him myself.” This sounds rather like Three Star Hennessy dicta, but it no doubt is based on actual observation.

One of the military posts visited was Fort Phil Kearney.

Shortly after Bierce’s party left this fort, some Indians lured a force of ninety men and officers outside and slaughtered them to a man. From Fort C. F. Smith, the party turned north and swam the Yellowstone. In the Valley they found herds of elk, deer and buffalo. It was a magnificent region. It eclipsed even his memory of the mountains of Virginia. Surely if there was this much grandeur in nature, there must be a similar current in human life, if one but acted magnificently enough to strike the right chord. He began to act on this principle. After leaving Yellowstone, the country was bare and without game. They proceeded to Fort Benton and arrived there a "sorry-looking lot," as Bierce phrased it. Then they went north to Helena, Montana, and back south again to Virginia City, most fabulous of all western mining camps. The last bivouac of the party was on the camping ground of the famous Donner party, where Bierce first heard the story of that memorable expedition.

These months of camping and riding, from Omaha to San Francisco, were for Bierce an introduction to the western manner. He was still young enough to be impressed with the feeling of liberation that the fresh and untrammeled life of the West created. He was essentially a Westerner in many ways. Of late years the influence of the West has been made the subject of sharp comment by Eastern critics. Mark Twain, we are informed by this criticism, was not the splendid fellow that the West always envisaged: care-free, lazy, laughing and full of a great gusto for life, but a hen-pecked journalist, bitter with disappointment. Such criticism overlooks the fact that Twain, if he was ever overawed by social prestige, was victimized in the East. Both Bret Harte and Mark Twain lost their early force and vitality when they went East. But this fact should not obscure the values that the West did create, for, as Mr. George West has written, "it offered a certain masculine freedom and zest and some very genuine values." Many of these values are invariably associated with Bierce's name. The West gave such a character elbow-room and if he became an excessive individualist it should not be too seriously deplored. His enormous energy, personal bravery, forceful directness; his impatience with pettiness and disdain for social fetishes, all these qualities were Western. Of course it is always difficult, if not specious, to localize a virtue. But the West did emphasize certain values which have come to be called Western. Bierce's best work was done in San Francisco, and it was to San Francisco that he was now journeying.

As the party left Salt Lake and began the last part of their trip, the talk was rife as to the nature of the land they approached. California was a magical word in the fifties and sixties; it was "El Dorado" as Bayard Taylor had written. And what of San Francisco? They had heard nothing but stories about this city since leaving Nebraska. They were so impatient to see San Francisco that they only lingered a few days in Virginia City, and then turned westward again, skirted the edge of Lake Tahoe, and came to the end of their wilderness route at Dutch Flat in Placer County. From this point to San Francisco they could travel along the road-bed of the new transcontinental railroad. Through Placer County they saw marks of “diggin’s”; miners were along the hillsides and the creek bottoms. They hastened forward; Sacramento did not detain them long. They visited “The Plains” saloon and admired the paintings of the Wind River Mountains and Fort Laramie that adorned the walls, but they were eager to be gone. The journey down the Sacramento River was one fraught with expectancy. The soft brown hills dropped into bottom lands and finally rose to the last ridge of bluffs along the bay. Monte Diablo gleamed in the distance. They sailed through the Straits of Carquinez and the bay was outspread before them. The picture was sharp, swift and unforgettable. Such a bay!

But what of this fabulous San Francisco? The miners and traders on board, obdurate to the scene, grunted that it was “over across the bay,” and pointed to a reach of land veiled in mist. The boat struck the currents of the bay; winds swept in from the ocean; the waves slapped softly against the boat; and the desert was quite forgotten. San Francisco could be seen rising behind the sand dunes: a wind-swept city that sprawled along the water front and climbed up its three hills for a look at the bay. Flocks of white sea birds fluttered about the boat and dove down to ride the slate-colored waves. Alcatraz huddled in the bay like an iron-backed turtle that had risen to the surface with an effort. Dusk came and suddenly the place seemed ageless: full of shadowy sorrows, a mezzotint of dark hills, the spars of ships and the rickety frame houses on the hillsides.... He would like to stay here for a while, but his commission undoubtedly awaited him and he would soon leave for Panama. The chatter of the waiting crowd at Clark’s Landing interrupted his thoughts. It was the voice of a new mob, a polygot mob, a miniature world with which his destiny was to be inextricably woven. There was surely something lively and envigorating about this city. He had arrived in San Francisco.

CHAPTER V. SAN FRANCISCO

THE San Francisco of 1866 was a most extraordinary city; nothing quite like it was ever seen on this continent. The gold rush of the early fifties had somewhat subsided, but the city was still in an uproar. It was teeming with life and through the entire fabric of the place ran a thread of gold, the gold of Virginia City and the Comstock. It was the supertype of Western bonanza town, but spiced and scented with the orient; Chinese chattered in the narrow passageways of Chinatown, and Kanakas from the Islands worked in the streets. San Francisco had numbered two thousand in the first of 1849; it passed twenty thousand and the white sails of seven hundred vessels had come to port in its harbor by the end of that year. Bayard Taylor arrived in’49 and left on a hitch hike for Monterey. He returned to the city in four months and could scarcely find his way about. By 1866 some of the early turbulence had subsided. Casey and Cora had blasphemed from the scaffold in front of the Vigilante Committee headquarters as they were precipitated into that hell to which, in their last words, they had so warmly consigned their executioners. James King of William Was already a legend. Fires had ravaged the town several times, but it had always grown back with weed-like rapidity. The first glorious flush had waned and the period of magnificence had arrived. It was the dawn of the era of the “Great Developer” and there was much talk of Teavis, Fair, Mackay, and Flood. The whimsicality of the “Oh Susanna” mood had gone; colts had been replaced by derringers; the sombrero by the black beaver hat. Judge Terry’s famous Texan knife was momentarily sheathed and Leland Stanford was gazing hungrily at the large estate left by his former partner, Colton.

San Francisco was still tumultuous and gay. It had not as yet settled down to the lethargic mood that possessed it in later years: the sordid days of graft, race-horse gambling and Chinatown sporting, under the régime of “Boss” Buckley. There was still a great vibrancy about San Francisco in the sixties. It was impossible to live there and not be excited by its keen music. Bayard Taylor wrote that “The very air is pregnant with the magnetism of bold, spirited, unwearied action, and he who but ventures into the outer circle of the whirlpool, is spinning, ere he has time for thought, in its dizzy vortex.” It was a distinctly masculine community and its atmosphere of uncertainty and transiency provided a tireless spur to rowel men out of established ruts. The early commentators noticed the amazing contrasts and swift movements in its social life. Doctors and ministers forgot their callings and turned speculators; professors drove ox-teams; and army officers took minor government posts and married wealthy girls. Taylor, however, in the midst of his first enthusiasm, observed certain “dissipating and disorganizing” influences at work. By the sixties this whirligig society was coming to a pause and sobering up. The dust clouds stirred by its early rampancy were settling and when they finally disappeared a somber scene was revealed. The big strike was over; hilarity was supplanted by calculation; and the boom was followed by its inevitable aftermath of dark days.

Into this “gray town, prematurely wrinkled, like a woman in whom youth’s excesses too long burned, which huddled on a point of sand, scourged with winds, racked by fogs, scintillant with dusty motes in the cold sunshine,” came Major Bierce. For him the place was full of novelty and charm. Spring, with its gay light warmth, hovered about the streets that ran up hillsides to disappear in unseen hollows beyond. With General Hazen, Bierce visited the Presidio, speculating excitedly as to the rank of the commission which he had no doubt awaited him. There it was, neatly sealed and magnificently embossed, but it was only for a second lieutenancy in the Fifth United States Infantry! Hazen cursed and tried to hit upon an explanation for such stupidity, but his young attaché, with characteristic disdain, announced that he would refuse even to decline such a commission. He had come to the coast with no intention whatever of remaining but now that he was here he might as well stay. It was about all that he could do, under the circumstances, for he would never accept a second lieutenancy and the fact that he had even been tendered such a lowly commission made argument or expostulation unthinkable.

The officers at the post suggested that Bierce try to obtain a government position. This suggestion was agreeable, particularly as he had been a treasury agent for some months. He applied to the Hon. D. H. Cheesman, head of the United States Sub-Treasury, for a position and soon went to work as a night-watchman. It has been stated so many times that computation would be difficult, that Bierce was an employee of the Mint in San Francisco. But the positive recollections of perhaps the only two men who knew him at that time, and who are still alive, Emory M. Long and Elisha Brooks, are to the effect that he worked in the Sub-Treasury. This department was connected, of course, with the Mint but was regarded as separate and distinct, at least by the employees of the two institutions. During these days Bierce roomed with Elisha Brooks, who also worked in the Sub-Treasury, although he was later transferred to the Mint. His fellow employees were impressed with Bierce’s fine military carriage, his dignified manner and his unbending pride. Mr. Brooks had also been in the war, and the two of them spent long hours thrashing out old battles. One trait that

Bierce possessed which they all disliked, since to them it was inexplicable, was his irreverence. The man was frostily ironic; he would not tolerate piety and found nothing too sacred for satire. To quote from a recent letter of Mr. Brooks: “Bierce was a very genial and pleasant man to associate with if you could tolerate his denunciation of all religions and his habit of using the most offensive language in speaking of matters that people usually regard as sacred. He would never allow you to differ from him in his views of religious or sacred matters. Otherwise people liked him very much.”

Not long after Bierce began to work for the government, he announced to Mr. Long that he intended to become a writer. He made this statement with his usual assurance. His room was soon piled with books from the library; the “heaviest” books, according to Mr. Long. He cannot recall the titles but he does remember that Bierce read long passages from Gibbon with marked approval. He would permit, so his roommates say, no word to go unnoted; he loved precision and definition became a mania. He read avidly and with great determination. His style was as yet but a “diamond in the rough,” but he was beginning to polish it into form. His first compositions were atheistic tracts. The employees of the Mint had heard of this fellow in the Sub-Treasury who debated about God. Being more reverent than Bierce but no less disputatious, they issued a challenge for an exchange of letters on the subject of atheism. Bierce defended his position with great vigor. The employees of both institutions read the letters aloud and were delighted with the verbal blows that were meted out. One thing they all remembered, however: a cold, sardonic, implacable element about Bierce. It rather startled them. It was not sophomoric irreverence: it was more a passionate protest against ignorance and piety. Death had marked him at Kenesaw Mountain and had left a question in his mind about which he was to puzzle all his life. Just at this time, he expressed himself by mocking idols. But the impetus for his iconoclasm was the thought that people died; always death and death’s hand even in the sunlight of youth.

These fellow employees would have quickly made a devil of Bierce had it not been for his personal charm. They liked him. He drew amusing pictures and cartoons for them, which were posted about the Sub-Treasury and the Mint. They roared with laughter at the sharp, pointed wit that animated these sketches. But, strangely enough, they knew and respected Bierce’s desire that his drawings should not be shown about. The sketches were just for their amusement. He seemed apologetic and diffident. Once, however, a political campaign was raging in the city. Every one was talking about the merits and demerits of the candidates. Bierce wearied of the balderdash and drew a series of cartoons which were posted about the offices. These pictures are remembered with glee by his friends. They satirized and gibed at politics in general, ridiculed both candidates, and reduced the entire campaign to the elements of farce. An ambitious co-employee stole these drawings from the walls and divided them into two sets, one of which he sold to each of the respective political parties. The next morning the streets of San Francisco were placarded with these amazing cartoons. Bierce was full of white fury. Who had done this? But the silence was profound. He stormed and raged and cursed, but no confessions were forthcoming. A few days later the culprit went to Bierce and told the story, but he had with him some $800 in cash. A division was made and Bierce felt somewhat mollified. But he ceased drawing pictures.

Bierce was never under any illusions as to the state of his cultural development at the time he arrived in San Francisco. “I came to California in 1866 with a fair knowledge of political economy, and a cast-iron conviction about everything, from the self-evident to the unknowable, both inclusive.” Although he was studying hard, his time was not altogether given over to the reading of Gibbon. He enjoyed the life of the town and no interesting incidents escaped his attention. He was getting the feel of the city; becoming acquainted with its scandals, political and otherwise, and becoming familiar with its chief characters. The very rowdiness of the place seems to have had an attraction for him. Soon after his arrival, he witnessed the hanging of one Juan Salazar in the streets of the town. He told the story in later years and closed the incident with these words: “The sheriff performed his peculiar duties with a skill and dignity that made one rather covet the distinction of being hanged by him. Salazar assisted with intelligent composure, and the spectators, who had repented of his crime, endured his death with Christian fortitude and resignation.”

*

BIERCE did not take his duties at the Sub-Treasury office too seriously and devoted all his spare time to writing. He attempted to write ironic pieces much in the manner of his early drawings. He would select some local happening, write of it in an elaborately ornate manner, and then puncture the bubble of his own rhetoric. This was a favorite trick of the early humorists and it was humor that most interested the early San Franciscans. One could not write critical essays or philosophic tracts or rondels for the amusement of gamblers, miners, prostitutes and ladies of fashion. They wanted something amusing and the broader the humor the better. It must not only provoke a smile: it must drum the risibilities of the callous until they burst into guffaws. Bierce began by doing a few sketches in the wildly humorous manner of the times. He had some predecessors in the field, and he did not hesitate to follow their technique. He began to modify it to suit his own needs later, but his first work clearly belonged to the school of Dan DeQuille and Mark Twain. A most interesting chapter in California letters was just coming to a close when Bierce arrived in San Francisco.

The chapter had opened with the publication, in 1852, of the first issue of *The Golden Era* by J. MacDonough Foard and Rollin M. Daggett. The journalists of that day — bombastic old Stephen Massett, young Bret Harte, the romantic Joe Goodman, moody Prentice Mulford, James Bowman, Mark Twain and Dan DeQuille — were a great lot. They developed a typically Western manner of writing, aptly characterized by Idwal Jones as "whimsical and bombastic." The style that came into vogue with them was a child of the marriage of the wildly humorous manner of Mark Twain — the literary equivalent of a barroom story — with the plaintive and sentimental whimsicality of Bret Harte — an etherealized banjo tune. It is perhaps true, as Mr. Jones suggests, that the style dated back to pre-Civil War days. It was in this tradition that Bierce was schooled. He came upon the scene in the sixties when times had somewhat changed; but, along with Charles Warren Stoddard, he contributed sketches to the *Alta California,* and came to know Bret Harte, secretary of the Mint. Up in Portland one C. W. Miller (Joaquin Miller) published his first volume of verse in 1868, "Specimen." But, although Bierce did adopt something of the riotous, Western manner of Twain, it was tempered with some very scholarly instruction that he received about this time from James Watkins. The result was that Bierce soon abandoned his early models and became a close student of the classics. In later years Bierce remarked that he had read Mark Twain "to sharpen lethiferous wit against bovine humor" and the comparison is most apt.

Prior to the work that he did for the *Alta California,* Bierce had sent some sketches to "The San Francisco *News-Letter* and California *Advertiser"* which were accepted. This interesting publication was founded by F. A. Marriott on July 20, 1858. Marriott was a London journalist, who at one time had edited the London *Illustrated, News,* and later the *Morning Chronicle* and *Chat.* These various publications had all failed and Marriott had come to California to start over again. *The News-Letter* was modeled after the London weeklies of the day and was a rather sprightly journal. Soon after Bierce's first sketches were accepted, he received a neatly written, finely phrased note from James Watkins, the managing editor of *The News-Letter,* asking him to call at the office. Bierce lost no time in accepting the invitation, and met a most charming gentleman. Watkins was a strange, whimsical, scholarly fellow, who had been a journalist in London and New York. His style, rather suggestive of Stevenson's, was delightful. He was, according to Bierce, "one of the greatest writers of English that ever lived," and while the statement is hyperbolic it does suggest something of the real value of Watkins' style. Watkins was a singularly sweet-natured and lovable character, and he wrote a style that, for the period, was indeed remarkable. It had rhythm, variation and was full of charming cadence. Doomed to the life of an unsuccessful journalist, poor Watkins went from paper to paper, writing blurbs for poultry farmers and irrigation projects on the side, in order to earn a livelihood. Years later he worked on the New York *Sun.*

Bierce and Watkins became the best of friends and, strangely enough for Bierce, the friendship continued. Watkins instructed his young protégé with kindness, intelligence and insight. He was a student of Shakespeare and, judging from the copy of "Othello" which he presented to Bierce, he devoted some time to pointing out the values of dramatic blank verse to his young friend. Then, too, he called Bierce's attention to Swift, and Voltaire, and advised him to read over the material that William Thackeray had written for *Punch,* that he might clothe his wit in the silk of a charming style. Watkins' influence on Bierce cannot be overestimated. He pointed out the vulgar and called attention to the best in style with unimpeachable taste. He was, without doubt, the most cultured and intelligent associate that Bierce knew during this period. And it was a crucial time in Bierce's life. Watkins was a rare spirit and he seemed to understand Bierce better than any one else ever did.

Surely Bierce never gave to another the respect and admiration that he always accorded Watkins. They spent many delightful hours together in these first years, and the friendship was never broken.

Many of Watkins' early letters are full of shrewd comment and advice. In one letter, written in 1874, he mentioned La Rochefoucauld, Murger and Balzac, whose works he had praised to Bierce, and then added this comment: "Your method of language is that of these Frenchmen; your method of thought, meanwhile, is essentially different from theirs: it is the real English (or American) thought, and you give us the net result of its processes phrased with the Frenchman's wit and point and epigram."

At the time that Bierce began to write for *The News-Letter* it contained, as a regular feature, a page called "The Town Crier." Bierce did not start this page, which was as old as the magazine itself, but he did take it over, when, in December of 1868, Watkins resigned as editor and induced Marriott to give the post to Bierce. Bierce was editor from that date until March 9th, 1872. In addition to this work, he also wrote for the *Alta California,* along with his friend, Charles Warren Stoddard. He had given up his post in the Sub-Treasury when he became editor of *The News-Letter.*

With Stoddard and "Jimmy" Bowman, and the other young journalists of the time, Bierce kept San Francisco highly entertained. These fellows engaged in some amusing exploits. One night after they had passed beyond the merely facetious state of inebriation, and when their voices were shouting valiantly to be heard above the din and blare of a New Year’s Eve celebration, it was proposed that they strike Christianity a fatal blow. They did not propose to go about this work in the methodical manner of Martin Luther, but with anarchistic means. There was a great wooden cross that stood upon a hillside in the region of Golden Gate Park and it had often annoyed them with its attestation of piety. There they journeyed after midnight with ropes and fagots. They roped the cross and tugged and pulled in a vain effort to tear it down. But the cross was triumphant. They then concluded that if they tied the rope about their bodies, the trick could be turned. But their success was no greater. By this time these “eminent tankard” men were exhausted and, in their struggles around the cross, became entangled in the rope and fell down bound to the cross in a manner that would have inspired the faithful to draw an obvious but ironic moral. This story was first related in the chapter on Ambrose Bierce in Paul Jordan-Smith’s “On Strange Altars,” but its truth has been vouched for to me by a distinguished San Francisco editor whose name would give immediate credence to the story, but unfortunately he was one of the young men at the foot of the cross, and his identity must remain a secret.

In order to appreciate the fame which Bierce soon attained with his “Town Crier” copy, one must keep constantly in mind the significance of “Western humor.” The book stacks of London were flooded with wild, irresponsible stories in booklet form about the gold mines of California. The West, particularly California, soon became a fantastic place in the eyes of every Englishman. He was in a mood to believe anything that he heard about the country and its inhabitants. So that the “wild” and “ferocious” satire of Bierce, along with the broad, rough, fun of Twain, was accepted abroad with enthusiam. It will be remembered, too, that Joaquin Miller first attained fame and recognition in England, for none of his countrymen would take the old braggart seriously until England had pronounced him a great poet. Western humor, with its coupling of exaggeration and excessive understatement, found a large audience in England. The copy had great novelty about it then, and it is not surprising to find that Bierce’s paragraphs, unreadable as they are to-day, were quoted in the Glasgow and London and New York papers. As a writer once put it in the New York *Arcadian:* “In 1867 or 1868, I forget which, *The News-Letter* in San Francisco contained every now and then queer, irregular paragraphs, each pungent and striking and all pervaded by a *new and puzzling* flavor that was a combination of eccentric wit and utterly unconventional form. All that could be ascertained of their authorship was that a clerk in the San Francisco Mint was the author and that he ‘threw them off — just for the fun of it.’”

A few further quotations will suffice to show that Bierce was really attaining a considerable fame with his “Town Crier” work and that it was being appreciated for its true worth. The uncertainty about Bierce, the misunderstanding that has only increased with the years, was largely due to this early interruption in his literary career. The New York *Nation* wrote of his work: “One main quality of the humorist — a Rabelaisian audacity which stands abashed at but very few things indeed — the ‘Town Crier’ possesses in fullness; if he is not the most impudent and most irreverential person on the Pacific Coast, then he must have the steady assistance of his most admired friends, for a newspaper page that exhibits less respect for constituted authority of whatever kind than his page parades is not printed in English.” And *Every Saturday,* published in New York, contained this comment: “It is possible that some of our readers are not familiar with this candid voice of the Pacific Coast, though his fame has reached England, where his homicidal paragraphs are quoted by such journals as the *Saturday Review* and the *Spectator.”* But, just at the height of this early fame, Bierce left for England, and during his absence was forgotten.

As editor of *The News-Letter,* Bierce came in contact with many of the early journalists and writers on the coast. Foremost amongst these were, of course, Mark Twain and Bret Harte, neither of whom had as yet attained to any great national fame. Bierce was fond of telling about the first time he ever saw Mark Twain. Bierce was working one afternoon, in the offices of *The News-Letter,* when a tall, lanky fellow, who talked with a drawl, came into the room. He stood, bare-headed, in the middle of the room and looked slowly and deliberately all around the barren walls, allowing his eyes to finally come to rest on the youthful editor at the desk. “Young man,” the voice drawled, “this room is so nude I should think you and the owner would be ashamed of yourselves.” Bierce made some comment and kept on working. The man with the drawl spoke again: “Young man, where is the owner?” Bierce replied that Marriott was somewhere about town and would return soon.

“Young man,” Twain said, looking intently at Bierce, “are you sure he is not in that next room drunk?”

Bierce was still mystified, but explained that Marriott was actually away and asked Twain what he wanted. Twain explained that he had come in to repay a loan, and Bierce then suggested that Twain pay the money to him.

“Young man,” the voice drawled again, and the man fixed Bierce intently with his eyes, his whole expression assuming a grave and serious mien, “look me in the eyes and speak as though you were talking to your God: if I gave you that money are you sure your employer would ever see it?”

In those days Bierce had, I think, a high regard for Twain, whom he later came to know well in London. He had occasion to say of Twain in later years that he had “suffused our country with a peculiar glory by never trying to write a line of poetry.” What he thought of Twain’s work at this early time is not known, although in later years he was careful to admonish George Sterling to re-read “Huckleberry Finn” and said: “See if you don’t find more there than mere funning.” He was, however, disgusted when Twain married a rich woman and wrote rather sharply of the matter in *The News-Letter*. In his “Town Crier” page of February 19th, 1870, we find this: “Mark Twain, who, whenever he has been long enough sober to permit an estimate, has been uniformly found to bear a spotless character, has got married. It was not the act of a desperate man — it was not committed while laboring under temporary insanity; his insanity is not of that type, nor does he ever labor — it was the cool, methodical, cumulative, culmination of human nature working in the heart of an orphan hankering for some one with a fortune to love — some one with a bank account to caress. For years he has felt this matrimony coming on. Ever since he left California there has been an undertone of despair running through all his letters like the subdued wail of a pig in a wash-tub.” The sentiment was rather harsh, considering the fact that Bierce was himself soon to marry and to marry, also, a rich man’s daughter. Twain never mentioned Bierce except to refer to him in a casual way in his “Autobiography,” and his collection of “Humor Stories,” and in both cases Twain’s references were erroneous. He says in the “Autobiography” that Ralph Keeler, Bret Harte, Charles Warren Stoddard, Prentice Mulford, and Bierce, all contributed to Joe Lawrence’s literary magazine *The Golden Era*. This is, in all probability, an error as far as Bierce’s name is concerned. In his “Dictionary of Humor” he refers to Bierce as the author of “Bierciana,” a collection of wit published in England. In this he was in error also. Later in London, as will appear in a subsequent chapter, Bierce and Twain met often and became quite good friends.

Bierce’s relations with Bret Harte are better known. In *The Examiner,* March 3, 1889, Bierce said that Harte never thought much of his celebrated “The Heathen Chinee,” and that, in fact, Harte offered the manuscript to Bierce for publication in *The News-Letter,* saying he had written it to fill a place in *The Overland Monthly,* but thought it too trivial. Bierce wanted it for *The News-Letter,* but had the unprofessional candor to tell Harte that it really belonged in the *Overland,* and there Harte published it, although reluctantly. Upon its publication, of course, it made the name and fame of Brete Harte.

The relations of the men were strained, after Harte became a national figure and went east. There was much dissent on the part of his friends, but there seems to have been a general and abiding dissatisfaction with Harte's attitude, which had apparently changed with success. This did not, however, change Bierce's admiration for his style. He would occasionally damn him, in later years, for a careless circumlocution, but he would usually end his remarks with some such statement as this: "The flight of his genius is always in one direction, but it beats the air with as strong a wing as when it first sprang away." He was one of the first to praise Harte's "incomparable humor."

He also had some friendly relations with Harte as contributor and editor, for Bierce wrote the "Grizzly Papers," signed "Ursus," that appeared in *The Overland Monthly,* in Number I issue of that periodical in January of 1871, and that followed for the next three issues, down to April of 1871, by which time Bierce had left San Francisco for England. Some of the views expressed in these early papers are interesting, for most of the work that Bierce was doing for *The News-Letter* at this time was nonsensical "funning" that is negligible to-day. In fact, in the issue of February, 1871, we find Bierce setting forth, tentatively, his creed and ambition as a writer which he was to follow so steadfastly in the years to come, in these words: "If any man of true wit shall seriously, sharply and pointedly assail folly, cant, hypocrisy, and villainy in the persons of their representatives, being not too particular in the suppression of names, he shall win for himself a great applause from those who will look coldly on while he runs a tilt against a possibly foolish, but certainly insignificant habit of thought or expression, or impales the inoffensive moon."

As I have said, his *News-Letter* work was negligible, although it did give him an opportunity to try his wit on the enemies of the paper and to keep a lively interest centered on his column of abuse. Occasionally wearying of restraint, he would have at some local statesmen with a bludgeon. He wrote of one forgotten unworthy: "Of all the donkeys in our State Legislature, and the number is limited only by the State Constitution, Mr. Henry of Sonoma can bray the loudest, longest and with the most elaborate monotony." Once an antagonist wrote some witty verses aimed at "B *," which might have meant Bierce, Bowman, or Barnes. Bierce, not to be outdone, replied:

"Young man, when next you wag your pen,
Discretion should assist it;
When next you use uncertain words,
Your B shall stand for Biscuit;
When next you have an asterisk,
Think twice before you risk it."

It was after Bierce became editor of *The News-Letter* that he first met Mary Ellen Day, or “Mollie Day,” as she was known. Mollie Day was the only daughter of Captain Holland Hines Day, a Forty-Niner, who had crossed the plains from Galena, Illinois, where Mollie was born. He won his title of “Captain” as an Indian fighter in the Middle West prior to leaving for California. His brother, James L. Day, was a prominent mining man in the West, having discovered the “Emma” mine. He was a millionaire and the famous “James L. Day” steamship was named after him. Captain Day had mined in Trinity and Placer counties until the discovery of gold in Nevada. He opened the Savage Mine and was later superintendent of the Ophir, one of the famous Western mines, and of the Central. He later became interested in mining properties in Utah, particularly one mine “The Tintic,” and was so highly regarded in Salt Lake that his name was once proposed for the office of United States Senator. He was a fine, kindly old gentleman. Mr. Thomas Beer would, however, have called his wife a “Titaness.” She was full of pretense and determination, and was quite a figure in early San Francisco society. The romance of their only daughter with a nondescript journalist, of whom no one knew anything and none dared ask for information, was not met at first with warm approval. When it became apparent, however, that Mollie was determined to marry “The Town Crier,” they offered no opposition to the match.

Mollie Day was a very beautiful girl. She had wit and verve and excellent taste. She played the piano and sang and was excessively romantic. Along with her friend, Miss Riemer, she was one of the most popular girls in San Francisco society of the times. Mollie lived for years in the handsome residence of the Days’ on Vallejo Street, but she had spent a great deal of time in Nevada, visiting her uncle and father, and also her friend Fanny Fee at Virginia City. There, too, she came to know the Sam Davis family. Disappointing as the fact will be to those writers who have always referred to her as a “lovely Irish girl,” Mollie Day was, on both sides of her family, of Dutch blood. The Days had once lived in New York and came to Illinois from that state. When Bierce first met her, she was an extremely sentimental young lady, as is shown by her letters, and was done up, so to speak, in furbelows and ribbons. A note that she once wrote her mother, accompanying some presents for the latter’s birthday, is indicative of her nature: “Darling Mother, this is your birthday, will you accept of these simple presents that I now offer you, with the best love of your daughter, and always think of me as, your loving child, Mollie Day.” Bierce had been stricken with recurrent attacks of asthma soon after he arrived in San Francisco, and had been forced to seek relief in San Rafael, across the bay, in Marin County. It was quite a popular summer resort in those days, and the Days spent much time there. It was thus that Bierce met his future wife. They had a group of friends that went on boating and picnicking expeditions, among whom were Ina Coolbrith and Charles Warren Stoddard. The group was frequently invited to Miss Day's home. Once Stoddard failed to appear to keep an appointment and Bierce wrote him: "I had arranged a nice card party with the ladies and you don't know how much beauty and youth, and virtue, and similar stuff you missed by not remaining another night." The letter is postmarked from San Rafael and refers to "Miss Day." The Major, after he became editor of *The News-Letter*, began to be quite well known. He was one of the organizers of the Lotus Club, the first yachting club to be formed on the coast, and he used to take Mollie Day for boat rides around the bay in the yacht of Capt. Moody. At the time the club was organized there were no by-laws. Later, when asked to sign the by-laws, Bierce refused because he noticed that they contained a clause against the use of intoxicating liquors while on the seas! When they were not picnicking in Marin County, or boating, they attended such dazzling affairs (and amusing) as the Sharon Reception and the Calico Ball. These gorgeous social gatherings impressed San Francisco as being easily the equivalent to court life on the continent. Then, too, there were expeditions to Woodward's Gardens to gaze at sea shells!

It was not long until their engagement was announced and on December 26th, 1871, the following notice appeared in the *Daily Evening Bulletin*: "In this city, married, December 25th, by Rev. Horatio Stebbins, Ambrose G. Bierce and Mary E. Day." Bierce had unmercifully ragged this same Horatio Stebbins in *The News-Letter*, and was often to satirize him in the future. In fact, he once suggested to Rabbi Nieto that he should have dedicated "Black Beetles in Amber" to Horatio Stebbins because he had performed the marriage ceremony. But this was only in later years, after their separation; it was then, too, that he wrote the lines:

"They stood before the altar and supplied
The fire themselves in which their fat was fried.
In vain the sacrifice! — no god will claim
An offering burnt with an unholy flame."

A later issue of the *Evening Bulletin* announced that the marriage ceremony was performed at the home of the bride's father and mother, and that "all of San Francisco attended," which probably meant that several friends were present. On December 30th, 1871, a news story appeared in *The News-Letter* which purported to be a resolution of a Woman’s Suffrage Association announcing their glee over the marriage of the Town Crier who had always reviled their sex.

The young couple did not leave immediately for England on their honeymoon, but took up a residence in San Rafael. There is in existence a letter from Bierce to Stoddard under date of January 5th, 1872, from San Rafael, acknowledging in a friendly way Stoddard’s felicitations and closing with the statement: “We are living cosily. My regards to Ina,” meaning, of course, Ina Coolbrith. They lived in San Rafael until their departure for England in the spring. But on March 9th, 1872, Bierce bid farewell to the readers of the Town Crier page and made this valedictory:

The present writer’s connection with this paper ceases for at least a brief season, with this issue, be the same longer or shorter. Since December, 1868, he has, with one or two weeks’ intermission, conducted this page. The Town Crier does not seek a wider field for his talents. The only talents that he has are a knack at hating hypocrisy, cant, and all sham, and a trick of expressing his hatred. What wider field than San Francisco does God’s green earth present? Gentlemen, — Ah! and you, too, darlings, we came near overlooking you — a large, comprehensive and warm farewell! Be as decent as you can. Don’t believe without evidence. Treat things divine with marked respect — don’t have anything to do with them. Do not trust humanity without collateral security; it will play you some scurvy trick. Remember that it hurts no one to be treated as an enemy entitled to respect until he shall prove himself a friend worthy of affection. Cultivate a taste for distasteful truths. And, finally, most important of all, endeavor to see things as they are, not as they ought to be. Then shall the Town Crier not have cried in vain; and if ever again he shall resume the whip of the satirist, it shall fall upon your shoulders as a snowflake settles against the rocky side of Mt. Shasta.”

Some of the eastern papers read that The Town Crier was to leave *The News-Letter* and commented on the fact. *The Critic* contained these lines:

“Noos Lettah, so fierce Has lost his Bierce,
And doesn’t know where to find him;
Left all alone
He must weep and groan
And tuck in his tail behind him.”

It was not long after the marriage that “Sandy” Bowers, an old friend of Captain Day, gave a reception for the young couple. “Sandy” had been just a common Irish day laborer until he made a fortune in mining. The reception was one of the most unique events in early San Francisco's social life. The Bowers had pieces of Italian statuary through the house and on the figures of some of the models, Mrs. Bowers, with a sense of modesty that has perhaps never been paralleled, had draped pink cloth to hide any suggestion of the improper. In the library old "Sandy" had a picture or bust of the various authors over each section so that he might know whose books he was pointing at since he could not read the titles.

It was about this time that Bierce and his bride left for England on a honeymoon, as their passport was issued on April 30th, 1872. The yellowing document gives an interesting picture of Bierce, rather suggestive of the description of General L. V. Bierce: "Age 30; five feet four; forehead, medium; eyes, grey; nose, large; mouth, medium; skin, medium; hair, light; complexion, florid." The trip was financed by Captain Day and was in the nature of a wedding present. Mr. Marriott of *The News-Letter* fortified Bierce with letters of introduction to various Fleet Street luminaries. And thus, with money and the open sesame to his chosen field of journalism, Bierce left for England. It is undeniable that Bierce personally wanted to go to London. His acquaintance with Marriott and Watkins had fired his ambition to become a "London journalist": all others were as trash; even New York was provincial. He had received some letters from England about his Town Crier work and it had been frequently quoted in the English press, so that he thought he would have no difficulty in securing a place on the staff of some periodical.

These first six years in San Francisco had been interesting and eventful. During this period he had forever abandoned the thought of a career in the regular army and had become, after an interval in the Sub-Treasury, a professional journalist. Then, too, he had married perhaps the most beautiful girl in San Francisco and one of the wealthiest. The young couple had been sent on their way with much ringing of bells, good wishes and prediction of happiness. Along with this good fortune, was a trip to London, London! Bierce's *ultima thule*, the symbol of earthly elegance and perfection.

As they traveled eastward along the line of the railroad that had been completed in 1869, Bierce must have thought that he had come miles in the journey of life since he had ridden westward over these very plains. Indiana was just a memory; the war a vivid recollection temporarily hidden.

From his farewell note in *The News-Letter* it is apparent that Bierce did not intend to return to San Francisco. He had finished with the West and was now going to carve a niche in Westminster Abbey, Farewell, San Francisco! "The marble dream by the Ægean Sea," as his young friend Ina Coolbrith had sung of it. The first great chapter in his life was rounded out: he was on the threshold of fulfillment. And what of Mollie Bierce? Doubtless she was as certain of their success as her handsome young husband. Certainly she could not have been happier. She had a picture taken leaning over the railing of an ocean liner, a diminutive muff raised in a gesture of farewell, her face all laughter and joy. At their age, with money, youth and beauty, happiness was inevitable. Life was an unopened wine bottle.

CHAPTER VI. LONDON

THE Bierces arrived in Liverpool and went directly to London. They found Liverpool “a wildly uninteresting commercial soil” but London was “Paradise” and they were possessed of a “haunting fever of impatience to visit Stratford-on-Avon.” They stayed, however, in London for some time. It is apparent from Bierce’s papers that he must have had some correspondence with John Camden Hotten, the publisher, before leaving America. Hotten published Mark Twain and Artemus Ward, and doubtless desired to add the Town Crier to his list of Western Humorists. It has been rumored that Bierce was induced to go to London because of a correspondence with Leigh Hunt. This is erroneous, as Hunt died in 1859; nor are there any letters from Tom Hood addressed to Bierce in America. It would seem that Hotten was perhaps the first person to call on Bierce after his arrival in England, for there is in existence a note from Hotten, dated July 29th, 1872, asking for an appointment. Publisher and author seem to have come to terms quickly for, in September, Hotten was writing Bierce that the “proofs” were ready, and he was doubtless referring to “Nuggets & Dust,” which was merely a compilation of some of the paragraphs from the Town Crier’s page with a few new pieces. It appeared in 1872.

It was through Hotten that Bierce met many of the men with whom he was to be associated during his residence in England. Foremost among these was, of course, Tom Hood, the younger. Hood was editor of *Fun* at the time, and asked Bierce to send in some contributions. They were quickly accepted and Bierce was asked to become a regular contributor. His first journalistic work in London was done for *Fun,* a series of humorous sketches—”Fables of Zambri the Parsee,”

“translated by Dod Grile,” which was the pen name he used in England. The first series of these sketches ran from July, 1872, until March, 1873, and were published in that year, first, by the *Fun* office in a paper edition, and later in the same year in regular book form. After his work on *Fun* became known, Bierce was asked to write for several other publications, and soon became associated with James Mortimer, editor of *Figaro.* Bierce wrote regularly for *Figaro* a column called “The Passing Showman.” It is interesting to note that some issues of the magazine are adorned with the vignette of a handsome woman by Faustin, who was none other than Mollie Day Bierce. The same vignette was once reproduced in *Fun.* It has been said that Bierce wrote for *The Bat* and *The*

Cuckoo, two publications edited by one “Jimmy” Davis, but I have been unable to find verification for the statement. But his early fame was won with his contributions to *Fun.* His alleged acquaintance with Mr. Gladstone would seem to be mythical. Gladstone in later years gave an interview to the press, in the course of which he said that he had just purchased from H. H. Harley, 21 Park Street, Camden Town, a copy of “The Fiend’s Delight,” and that he remembered reading the book when it first appeared. The story was current in many papers, and Robert Barr of *The Idler* sent Bierce a news clipping, and a correspondence with Gladstone resulted. But that he knew Gladstone in England does not seem likely. It is difficult to state accurately just how much work Bierce did for *Fun* during his residence in England. The few things that were republished can be easily identified in the files of the magazine, as, for example, the Zambri Fables, which were published in “Cobwebs From an Empty Skull,” published in 1874. But he wrote much besides these fables, as is shown by a letter from Henry Sampson, in the course of which Sampson said: “Before you came Tom used to do nine columns, and I one. He used then to average seven columns a week, the paper holds ten or less, and the other three were divided between you and me.”

Bierce did not stay long in London. After having interviewed Hotten, arranged for his book and started his work for *Fun,* he left for a visit to Stratford-on-Avon with his wife. He was so enthusiastic about the trip that he wrote a long three-column account of the visit for the *California Alta,* under date of October 3, 1872, which appeared in the form of a letter to the editor. Parts of this letter were later reprinted in “Nuggets & Dust,” but several significant passages were omitted. Bierce was utterly delighted with Stratford-on-Avon. At last he was before the great literary shrine of the period. He entered the following lines of verse in the Visitors’ Book:

It nothing boots exchanging “saws.”
With canting dunces who proclaim
The lightness of the world’s applause —
The worthlessness of human fame.
Fame valueless? They’ll have it so —

They still will teach and preach the same —
Until by chance they undergo
The cheating done in Shakespeare’s name.
Perhaps they then will bow them down,
And own there’s profit in renown.”

And he closed the letter with this sentence: “I did not visit Charlecot, where Shakespeare stole the deer, nor did I extend my pilgrimage to the crab-tree under which Will and his guzzling companions lay drunk. For me it is sufficient that he *did* steal a deer, and that he *did* get drunk.”

Bierce found during his short residence in London that he could not work well in the city, and that his health was seriously affected by the damp climate. Hence, he went to Bristol to live. He wrote to Stoddard, under date of December 29th, 1872, from Bristol: “I am at Bristol because I fear the London fogs and because my boy so far forgot himself as to be born while I was on tour. He swears he won’t travel just yet.” This child was named Day, although in later years, out of vanity, he attempted to rechristen himself “Raymond.” Bierce was fond of telling a story about the birth of his first child. It seems that Mrs. Bierce had ardently desired a daughter, and that she was acutely disappointed when the doctor, a bluff, red-cheeked old fellow, announced that her child was a boy. To comfort her, the Doctor said: “Well, Madam, at his age it really doesn’t make much difference.” Day was a remarkably beautiful child, destined to a short but dramatic life. Always the favorite of both parents, richly endowed with good looks and intelligence, he grew into a handsome, arrogant youth.

While residing at Bristol, Bierce seems to have had no fixed plans. His residence there was born of three necessities: work, his health, and the birth of his son. He wrote Stoddard that he expected to remain in Bristol for only two months and then he would return to London. He did return to London in January of 1873, but he found it difficult to work there, as his accursed asthma troubled him no end, so that in March he had to move to Bath. He wrote Stoddard, from No. 6 Sydney Building, Bath, on March 16th, 1873: “I am doing just work enough over here to pay my current expenses at this somewhat expensive place. It does not require much of my time either. Have not attempted to get any permanent work, and don’t suppose I shall, as my object in coming was to loaf and see something of the country — as Walt Whitman expressed it, when the paralysis had, as yet, invaded only his brain, ‘to loaf and invite my soul.’” Of course there was a touch of bravura about this letter, as the father-in-law had sponsored the trip, and what Bierce earned as a journalist was a mere pittance. The passage does show, however, what his object was in going to England.

The western journalist was, during this period, something of a *rara avis* in London life. Francis Grierson, in his unpublished memoirs, noticed that London society simply doted on these queer and eccentric fellows. It puzzled him, for, having been born in the Lincoln country, he knew that Joaquin Miller was something of a faker. People had heard fascinating stories about life in far-away California, and it was but natural that they were interested in writers who made a living by telling gorgeous lies about the region. They were never disappointed in these characters, for surely two more interesting and amusing fellows than Mark Twain and Joaquin Miller never lived. Miller was, however, about the only writer of the group who was the complete embodiment of what Europe imagined was a western journalist. He possessed a movie actor’s vanity and was wit enough to be vastly amused at the amazement he created. In any event, Twain, Miller and Bierce formed a great trio and naturally they were well received. The English liked Twain’s gorgeous stories and his inimitable, drawling manner of telling them; they were fascinated by Miller’s hip boots, red belt, flowing locks, and wild west mannerisms; they were puzzled, but amused by Bierce’s studied indifference and his cold, sarcastic turn of mind.

The three were once guests at the famous White Friars’ Club in the winter of 1873. Bierce later, along with Twain, Miller and Col. Dudley Waring, became an honorary member of the club. The dinner in question was, however, really in honor of Bierce, for in the South London *Express* the next morning this notice appeared: “Last night a personage of worldwide celebrity dined at the White Friars’ Club — as honorary guest. I refer to the Town Crier, one of the most original and daring humorists this age has produced.” Miller came to the dinner arrayed in his usual western regalia, with a huge knife in his belt. Twain and Bierce feigned indifference and did not so much as comment on their compatriot’s eccentric appearance, giving the impression that such unique costuming was quite common in America. When Miller picked his fish up by the tail and swallowed it whole, they did not appear to notice his conduct. It was on this occasion, too, that Bierce was called upon to make a speech. Thinking to have some fun with Twain, he told the story of Twain’s visit to the office of *The News-Letter.* But Twain never cracked a smile, and merely appeared to be bored with the story; Bierce said that his expression of sad despair was perfectly feigned. No one laughed and it left Bierce quite stranded. The White Friars’ Club was located in Mitre Court, Fleet Street, nearly opposite Fetter Lane, and the regular meetings were held on Fridays.

It was about this time that Bierce began to be somewhat annoyed with Joaquin Miller’s irresponsible conduct. An incident occurred which brought the matter to a crisis. Olive Harper, after first seeking and being denied an interview with Bierce, wrote of him in the New York *Evening Graphic,* that he had once worked in a brickyard, but now that he had married a rich woman and gone to live in England he had given himself airs. Bierce knew immediately that Miller’s hand was in this story. On November 16th, 1873, he wrote a letter, which appeared in several London journals, stating the facts and then quoting the following open letter to Miller:

"Dear Mr. Miller:

"It would be a favor to Mrs. Harper if you would kindly indicate to her, in any way you like, that I hope she will not do me the doubtful honor of calling. Perhaps when she shall have associated long enough with the nobility and tradespeople, her manners will improve, and her conversation acquire a touch of decency; at present she is rather vulgar. I trust this will not offend you; if it does I shall be sorry. Anyhow, it is better you should keep her from calling than to have my servant shut the door in her face."

Of course, Bierce's irritation was caused by Mrs. Harper's taking revenge on him for denying an interview in the manner that she did, but nevertheless he knew that she had gotten her information from Miller. In later years Bierce and Miller tolerated each other in private and admired each other's work in public, but the personal antipathy was quite apparent.

The months at Bath were particularly enjoyable to Bierce. His letters of this period have an unmistakable quality of contentment; they are full of wit, to be sure, but it is never shrill or sharp or bitter. He was entranced with the English countryside, and wrote to Stoddard, who was still in San Francisco: "It is the most charming of all imaginable places. Every street has its history, every foot of the lovely country its tradition. Old Roman, and even Druidic, remains are plenty as green peas. You are aware that Bath was the stamping ground of Pope, Fielding, Smollett, Warburton, Malthus, Beau Nash, Ralph Allen, — who 'did good by stealth and blushed to find it fame' — and a lot of worthies whose haunts I frequent and over whose graves I shed judicious drops and tried to fancy myself like them. I don't succeed."

During the summer of 1873, Mrs. Day came to England from San Francisco to visit her daughter and to see the grandchild. Upon her arrival, the Bierces moved back to London, and took up temporary quarters at 19 Downshire Hill, Hampstead, and it was there that Bierce planned to receive his friend, Charles Warren Stoddard, who by then had sailed for England. Bierce wrote to Stoddard and insisted that he come directly to their home until he was located, and closed the letter with a characteristic touch: "And so God(?) bless you (!) and by-by." To this letter is appended a succinct postscript: "My Mother-in-law is here, wife is well, and baby marvelous."

Just what had been Bierce's reactions to literary London during this first year? The matter is not a subject of speculation, for it is summed up admirably in one of the most remarkable Bierce letters in existence. It is addressed to Stoddard, under date of September 28th, 1873, and posted from the Hampstead residence.

In order to get the full purport and meaning of the letter, one must remember the circumstances. Bierce had been in England for over a year as a journalist, and during this time he had seen something of literary London and had come to know its chief personalities. His friend, Charles Stoddard, would have to face the same tests and under the same circumstances that Bierce had previously experienced. Naturally, Bierce would have preferred to advise Stoddard orally, but it so happened that he was leaving England for two months in Paris with his wife, Mrs. Day and the baby. So he wrote the letter, pinned it on the door at the Hampstead residence so that Stoddard might find it when he called and thus be carefully and wisely advised as to how he should conduct himself. With these circumstances in mind, the letter is most illuminating:

"I have told Tom Hood to look after you. Now mark this: Tom is one of the very dearest fellows in the world, and an awful good friend to me. *But* he has the worst lot of associates I ever saw — men who (with one or two noble exceptions, whom you cannot readily pick out) are not worthy to untie his shoe latchet. He will introduce you to them all. Treat them well, of course, but (1) don't gush over them; (2) don't let them gush over you; (3) don't accept invitations from them; (4) don't get drunk with them; (5) don't let them in any way monopolize you; (6) don't let them shine by your reflected light. 1 have done all these things, and it is not a good plan, 'for at the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder.' *I* don't mind biting and stinging, but you would — particularly if done in the dark.

"Remember this: London — literary London — is divided into innumerable cliques which it will require some time to get the run of. Remember, also, that if you fall into the hands of one clique, all the others will give you the cold shoulder. Remember, also, that everybody will profess the most unbounded admiration for you, and not one of them can tell a line you have written.... You will, by the way, be under a microscope here; your slightest word and most careless action noted down, and commented on by men who cannot understand how a person of individuality in thought or conduct can be other than a very bad man. Lord! how I have laid myself out inventing preposterous speech and demeanor just to get their silly tongues wagging. It is good fun for me. Walk, therefore, circumspectly, keep your own counsel, don't make speeches at clubs, avoid any appearance of eccentricity, don't admire anything, and don't disparage anything; don't eat mustard on mutton!

"You just 'bet your boots' I know these fellows and their ways. They think they know me, but they don't. I am hand-in-glove with some hundreds of them, and they think they are my intimate friends. If any man says he is, or acts as if he were, avoid him, he is an impostor. This letter is *strictly confidential,* and when I come back I shall ask you to hand it to me."

It has been suggested that Bierce was rather flattered and swept off his feet by the reception given him by these Fleet Street journalists whom the London *Spectator* referred to as "raffish celebrities." That such was not the case is shown by the letter to Stoddard. However much Bierce might have been affected by his first exposure to their flattery, it is apparent that one year's experience with them was enough to open his eyes. As a matter of fact, he loved Tom Hood; was very fond of Henry Sampson, editor of *The Referee,* and co-editor with Bierce of a "Dictionary of Slang"; liked James Mortimer; and was amused by George Augustus Sala, but it cannot be said that he entertained a very high regard for his other associates. He did know, however, quite a number of prominent literary figures. The vignette in "The Fiend's Delight" is said to have been done by W. S. Gilbert. Bierce also knew Barry Sullivan, G. R. Sims, Henry S. Leigh, who wrote some charming songs and died a pauper; Austin Dobson, and quite a host of others, including William Black, the novelist — Capt. Mayne Reid. Bierce denied that he ever knew Clement Scott and once gave him an unmerciful pummeling in "Prattle."

But he did have, however, a real affection for Tom Hood. Of Hood's personal charm, so much has been written that it may be assumed. Naturally Bierce was fond of him. Hood's letters to Bierce, very few in number, are touched with the most delightful wit and grace. After the birth of Day, he wrote Bierce that he was coming down to Bath to see the new "Day-Man who is the real Fiend's Delight." And, again, on New Year's he wrote: "A happy new year to you — and to the dawning Day — I suppose you'll want him made a Knight, your republican tendencies of course being aristocratic as shown by your signature 'Bierce' as our Dukes and Earls write 'Wellington' or 'Derby' — are you sure you are not the real Tichborne?" Throughout their correspondence there is not the suggestion of a quarrel or a misunderstanding: a rare experience with Bierce.

Bierce used to visit Hood in Penge, a suburb of London, beyond the Crystal Palace. "Back of his odd little house was his odd little garden, and here we were accustomed to burn our cigars after which we commonly passed the entire night in a room upstairs, sipping grog, pulling at our pipes, and talking on all manner of things.... Tom had in him a vein of what in another I should have called superstition, but it was so elusive in character and whimsical in manifestation that I could never rightly assign it a place, nor determine its metes and bounds. It may have been an undeveloped religion, a philosophical conviction, a sentiment — for ought I know a joke." During many of the nocturnal visits they talked of ghosts, and one night they made the usual death pact with each other that the one who first should die would attempt to communicate with the other. Bierce left London shortly after this for a trip, and during his absence Hood died (1875). One evening after his return to the city, he was walking to his home in Warwickshire, when he felt the presence of his friend rush past. “I need not attempt to describe my feelings; they were novel and not altogether agreeable. That I had met the spirit of my dead friend; that it had given me recognition, yet not in the old way; that it had then vanished — of these things I had the evidence of my own senses. How strongly this impressed me the beating of my heart attested whenever, for many months afterward, that strange meeting came into my memory.” He was to make use of this incident when he wrote “The Damned Thing.”

Aside from Hood, Bierce was on more intimate terms with Henry Sampson than with any of his other associates. They became the best of friends. Sampson seems to have been of a somewhat quarrelsome nature, and was constantly talking and writing about his “enemies” and their “blackguard tactics” in a most saturnine manner. Along with Bierce, he cherished a particular and special antipathy for Sir Henry Lucy. When Hood died in 1875, Sampson took over the editorship of *Fun.* Both Hattie O’Connor, Sampson’s only child, and Mrs. Croston (formerly Julia Sampson), knew Bierce well. In fact, they visited the Bierces in San Francisco on a return trip from Australia years later. Mrs. Croston’s slight memoir of Bierce may be found in the London *Evening Standard,* September 15th, 1922.

Bierce once related an amusing story about himself. It seems he was in the bar of the Covent Garden Theater with Henry Sampson one evening. Sampson had a habit of practical joking which was well known by all his friends who had been its victims on numerous occasions. Bierce was aware of this trait, and, like the other members of their circle of friends, was constantly on guard. Henry Irving entered the room and saluted them, and was by Sampson introduced to Bierce. “Our foremost actor,” Sampson added by way of showing off his lion. But, as Bierce said, “I mistook the lion — I thought the remark was addressed to Mr. Irving, a bit of fun suggested by the spirit of the place. Still, one does not care to have one’s profession misstated. Looking Mr. Irving gravely in the eye, I said: ‘Mr. Sampson is facetious.’ Irving said nothing, but I soon began to gather from his manner that he did not think Mr. Sampson facetious; and it was not long before I renounced that view of the matter myself. The silence was shocking, but in the midst of it, Sampson managed to signify a sense of thirst. We drank, and at the conclusion of the rite, Mr. Irving said good evening with a considerable *vraisemblance.* I thought him a good actor.”

Bierce and his family soon gave up their residence in London and returned to

Bath, where they spent the winter of 1874. During this period, Bierce was still writing for the weekly and monthly humorous magazines of London. By this time he had published three books: “The Fiend’s Delight,” published by Chatto & Windus as successors to John Camden Hotten; “Nuggets & Dust”; and “Cobwebs from an Empty Skull.” The first two volumes were negligible and were compiled at the suggestion of John Camden Hotten. In “The Fiend’s Delight” is one section of “Aphorisms,” many of which Bierce thought well enough of to give them a place in Volume XVIII of his “Collected Works.” Aside from these few aphorisms, Bierce did not entertain a very high regard for the work printed in these early volumes. Referring to “Cobwebs from an Empty Skull,” he said in a letter to Stoddard (December, 1873): “I am pleased that Mark likes my fables, but your idea that they ought to create a ‘furor’ — I think that is the word — amuses me. I don’t create furors. The book in question has never, I believe, been sent to a single journal for review, is not published in anybody’s list, and is not even advertised — If I had one of Mark’s cocktails I would finish this letter; as it is I have not the spirit to get through it, and if anything else strikes me I’ll telegraph.” And in still another letter to Stoddard (January, 1874): “Do you know I have the supremest contempt for my books, — as books. As a journalist I believe I am unapproachable in my line; as an author, a slouch! I should never put anything into covers if I could afford not to.” This is a singularly revealing statement, not so much because it shows that Bierce had a clear-headed conception of his faults, (one would expect that of such a man), but because of his calm assumption of supreme worth in “my line,” *i.e.* journalism. Bierce knew that as a satirical journalist he really was “unapproachable.” He remained a great satirist all his life, and it is to be seriously doubted if so immensely effective a journalist, in his own manner, ever wrote in this country. To some it may only be “journalese,” but others will find in “Prattle” such mordant satire, such utterly annihilating sarcasm and abuse, as cannot easily be paralleled.

But, regardless of their value, Bierce was too modest in his letter to Stoddard about the reception of these early books. As a matter of fact, they were quite well received. Tom Hood was enthusiastic about them; so was Henry Sampson. Hotten, who published them, was pleased and asked Bierce for more copy, suggesting, however, something a “trifle less bloody — less swinging of the meat axe. I am sure you must have written plenty of delightful conceits not entirely of a gory character.” His English associates knew that Bierce was simply amusing himself with these “awful” stories; they were not compelled to convert him into a sadist but were willing to accept his statement, made in “The Fiend’s Delight” — (Page 75)—”One of the rarest amusements in life is to go about with an icicle suspended by a string, letting it down the necks of the unwary. The sudden shrug, the quick, frightened shudder, the yelp of apprehension, are sources of pure, because diabolical, delight.” One reviewer in mentioning “Nuggets & Dust” made this comment:

“If Artemas Ward may be considered the Douglas Jerrold, and Mark Twain the Sydney Smith of America, Dod Grile will rank as their Dean Swift. There is a grimness and force in him which place his humor far above anything of the kind ever attempted. The New York *Nation,* a literary authority of ability, is struck with Dod Grile’s wit and delightful badinage, every line of which is written in the most forceful English.”

When “The Fiend’s Delight” appeared, Bierce reviewed it himself, under a *nom de plume* in *Figaro,* and said that it was: “A piece of exasperating blackguardism, begot of comprehensive ignorance and profound conceit. But it is useless to chide this animal; the wise man has said of the fool that though brayed in a mortar yet his folly will not depart from him. Still, it is a grateful task to bray him, anyhow.”

In the spring of 1874 the Bierces moved to 20 South Parade, Leamington, Warwickshire. In a letter to Stoddard dated April 26th, 1874, Bierce said: “You will want to see Kenilworth, Warwick, and Stratford-on-Avon again. You have no notion of the beauty of the country now when it is green.” He made innumerable trips through the English countryside and never ceased to praise its beauties. In “Nuggets & Dust,” he tells about a visit to Kenilworth Castle one Sunday. On his return he stopped at a little inn on a hillside.

“As I sat in my little ten-by-twelve parlour, looking upon the gigantic hot joint gracing my table, flanked with a jug of nut-brown ale, and then backward across the remnants of the old priory in the valley, to the solemn Ruin, the westering sun struggled from behind one of those mountains of tumbled cloud which I have never seen but in an English sky, and set the giant pile afire with a great glory. The light burned and flickered upon the angles like the flame of molten iron; broad banners of it seemed flung from every summit; it poured in jagged torrents through the rent sides, and shot in long straight beams through the narrow fissures, ribboning with gold the blue-black shadows darkening broadly about its base! Anon the glow crept athwart my own windows, streamed in, and gilded the brown joint upon the board with a radiance all its own.”

Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick made similar impressions. Bierce never wrote in this manner about any other experience. It was his introduction into an orderly life in which chaos was but a faint rumble; all the futile landscapes of his youth were replaced by this loveliness of Old England. Memories of Horse Cave, Ohio, were crowded out of mind by the glitter and warmth of the Mitre

Tavern. He was happily married; he had an established reputation as a man of letters; he was the comrade of many distinguished writers. He was tasting the sweets of life. The disquieting sense of futility which he had experienced soon after the war, was almost forgotten as he gained confidence in the possibility of orderliness in life.

Mrs. Day was still living with her daughter at this time. She had traveled to London to gaze upon one grandchild and stayed to witness the birth of another, for in May, 1874, the second son, Leigh, was born at Leamington. Shortly after the birth of this child. Mrs. Day departed for America. It has been bruited about that she returned to America with her daughter. This, of course, is untrue. Bierce never liked his mother-in-law, but this antipathy had nothing whatever to do with the estrangement with Mrs. Bierce which occurred at a much later date.

The summer that followed on Mrs. Day's return to America, was far from pleasant for Bierce. Much of the worry of the household fell on him, and he was scarcely the type of man to be delighted with domestic cares. He wrote to Stoddard from Leamington (July 4th): "I have had a deal of worry — having more work than I can do, and Mrs. Bierce having two babies and nursemaid to look after. — Then, too, I have been, and am, up to my ears in work, grinding stuff for five publications: one semiweekly, two weeklies, one monthly, and one 'occasional' — a pizen thing of which I write every line. If some of these don't die of me I shall surely die of them." The exile was broken by visitors from London and one or two callers from San Francisco, such as Belle Thomas and Prentice Mulford. Belle Thomas visited the Bierces on her way to Paris to study music. She was a great favorite of the Bierces. Mrs. Bierce once remarked that the most delightful evenings in England that she could recall were spent "toasting crumpets with Prentice Mulford." Later Mulford anticipated Dr. Frank Crane with his catchy, optimistic "White Cross Library," but with all the inconsistency of the professional smiler he was found dead one morning in a boat at Sag Harbor. He could smile cheerfully through all life's cruel disappointments, but when "Josie," the inspiration of Miller and Charles Warren Stoddard also, deserted him he found his philosophy of no assistance. Through these occasional visitors Bierce maintained some contact with San Francisco, but he had ceased to correspond with any of his old friends with the exception of James Watkins. Stoddard was, at the time, in Rome, attempting to see "the Holy, if somewhat eccentric, Father," as Bierce phrased it; Miller was gone; Twain was no longer in London. The only California newspapers that he read were *The News-Letter* and the Santa Cruz *Sentinel.* He had definitely abandoned America in his own mind.

One of Bierce's close associates at this time was James Mortimer, editor of

Figaro. Mortimer had had a varied experience as journalist in England, America and in France, and was typical of the profession at that date; hard-drinking, witty, irresponsible, and lazy. He had perfected the technique of polite blackmail, then so much in vogue among struggling journalists. He had immediately recognized in Bierce a writer with a genius for satirical expression, and had given him all the work he could do. He kept nagging Bierce for copy, writing "Go at it again, try to be exceptionally bitter," or "Be as cynical and disagreeable as you like, which is saying much." He made endless sport of Bierce's enigmatic initials "A. G.," referring to him as "Aaron,"

"Abner" and whatnot. Along with Sampson, Sir Henry Lucy and others of the time, Mortimer belonged to a class of journalists that disappeared about 1890. Their work is hard to read to-day because the personal allusions have been forgotten, and the innuendoes are no longer comprehensible. They specialized in personal abuse of the most scurrilous variety, and often had to flee across the channel, as Mortimer did more than once, to evade the harsh criminal libel laws of England. Bierce was of a much finer caliber than any of these men, but they did instruct him in the art of verbal fencing.

Mortimer, during the time that he had lived in Paris, had become an intimate of the Emperor and Empress. After they fled to England, he had been able to render them many courtesies and had performed many valuable services. It was but natural that they should consult him when it was announced that Henri Rochefort was coming to England. In order to appreciate fully the significance of what follows, it is necessary to know something about this amazing Rochefort and his relation to the royalty of France.

Henri Rochefort, Victor Henri, Marquis de Rochefort-Lucay was the scion of a very aristocratic family in France. After first failing very ignominiously as a medical student and later as a clerk, he became a revolutionary demagogue of great rhetorical violence. In 1863 he was one of the editors of *Figaro,* and soon afterwards began the first of his mordant attacks on the Napoleonic régime. But these early writings were mild indeed compared with the diatribes he began to publish in 1868 after the more arbitrary restrictions on the press were relaxed in France. It was at this point that Rochefort launched his famous weekly, *La Lanterne,* which immediately upon its publication enjoyed an enormous circulation. In the columns of *La Lanterne,* so-called because, as its editor said, "A lantern may serve both to lighten the day of the honest men and to hang wrongdoers," Rochefort left nothing unsaid about the Emperor or the Empress. He even went to the extreme of denying the legitimacy of the Prince Imperial! This abuse continued for some months, but finally Rochefort was convicted of "disrespect against the government" and fled to Brussels, where he joined Victor

Hugo, also in exile, and continued the publication of *La Lanterne* from that retreat.

In 1873 Rochefort was sentenced to the penal colony at New Caledonia, and it was generally held that a good riddance had been made of bad rubbish. The man was really a most remarkable firebrand. His memoirs, "The Adventures of My Life," in two volumes, published by Edward Arnold in 1897, is a most interesting account of a life devoted to intellectual carnage, riot and excitement. His days seem to have been entirely taken up with duels, quarrels, plots, and scurrilous attacks on people of the highest estate. And, as might be expected of so violent a temperament, his nights were rarely given over to meditation.

Aside from the memoirs, the best account of the man to be found is that by John F. MacDonald, published in the *Contemporary Review,* August, 1913. According to this observer, Rochefort was Baudelaire turned politician. He was known throughout Europe as "Rochefort the Lurid" and "Rochefort the Vicious." Of his personal appearance MacDonald says: "Pale, steely blue eyes lit up cruelly, evilly at times, a face seamed, sallow and horse-like in shape; he had a harsh, guttural voice; and large, yellowish hands with long, pointed finger nails." That Rochefort was capable of pithy utterance when aroused is shown by some of the epithets he hurled. He called M. Jaurès "a decayed turnip"; M. Georges Clemenceau, "a loathsome leper"; M. Briand, "a moulting vulture"; President Loubet, "the foulest of assassins"; and President Fallières, "a fat old satyr." He dallied in the cafés of Paris with a toy lamb on his table, making cruel sport of the people that he met. He was utterly capricious and entirely mad. Purporting to be a liberal, he pursued Captain Dreyfus with relentless vigor and even allied himself with such rank militarists as General Boulanger and Paul Derouledè. For some fifty years he was "a holy terror," as Bierce would say, in French journalism. His papers, notably *Figaro, La Lanterne, L'Intransigeant,* and *Patrie,* were renowned for his vicious, scurrilous, vulgar abuse.

The Empress Eugénie had come to fear Rochefort's diabolic attacks during the days when she was in power in France. It is small wonder, then, that she trembled in exile whenever his name was mentioned. She had fled to England after the collapse of the Empire and settled at Chislehurst. Although England was gracious enough to Marie Eugenie Ignace Augustine De Montijo, it was quite a problem to determine just how royally a nominally republican government should treat a fugitive monarchist. Eugénie had fled from France, however, with most of the loose gold of the realm, and with this in mind England was amenable to the ever-pleasant conviction that the rich must necessarily be the just.

It was about this time, 1874, that the ubiquitous M. Rochefort escaped from

New Caledonia and was, via Australia and the New World, en route for England and Eugénie. Rumors reached the Empress that this inhuman scourge was coming to invade her sanctum for the express purpose of humiliating her, and at this Chislehurst began to erect barricades. Rochefort, on arriving, announced that he would publish *La Lanterne* in London for a time, printing one edition in English and the other in French, the latter edition to be smuggled into France, where Rochefort was still *persona non grata,* and the former to be used in tormenting Eugénie. The prospect of such a state of affairs, particularly at a time when public support was sorely needed, must have worried the Empress exceedingly. She had no way of knowing what Rochefort the Lurid would say; why, for all she knew, the fellow might even question her chastity!

When Mortimer was consulted by the Empress as to what course of action she should pursue, he recommended that she found a journal to be called *The Lantern,* and beat Rochefort at his own game. Mortimer saw a fine opportunity to make some money and to win the favor of the Empress, and it could all be done cheaply, for he would hire Bierce to write the copy, and it could be printed at the regular offices of *Figaro.* Thus it came that Bierce wrote every line of the two issues of *The Lantern* that appeared: one on May 17, 1874, and the other July 15, 1874. — It was a most interesting publication and boasted that it was the first newspaper in the world printed in six colors. Whether this is correct or not, the journal was certainly a handsome publication for the time, and it is interesting to note that *The Wasp,* a periodical Bierce edited in San Francisco, was remarkably like *The Lantern* in makeup.

Bierce, in his account of *The Lantern,* intimates that Rochefort left London immediately upon the appearance of the magazine. It would seem now that this was not altogether the fact. Rochefort, in his memoirs, tells about his amusement over the derisive welcome given him in *Punch* and other “local magazines,” and comments upon the fact that he was followed by jeering mobs through the streets whenever he left his hotel.

He states that it was his intention to publish *La Lanterne* in England, but adds that he actually published one or two issues there. However this may be, he left England soon and went to Geneva, where *La Lanterne* waved for a time in 1874.

The Empress was delighted with the work of her kept satirist. She invited Bierce to call at Chislehurst, but unfortunately her invitation was worded in the form of a “command,” and he refused out of an avowed deference to republican habits! As a matter of harsh fact his refusal can only be designated as another of his studied gestures, because he would always be “republican” when he could at the same time be grand. The Empress being gracious if not “republican,” accepted his rebuff in good part and sent him a beautiful ivory card case as a gift.

With the spring of 1875, Mrs. Bierce had decided to return to America and visit her mother. There was no other reason at that time for her return. Contrary to the rumors that have circulated for years, she did not leave Bierce at this time. There is abundant evidence to show that she merely planned a trip to America, and that she intended to return to London in the fall or the winter of 1875. Her departure with the babies left Bierce very lonely and despondent. Stoddard had returned to London by this time, and Bierce wrote him on June 2, 1875: “Awfully glad you are back, and want to see you very much, for I am lonely, of course, without the wife and babies.... I am struggling with more work than I can manage, and that is partly what has made me ill — for I am ill though I keep pegging away, somehow. Second, I live precariously and abominably.... As soon as I feel well enough to travel I’m coming to London till Mrs. Bierce returns, when I shall have a house somewhere in the suburbs. I have heard nothing from Mrs. Bierce since she left New York, but am expecting a letter every day from Salt Lake. I am not so ill as you suppose. It is only a cursed sort of semi-lunacy, I think, from lack of sleep, hard work, and unchristian cooking.” This letter is revealing, indeed, and scarcely needs emphasis. But two facts are quite apparent: that Mrs. Bierce intended to return to London and that Bierce intended to remain there; that he missed her greatly. The talk about “cooking” and “abominable living” are the words of a man used to a pleasant home life. They reveal a condition that speaks loudly of his affection for his wife and boys, and are about as demonstrative as Bierce ever permitted himself to become.

Bierce remained in Leamington during the summer of 1875, — leaving for London in the latter part of August, 1875. He lived in London for several months, and then in the latter part of 1875 sailed for America, as he had received word from Mrs. Bierce that she was again *enceinte* and he hastened from London, abandoning his plans, work, friendships, and associations, so that he might return and be with her during her confinement. He must have realized that this meant a break in his life: a return to the West which would perhaps be permanent. The trip had, after all, been little more than an extended honeymoon. They had not yet come to grips with life. Bierce had not even been able to pay expenses with his earnings in London. He knew that when he arrived back in San Francisco he would have to go to work again as a hack libelist for some journal of the day. And yet he returned to America. His conduct can scarcely be considered the act of a disgruntled husband. He sailed on the *Adriatic*, arriving in New York Sept. 25, 1875, and the unpleasant nature of the voyage was somewhat alleviated by the presence on shipboard of Madame Theresa Tietjens, the famous opera singer, whose care and well being had been entrusted to

Bierce's hands on sailing by a mutual friend. She is the opera singer mentioned in "Bits of Autobiography." Bierce tells about the mysterious foreigner whose civility anticipated Madame's every need and desire. On visiting Madame Tietjens in New York, Bierce discovered that the fellow was her servant!

And so the London residence was at a close and it was the new world again, to be rediscovered, and tried once more. That Bierce liked England immensely cannot be doubted; and that, after his arrival there, he intended to make it his home can still less be doubted. If it had not been for his wife becoming *enceinte*, there can be no doubt that Bierce would have remained indefinitely in England. It was the scene of peace, quiet and order that he instinctively sought; it was the period of rest and pause in his life; a period of work, meditation and study. These years had done much for him, coming late as they had in life. The man had been fundamentally the same at all times: super-sensitive and given by this very fact a sharp, swift, insight into human affairs. He was a man to whom every contact with vulgarity, dishonesty and sloth brought a reaction so spontaneous and violent that it unbalanced him for the moment. He saw the evasion and he struck. Perception and reaction were spontaneous with him. This gave his wit its force and aptness. Meditation would have brought doubt, and doubt in turn might have resulted in meditation and study, which might have brought about abstract thought and philosophy. But not for a sensitive man. He had not learned, as had Anatole France, "to despise man tenderly." He hated ugliness; detested dishonesty; shunned hypocrisy as the evil one itself. I shall have occasion again and again to emphasize this sensitiveness which bordered on the pathologic in the course of time. In time, too, came a gruff exterior; a layer of cynicism that tended to become coarse. But beneath that exterior the man was almost feminine in his vibrant perception of values. It appeared, this same trait, in his son Day. Mrs. Isgrigg has told me how Day would stand in the middle of the room, at St. Helena in later years, his eyes flashing, quivering with rage, his sensitive nostrils dilated, his whole person flaming with indignation like a Shelley, and say: "I wouldn't think of doing such a thing!" when told about some act of dishonesty or petty cheating. This same sense of values was Bierce's. It was scarcely aesthetic, not philosophic, it was more a poetic intuition, a sharp ability to perceive realities beyond realities, a certain fine quality of perception.

Mr. Mencken has spoken of Bierce's "appalling cynicism" and with this phrase I have no great quarrel. But it stated only one side of the equation. Externally Bierce was a cynic, for experiences had made him so, and, as W. L. George once pointed out in connection with Anatole France, a highly developed human being tends to hold two views upon one topic: the one of his instincts and the other of his reason. Instinctively Bierce was one of the most idealistic men that his generation produced in America, a man of exquisitely balanced perception, intuition, and even a sort of harmony. He maintained mental balance by giving violent expression to his work-a-day views. The core of the man was idealistic: shining, brilliant, forceful. The cynic is the concave idealist. The only utter cynic is the man who mouths platitudes which he knows to be untrue. Compared with the men of affairs of his day, Bierce was a great moral force: he was truth resplendent, for the man would not lie, and truth alone mattered to him. It came to mean more than beauty, always a rather secondary consideration with Bierce; it came to be the paramount value of his life. He could not have willed it otherwise. Sensitive, fine, idealistic, splendid, he was destined to fight hydra-headed monsters of untruth all his life. The rage finally exhausted him. He was devastated by his own apocryphal disgust with mankind. Idealism burned itself out in him.

He scorned moderation, philosophic meditation; he would have nothing to do with George Sterling’s oft-repeated “implications of infinity” — the assurance that many things were transitory and did not matter; they mattered greatly to Bierce. I want to say again: he was shocked in a manner that is very difficult for us to understand, and to an unbelievable degree, by base things. He has been criticized for his sharp, harsh treatment of friends who sinned against his code; he has been violently assailed by a few personal friends for his harsh treatment of his wife’s alleged infidelity. But what I want to force home is that he could not prevent his passionate convictions, his ungovernable, uncompromising determinations. If idealism ever is pathologic sin, it was with Bierce. His violent shots at friends for their shortcomings were boomerangs that took notches out of his own soul: they burned, and hissed, and cut his inner calm to shreds. Ingratitude of friends tortured him as it did King Lear. He suffered from these things. It was not a merely intellectual perception of degraded states of life: he was incapable of such objectivity. He was so shocked by baseness that he froze inwardly, suppressing every natural inclination, suppressing a very great and tender affection. The death of his son, Day, rocked his life like nothing had done before. The slightest suffering or pain tortured him. Inwardly he was so tender, so kind, so idealistic, that when the stimulus came it toppled him off balance in the other direction. It doesn’t do any good to attempt to explain this quality: it is difficult enough to describe. He was simply that kind of man. War or no war, sorrows or no sorrows, he was Bierce and an inscrutable destiny had made him what he was.

It has often been stated that Bierce learned his trade as a witty journalist in England. This is inaccurate. In his writing for *The News-Letter* he struck the note which echoed through all his later work. He was fundamentally the same before as after his residence in London. What he did acquire from his years abroad was a manner, an attitude, something of a personal style. It was often remarked in later years by people who knew Bierce but slightly, that he was of English origin. Gavin McNab, the famous San Francisco attorney, once wrote me that he was quite positive Bierce was an Englishman. He had about his person something that suggested the foreigner; his manners alone set him apart from the ultra-Americanism of Twain and Artemus Ward. Even his writing possessed certain qualities that impressed critics as European. John G. Neihardt, writing in the St. Louis *Post-Despatch* (December 31, 1927), suggests that Bierce was a "congenital outsider." Herman Scheffauer wrote of Bierce: "During his short sojourn in England, he adopted many English, not to say Tory, externals. He once told me that his ideal of an aged man's appearance should be a florid face and silver white hair: a color harmony which he realized in his own life." The London residence was only to make him the more romantic, for on his return to America he felt infinitely superior to all "local" writers. Then, too, the men he had associated with were the survivors of a rather anemic period. Their influence was perhaps more harmful to Bierce than it was helpful. But the years abroad did give him personal poise, polished his manners, and gave him an opportunity to read and study that would have been impossible in San Francisco.

But important as were the years in London from a personal standpoint, they are even more significant when Bierce's views are considered. Before attempting an analysis of his own views on the matter, a personal explanation is necessary. What Bierce actually said and wrote is relatively unimportant to-day. It would be folly to attempt a scriptural defense of his views, although he did possess what François Porche has so finely termed "the essential virtue of judgment: lucidity." One can point out, with sophomoric ease, that many of his views are trite, lack learning, were conceived in excitement and are hastily phrased. But all this is really beside the point when one considers his personal significance. What is important is that such a man lived and wrote in early San Francisco: a man so forceful and so impressive that he stamped his personality in an indelible manner on every one he came in contact with. He stirred his generation in the West as no one had done before, or has done since, for that matter. His influence was essentially a personal influence. What gave his satire, for example, such tremendous force at the time it was written, was the knowledge uppermost in the mind of every reader that Ambrose Bierce had written it.

Considering his ideas, then, from an objective standpoint, it is apparent that may of them are of English origin. He once wrote a long panegyric about the English system of government in the course of which he said: "For nearly all that is good in our American civilization we are indebted to England; the errors and mischiefs are of our own creation. In learning and letters, in art and the science of government, America is but a faint and stammering echo of England. The English are undoubtedly our intellectual superiors.”

His admiration was genuine and his attitude towards democracy, although influenced by his own personal bias, was essentially the attitude of an Englishman. In pointing out evils in American society, he would invariably point to the superiority of the English custom.

Often, after his return to San Francisco, he would drop his mask as satirist in “Prattle” and write a few revealing lines of reminiscence about the London years. They came in the course of time to be an oasis in his life. He perhaps magnified his happiness and well-being during these few years, because of the aridness of the times that followed. Nothing he ever said on the subject is so significant as this passage from “Prattle” (*Argonaut*, Nov. 9, 1878): “A certain friend of mine, who writes things, is commonly accused by those of whom he writes them of thinking himself a Titan among the pigmies. It can hardly be from vanity, for he frankly confesses that the happiest and most prosperous period of his life was passed where he felt himself a pigmy among the Titans. My friend used to write things in London.” To one familiar with Bierce’s writing from its inception to its close, such lines, rare as they are for their simplicity and personal quality, speak volumes. “My friend used to write things in London.”...

CHAPTER VII. “THE TERRIBLE SEVENTIES”

BIERCE returned in the fall of 1875 and spent most of the winter with his wife and children in San Francisco, where they were living at the home of Mr and Mrs. Day on Vallejo Street. For a brief holiday in December, he took his wife to Calistoga Hot Springs, then a famous resort. The Napa Valley through which they journeyed was in striking contrast to recent scenes in England, but they were not disheartened at the prospect of living on the coast. Mrs. Bierce, in particular, was delighted at the thought of being near her friends. After the birth of their daughter, Helen, they moved from San Francisco across the bay to San Rafael, in Marin County, where they had lived when they were first married. Bierce found, soon after his arrival in San Francisco, that by living in Marin County he could secure relief from the attacks of asthma which had always troubled him. This cursed disease made him a fugitive from society and his grief was unassuagable, when, one evening as he bent over his son Leigh, he heard that dreaded wheezing, that painful breathing, of the asthmatic. Thenceforth there were two exiles in the family.

One reason that the Bierces had decided to live in San Rafael was the fact that their friends, the Getliffs, who had visited them in England, made San Rafael their home. The two families lived next door and were neighbors for many years. Bierce found life very pleasant in San Rafael. It was a pretty town, only slightly removed from the bay, full of a quiet and restful beauty. He could tramp the brown hillsides with their evenly spaced clusters of green, umbrella-like trees.

He took long walks up Mt. Talmapais where the sun burned down upon the slanting hillsides with warming indolence. Then, too, there were trips across the bay to San Francisco, when the waters were dull with sorrow, full of uneasy restlessness, tugging at the shoreline. He would return home in the evening with his banker friend, Getliff, or perhaps with Judge Boalt as a week-end guest, and they would talk over the affairs of the day. A friend remembers a picture of the three of them standing near the railing, dignified, clear-eyed, but in that state of inebriation that converts every word into a sonorous intonation and makes of every movement a superb gesture. There was still a spaciousness about life, then, that permitted of gestures, verbal violence and magnificent sentiments.

What work Bierce did for the San Francisco journals immediately upon his return must have been under a pen name. There is no mention of him in any of the early journals until June 24th, 1876, when there appears a letter to the editor of *The News-Letter* from “A. G. Bierce” dated in San Francisco, enclosing Bierce’s version of the poem “Dies Iræ.” He might have done, and probably did do, a good deal of free-lancing during these months in an effort to reëstablish himself in journalism, but whatever work he did, it is buried to-day in a manner that would defy exhumation.

Bierce found, upon his return to the coast, that conditions had radically changed during his absence. The impossible prosperity of the sixties had abated and the spectre of unemployment stalked the state. Thousands had been lured to the coast by fabulous yarns of gold, only to be stripped of their earnings and property. When the boom subsided, they naturally cried for work. But, in the meantime, a new class of laborers had preëmpted the field. The Chinese had been shipped into the country by the thousands to work on the Central Pacific Railroad under the supervision of Crocker, the labor-boss of the famous Stanford-Huntington-Hopkins group. When Bierce left for the West in 1866, he saw the eastern section of the trans-continental railroad at work in Nebraska and he met the western construction unit at Dutch Flats. When the work was well under way, it is said that “Charlie” Crocker had approximately ten thousand Chinese at work on the western division.

This cheap labor was effective at the time, although no one seemed to realize that the Chinese intended to stay in America after the road was completed. There had been slight demonstrations against the Chinese as early as 1854, but popular feeling did not reach its crest until after the railroad was constructed. The situation was somewhat alleviated by the Burlingame Treaty in 1868, which secured certain rights to the Chinese. But with the panic of 1873, there came a serious economic depression and the unthinking immediately attributed this condition to the presence of the coolie, who has ever since been a favorite scapegoat. The economic depression culminating in the panic was due to causes that bore no relation to the fact that Chinese were employed in large numbers; it was simply a period of post-boom depression, a common phenomenon in California. The collapse of the Bank of California, which, under the leadership of William C. Ralston, was the leading financial institution of the state, precipitated the panic. It was most seriously felt during 1876 and was accompanied with a sharp depression in the mining stocks which had driven California wild with the fever of speculation during the late sixties. Out of this period of doubt and misgiving, of economic depression and unemployment, came the figure of Denis Kearney.

This young Irishman had been a drayman in San Francisco, in the early days, and had secured some training in oratory at a “Lyceum of Self-Culture.” With this meager background, his demagoguery could not be other than the dangerous, incendiary stuff that it was. Kearney began to whip the crowds of unemployed into frenzies of wrath. So keen did the agitation become that during the winter of 1877 a business men's vigilance committee was formed, analogous to the earlier Vigilante Committee, and headed by the redoubtable William Coleman. This committee was styled "The Pick-Handle Brigade" from the weapon found most productive of orderliness. Kearney, and his lieutenants, delivered their blood-curdling harangues before mobs that gathered on the vacant sand lots near the city hall. Hence the movement was later known as Sandlotism. It was during the first few weeks in 1877 that Kearney led a mob to burn the mansions on Nob Hill, but, like most of Kearney's enterprises, this worthy architectural reform failed of consummation. To make a bad condition worse, several journals of the day, notably *The Chronicle* and *The Call,* seeing a chance to win popular favor, took up the cause of Kearney, and with the aid of these billows the movement was converted into a hurricane. The Workingmen's Party of California ("W. P. C.") was formed and it seemed as though Kearney might gain control of the state.

Something had to be done about Kearney. It was this necessity that gave birth to *The Argonaut.* Its founder, Frank Pixley, was a most interesting character. He was a bit of the soldier and pioneer, and had once been United States District Attorney in San Francisco. Ambitious politically and possessing an overpowering lust for money, he was yet a man of courage. He decided to run Denis Kearney out of San Francisco, and to make the place most uncomfortable for the Irish Catholics generally. With this end in mind, he founded *The Argonaut.* But at the time he established the journal he was scarcely literate. A young man once sent in a poem to the publication which was accepted. A few days after its appearance, the poet met Mr. Pixley and thanked him for printing his "sonnet." Pixley stared at the poet with incredulous eyes and said: "What's a sonnet?" Having no experience as a journalist, Pixley needed an editor. He associated with him a very brilliant journalist, Fred Somers, who went east in later years to found *Current Literature.* Somers, in turn, selected Bierce as managing editor. This selection was inevitable. Bierce fitted every requirement: he had a name on the coast as a great satirical journalist, and, moreover, he possessed the halo of a "London" reputation. He stood far above the rank and file of the profession on the coast and he was, at the moment, unemployed.

The first issue of *The Argonaut* appeared March 25th, 1877, and in this initial number appeared "The Prattler," a column by "Bierce." With almost the first issue, Bierce became virtually sole editor. Much dispute has raged on the coast as to whether Bierce ever actually "edited" *The Argonaut.* It is true that the masthead of the paper, during this period, carried the names "Frank Pixley and

Fred Somers, Editors.” But Bierce himself once stated that he had edited the magazine, relating the circumstances, and neither Somers nor Pixley denied his statement. Then, too, “The Elite Directory” published in 1879 by The Argonaut Publishing Company, a subsidiary of the press, listed Bierce as “associate editor of *The Argonaut.”* It is quite apparent that Pixley was too busy to edit the paper, as was Fred Somers, who was interested in several private enterprises at the time, such as the little journal *Figaro.* Then too, there is the significant fact that one can literally see Bierce’s hand, throughout the early issues, in every department of the magazine.

“The Prattler” was the most important feature of the paper and was paraded, for a time, on the first page. The name of “Prattle” had been taken from Rochefort’s journal *The Lantern,* but in the first few issues Bierce called his column “The Prattler” and then changed it to “Prattle” and such it remained for practically twenty-five years. Bierce left little doubt in the minds of his readers as to what his editorial aims were, for he wrote in the first issue: “It is my intention to purify journalism in this town by instructing such writers as it is worth while to instruct, and assassinating those that it is not.” San Francisco was sorely in need of just this kind of treatment for, in truth, its journalism had fallen to a low level. The quality of its journalism in the fifties and sixties, when presses sprang up by the twenties overnight, was sprightly and full of charm. But, by 1877, this early enthusiasm had waned and “Mike” De Young was teaching his competitors that it was folly to devote any money or time to improving the quality of journalism. De Young belonged to those early precursors of modern journalism who, in an effort to be understood by the mob, talked so barbarically low that they became unintelligible.

These were busy days for Bierce. He wrote his two columns of “Prattle” every week, edited the paper, and wrote in addition numerous poems and articles, besides reprinting from time to time some of his “Parsee Fables.” It was about this time, too, that he began to publish those ghastly animal humorous stories of his, in childish dialect, called “Little Johnny and his Menagerie.” That Bierce could have written such stupid drivel has always remained a mystery. If Swift had written Boz it could not have been more surprising.

Bierce’s work for *The Argonaut* contained some droll remarks. For example, he noted that an insane woman had been found sleeping in a cemetery. The incident drew from him this comment: “Mary’s preference for lodging with dead men is, I confess, indefensible, — she may not be demented; she is indisputably unique.” He noticed the name Clitus Babcock in the press of the day and had the temerity to remark: “Clitus Babcock — for whose first name might be substituted a work which, it is hoped, no one will have the hardihood to suggest.” It was during this period, too, that he wrote one of the most ruthless lines about “lovely woman” that he was ever to pen: “A woman in love is like a pig, which having firm standing ground roots it up, and if cast into deep water cuts its throat with its toes.”

There were many amusing incidents that grew out of remarks that Bierce made in “Prattle.” Many of these were exciting as well as amusing, and succeeded in keeping San Francisco’s more intelligent residents vastly entertained. Sometimes the unfortunate local poet — there was no one Bierce hated so much as a “local” poet — would retaliate. One of them, Hector Stuart, struck back at his tormentor by writing these verses:

“Here low in the dust,
As dry as a crust,
Lies Bierce, who befuddled newspapers;
Well-prized for his nob,
Very dear as a bob,
And noisome as Butcher Town vapors.

When he lived long enough
He belched his last puff,
And burst like a wad of gun-cotton;
Now here he doth lie,
Turned to a dirt pie,
Like all that he scribbled — forgotten.”

Bierce did not answer for a week or so and then he wrote this comment: “Concerning my epitaph by Hector S. Stuart, it is perhaps sufficient to say that I ought to be willing to have my name at the top of it if he is willing to have his at the bottom. As to Mr. Stuart’s opinion that my work will be soon forgotten, I can assure him that that view of the matter is less gloomy to me than it ought to be to him. I do not care for fame, and he does; and his only earthly chance of being remembered is through his humble connection with what I write.” Arrogant prophecy? and yet how extremely true! Bierce was clear headed and knew the worth of some of the things that he was writing, just as he realized very keenly his limitations, as I will have occasion to show a little later.

He returned to Stuart in a later issue, with these words: “Oh, Stuart, Stuart! — let not these dumb dead bones speak to thy hot blood in vain! In some incalculable distant age, after my scurvy prose shall have been forgotten, and before thy noble verse shall come to be read, how wilt thou like some delving antiquary to spade us out of our little mound — the dunghill upon which we fought and fell — the fingers of thy mouldy frame gripping the neck of mine? there in the blaze of the world's eyes, dead in a deathless feud, two mortals immortally implacable! Why, man, it will look like murder. Stuart, let us be friends; throw down thy pen forever, and give me thy nose." This Stuart, along with one Fred Emerson Brooks, suffered under Bierce's withering blasts for years. Yet nothing could daunt their poetic ardor. They would write verse despite devils and tormentors. Finally Bierce seemed to weary of the chase and wrote: "Perseverance is, indeed, reckoned amongst our virtues, but then it is also one of the vices of local poets. Have they stopped writing? Have they shut down the back windows of their souls and ceased for even a week to pour a deluge of bosh upon the earth? Who began this thing? As the steel-trap said to the fox."

I have related how men who deemed themselves insulted by some remark in "Prattle," would walk into the office of *The News-Letter* and demand satisfaction. Perhaps the most amusing incident of this sort occurred while Bierce was on *The Argonaut.* It seems that one evening in October, 1878, a man by the name of Henry Widmer, who was an orchestra leader at the Baldwin Theater in San Francisco, entered the office of *The Argonaut* and asked Bierce if he was the author of certain lines in a prior issue of the paper. Bierce replied that he was; whereupon the man slapped him across the face. As well might he have thrown a match in a tank of gasoline, for Bierce immediately drew his gun and would have killed the man but for the timely intervention of Frank Pixley. Later Widmer gave an interview to *The Chronicle,* owned by "Mike" De Young, in which he called Bierce a coward. To this Bierce replied:

> "Mr. Henry Widmer has not thought it expedient to act upon my studiously respectful suggestion that he disavow the insulting falsehoods published concerning me in his name. Moreover, I can prove him their author, — that he devoted the life which I mercifully spared to systematic defamation of my character and conduct. I, therefore, take this opportunity to remind those who have the misfortune to know him, and inform those who have not, that he has the distinguished honor to be, not a man of principle, but a ruffian; not a man of truth, but a liar; not a man of courage, but a coward. — In order that there may be no mistake as to what member of the *canaille* I mean, I will state that I refer to Fiddler Widmer, the charming blackguard."

Such incidents were not isolated. "Prattle" was a rather exciting experience for the entire community and it remained so for many years.

As to Bierce's other literary work at this time, there is little to be said. He was too busy with editorial duties to do much writing. But he would write an occasional poem and several stories appeared in *The Argonaut,* among them: “Night Doings at Deadman’s” and “The Famous Gilson Bequest.” Judged even by Bierce’s standards, these are not exceptional stories. They show the obvious influence of Bret Harte in their effort to be whimsical about the pioneer. Some of his other work at this time was, however, interesting. He wrote for *The Argonaut* a series of articles on prosody which revealed an amazingly accurate and precise knowledge of the subject. The articles were the primer in versification for many a budding poet. Then, too, in a regular department, he was publishing selections of French epigrams, the work of La Rochefoucauld, A. de la Salle, Stendhal, and others. It is undeniable that he studied the work of these men with great care and that he modeled his wit after theirs. Also, Emma Frances Dawson was making translations of E. T. A. Hoffman’s stories of horror and the supernatural, and that Bierce read these yarns with care is borne out by an examination of his later work.

While on *The Argonaut,* Bierce became a party to an amusing literary hoax. His co-conspirators were T. A. Harcourt, who had formerly contributed to *The News-Letter,* and William Rulofson, a well-known photographer in San Francisco. The idea for the book was largely Rulofson’s and he wrote most of the manuscript, which Bierce corrected, with Harcourt participating to some extent in the plot. There have been many conflicting statements about the authorship of “The Dance of Death,” but the version I give is based upon Bierce’s own account of the matter, published in the San Francisco *Examiner,* February 5th, 1888. The book purported to be a fierce attack on the seductive influence of the waltz, and it created a tremendous furore on the coast. Bierce stirred up considerable comment about the book by writing a vicious review of it in “Prattle” in which he said: “‘The Dance of Death’ is a highhanded outrage, a criminal assault upon public modesty, an indecent exposure of the author’s mind! From cover to cover it is one sustained orgasm of a fevered imagination — a long revel of intoxicated propensities. And this is the book in which local critics find a satisfaction to their minds and hearts! This is the poisoned chalice they are gravely commending to the lips of good women and pure girls! Their asinine praises may perhaps have this good effect: William Herman (the pen name used by Rulofson) may be tempted forth, to disclose his disputed identity and father his glory. Then he can be shot.”

Such propaganda must have been very efficacious, for “The Dance of Death” sold 18,000 copies in seven months, and was actually endorsed by a Methodist Church Conference! An answer to so provocative a book might have been expected and it was soon forthcoming in “The Dance of Life” by Mrs. J. Milton

Bowers. Of this book Bierce wrote in his characteristically tender style: “It is the most resolute, hardened, and impenitent nonsense ever diffused by a daughter of the gods divinely dull.” Vincent Starrett, in his admirable “Bibliography,” intimates that Bierce might have written this book himself and advances some interesting evidence to support the theory. But I see no reason for doubting Bierce’s statement, made years later in *The Examiner,* that the book was actually written by the wife of Dr. Bowers. T. A. Harcourt, a fellow member of the Bohemian Club, and Bierce’s colleague in this enterprise, was an interesting character. He wrote some admirable verse in his day, and did some early translations of Zola. Shortly after collaborating on “The Dance of Death,” his wife deserted him and ran away with another man. Harcourt grew bitter and morose and proceeded to drink himself to death. He anticipated the slow decay of alcoholism by jumping out a window and committing suicide. It was of him that Bierce wrote the lines:

“Thus my friend, —
Still conjugating with each failing sense
The verb ‘to die’ in every mood and tense,
Pursued his awful humor to the end.
When like a stormy dawn the crimson broke
From his white lips he smiled and mutely bled,
And, having meanly lived, is grandly dead.”

About 1880, Fred Somers, one of the proprietors of *The Argonaut,* resigned from the staff and sold out his interest in the magazine to become editor of *The Californian,* the most ambitious of Western literary magazines. He induced Bierce to write a series of articles on the dance, carrying on the controversy begun by the two books. These articles appeared under the general head of “On With the Dance!”, beginning with February, 1880, and were written under the *nom de plume* of “Bashi Bazourk.” Later Bierce collected them for republication in his “Collected Works” (Volume VIII). They constitute some of the most downright drivel that he was ever guilty of having written. Along with the regrettable “Little Johnnie” stories, they represent a dark blotch on an otherwise remarkably even record of performance.

This same Fred Somers was a very shrewd observer of life and letters, and Bierce profited by his advice. After he established a considerable reputation as an editor in the East. Somers still corresponded occasionally with Bierce and kept in touch with his work. Its continued bitterness brought forth this comment: “Now if you had not drummed and hunted these literary pismires out of their holes, and bruited them into public sympathy and recognition we should have been free of them. Yet you still continue poling at Windmills, setting them up often yourself — and for a wage — sneering at the industry. Sycophant or blackguard there is little choice." This was exactly the dilemma in which Bierce was so often involved: instead of his satire "lashing rascals through the world," it merely earned them popular sympathy. His remorseless attacks on David Lesser Lezinsky, a young poet in San Francisco, aligned many people, fundamentally in sympathy with Bierce, with the enemy. Ina Coolbrith, for one, turned against Bierce because of his unrelenting satire. Of course, Bierce explained his position by remarking to a friend: "It is perfect rot to say that I am responsible for Lezinsky's death. I never met him and would have refused to do so had the occasion arisen. I never once attacked him personally but only his verse. When he elected to become a poet, he impliedly consented to public criticisms of that which he made public." Bierce's journalistic satire was impulsive and irrational. It was the result of irritation grown chronic. He attempted, at various times, several philosophic justifications for his attitude, but never once did he strike close to the real fact, which was that he could not avoid being indignant. There was nothing eclectic about his position.

His first philosophy of criticism was, and it is still a popular theory, that he hugely enjoyed scourging rascals, and that he did it for entertainment. He once attempted an elaborate statement of this theory in his column of "Prattle":

> "I know a chap whose trade is censure; fools are his theme and satire is his song. Knaves and vulgarians, impostors, sycophants, the variously unworthy and the specifically detestable, no sooner draw his eye than he is on to them with bitter abuse.... Moreover this fellow's social habits are consistent with his literary: he is imperfectly civil to the rich and distinguished, coldly declines introductions, utters his mind with freedom concerning people's characters, takes an infantile delight in cutting men whose acquaintance he deems no longer desirable, cherishes the most shocking convictions, maintains a private system of morality and is not in sympathy with civilization. From the books and proverbs it is clearly deducible that this person ought to be the most miserable of men, tormented by conscience, baffled by secret and overt antagonisms, hunted by the dogs of hate reared in his own kennels, and roosted on by homing curses thicker than blackbirds on a tree. So far as I can see, the wretch is mainly engaged in more deeply imbedding his kidneys in broader layers of leafy fat, peacefully nourishing an oleaginous and comfortable content, gratifying his soul with a bird's-eye view of human illfare, happy in the prospect of a green old age and indulging fascinating dreams of a blessed hereafter."

This was written after twenty years at the trade of hired satirist; it was, at best, an *ex post facto* rationalization, and none are more illusive or unreliable. Properly to analyze his cynicism, one must start at a point prior to his becoming a journalist, for, as I have shown, his first writings were (a) atheistic pamphlets; (b) satirical journalism. From the moment he began to write, he had a satirical bent. Furthermore, it is quite apparent that his satire sprang from no such *contented*, harum-scarum, jolly motive as he suggests. His explanation is mere camouflage. It is impossible to associate such force and energy, with a desire merely to amuse himself. He was rather hesitant about admitting his idealism but he was essentially idealistic and romantic, just as he was always overtly cynical and realistic.

In order to come closer to his motives, one must turn to James Watkins, just as Watkins shall be called upon to explain Bierce's aesthetics. Bierce once wrote Watkins that his cynicism was the great barrier to the development of his creative powers. To this letter Watkins replied, and because the passage answering Bierce's doubt blazes a way to the very heart of the darkness and misunderstanding in Bierce, I shall quote a considerable passage:

"Why, yes, if you read into the word 'cynic' a meaning special to this mode of thought and arrest the meaning at the mode. But this thinking is in fact no more than fetching the images and pictures out of the dim religious light where all manner of unnatural colors are strained upon them through painted windows, and handling them in the light of day. Turn them round and about, knock the dust off, see how they are made, and examine the canvas side, plenty of bugs tumble out, which excite disgust. But then, as often, you earn a laugh — or cause for laughter, which is not quite the same thing. Now, I hold, as an issue of simple propriety in the use of language, that, allowing this to be the mental process of the cynic, its motive must be of one special sort before that mind can rightly be employed. I take it that your cynic must do all this out of an inborn hate of dirt, which is the reverse aspect of his love of light and sweetness. But, unless the individual be inspired by this spirit, the noble word 'cynic' does not apply. There are folk who raise a dust out of pure love of annoying others, — out of cussedness — to whom the annoyance is itself an aim and an end. Many religious folk, for example, make others uncomfortable as a good in itself — self-operative for righteousness, which it is understanding righteousness in their sense, as one aspect of hatefulness. Or another way, in the overflow and waste of benevolence turn a ray of light in on abodes of filth and creeping things, on the chance that the responsible occupant may be led to clean up, and refrain from breeding typhuses and plagues. Sure, it is using language out of its meaning to class such a loitering lantern-bearer among the order of cynics.

Now, it is true of myself — I know that you are mixed with a more coercive conscience — that I do not care one damn for the alleged human being who lives in that filth. He is less to me than the strange dog, of whose race I am really fond. But I am superstitious about typhuses. It is a distinct superstition with me that, if you keep your lantern slide shut when passing pest spots, the germs bred there will contrive to lay hold on you. Hence the blinks of light I aim to shed on such places, hasting on to something more agreeable. You drag open shutters and pour in a beam of illumination as from a Drummond apparatus; this attests the love of light which implies hatred of murk and muck, and wrath against them by whom these things are maintained. My performance is misprized by pure cowardice, and accompanied by no sentiment but disgust for them by whom these things are maintained. You are the cynic: I am something less.

Because you are a cynic and informed with righteous indignation, you glow and scorn, and distil words that are destructive of animal tissue. I would be glad to, for I think it a fine thing to do, and to be able to do; but my power is limited to stopping the passersby like the good bishop, to invite attention to the offense —’Observe this grisly beard, Observe, my friends, this nose’: then tillup along over the cobbles with a conciliatory, if not positively apologetic, carriage. The word cynic is inapplicable unless to bigger men than me.

The bearing of all this? Dear boy, it is an apology for not doing anything serious; an apology, and in part a caveat against misjudgment. Don’t think that I think that what I am doing is serious. That is all. That is the whole meaning of it all. The day is still as far as ever when you and I are to run a sheet that is *to lash the rascals as with whips of scorpions, naked through the world*. But, Oh my God! what larks it would be!”

It seems to me that Watkins, with all his kindly insight and intuition, stated Bierce’s position far better than Bierce ever did himself. And, it is to be noted, Watkins points out the pettiness of the attitude that would justify satire as a form of self-amusement, under which theory “the annoyance is itself an aim and an end.” Such a philosophy is, of course, sophomoric. Watkins perceived the more fundamental nature of all great satire.

During these years after his return from England, when he was reëstablishing his reputation on the coast as a writer and editor, Bierce was living happily with his wife and family in San Rafael. It has been said that Bierce’s subsequent trouble with his wife was the “cause” of his cynicism. But Prentice Mulford, who also had trouble with his wife, was the most saccharine of optimists. Furthermore, the three great tragedies in Bierce’s life all occurred after he was past middle-age. He was writing in the same vein for *The News-Letter* in 1869, before his marriage, that he wrote after the separation.

These early years reveal no organic invections; Bierce was living happily with his wife and children, had many friends, and was actually quite a popular social figure. He joined the Bohemian Club when it was formed on March 9, 1872. After his return from England, he took an active interest in the affairs of the club and was secretary for the year 1876-1877. Years later he quarreled with the club. The occasion was the visit to San Francisco of the Emperor of Brazil. His Majesty was received with such sycophancy, particularly at the club, that Bierce resigned in disgust. He said the “flexibility of the republican knee and the arch of his back” were inexplicable. But while his association with the club lasted, it was very pleasant indeed. Many of his friends were fellow club-members, notably Jeremiah Lynch, the Egyptologist, and author of “Three Years in the Klondike” and “A Senator of the Fifties,” and E. L. G. Steele, who published “Tales of Soldiers and Civilians.” Occasionally the paper would print a notice that “Mr. Bierce is confined to his home in San Rafael with a severe attack of asthma.” The blight was unconquerable and relentless. It plagued his days and made his nights livid with agony. Sometimes, however, he suffered from minor casualties. In fact, his life was interspersed with semi-humorous accidents: he shot himself in the foot when in the Sub-Treasury; broke a rib at Calistoga Hot Springs when his bicycle went over a bank (old Schram’s white wine was probably responsible for this); and had lumbago in his old age, followed with hives! Once while crossing the bay from San Rafael, he was standing on the deck when a barge rammed into the ferry boat. He attempted to jump aboard the other ship and was thrown into the bay and nearly drowned. It amused him for weeks thereafter to speculate on the pleasures of death by drowning over those of asthmatic strangulation. Death was, truly, the last and silliest folly. He had led columns in attack at Pickett’s Mill, and now his life was threatened by the most childish disasters.

In San Rafael he had many friends, among others Sheriff Tunstead, a renowned “man hunter” of Marin County. He was a giant of a man, with huge moustachios, and the voice of Paul Bunyan. His pictures are as amusing as anything to be seen on the comedy lots at Studio City. This old fellow went for long tramps and hunting expeditions with Bierce. They both enjoyed the outdoors and were crack shots. Mrs. Bierce detested Tunstead. The vulgar old ruffian was forever poking his head in a window and yelling: “Where’s Bierce?” just at the moment when one of the children would run in breathless to announce that Mrs. Charley Crocker’s carriage approached. Mrs. Bierce once asked her husband why he associated with such a character as Tunstead who “had no manners.” Bierce replied:

“True enough, my dear, but you should see him shoot!” Bierce and Tunstead would spend long nights over a bottle in the study where the shades of Pascal, Sir John Mandeville, and Thomas Browne hovered, listening to these two old soldiers match stories of hangings, murders and other such humorous tamperings with the life-stream. Bierce, for all his fine rhetoric, liked honesty even when he found it in illiterate sheriffs.

To illustrate the complete honesty and consistency of Bierce, one example will suffice. Pixley launched a movement to oust General O. H. LaGrange from his position as head of the United States Mint. Bierce had known La Grange for many years; in fact, he had induced LaGrange to give his brother Albert a position in the Mint when the latter arrived on the coast in 1869. The attitude of *The Argonaut* was thus putting Bierce in a very embarrassing position. So he went to Pixley and asked permission to state his own private views on LaGrange in a signed article. This request was granted and on September 1, 1877, Bierce’s defense of his old friend appeared, cheek by jowl with a biting and accusatory editorial. General LaGrange was befriended by Bierce on more than one occasion. It seems that the General could not, like many another mortal, resist the unscrupulous type of woman. His enemies were constantly producing one of these discarded but revengeful amours to cause the General great confusion and embarrassment at critical political junctures. But when Mr and Mrs. Bierce separated, the General was one of the first to denounce Bierce, without waiting for an explanation. Bierce never forgave La-, Grange this disloyalty and wrote him a letter in which he said that it was his desire that LaGrange should always remember the hurt and sorrow that his criticism had caused, particularly in the light of what had happened in the early days of their acquaintance. Poor Bierce! He could write the cleverest epigram imaginable on the frailty of friendship, but when he lost a friend in private life it was only with deep sorrow.

In later years Bierce repudiated most of his work written for *The Argonaut.* He acted wisely, for much of it was ephemeral and ill advised. But, realizing that it was written just as journalism, there is an amazing clarity and force to such statements as this: “There was enough of Lincoln to kill and enough of Grant to kick; but Hayes is only a magic-lantern image without even a surface to be displayed upon. You can not see him, you can not feel him; but you know that he extends in lessening opacity all the way from the dark side of John Sherman to the confines of space.” Or such cogent reasoning as this: “No man of sane intelligence will plead for religion on the ground that it is better than nothing. It is not better than nothing if it is not true. Truth is better than anything or all things; the next best thing to truth is absence of error.” He anticipated Nietzsche by saying: “No one but Jesus Christ ever loved mankind.” Not only was he beating some of the sound tenets of skepticism into the gaseous souls of his fellow citizens, but he was pummeling them out of their magnificent rhetoric, their incurable fondness for bombast, which was really the same thing. He made this suggestion to Loring Pickering, editor of one of San Francisco’s largest daily newspapers: “Mr. Pickering, I have told you a dozen times that to call rain a ‘pluvial dispensation,’ is to be a magniloquent idiot, compared with whose style the song of a sturdy jackass in braying his love to a star is chaste and elegant diction.”

Bierce had returned from England impressed with the possibility of an intelligent control of life. He reëntered a madhouse in San Francisco; became a partisan in the struggle with and was personally pitted against, Denis Kearney. The experience threw him off balance and forever prejudiced him against anything that even sounded of sociological amelioration. His name for an unpleasant person was always “an anarchist.” He elevated sandlotism to universal significance; he magnified it out of all proportion to scale or perspective. The Bay District was the world *in petto,* and Kearney was its Nero. Bierce actually used such historical names as Jack Cade and Wat Tyler in searching out parallels for Kearney. He became slightly prophetical, and, like most prophets, slightly ridiculous. His excitement was justified at the moment: only Anatole France kept his head during the Dreyfus trial.

If the ideas that Bierce championed in later years are to be understood, or rather the psychological states of mind that produced these ideas, one must constantly remember his experience. To illustrate the importance of this relation, take the volume “The Shadow on the Dial.” It consists of a number of essays which, when gathered into book form, were not read as they were printed — by the side of news stories of riots, arson and theft. Many of the essays did not carry the date of their appearance as a footnote; hence confusion was inevitable. The title essay itself, “The Shadow on the Dial,” appeared in *The Argonaut* as an attack on Kearney, some thirty-two years prior to its publication in book form. When the book was published, Bierce dropped Kearney’s name, and generalized an incident into an historical principle. This is apparent in such a passage as the following:

> “The Kearneyism ‘episode’ is not an episode; it is part of the general movement. Thousands of armed men are drilling all over the United States to overthrow the government. I tell you the good God, Majority, means mischief.”

Much of Bierce’s writing during this period was simply hysterical journalism, inspired by the moment and forgotten with its passage. George Sterling, who was scoffed at as a thinker, had some ideas on the significance of time that Bierce might have read with profit. George did not agree with Theodore Dreiser's "Hey-Rub-a-Dub-Dub" when it appeared. It sounded specious to one who had heard the roar of the surf at Monterey with its undertone of eternity, so he wrote a little essay "The Implications of Infinity." Bierce, however much he might have appreciated the essay, would never have accepted its philosophy. And, after all, who was the real cynic, Bierce or Sterling? Sterling was wise enough to be cynical of mere intelligence, so-called, and wrote few essays but was careful to be always kind and gentle. Bierce's splendid indignation hardened and crystallized into intolerable prejudice and bias. His violently reactionary views on crime, his merciless attacks on "rose-water penology," are incredible when read apart from his experience. When one learns, however, that in the eighties California had a Governor by the name of Stoneman who pardoned all the most atrocious criminals, a new light dawns. After this experience, Bierce would never listen to reason about criminals.

"Stoneman at last is made to dwell
Where pardons do not come;
O Father, thou dost all things well
Though rather late with some."

It is interesting to speculate on what might have been the consequences had Bierce stayed with *The Argonaut.* In two years he had made it the foremost weekly in the West. Who can tell what might have resulted if he had remained as editor? He resigned from *The Argonaut* for private reasons and was not discharged as some of his biographers would have us believe. Ultimately he would have either resigned or been discharged, for he could not have endured Frank Pixley forever. They had nothing in common except an aversion to Denis Kearney. But Bierce was swept away from journalism by the excitement over the newly opened mining territory in the Black Hills. He decided to become a miner and *The Argonaut* lost its first, and one is tempted to add, its only editor.

Thus came to a close the first chapter in his life after his return to California. The period prior to that is complete, self-contained and final. With his return to California the years of his journalistic satire began in earnest, for his mining expedition was of slight duration. He had entered the field at a most significant time. The "terrible seventies," as Mrs. Atherton refers to the period, saw the collapse of the artificial and unutterably gorgeous society of the sixties. In those early years the town had gleamed with gold, and mining speculation became the enterprise of an entire community, with the Nevada stocks alone rising from seventeen millions to eighty-four millions in one year. It was the day of Comstock Lode, Consolidated Virginia, Crown Point, Belcher and Ophir. The mining fever acted as a vortex that sucked into its inexorable funnel all the gold that the forty-niners had discovered, along with all the additional money that the settlers had brought with them. The end of the seventies saw the money being accumulated into the hands of a few, and, while the eyes of the community were dazzled with dreams of gold, the promoters of the trans-continental railroad had very craftily saddled and bridled the state. When people awoke from the trance, they were servants to an empire of monopoly. Radicalism swept in for just a moment, but was poorly generaled by Denis Kearney, and soon failed. The leader of the Sand Lot abandoned the W. P. C. and went back to Boston, where he captured large audiences at' Faneuil Hall with orations that were written for him by newspaper reporters. Bierce saw all these swift and moving events and was conscious only of the particular actors in the drama and the essential pettiness of both sides. The romantic California of the sixties was gone forever: Spanish California, built on a sound, self-contained culture, had existed for years and might have flowered into a fine civilization but for the discovery of gold. With 1849 a new era came into existence, raced through its meager term of years, and expired in 1870. There would be no more cotillions and Calico Balls; Mrs. Fair would now forget her ambiguous origins and become a grand lady. By 1876 the whirligig society of the sixties, in which Mollie Day's hand was open game, was irretrievably gone, and, the pity is, without a record. Bayard Taylor's slight volume, the romantic tales of Bret Harte, and a little of Twain: this alone marks the passage of an immensely important era. With the seventies came a period of horrific solemnity — magnificent, dull and empty.

The period that followed suffered from the excesses of individualism. Mr. Brownell once wrote that "Lack of sympathy with each other; a narrow and degrading struggle for 'success'; a crying competition; a dull, leaden introspection; no community of interest, material or ideal, except of a grossly material religious ideality; duty ignorantly conceived; sacrifices needlessly made; generous impulses leading nowhither, and elevated effort clogged by the absence of worthy ends; the human spirit, in fine, thrown back on itself and operating, so to speak, *in vacuo,*—" and, to break his sentence, one knows that this is a description of the seventies. Read "Prattle" just as it appeared in the newspapers and note the advertisements, the popular news, the announcements, and, in a word, all the unstudied expression of the period, and you cannot help but conclude that Bierce wrote "in vacuo." Later his steadfast skepticism bore fruit in a tradition, but in the early days his satire was wasted; he might just as well have gone fishing with a copy of Rabelais, as to have written those reams of abuse.

What difference did it make whether rogues were rogues; and why become excited over the fact that the county treasurer was a thief or that there was an occasional murder in San Francisco? Did it really matter so much?

This, then, was the end of an important experience; the high adventure of the war was a memory; the trip across the plains was forgotten; London existed only in the form of a few witty anecdotes; and he was now nearing middle-age, married, with a family to support, with no position, hated by every powerful lobby in the state. Is it small wonder that during these days when Bierce thought that the firebrands of the sandlot were destroying the nation he had fought to preserve that he exclaimed: “Patriotism? Wouldst thou serve thy fatherland? Cultivate, then, the habit of uttering whatever thou art most reluctant that its enemies should know.... Patriotism is fierce as fenur, pitiless as the grave, blind as a stone, and irrational as a headless hen.” Patriotism? And every 4th of July saw General W. H. L. Barnes marching at the head of his regiments of valiant peace-soldiers down Market Street!

These were, indeed, bad days for Bierce. The country reeked with the peculiarly fetid odor of money-lust. In all those days Bierce, alone of his generation in the West, mustered a shout against the awful futility of such a society. He stuck by his guns in a most manly fashion, and never once truckled to the molochs of the day. As an editor, his only congenial contributor was Emma Frances Dawson, an old maid who wrote ghost stories for *The Argonaut* and later turned into a ghost herself, living alone for years in a little hut, and dying finally of starvation in Palo Alto. While Mr. Stanford was mouthing delicious platitudes in public and waiting eagerly for the decision in *Colton vs. Stanford,* the decision of the supreme court having been delayed several times to permit of convenient last-minute elections, the artists of the day had turbulent dreams of rattlesnakes and wrote ghost stories. It was the tradition of Poe or that of *Godey’s Lady Book.* Of Mr. Godey’s magazine Bierce wrote: “It is a publication which from the teens of our grandmothers has poured a thick and slab stream of irreparable and unaffected bosh into the misunderstanding of genderless gents, lettered wet nurses and misses cherishing a blasted hope apiece.” One afternoon in a quiet corner of the lobby in the old Belle Vista Hotel, a very beautiful woman, who dressed in charming widow’s weeds and had a taste for poetry, asked Mr. Bierce why he never wrote a love story. Her question was, under the circumstances, something of a love poem itself, but he answered: “The world to-day is only interested in love and horror and it is impossible at present to write of love with decency.” He was quite right. The most scandalous book of the seventies in San Francisco, a volume that rocked the town, was “On the Verge: a Romance of the Centennial” by Philip Shirley. “Philip Shirley” was the pen name for Annie Lake Townsend, who, *en passant*, wrote some very tender poems to Mr. Bierce. Her novel was a sensation. One may open the book at random and find such delicious morsels as this:

“He found, beside the concerto, Schubert’s ‘Wanderer,’ Spohr’s ‘Bright Star of Night’ and Virginia Gabriel’s ‘When the Pale Moon Arose.’ His expression as he looked them over was just what she knew it would be and what she had determined not to encounter; but the thing was done now. She leaned back and defied him with flashing eyes.”

In 1879, when such a book as “On the Verge” was hailed as a masterpiece, the only thing for a gentleman to do was to write a ghost story.

Bierce closed this chapter of his life thinking he was through with journalism forever: better mining than blasphemy at nothing a line. This time he left San Francisco under colors not quite so bright or fair as before. There was not quite such an atmosphere of hope and triumph about his trip to Dakota as there was to the London adventure. Mark Twain tried his hand at the publishing business; Ambrose Bierce became a miner. “The Gilded Age” claimed them momentarily, and when it “panned out,” both were left to do some prospecting in their souls.

CHAPTER VIII. THE BLACK HILLS

GOOD memoirs," Max Beerbohm once wrote, "must ever be the cumulation of gossip." If the truth of this statement be assumed, it is not surprising to find that Bierce's fragmentary memoirs are so disappointing. The manner in which a man writes about his own life, the details which he selects as illuminating, the attitudes he stresses as important, constitute a good measure of his capacity for honesty. Bierce, who was so frightfully honest about others, was not publicly truthful about himself. In his letters there are moments when he is off guard, but his "Bits of Autobiography," found in Volume I of the "Collected Works," are most significant in their highly romantic version of several major happenings of his life. He never related a mean experience about his life; he selected only the "grand" episodes and wrote of them after the manner of an elderly gentleman entertaining a circle of excited ladies. One can detect in the manner in which these experiences are narrated, the dramatic and studied gesture, the carefully planned pause, the shock and surprise, and then the murmur of laughter and approval as the delighted audience of faithful admirers subside in quiescent rapture. His "memoirs" are told in the manner of a professional *raconteur,* and were selected solely for their dramatic possibilities as stories and for the romantic halo which they cast about his own life. He bows, in these memoirs, more than once to the galleries.

In none of these episodes was he more misleading than in the few paragraphs which refer to his experience as a miner in the Black Hills. He prefaces the episode with a note about the melancholy that enshrouds the life of a "sole survivor." Then he announces that he was once on his way to Rockerville, Dakota, with "thirty thousand dollars on my person, belonging to a mining company of which I was the general manager. Naturally, I had taken the precaution to telegraph my secretary, etc." The story follows about how one of his hired desperadoes, Boone May, shot a bandit who attempted to rob the manager of his money. This is the only record that Bierce left about his year in the Black Hills of Dakota. There are reasons why he would not particularly care to discuss this period in his life, and why he permitted it to be veiled in obscurity. Even his own family did not know much about what happened, and his only advisors in San Francisco were Judge Boalt and "Charley" Kauffman. It was surely not the romantic interlude that he infers in the episode mentioned.

The entire matter may be traced to Bierce's trip across the plains in 1866. Hazen's expedition had passed through the Black Hills on its way west, and Bierce had made numerous sketches for a map to be made of the entire region. When, after his return to San Francisco from England, there began to be much excitement about the Black Hills territory, which was then being thrown open by the government for settlement, Bierce made these notes into a map which was published by A. L. Bancroft & Company, in 1877, under the title: "Map of the Black Hills Region, Showing the Gold Mining District and the Seat of the Indian War. Drawn by A. G. Bierce from surveys ordered by the War Department." The gold fields of the Far West had been thoroughly exploited by then and the floating, migratory, mining population was looking for new regions in which to prospect for gold and silver. Naturally Bierce was interested, particularly as he was familiar with the Black Hills region. He was, moreover, beginning to be rather disgusted with Pixley.

Mining as an adventure exercised a great sway over the popular imagination from 1849 to 1890; the period of the supremacy of mining as a popular ideal probably lasted until after the collapse of silver mining which perished with the repeated defeats of William Jennings Bryan. There was scarcely a Western family during these years that was not affected in some manner by mining. The extent of the widespread popular interest in mining is reflected in the Western journals of the day. These newspapers were full of mining news, mining stock quotations, rumors of strikes, the fabulous escapades of Tabor and the rise of Leadville. The habits of the miner became Western traits of character, and the jargon of the mining camp colored the stream of our vocabulary. It is an amazing experience to check over the lists of publishing houses during this period and to note the flood of books, pamphlets and tracts about mines or mining life. The list of "homely" philosophies of life inspired by queer mining characters would alone make a considerable bibliography. The three foremost figures in Western literature, Mark Twain, Bret Harte and Ambrose Bierce, were intimately associated with mining life. The poems, stories, and novels that came out of the west during this period centered about mining life and, towards 1898, one can trace the sweep of the mining hordes to Alaska and the emergence of a new group of writers who attempted to record that phase of the movement. It is not, therefore, surprising to find that Bierce resigned his position with *The Argonaut* to become a miner.

The matter was even more personal. Bierce had a natural interest in mining; it was a vocation to which many members of his family gravitated. Several Bierces are to-day prominent mining engineers: H. C. Bierce, of Los Angeles, is a hydraulic engineer; and Herman Bierce Waters and Lucius Fuller are well known in their profession. Albert Bierce showed this same interest. Ambrose had some engineering training. Moreover, his work at the Sub-Treasury, which was in effect the United States Mint, put him in contact with mining and mining men. Several of his best friends, such as Capt. Nichols, who married the beautiful Belle Thomas, and O. C. Miller, were miners. Then, too, his wife's family had been miners for two generations.

Dr. Danziger intimates that Bierce's mining expedition into the Black Hills was, in some strange manner, connected with the Southern Pacific. But this, of course, is nonsense. And, contrary again to the doctor's vivid imagination, Bierce did not quarrel with Frank Pixley prior to leaving for Dakota. Bierce was not discharged from *The Argonaut.* Both Pixley and Fred Somers are, of course, long since dead. The only person who perhaps recalls exactly what happened at the time is Jerome A. Hart, an early contributor to *The Argonaut* and its owner and publisher after the Pixley-Somers régime.

As a journalist in the early days, Mr. Hart came to know Bierce, Pixley, Somers, James Watkins, and the other figures of the San Francisco press. According to Mr. Hart, who was on the staff at the time, Bierce ceased writing for *The Argonaut* in April of 1879, and was absent from the office until November of that year. This coincides with the circumstances, for Bierce's copy disappeared from *The Argonaut* in May of 1879. There were a few items throughout the summer; and one series of "Fables and Anecdotes" and "Little Johnny" appeared on October 11, 1879, but it is apparent that this was copy which had been left at the office. From other records which Bierce left with his daughter, it appears that during the summer of 1879 he was interested in the promotion of several mining companies. There are several letters from O. C. Miller, an old friend, written during August of 1879, indicating that Bierce was associated, in some manner, with the Carrie Steele Mining Company, along with Miller and several other San Franciscans.

What happened after Bierce returned to the office of *The Argonaut* in the fall of 1879, may be related by Mr. Hart. "About this time Bierce grew much excited over the talk of gold mines in the Black Hills, then thrown open by the U. S. Government to miners and settlers. His knowledge of assaying acquired in the United States Mint *(sic)* led to his securing a well-paid position with a mining company in the Black Hills. He resigned from *The Argonaut* staff; I think this was in the spring of 1880. There was no quarrel with Pixley or anybody else; his parting was amicable; everybody in the office wished him well and envied him his potential wealth as a gold miner." This statement is substantially correct. Bierce secured the appointment because of his familiarity with the Black Hills region, as the publication of his map had made him something of an authority, and not because of any knowledge of assaying that he may have acquired.

The company that Bierce finally became associated with as “superintendent” was The Black Hills Placer Mining Company, which had headquarters at Rockerville, South Dakota. Bierce got in contact with the organizers of this company through an old army friend who was attorney for the project. He was none other than Sherburne Black Eaton, the “S. B.

Eaton,” head of the treasury agents in Section No 1 of Alabama, who had returned to New York after the reconstruction work and entered the practice of the law under the firm name of Chamberlain, Carter & Eaton. He had kept up his acquaintance with Bierce by correspondence after the war, and when this opportunity arose had naturally tendered the position to his old associate. The company had been organized before Bierce went to Dakota. He was its general agent, with full power of supervision, from July to September, of 1880, at Rockerville, South Dakota.

The company’s former agent was one Captain Ichabone M. West. He had resigned from his position, but was fulfilling a contract with the company for the erection of a flume and other structures at the time Bierce took over the management. Some two hundred thousand dollars were advanced to this man under Bierce’s supervision on construction work. The company seems to have been poorly organized and soon ran out of capital. Bierce began to write Eaton urgent letters, demanding money to meet the payroll of the mine, as laborers and other creditors were becoming quite insistent in their demands. To make matters worse, Captain West defaulted with the proceeds of a draft from the New York offices, and the local bank refused to pay Bierce the balance of the funds which were on deposit in his name as agent, inasmuch as the bank claimed the right to offset the money West had taken against the amount of the draft.

The situation became too acute for Bierce, and he left for New York in an effort to secure additional funds to carry on the work of the company. But nothing could be done. The Black Hills did not, of course, develop into a great gold mining region and many other companies failed about this time. He stayed on in New York for several weeks, conferring with Eaton and Marcus Walker, and a Mr. Amidon, but it was apparent that the company was insolvent and the directors did not have sufficient confidence in the enterprise to finance it further. So Bierce left New York for California, a very disappointed and disheartened man. His great bonanza had failed and he was in a much worse position than before, since the company even owed him the greater part of his wages for the time he was in Dakota. It was surely not a very pleasant *dénouement* to what had promised to be such an exciting triumph.

Prior to his departure for New York, Messrs. McLaughlin and Steele, the attorneys for the company at Deadwood, brought suit in Bierce's name against the First National Bank of Deadwood to recover the balance of three thousand dollars which the bank would not honor because of Captain West's overdraft. The suit was brought in the District Court of the First Judicial District of Dakota Territory, Lawrence County, and was an interminable piece of litigation. Bierce won in the lower court; the action was appealed and reversed; and was retried again at *nisi prius.* Bierce was merely a nominal plaintiff in the action, inasmuch as the claim had been assigned by the defunct company to its attorneys. These lawyers kept writing Bierce when he was in Auburn during 1884-1885, soliciting his aid. He replied to one of their letters and in the course of his reply said: "My experience with the company's officers has not been such that I am willing to take any steps in matters affecting them without some guaranty that my action will be acceptable to them." It is indicative of the unpleasant relations that existed between Bierce and the mining company. During this litigation, Bierce was counseled by Judge Boalt. He finally agreed that his deposition might be taken in San Francisco. His answers to the written interrogatories which were propounded are models of clear thinking. Time and again, during the course of this lengthy deposition, Bierce would write down an answer which cut through the irrelevant questions and struck the main issues with very satisfactory directness. The action of "Ambrose G. Bierce vs. The First National Bank of Deadwood" was an apparition of an unfortunate experience that ever and anon reared its head to mock those early dreams of a fortune and independence, for it is quite obvious that Bierce had high hopes as to the success of his mining venture. He had written, before leaving San Francisco, to Henry Sampson, announcing that he was "free" from journalism forever. Sampson, who had probably witnessed several similar revolts in his day, wrote back: "How I envy you when you say that journalism is over with you! But I think I read somewhere once about a dog and his vomit which would doubtless apply in my case if it doesn't in yours."

The Dakota episode, and it was only an episode, may have fortified an attitude; surely it did not create one. It only extended over a period of a year and its ultimate effect must have been trivial. But it could scarcely have "sweetened" Bierce's reaction to life. He was always very proud and the rather humiliating circumstances of his return to San Francisco marked the beginning of a new feeling towards the city. He became resentful, and, where he had formerly been satirical in a rather amused manner, he was now vituperative and broad-oathed.

The failure of his mining venture did, however, have one important effect: it was the cause of considerable domestic disharmony. Mrs. Day had always watched over her daughter with an eye that missed no discrepancies on the part of Mollie's husband. There had been some friction between Bierce and Mrs. Day in England and their disagreements now broke out in an open feud. Mrs. Day had always resented the marriage of her only daughter, a daughter so popular and so beautiful, to a mere scribbler, a rowdy fellow who wrote paragraphs for *The News-Letter*, and who had once participated, so the ladies whispered, in a drunken Anti-Christ demonstration. The dear lady was given to social pretense and always annoyed Bierce with her "Great Catherine" attitude towards the world. Once, after she had been in the town of Eureka for some months, the townspeople rented a large hall and held a "social gathering" to bid her farewell, as she was returning to San Francisco. The walls were decorated with "evergreens, pictures and lights. On entering the hall, the first thing that struck the eye was the word 'Welcome' rustically arranged with evergreens directly over the music stand, below which was the stars and stripes extending across the entire width of the hall." During the course of the entertainment, "Mrs. Day was presented with a handsome dressing case, accompanied by a neat little speech from one of the committee of ladies that had selected and purchased the article. Mrs. Day was so taken by surprise, that she said, 'I can't say a word.'" The quoted extracts are taken from a Eureka newspaper clipping. Such things disgusted Bierce, particularly as he suspected that the lady had arranged the social gathering herself. He resented her condescension, and the two of them were never known to agree upon anything. With Captain Day, a genial, fine-spirited old fellow, Bierce was always on the best of terms. Bierce had not consulted either the Captain or James Day, his brother-in-law, before accepting the position with the Dakota mining company. Hence when it failed, he had to return to San Francisco in a rather defiant attitude, and he was precluded from asking or accepting assistance from the Days.

During the time that Bierce was in the Dakotas, Mrs. Bierce and the children lived with Captain and Mrs. Day in San Francisco. The boys, Day and Leigh, attended the old Spring Valley Grammar School, and were great favorites in the neighborhood. After Bierce returned to San Francisco, he rented a home in what was known as the "Fort Mason" settlement. It was high on the hillsides overlooking the bay and was, for the most part, an unsettled neighborhood. The boys organized "gangs," built forts in the hillside and resisted the attacks of the youngsters from the city with great vigor. Day and Leigh immediately joined this "Hill Gang" and became its leaders. Just as their father had flayed Denis Kearney, so would they pummel the dirty youngsters from the city with mud bullets and an occasional rock. Mr. J. G. Hawks remembers the wild battles that used to rage in the afternoons when school was over, and retains a vivid recollection of Day Bierce. Day was a brilliant youngster; he never "seemed to study and was super-normally quick and alert mentally.” He was impetuous, valiant, and disdainful in a manner that suggested his father. But in the son the true quality appeared in an uninhibited, undisguised manner, for Day Bierce was something of a Shelley. His genius, and it amounted to that, was vivid and unforgettable and he was impossibly idealistic as shown by later experiences. The other son, Leigh, was talented and clever but lacked the authentic mark of genius that was about everything that Day Bierce said or wrote.

Bierce’s manner with his children was most characteristic of the man generally. He was very severe, a Spartan parent, in the matters which he thought were important. He stressed manners rather than morals. He was vehement in his demands that they be individualistic, self-reliant and skeptical of buncombe. Once Day reported to his father that he had slapped an instructor’s face who had attempted to chastise him. Bierce not only approved of the rebellious attitude but called on the instructor himself and told him never to attempt a punishment of his son again. Any indication of irreverence in the boys was met with encouragement on the part of their father. Bierce was, as is well known, fanatically neat, one of the most immaculate gentlemen imaginable. His children might be slightly rebellious and harum-scarum, but if they were ever ill-mannered or dirty, they must expect his swift and emphatic denunciation. They could play as they liked; hold such opinions as were agreeable to them; but if they were dirty they must expect the inevitable punishment. He thoroughly approved of his sons’ conduct in refusing to attend Sunday school, although he yielded a point to his wife in permitting the daughter to go to church. He thought the experience would do Helen no harm, since, being a woman, it was immaterial what views she held! These seeming peccadilloes of personal prejudice are important, since they show what a remarkably consistent man Bierce was — personally. His ideas might be full of apparent contradictions and paradoxical utterances, but personally he was ever the same. He loathed streets that were named “Twelfth” or “Eleventh,” as they were common and unmemorable. He disliked to carry on a conversation over the telephone, particularly with a chance acquaintance, as he could not look his interlocutor in the eye. He would seldom attend a lecture since, according to conventional rules of etiquette, he could not rise and correct some misstatement of the speaker. He abominated vulgarity and the active hatred he entertained for a “common” woman was almost unbelievable. He was always neat, and plain, about his dress, and his tastes were excellent. A typical Bierce letter is alone most significant: it was invariably written on a rather heavy-weight, cream-colored, four-page stationery and folded once, and was written with a stub-pen in a precise and beautiful hand, with never a blotch, a misspelled word, or any hesitancy. The thought was always firm and clear and touched with his personality. The ink tended to become bronzed with time and the old letters when unfolded are a joy to read. On the reverse of the envelope would be the seal, affixed with a scarab presented by his friend Jeremiah Lynch. Bierce was just as fastidious about the matter of cuisine as he was, say, about the structure of the sentence. He had devised some rather tasty dishes, and the Army and Navy Club in Washington was indebted to him for many choice recipes and suggestions, and he is said to have known something about mixing a cocktail.

The Bierces were a memorable couple. An old Frenchman, from whom they once rented a flat in San Francisco, remembers their leaving one evening to attend a performance at the Baldwin Theater. He was standing in the hallway as they descended the stairs with the light shining above them. He says it is one of his most vivid and prized recollections. Bierce dressed in black: tall, erect, his red-golden hair touched with light and energy, and Mollie Day Bierce dressed as though she had stepped from a fashion plate out of *Harper's Bazar.* As they passed out into the night, she turned her head, adorned with a little crimson bonnet and a drop-veil of half length, and smiled *Bon Soir!* with a gesture of delight. He turned indoors sadly, for the picture of this elegant couple had stirred old memories of life on the continent. His recollection is, perhaps, the last record of their happiness.

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BIERCE returned to San Francisco in December of 1880. According to Mr. Hart he "applied with confidence for his old job on *The Argonaut."* The owners, Pixley and Somers, after consultation, decided that his prolonged absence proved that he was not indispensable, and therefore they declined to reengage him. Bierce was much chagrined and deeply angered; as Pixley was the "majority owner he held Pixley responsible and never forgave him." This is an accurate statement, I believe, of what occurred, as it coincides with the facts. In accepting Mr. Hart's version of Bierce's relations with Pixley and *The Argonaut,* I am not unmindful of the fact that Bierce on occasion wrote very sharp notes about Mr. Hart in "Prattle." I make this notation to forestall criticism, but I feel that Mr. Hart's statement is the clearest that has been made and it has the added advantage of being capable of verification in many particulars.

Bierce was, as Mr. Hart says, deeply angered and chagrined at his inability to secure a place on the staff of the magazine that he had literally "made." But his subsequent hatred of Pixley, while it may have been colored by this experience, was also inevitable. Bierce did not dislike Fred Somers and he did not dislike the other members of the staff. But for Pixley, there was no phrase too sharp, no comparison too odious. I have tabulated Mr. Bierce's antipathies and the tallies scored after Frank Pixley's name outnumber all the others by a great margin. He excoriated the fellow for twenty years, punctured every editorial bubble that he blew, and traced the ulterior motive in his every change of policy. He would write such incisive sentences as this: "Pixley is as good as it is possible for him to be, has all the dignity he needs in making a back for all the rich to play at leap frog, and as much amiability as is not incompatible with an assassination of character." War was declared between these two militarists in 1881, and continued until Pixley's death. His hatred would have survived even Pixley's demise but, as he noted in "Prattle," Pixley had the forethought to be cremated so that there was no grave to be made the subject of caustic and corrosive comment.

During these black days after his return, the journalistic career of Ambrose Bierce hung in the balance. There was not a paper that would employ him on its staff. He was bitterly hated by "Mike" DeYoung, who owned *The Chronicle,* and the editors of the other papers were equally antagonistic. He could have secured immediate employment by agreeing to be a hired libelist, for his talent as a satirist was well known. But he would make no agreement or bargain. About the only thing he could do was to work as a "free lance," which he did for several months, sending in occasional contributions to various newspapers and magazines.

Dr. Danziger relates, as an uncontroverted fact, that Bierce once worked for "Mike" DeYoung. Upon examination, the doctor's story, however, appears to be based entirely on the hearsay of "Petey" Bigelow, an early-day journalist and friend of Bierce. According to Dr. Danziger's story, DeYoung underpaid Bierce for a contribution and Bierce threw the money back in his face. Here, says the doctor, with naive disregard for the principles of historical research, is the origin of Bierce's hatred of DeYoung. Bierce did hate DeYoung, but that he ever worked for *The Chronicle* is a statement which finds no corroboration in the facts. "Journalism in California" by John P. Young, of *The Chronicle,* makes no mention of such an employment, and surely it would not have been neglected if it were a fact. Moreover, the origin of the story, which Dr. Danziger has either deliberately warped to fit his theory or has repeated without investigation a version which is inaccurate, may be traced to an actual occurrence.

It seems that during these days when Bierce was hard-pressed for employment, he contributed occasionally to *The Call* under the editorship of Loring Pickering. The company's records showed the fact of this employment, because a reporter for *The Wave* investigated the matter and wrote a news story about the occurrence here related. Subsequent to the appearance of the story in *The Wave,* however, the original records were destroyed in the great fire and earthquake, so that the only evidence to-day is a record of a record, but it is significant that Bierce knew the editors of *The Wave*, read their story, and made no correction. He would most certainly never have allowed the story to go unchallenged if it were not true. It seems that it was customary in those days for all San Francisco companies to pay their employees in silver. Pickering wrote an editorial in *The Call* in which he denounced this practice, pointed out the inconveniences which it entailed, and suggested that all employees demand payment in currency in order to correct the custom. The next time Bierce called at the cashier's window to receive payment for a contribution to *The Call,* he pushed back the silver tendered him, showed the cashier a clipping of Mr. Pickering's editorial and demanded currency in payment of the debt. The cashier was furious, but walked across the street, got the currency, and paid Bierce. It was the end of his connection with *The Call.* Now it is obvious at once that Dr. Danziger's yarn is a variant of this story, but how melodramatic it became in the Doctor's handling! Not to mention the fact that the scene is shifted from *The Call* to *The Chronicle* in a cleverly disguised effort to show that Bierce was mean and personal about all his hatreds, and that he did not act in accordance with principles and ideals, as though one had to dig up or invent a motive for Bierce's hatred of "Mike" DeYoung! There is a significant contrast between the Doctor's fulsome, nauseating praise of his "great blond God" and the mean, contemptible way in which he attempts to show that Bierce's three great antipathies: Pixley, DeYoung and *C.* P. Huntington, were the results of purely personal situations. Dr. Danziger tries to make out this case against Bierce so that his readers may assume or infer that Bierce hated the Doctor for some such petty and personal a motive. But just as it may be shown that Bierce's antipathy to Pixley, DeYoung and Huntington, was but an expression of his instinctive aversion to all men who acted as animals, just so may it be shown that Dr. Danziger was on the "black list" for certain definite and very understandable reasons.

With the doors of *The Call* closed as irretrievably as those of *The Argonaut* and *The Chronicle,* Bierce was driven to the wall. His position was as isolated as it is possible to imagine, and there seemed to be no escape. He could not go east because his wife refused to leave the coast where she was at least assured of the support and care of her family. Moreover, Bierce disliked the East, and was under the mistaken belief, for many years, that his health was better in the West. Then, too, he was without funds to finance such a move. It was under these circumstances that he finally secured a position with *The Wasp* and once more came into control of a journal in which he could flay San Francisco with a wrath that had about it now something of the vindictive and revengeful spirit. The mining days were over and “The Prattler” was once more at work.

CHAPTER IX. THE WASP

BIERCE’S new home for “Prattle” was one of the most interesting journals that printed his copy. *The Wasp* (a singularly appropriate name), was said to be the first colored cartoon magazine published in this country. It resembled in many details *The Lantern,* having the same large, full-page colored cartoons; much the same format; and it printed the same sharp comment on men and affairs. Two cartoonists who did excellent work for *The Wasp* were Keller and Backhaus. Backhaus was a boy, only seventeen, and with little education. He was a great favorite of Bierce’s. Later he went to Germany, which, as Bierce said, “was right, but he died there, as was wrong.” Bierce was, *en passant*, a talented newspaperman. His knowledge of the craft was more accurate and better informed than the second-hand acquaintance of the average columnist. *The Wasp* under his editorship was a most unusual magazine, and its files remain interesting to-day. In 1881 it must have been a minor sensation, and it was in January of that year that it began to publish the first of his work, part of “The Devil’s Dictionary.” He soon became its editor and published “Prattle” in his pages from 1881 to 1886. But it is apparent to even a casual reader that *The Wasp* was never self-supporting. It must have been a costly publication, there was scarcely any advertising in its pages, and its general tone was surely not such as to have attracted a wide audience. How, then, was this interesting journal financed?

It seems that, unknown to Bierce, *The Wasp* was really owned by Charles Webb Howard, an official of the Spring Valley Water Company, a large public utility corporation operating in the Bay District. To keep Bierce, and others, in ignorance of the true ownership of the paper, a dummy was employed to play the role of “publisher.” So far as Bierce knew, the paper was owned by one Harry Dam. But Mr. Howard was at all times the real owner, and he made a nice profit by forcing the Spring Valley Water Company to buy about all the advertising space that the paper sold. This condition existed for quite a number of years, even after Bierce became editor, and until he learned the facts as to its ownership. When he discovered the deception that had been practiced upon him, he was furious and could not be placated. “I was more obstinate than ever; and now when I remember the lofty scorn with which I greeted every overture of my employer, I am filled with admiration and convinced afresh that I was born to be Rear-Admiral of a trade-union.” He threatened a public exposé of the fraud, and in order to prevent this calamity Howard was forced to sell the paper to E. C. MacFarlane, an old friend of Bierce's.

From the first issue to which he contributed until he resigned, Bierce was *The Wasp.* He wrote the editorials; conducted his page of "Prattle"; edited all contributions; wrote many poems; and began the publication of "The Devil's Dictionary," perhaps the sharpest and most readable wit that he ever wrote. With the first issue of *The Wasp,* he began the publication of this dictionary of wit, beginning with the letter "P," and continued down the alphabet until March 5th, 1881, when he started the dictionary all over again, apparently with the thought in mind of rewriting and enlarging the original plan. The idea of such a dictionary was, of course, old with Voltaire, but it owed its immediate origin to some work that Bierce had done for *The News-Letter* in December of 1875, after his return from London, called "The Demon's Dictionary" and which ran for only a few issues. It was a convenient frame for a professional wit to use, as it gave him a constant pattern, and all that was needed was to select new words on which to direct his satire. Much of his wit was the result of a formula, a mere verbal juggling with ideas. In the early issues of the magazine appeared, also, "The Wasp's Book of Wisdom," containing many epigrams and aphorisms rather suggestive of the "Smart Set Birthday Book" that Mencken and Nathan published several years ago. Bierce reprinted in *The Wasp* a great deal of his London work; many of the fables from *Fun* and a few stories first used in Tom Hood's *Comic Annual.*

"Prattle" was the same sprightly page that it was in 1869. There were no exceptions to Bierce's scorn; his abuse was universal and lovely. It was sharpest when directed at a local poet or novelist, as though he resented even the thought of a San Franciscan attempting to write. In many instances his satire abruptly terminated the creative impulse. During the time that Bierce edited *The Wasp,* a fellow journalist, Harr Wagner, was editor of *Vanity Fair,* a continuation of Joe Lawrence's famous magazine *The Golden Era.* Mr. Wagner is an optimistic fellow, and he was even more cheerful and sentimental in 1881. He once published a novel called "The Street and the Flower," which tells the story of a young boy of the streets and the sweet, flower-like maiden who redeemed him. Bierce pounced upon this book hungrily and with joy. For weeks on end he poured abuse into Wagner that would have shamed a Turk. Mr. Wagner was good-natured about the matter, and was shrewd enough to reprint some of Bierce's unkind gibes. They immediately provoked a reaction in favor of the novel and its author, for it was quite obvious that Mr. Bierce was unfair. But, good-natured as he was, Mr. Wagner never wrote another novel. Lillian Ferguson contributed occasional verse to the press during the eighties under the name of Lillian Plunkett. Bierce seized upon this name with sadistic glee and made endless sport of her verse by puns on the word “Plunkett.” The recollection of these early burlesques still rankles in the memory of several writers who survived his satire. Charlotte Perkins Gilman remembers him very vividly, as is revealed in this statement: “He was the Public Executioner and Tormentor, daily exhibiting his skill in grilling helpless victims for the entertainment of the public, — for wages. He was an early master in the art of blackening long-established reputations of the great dead, of such living persons as were unable to hit back effectively, and at his best in scurrilous abuse of hard-working women writers. He never lost an opportunity to refer to the cotton-stuffed bosoms of the women writers.” But Mrs. Gilman errs in saying that he struck only those who could not hit back effectively. As a matter of fact, there was no reputation, living or dead, that he was afraid to attack, although his blasts have the unmistakable indication of bravura about them at times.

In a single page of “Prattle” he would excoriate as many as fifteen prominent San Franciscans. Some he never wearied of flaying. General W. H. L. Barnes could not walk abroad but that Bierce would snip at his heels; Loring Pickering never split an infinitive or mixed a metaphor but that Bierce hit him with a longshoreman’s swing. Mr. W. C. Bartlett must have hesitated to write his art criticism, for Bierce would wait until he had reviewed an exhibition and then make some such comment as this:

“The old he-hen who makes the *Bulletin’s* art criticism has been in full cackle ever since the opening of the Spring exhibition — Everything about the Exhibition is, to Mr. Bartlett, great and excellent. Furthermore, he has executed this identical prostration of his spirit every spring since Californian art began to defy the law against indecent exposure — Doubtless the senile and unhaired wretch can now show as many little notes of gratitude from the ladies (weirdly malographic and uncannily mispencilled) as he has mentioned names which will visibly enhance the superiority of his smile and endow him with fat sleep and free dreams.”

It was an amusing page of malice and the number of victims preserved in its yellowing pages is startling, for it reads like a directory of San Francisco! Poor Pixley was ever and anon made immortal in some epitaph starting, as one did, with the line: “Here lies Frank Pixley as usual.” A wretched druggist was once a candidate for Supervisor. He had cards printed with the words: “William J. Bryan, Druggist, for Supervisor 12th Ward.” Bierce quoted the card in his “Prattle” and then wrote:

“Oh! William, such a thrifty trick,
Closely on genius verges;
Your candidacy makes men sick
So to your pill-shop double quick
They fly for pukes and purges.”

The collapse of the seventies had given the railroads a magnificent opportunity to gain control of the state, and by 1881 they were so bold about their dominance that it seems incredible that the citizenry could have endured the situation. But they did, and the universal corruption became really laughable; every one was a kept lobbyist for the railroad. The legislatures at Sacramento were a disgrace even for the State of California. Such political corruption and bribery were perhaps never witnessed in an American commonwealth as occurred in California during these years. The supremacy of “Boss” Tweed was localized and trifling when compared with the state-wide control of the Southern Pacific Railroad in California. The railroad took no chances: it owned both major political parties: it controlled the press with scarcely an exception. Bierce became so annoyed with the apathy of his fellow-citizens that his abuse grew shrill and hysterical. “If nonsense were black, Sacramento would need gas lamps on Monday.... So scurvy a crew I do not remember to have discerned in vermiculose conspiracy outside the carcass of a dead horse, — at least not since they adjourned.” The national scene did not seem much more inspiring: “The frosty truth of the situation is that we are a nation of benighted and boasting vulgarians, in whom the moral sense is as dead as Queen Anne, at her deadest; that we are hopelessly floundering and helplessly foundering in a sea of public and private corruption as offensive as that upon which the Ancient Mariner saw the shiny things that ‘did crawl with legs’; that we are a laughing stock to Europe and a menace to civilization.”

Not only was Bierce frantically annoyed with the stupidity of the people of a great commonwealth who permitted thick-browed gentlemen like “Uncle Colis” Huntington to loot them blind, but his feeling of resentment was deeper and more personal. He was lonely for the society of civilized people. The society of San Francisco, at the time, was slightly grandiose and ornate. Some French architects in the sixties imported a psuedo-classic type of design that quickly became a grotesque pattern in the hands of the natives. Greek porticos with Corinthian columns led up flights of wooden steps, and inevitably a “bay window” bulged out over the street. The type gradually became even more pretentious. There were conical towers, eccentric steps, Queen Anne flourishes cheek-by-jowl with some one’s idea of Renaissance style. This uneven, quixotic society ranging from Nob Hill to the Barbary Coast, was shot through and through with barbarous hatreds and currents of greed that annihilated even the possibility of good work in the arts. A satirist could survive, if he were willing to lend his pen to verbal butchery; but the life did not permit of the same work that was just coming to flower at the end of the fifties with Joe Goodman, Bret Harte, and Mark Twain.

It would be impossible to trace the pattern of all the rancorous hatreds and scandals that were a part of the life of those days. The Rev. Isaac S. Kalloch, politician and preacher, called Charles DeYoung, founder of *The Chronicle,* a bastard. Threats were made, and a Kalloch killed Charles DeYoung. Crowds surged in the streets; the saloons were rife with loud pronunciations of vengeance; and for sixty-five days San Francisco milled around the court room until Kalloch was acquitted. Judge Terry, who began to “knife” people back in the Vigilante Days and who killed David Broderick in a duel, fell in state and became the pawn of the dramatic Sarah Hill. Majestic Stephen Field, once alcalde of a village in Spanish-California days, but on his way to the U. S. Supreme Court, offended Sarah during the course of a trial. Terry made threats. Later he tried to kill Judge Field and was shot down by United States Marshal Nagel, who became a famous precedent in *In Re Nagel,* but was saved by the reasoning of the future associates of Judge Field. The railroad sent armed thugs into Mussel Slough to oust settlers, and their pet gunman, Walter Crowe, slaughtered farmers from ten in the morning until the last hours of the afternoon, when he was shot dead. Sharon sued Sharon through forty volumes of California decisions, and Mr. Colton’s widow still complained of Leland Stanford. The heirs of James G. Fair, of Virginia City fame, quarreled about a trust. The case was appealed to the Supreme Court. The first decision of the higher court was in favor of the trust’s validity by a four to three decision, Henshaw voting with the four. Judge Henshaw wavered. After all, he mused, amidst a dusty stack of reports, “man lives but once,” and the next decision found Henshaw voting the other way. The final opinion shattered the trust, and Judge Henshaw received $400,000, as shown by the affidavit of a co-conspirator who saw the light of divine revelation from a “fake-healer” and rushed to Fremont Older to confess. Hate and lust and abuse... It was a furnace of anger which affected all classes in the commonwealth. In such a society, Bierce was kept at a boiling temperature for years; naturally when the hates ran their course, his white fury crystallized in adamant prejudice and opinion.

It is not surprising to find that during this time Mr. Bierce was still offering to give satisfaction to the offended. There was one occasion when two army officers had given affront in crossing the bay one evening. The next morning he addressed this note to the two unknown culprits:

“That you are cowards I have not the dimmest doubt, but you can hardly afford to prove it to one another by withholding from me the power to call you so by name, — which I engage to do; my name, Ambrose Bierce, being, I hope, a sufficient warrant that the purpose will be executed in good faith and to the letter.”

The eighties was not only the era of the false front in architecture, but it was the age of just as studied an avoidance of simplicity in the other arts. The literary gentlemen such as T. H. Reardon, wrote essays about Petrarch, or brought out editions of Heredia’s poem, as did E. H. Taylor, or wrote Byronesque poetry, as did the sad-eyed Richard Realf. “On the Verge,” the favorite novel of the period, abounds in French quotations in every other paragraph. And when stories were written at all, they were generally of the highly artificial ghost-type that R. H. Milne and E. H. Cloud wrote. They did not look at life; Mark Twain and Bret Harte had done so thirty years previously, but these latter-day fellows were too elegant for this earth. Bierce, during these first years on *The Wasp,* was too busy to write much besides his regular journalism. “What I saw of Shiloh,” appeared in the Christmas number, 1881, and there were reprinted stories from his London days, but the time had not yet arrived for him to write the stories which have since become so celebrated.

But whether the society was charming or not, and however boldly the rascals looted the money-bags at Sacramento, one thing remained to console Bierce: the untrammeled, gloriously independent American saloon. If he was poorly paid, middle-aged, ambitionless and weary of the scene, he could always quit work and sojourn along the cocktail route, that commenced on the southwestern corner of Kearney and Bush and proceeded along Kearney to Market, and continued on the northern side of Market west as far as Powell, and “return or not, as the devotee wished or could daily afford,” as Major Ben C. Truman once phrased it. As early as 1880 there were nine drinking places between the two ends, not counting Joe Parker’s place on the northwestern corner of Bush and Kearney, or the bar at the Baldwin Theater. Business adjourned at about 4 o’clock, and the Latin holiday spirit that ruled in San Francisco in those days was released. There was a stream of men following this cocktail route, ending up at the point of beginning about 8 o’clock in time for dinner. It was not a raucous scene: Hacquette & Hageman’s Crystal Palace was conducted as a high-class club. Along this route Bierce would journey, and when he, too, was ready for dinner, the lights of the city were gleaming and San Francisco was not the putrid, foul-smelling den of vulgarity that it had been before he commenced the journey. Booze was a great consolation, a spiritual solace, amidst such scenes. Mr. Upton Sinclair, who, for reasons that it is difficult to understand, called George Sterling foul names because he got drunk at a Ruskin Club banquet (who wouldn’t?), has also berated Bierce as “an eminent tankard man.” Of course Bierce drank. “Water,” he once remarked, “has one merit — it is cheap; and one disadvantage — it is not good.”

With the cocktail route, Chinatown and the Barbary Coast, San Francisco had its faith charlatans, and religious intolerance was not unknown. In 1881 Sarah Cooper was tried for heresy. Her chief persecutor was Rev. J. B. Roberts. Of this man Bierce wrote:

“Dim-pinnacled in the intense shame of his theological environment, he sits astride his evil eminence of personal malignity, breaking the seals that close that pestilence, his mind, and its insupportable rain of red ruin falls alike upon the just and the unjust, the while he cackles his unholy glee till the lute-strings of his larynx are aweary of their work. Look at him — the hideous apparition perched between the world and the light, flinging his ugly shadow athwart the scene to fray the souls of babes and sucklings. O, but he is a bright and beautiful bird-of-paradise, a-ripening for the gun. Some Christian sportsman fill him a tempest of shot and compile him a bag. He is game by God’s unwritten law — and he shall take himself away from Sarah Cooper’s burrow, or I, for one, will make him wish he were another and better dog.”

Finally Bierce wearied of the entire collection of holy idiots that were constantly creating disturbances and prosecuting the weak, and in tones of exasperation wrote of them:

“What a procession of holy idiots we have had in San Francisco — hot gospellers and devil-pelters of all degrees! Thick-necked Moody with Sankey of the nasal name; Hallenbeck, Earle, Knops and all their he-harlotry of horribles. And now this grease eating and salt-crusted Harrison from the pork regions of the northeast, thinking holy hog-and-hominy and talking his teeth loose for the dissuasion of sinners from their natural diet of sin, without which they would be sick! Can we do nothing to rid us of the periodical incursions of these scale-bugs

— these leaf-worms — these phylloxera of the moral vineyard? May the devil smite them with a tempest of sulphuric acid from his Babcock extinguisher!”

During these early years after his return, Bierce lived in a flat at 1428 Broadway, San Francisco. He lived with his family when his health permitted, but there were long intervals when he would be absent, away in the hills seeking relief from his asthma. Nicassio was his favorite retreat during this period. It was then quite a pretty resort in Marin County, near San Rafael. But, in a few years, it became apparent that he could no longer live in San Francisco or make a pretense of keeping a residence there. His absences from his family were increasing in frequency and duration. Contrary to his legendary cruelty, he was almost sentimental about these trips away into the hills. He would write his daughter, Helen, charming letters about the pines where he lived, the rumble in the storm clouds which was like the “roar of great cannons,” tell her in a wistful manner that he missed her very much, and then always end his letters, as he did with all his children, “Your Father, A. G. Bierce.”

But, before the family moved away from San Francisco, he determined to try one further resort for his health, and this time he went to Auburn, in Placer County, in 1883, where he lived for a number of years.

Prior to leaving for Auburn, however, there had been considerable trouble between Bierce and his wife. It was a rather subtle antagonism. He complained rather bitterly of the “Holy Trinity,” meaning his wife, Mrs. Day and James Day, his brother-in-law. These three were always of the same opinion on every question, and the two Days would sometimes succeed in swinging Mrs. Bierce into line with them against her husband. As already mentioned, Bierce had disliked Mrs. Day since his return from London, and his sharp antipathy to his brother-in-law dated from about the same period. The circumstances of this quarrel were well known to members of the family at the time. James Day had fallen in love with the daughter of an aged clergyman, who, strangely enough, was a good friend of Bierce and, for that matter, of the Day family. The affair was a rather sordid one, and the old clergyman was so humiliated and chagrined by the experience that shortly afterwards he committed suicide. It was the breach of friendship that nettled Bierce. The revulsion which he experienced against James Day could never be overcome. He froze into an attitude of contempt. Hence he never forgave him. But, although he was estranged after a fashion from his wife while living at Auburn, there had been as yet no separation. The cause of their ultimate and final separation had not occurred. Many people who knew Bierce at Auburn strenuously insist that he was separated from his wife at that time, but such is not the case. They lived apart a great deal, because of

Bierce's health, and there did exist considerable misunderstanding, but they were not separated in any legal sense of the term, nor for that matter, in the sense that they had agreed not to live together.

In Auburn, Bierce lived at the old Putnam House, a ramshackle hotel, the pride of that sleepy village. He rather liked to satirize Auburn, in verse and prose, and on one occasion he wrote of it these lines called "The Perverted Village":

"Sweet Auburn! liveliest village of the plain.
Where Health and Slander welcome every train,
Whence smiling innocence, its tribute paid,
Retires in terror, wounded and dismayed —
Dear lovely bowers of gossip and disease,
Whose climate cures us that thy dames may tease,
How often have I knelt upon thy green
And prayed for death, to mitigate their spleen!"

It was at Nicassio and then at Auburn that Bierce began that long, interminable vagabondage of his, a constant moving about from one country hotel to another in search of a "breathing place." First it was the Putnam House at Auburn; the Cranes Hotel at Sunol; Angwin's on Howell Mountain; the El Monte at Los Gatos; Wright's in the Santa Cruz Mountains; at the Jeffreys Place at Wrights. They were all small, unattractive hotels, sequestered in unbroken solitude. He lived, for the most part, without companions and without care in his periods of illness. That he missed the civilized, social life of London cannot be doubted. He wrote once that:

"I would rather dine in a receiving vault of a cemetery than in an American dining-room. I mean the dining-room of a hotel where ladies are admitted. The awful hush, the peculiar ghastly chill, the visible determination to be proper and avert the slow stroke of the rebuking eye that awaits the miscreant who laughs or speaks above his breath — these things overcome me. I can't breathe in that atmosphere of solemn stupidity. I choke my food and strangle on my drink. The waiter carries me out."

Many amusing incidents took place at Auburn that illustrate what a provincial place it was in the eighties, and, still is, I have no doubt. During one of Bierce's most violent attacks of asthma, nearly every woman in the town came to the hotel and advocated some special remedy. One woman, however, did not come to the hotel. Her reticence intrigued Bierce. When he recovered sufficiently to be about, he called on this lovely but adamant lady and asked why she had not proposed some remedy for his asthma. Her cold and professional reply was: “Oh, that’s easy to explain: I’m a physician.”

There lived in Auburn, at that time, a handsome and attractive widow. She shocked the town considerably by her efforts to keep far in advance of the times, and Bierce was amused by her antics. One day she proposed to him that they have a picnic in the woods: a bottle of champagne, some verse, and woodland intimacy. He assented and set aside, at least the volume of verse, for the occasion. The lady started to drive down the main street of the town towards the Putnam House, when the horse she was driving ran away. The buggy with the picnic-lady came careening up the street, turned a corner and upset. The contents of the picnic basket, including several bottles of champagne, spilled out in the road in the gaze of the usual crowd of village loafers and gossips, much to the lady’s discomfort. But Bierce rushed to the rescue, picked her out of the wreckage, and they picnicked just the same. Perhaps he had this woman in mind when, in after years, he defined a “widow.” He was present at quite an interesting gathering in Oakland, and some one happened to mention the word “widow.” Immediately Bierce became pensive and sad. “A widow,” he mused, “God’s second noblest gift to man.” There was a pause and then the expected inquiry: “And the first, Mr. Bierce?” Another pause, and then leaning forward in an atmosphere of hushed expectancy, he whispered very softly: “A bad girl.”

During the latter part of 1885, and into 1886, E. C. MacFarlane, or “Ned” as he was called, began to have great difficulty with *The Wasp*. MacFarlane was a personal friend of Bierce, who had induced him to purchase the paper. But he really had a secret motive in doing so, unknown to Bierce, and this motive soon became apparent. He had a brother, George MacFarlane, who was a wealthy sugar planter in the Hawaiian Islands. The status of the Islands was then quite unsettled, and the sugar planters were anxious to secure favorable rights under the terms of a treaty being drafted between the United States and Their Majesties. To further this cause, the MacFarlanes thought that it would be good policy to own a newspaper in San Francisco, as the measure required considerable publicity.

It was during 1883 that quite a group of people who were interested in the Islands, including a number of newspapermen and their families, went to Hawaii to attend the coronation ceremonies. Among Bierce’s effects is an invitation, dated February 12, 1883, in which “Their Majesties the King and Queen request the presence of Major and Mrs. A. G. Bierce in Iolani Palace for the coronation ceremonies.” Mrs. Bierce actually went on this trip, but her husband remained at home and cabled to his friends, in response to their inquiries as to why he was not present: "Why should I bother to see a negress crowned queen of the fly-speck Isles?" This invitation was, of course, the work of the MacFarlanes, and, also, of E. L. G. Steele, who was another San Franciscan vitally interested in the development of the Islands.

After he had moved to Auburn, Bierce surrendered the active management of *The Wasp* to Ned MacFarlane. But MacFarlane, who was quite inexperienced as a journalist, soon began to have difficulty with the management of the paper. It was not so much the matter of money, for the MacFarlanes were wealthy people and could arrange to finance the paper, as it was in the field of politics that the trouble arose. MacFarlane would take flying week-end trips to Auburn for consultation and would return to San Francisco measurably calmed, only to write eight-or ten-page letters the next day to Bierce, exclaiming: "Oh, what shall I do!" He was quite quick tempered and actually feared that he might be overcome with frenzy and kill some of his enemies. His chief tormentor was none other than "Mike" DeYoung.

DeYoung began to attack MacFarlane and Bierce in *The Chronicle.* The main point of attack, and it was insidiously planned, was that MacFarlane had not actually purchased *The Wasp* from Howard, its former owner, but that he was just another dummy, such as Harry Dam had been. This infuriated both Bierce and MacFarlane, but they were powerless to check the effects of the insinuation. They could shout denials and their very vehemence was taken as an admission of guilt. DeYoung was immensely clever about such things, and he knew that nothing would infuriate Bierce so much as this constant intimation that the editor of *The Wasp* was just a puppet for large corporate interests.

Then, too, MacFarlane was caught in the toils of a political dilemma. His brother began to make strenuous demands that *The Wasp* give its unqualified support to the treaty with the Islands. To do so, at the time, required a change in the politics of the paper, as the national party which *The Wasp* had always endorsed was opposing the treaty. Furthermore, the change had to be made in the midst of a presidential campaign. DeYoung was gleeful, and, after the change had been made, he pointed at the apostasy with scorn. The real situation was that DeYoung had tried to bribe the sugar planters into purchasing the support of his paper, but he had run foul of Adolph Spreckels. He had announced that Spreckels, another large plantation owner, was corruptly influencing the press of California in favor of the treaty, and, particularly, that he had purchased *The Wasp.* Old Spreckels stood for this quite some time. But he finally turned berserk and chased DeYoung into his office and gave him a good caning. But DeYoung's blow had struck, just the same, for there could be no denial that Ned

MacFarlane, newspaperman, and George MacFarlane, plantation owner, were merely playing a game.

“Mike” DeYoung was, without doubt, the most interesting journalist on the coast. He was unscrupulous but had the courage to be frank in his demands. Every interest had to subsidize his press if it wanted his support; he was selling influence and was quite willing that people should know the rates. He could not be insulted and was adamant to abuse. He outlived all his enemies and became a millionaire. His impassivity before epithet was amazing. He was called, at one time or other, practically every variety of rascal that the dictionary of abuse could define. But he would only smile and make more money. Occasionally, in later years, Bierce would hit too hard, and DeYoung would start out in the morning, after a few drinks, to “kill Ambrose Bierce.” But his nerve always waned or perhaps his cynicism reasserted itself. Bierce once called him a murderer to his face, and he still refused to fight. He knew when to smile.

The Wasp was essentially a political journal, and its pages reflect imperfectly the strident and vigorous manner in which political issues were debated in the eighties. Full-page cartoons shrieked blasphemies at the enemy, and editorials blasted the very foundation of the opponent’s platform. Naturally, Bierce’s views began to take color from such violence. The issues were somewhat obscure, the forces were imperfectly aligned, but political corruption was the rule. “Politics,” he once wrote, “is a pitch that defiles, a tope that endrunkens, a poison that penetrates the bones and gets into the hair.” In the midst of such scenes, Bierce despaired of his fine theory about “lashing rascals through the world,” and became cynical even of his scorn. He wrote of the press:

> “Newspapers — conducted by rogues and dunces for dunces and rogues, they are faithful to nothing but the follies and vices of our system, strenuously opposing every intelligent attempt at their elimination. They fetter the feet of wisdom and stiffen the prejudices of the ignorant. They are sycophants to the mob, tyrants to the individual.”

No doubt Bierce’s views on journalism and journalists were affected by his association with MacFarlane. He thought that his friend was buying *The Wasp* out of a disinterested desire to give him a journal in which to purge the city of its vices, when, as a matter of fact, he was buying the paper to further his own interests. And Bierce had to acquiesce in MacFarlane’s wishes, and consent to the ignoble change of policy midstream, and all for a personal consideration. Nothing but the greatest necessity would have made him do so.

In December of 1885, MacFarlane finally admitted that the fight was too much for him, and he left for the Islands, writing Bierce a long letter from the Bohemian Club explaining his motives and, also, advising him that “Charley” Kauffman would make provision for the journal. He also promised to secure Bierce a government position in the Islands, which he never did. Shortly thereafter MacFarlane sold his interest in the paper to Jackson, and the doors were closed on another interesting chapter in the history of “Prattle.” Bierce was probably glad that the episode was over, although it left him in a precarious position. It had never been a satisfactory arrangement; he had been underpaid; had worked too hard; had become involved in distasteful alliances; and had been repeatedly disappointed in MacFarlane. But now there was no journal left in San Francisco that would accept his work. He was hated like a rattlesnake. By the spring of 1886, “Prattle” ceased to appear in *The Wasp,* and when “Prattle” was discontinued it invariably meant that Bierce was sick, or fired.

His work on *The Wasp* had not passed unnoticed. Parsons, one of the strongest editorial writers and journalists on the Pacific coast, once wrote a long editorial in the Sacramento *Record-Union* (December 28, 1881), praising Bierce for his fine fearlessness; the Stockton *Evening Mail* (Dec. 30, 1881) was equally enthusiastic. Journalists on the coast read Bierce with indefatigable zest. A writer on the Visalia *Delta* (Jan. 6, 1882) had apparently seen Mr. Bierce in San Francisco, for he wrote: “He is a young man (apparently little over thirty), dresses in fashionable clothes without any affectation or eccentricity, and in bearing is always a polite, considerate, refined and scholarly gentleman.” The article then proceeded to analyze Mr. Bierce’s journalistic methods and came to the conclusion that his central merit was “absolute honesty.” This was, of course, close to the facts. It was Bierce’s theory that if you took the personal out of journalism nothing was left. He once asked: “Is it blasphemy to hold the mirror up to the blasphemer?”

But studying his journalism from the perspective which time gives, one is impressed with its futility. Of course, if journalism had to be followed as a trade, and it did during these years, for Bierce had no other means of support, then his fearless candor is no doubt commendable. But what did it matter if “Mike” DeYoung was a rascal, or that politicians were liars, or that local poets were ridiculous? Viewing his work during the six years that he wrote for *The Wasp,* the conclusion is inevitable that it was a waste of effort and that the devastating effects of his rage, reacting upon his own temperament, did incalculable injury to his thinking. To be personal inevitably provoked a quarrel, and when men quarrel they are absurd. The difficulty was, again, Mr. Bierce’s idealism. He wrote that “the belief so dominant in the last generation that human events occur without human agency is a captivating absurdity.” But was that belief so absurd?

The corollary of his proposition, namely, that by human agencies man's nature can be changed, leads to positions which it is difficult to defend. He secretly believed that his satire might be immensely effective in correcting the evils it berated. But this belief, which did not take into consideration the possibility that there are agencies at work in society more important than the merely personal, was rather naïve. For as Remy de Gourmont has written, "The position taken by man outside the world to judge the world, is a factitious attitude." He was hampered and kept ineffective by his lack of information. Mr.

Bierce felt the need of the times; he sensed the situation; and he was correct in his conclusions. He anticipated modern thought, but he lacked the assistance which modern investigation could have given. Because of this inadequacy in equipment, he was sometimes quite incompetent in the personal affairs of his life, and quite ineffective in his criticism of public events. He came to realize this in later years, but in 1886 he was still the victim of his own courage, caught in the mesh of his own idealism, but quite undeceived about the life of his day and writing with a vigor and directness which command modern admiration. "Men are mad," said Pascal, "so unavoidably that not to be mad would constitute one a madman of another order of madness."

CHAPTER X. “SIR ORACLE, INDEED!”

AFTER he ceased to write for *The Wasp* there was an interval in which Bierce was sorely pressed for a livelihood. He was past middle-age and had accomplished none of the work of which he knew himself capable. Then, too, he was ill with asthma and had to find a home in the mountains where he could live. About this time, some one told him that if he would go and live among the pines on Howell Mountain for a year or so, that he would be cured of his asthma. So he decided to move his family from San Francisco to St. Helena in order that they might be near. St. Helena is a charming little town, situated where the north end of Napa Valley is blocked by Mt. Saint Helena, and Howell Mountain runs a long, blue, pine-clad ridge to the east. The Napa Valley is the Rhine Valley of California; the warm sun-baked hillsides are covered with vineyards and the old Graystone Winery, on the outskirts of the town, is a silent spectre of a noble past. It was but a few hours to Oakland, when Bierce wanted to make a foray into civilization. But, for the most part, he lived at Angwin’s Camp on the top of Howell Mountain, about seven miles from St. Helena.

St. Helena, in the days when the Bierces first moved there, was a rather popular resort. Many prominent San Francisco families had country places nearby, such as the Polks and Fullers. Capt. Grant was an old friend of Bierce, in the early days in San Francisco, and he it was who suggested Angwin’s as a health cure. He even offered the Bierces his cottage on Main Street in St. Helena, which they accepted. There they were to live for several years, in the little white cottage with a special roost built above, for Leigh to sleep in as a haven from asthma. Bierce lived at Angwin’s on Howell Mountain, but he would return once or twice a week to his home, and would sometimes take Mrs. Bierce, with one or another of the children, back to his mountain retreat. Life in St. Helena was not altogether unpleasant: the valley was beautiful, many interesting people came there, and tucked away in the north end of the valley was old Schram’s winery, where Bierce used to get his wine.

A great friend of both Mr and Mrs. Bierce lived at this time in the Napa Valley. Her name was Lillie Coit. “Lil” Coit was the first “emancipated” woman of early San Francisco. While returning home from school in San Francisco one day, she noticed the Knickerbocker Fire Engine Company No. 5 stalled on a hillside. She discarded her books and rushed to the aid of the firemen. For this act she was made an honorary member of “No. 5,” and the number became a fetish in her life. She had it carved over the door of her room and, so rumor hath it in St. Helena, the sacred symbol appeared on her nightshirts. When the fire alarm rang, she would rush to headquarters and might be seen atop Fire Engine No. 5 careening madly down the streets of San Francisco. She was extremely wealthy and equally handsome, and had a beautiful estate near St. Helena called "Lonely." Her home was the scene of many gay and interesting week-end parties. She was a great favorite of Mr. Bierce and they used to go hunting together. Lillie Coit is a character in several of Mrs. Atherton's better known stories, and she surely deserved to be made immortal, for no more interesting character lived on the coast. She used to drive a tally-ho coach that went whizzing around the Napa Valley, to the amazement of the natives and the delight of her friends. There were barbecue feasts at "Lonely," and, occasionally, "Lil" would drive up to Angwin's, wearing scandalously short skirts and hunting boots, to take "Bierce" out for a tramp in the woods. Her mad escapades were the talk of her generation, but never once was there any personal scandal about her name. "'Lil' Coit," Bierce once remarked, "is a real woman."

But with the petty townspeople, Bierce had no traffic whatever. They quickly made a legend about the "blond god" who lived on Howell Mountain. On the occasion when he was in the town he would stalk around with all the hauteur of an officer in the imperial guard. There were few people in the town who were on speaking terms with him. The editor of the St. Helena *Star* once crossed verbal swords with him, and Bierce answered the fellow in "Prattle" in his usual terse manner and referred to him as the editor of the "St. Helena Liver-Complaint." But for the most part, the St. Helenans read his column of "Pratttle" and whispered awesomely among themselves. He seldom came to the town, and when he did it was at night, or to catch a train, so that they quickly concluded he was divorced from his wife and the legend became established. But of the lovely Mrs. Bierce, who was tall and dark and most kind, they had no illusions; they adored her without reservation. She would play the piano at their parties, help them with their "receptions," and entertain them, at Mrs. Hunt's home, with stories of London and the great world.

One day the minister came to call on Mrs. Bierce when Bierce chanced to be present. Leigh came running in from the garden shouting, "Oh, Daddy, Day just said 'Damn God.'" The minister and Mrs. Bierce were quite horrified, but Bierce only remarked: "Go and tell Day that I have repeatedly told him not to say 'Damn God' when he means 'God Damn.'"

When Bierce would go to Oakland, he would quite often stay several weeks, sometimes several months, particularly in the winter when he would take an apartment. But even after his family had been established at St. Helena, he would make trips to Auburn and other resorts, moving from one to another as his health required. It was while he was in Oakland, on one of his visits, that an incident occurred of the utmost moment and importance in his life. One afternoon there came a gentle tapping on the door of his apartment, and he went to find who it was that called. Let him tell the rest of the story:

"I found a young man, the youngest young man, it seemed to me, that I had ever confronted. His appearance, his attitude, his manner, his entire personality suggested extreme diffidence. I did not ask him in, install him in my better chair (I had two) and inquire how we could serve each other. If my memory is not at fault I merely said: 'Well' and awaited the result.

"'I am from the San Francisco *Examiner,'* he explained in a voice like the fragrance of violets made audible, and backed a little away.

"'Oh,' I said, 'you come from Mr. Hearst.' Then that unearthly child lifted its blue eyes and cooed: 'I am Mr. Hearst.'"

He had come to interview Mr. Bierce. Just a few weeks previously, in March of 1887, his father, Senator George Hearst, had given the San Francisco *Examiner* as a plaything to the former editor of the *Harvard Lampoon.* The young editor showed amazing shrewdness in selecting his staff; the principle behind his choice was invariably the same: he wanted the best. He had determined to commit the unspeakable heresy of making his paper interesting and readable, and wanted the brightest men he could obtain for his staff. He had F. L. H. ("Cozy") Noble; E. H. Hamilton; A. M. Lawrence — one of the best reporters he ever employed — and Sam Chamberlain, a great editor; Alfonso Murphy, Annie Laurie (Mrs. Bonfils), "Petey" Bigelow and Arthur McEwen. It was a formidable array of talent. McEwen was rated as one of the strongest journalists in the West; Mrs. Bonfils invented the "sob" story; and the best of "Jimmy" Swinnerton's cartoons have seldom been equaled. What Mr. Hearst needed was a little elegance for the editorial page, as he wanted to make it a memorable feature of his newspaper. Accordingly he turned to Ambrose Bierce; the choice was inevitable, and the bargain was soon sealed. But before they came to terms, Mr. Hearst was given to understand that there were two inviolable conditions: 1st, "Prattle" was to appear on the editorial page, next to the regular editorials; 2nd, it was to appear exactly as written. Perhaps Mr. Bierce did not define "exactly" at the time, but Mr. Henderson, and the other *Examiner* men, soon came to have a vivid understanding of his peculiarly exact definition of exactness. Bierce was to write two columns, if possible, of "Prattle" once a week for the Sunday edition, and if he did any additional work he was to be paid at space rates. The relationship established was of the greatest importance for both men, and should be, at least, an important footnote in any history of American journalism.

The significance of the incident to Bierce is quite apparent. It was the beginning of his great fame on the coast. It is true that he had a considerable local reputation with his work on *The News-Letter, The Argonaut,* and *The Wasp,* but the circulation of these weeklies was rather limited, and in them "Prattle" did not carry the same weight as did the two signed columns in *The Examiner.* And then, again, it gave Bierce leisure to do other writing, and it was high time, for he was past middle-age and had, as yet, done little writing of any moment. From now on he was to be well paid for the rest of his life, and was liberated from the burden of editorial detail. It is a shame that the opportunity did not come earlier in his life. To appreciate the fame that Bierce soon attained with his work on *The Examiner,* one must constantly remember that the Hearst papers in the West (it was then *the* Hearst paper) occupied a far different standing than they did in the East. In the West *The Examiner* was read by every one, including the people of influence and power and social position. *The Examiner* was not the rowdy sheet for the hoi polloi that some of the Hearst papers quickly became in the East. It has been variously estimated what the number of "Bierce readers" was during *The Examiner* days, but it must have been very large indeed. And no one knew this better than did Mr. Hearst.

The association of the two struck many people as being slightly incongruous. But they had several common interests; or, at least, they had certain mutual antipathies which they both desired to eliminate, although from different motives. Moreover, both of them loved a good fight. Mr. Hearst thoroughly enjoyed "Prattle" and never complained of his columnist, no matter how abusive he might be on occasion. It is altogether probable that Mr. Hearst was acting on the defensive when he employed Bierce, on the theory that such a dangerous satirist would be a powerful ally but an implacable foe. But then no one knew what Mr. Hearst's motives were and few do to this day. To build circulation? Perhaps; but there were quicker ways. At times, particularly in the early days of his career, one can easily detect different motives at work in Mr. Hearst's journalism. But he did love *The Examiner,* and he took a great interest in all the members of its staff, including Bierce, whom he pampered, mollified, and befriended at all times.

The sense of power that Bierce now experienced from his work on *The Examiner* added measurably to the quality of his satire. Theretofore it suffered from the impotency of futility, or hysteria. There was something rather harsh and blunt and ungraceful about his work on *The Wasp.* In fact, the years 1881-1886 represent a low-ebb in his satire, probably for the reason that he was overworked during this period. He could concentrate on his "Prattle" alone. Now that he was with *The Examiner,* he took up a rapier instead of the bludgeon which he had used on *The Wasp.* And, now, too, he began to write his stories.

There is much current discussion as to Bierce's actual merits as a satirist. Mr. Vincent O'Sullivan wrote in *The Dublin Magazine* (April-June, 1929), of some of Bierce's satire, that

"such writing is sheer abuse and too ponderous to get home. The reader's attention is kept on the way it is written, and he feels the man who wrote it is showing off; so the victim, the man who is knocked out, is lost sight of.... Bierce's piece has the pomposity, the slow movement and the rotund phrase of rhetorical orators or oratorical rhetoricians."

There is much force to this criticism. Bierce's style was acquired in an age that specialized in the wide gesture and the oratorical flourish. The great styles of the eighteen-fifties were those of Webster and John C. Calhoun; it was the period, as Mr. O'Sullivan writes, of the "beaver-hat." Much of this rhetoric, influenced by ideas of "elegance" acquired in London, crept into Bierce's manner of writing. Even in the best of his writing, that is, the simplest, he could not resist the temptation to intersperse "purple patches."

But with these reservations in mind, it is yet undeniable that "Prattle" was most amusing, and certainly the best written journalism in the west. And the amazing bulk of it! From 1887 until 1899 in the San Francisco *Examiner* alone, it would comprise volumes. Of Senator Vrooman, who was always making a "dying" speech, in "the shadows of the other world," Bierce once wrote:

"Step lightly, stranger, o'er this holy place,
Nor push this sacred monument aside,
Left by his fellow-citizens to grace
The only spot where Vrooman never died."

Bierce's definition of "retribution" was: "The Vigilance Committee prosecuting the crime of a prominent citizen." His idea of a painting to be entitled "A Bold Bluff" was "Colonel" J. P. Jackson bringing a suit in a court of law to quit his title. Of the famous epitaphs so many have been quoted that it is difficult to make a selection. They were all similar in structure and this one, written for Dick Hammond, is typical:

"Pause, stranger, and let fall a tear;

Dick Hammond has been dead a year;
This is the sacredest of spots:
At its antipodes he rots.”

But, for the most part, his satire was too “ponderous.” He was dealing with hoodlums and had to hit hard. The times admitted of no other satire. He once summed up the matter in a fable: “A Rattlesnake came home to its brood about to die — I have been bitten by the editor of a partisan journal, it said.” And such was the case in the early days of California journalism. Much of Bierce’s work was the outgrowth of this heavy-witted, hard-hitting Western journalism; it was the sort of writing that delighted the blood-thirsty old scoundrels who loafed around saloons waiting for a fight.

Too much of his writing was abusive, but his power of invective was tremendous and gorgeous. He once wrote of the secretary to the chief of police in San Francisco:

“This hardy and impenitent malefactor — this moneychanger in the temple of justice — this infinite rogue and unthinkable villain, of whose service Satan is ashamed and, blushing blackly, deepens the gloom of hell — this brilliant malversationalist — this boundless and incalculable scamp, enamored of his own versatility of unworth, invests the moral atmosphere with an audible odor that screams along all the visible ramifications of his influence among the noses of souls.”

“Mike” DeYoung was a “chimpanzee,”

“Sir Simian,” a “credulous liar.” Senator Frye was “that incarnate lachrymosity and slavering sentimentaler”; of another he said that “the very fat on his entrails belongs to the widows and orphans he has robbed and of yet another he wrote that he was “a whimpering simpleton — a hebetudinous hypocrite.” Such a column of abuse was never penned in the West. It was upper Billingsgate; poetic abuse, vituperation raised to the standard of a high art.

One Robert Morrow, a San Franciscan, was tried for the crime of embracery, or jury bribing. Of this man Bierce left nothing unsaid. For weeks on end in “Prattle” he excoriated the wretch. “Morrow,” he would write, “is a rich man and can afford every comfort and luxury. Yet he chews the cheapest toothpicks and is not above robbing the poorest widow in the land.” The matter reached such a degree of civic comment that Hall McAllister, attorney for Morrow, made a motion in Judge Sullivan’s court for a change of venue, and his motion was based on an affidavit which set forth all of Bierce’s comment and abuse. McAllister said that the satire in “Prattle” had incensed the entire community to such an extent that it was impossible for his client to have a fair trial. He called the court's attention particularly to these verses, which had appeared in that day's issue of "Prattle":

"The devil felt a sudden thrill
Of course to defy God's will.
Then Morrow spoke: 'As sure as fate
Their witnesses I'll indicate
Or if that prove expensive sport,
I'll — whispering — I'll fix the court.'

Sing, Muse, the subsequent events,
Arraignment, trial and defense.
Alas! their footing simply fell
And all were tumbled into hell."

"Of course, that really did not include this court," McAllister is reported to have explained to the judge. Morrow, who was present in court, paid Bierce the compliment of grinning in appreciation of the laughter that greeted the reading of the verses. After no lengthy consideration, Judge Sullivan granted the motion for change of venue and Bierce's only comment was to correct a slight mistake that appeared in the verses as reprinted in the newspaper. He continued to abuse Morrow with unabated ardor.

The incident illustrates something of the enormous power and fame that Bierce acquired in the Bay District. He was a Titan and Cyclops in San Francisco for a quarter of a century. As Joseph Lewis French said in *Pearson's Magazine,* 1918, "he was Sir Oracle, indeed! Seriously I doubt if ever there has been in all the history of letters a more complete dominion." This fame had an important effect on the man. It solidified his early prejudices; stiffened him into an attitude of mental immobility; and made of him a colossal egoist. The people who knew him during these grand days simply worshiped him, and he came to have a sense of unerring vision and sublime divination. The constant applause of his friends and disciples made him always conscious of an audience; the intensity of this local fame lifted the entire scene in his mind to the level of universal experience. He lacked perspective; this was not simply a Western city, in a few years of its development, but it was the drama of the world, and he was the Zeus who stirred the elements. He might not be the artist he wanted to be; he might be enraged at times when he realized the inadequate use he was making of his talent; but he could always burst forth in "Prattle" with splenetic energy, unseating the despot and sending the political alley rat scurrying for cover. It was predestined that he should play this role, that he should be warped into this figure of legendary grandeur and power, for, unknowingly, he was establishing a tradition. He could not have escaped had he tried. But the fame was not displeasing. It brought him young disciples, a horde of female admirers, and a comfortable livelihood.

"Prattle" became a gospel for the younger generation in the West. Its influence was more far reaching than is generally realized. A tramp wrote Bierce from Butte, Montana, that "your work on *The Examiner* became a religion to me, fir *(sic)* I believed it." In 1883, Charles H. Phelps, publisher of *The Californian*, while in New York, had shown Godkin of *The Nation*, Bierce's sharp exposé of the historical method of Hubert Howe Bancroft, who farmed out all the research work is his establishment for the manufacture of histories on a "big business" basis. Godkin was most enthusiastic and added a few words of comment himself on the Bancroft technique. Bierce received letters from Australia, Mexico, England and from all corners of the world. A. D. Temple wrote from Mexico: "Every week the Indian mail carrier packed the copies of *The Examiner* across the Sierra Madre and down to the deep canyon at Vantanas, where we, working in the silver mines, had no other communication with the outside world, and we read the latest news from Frisco, sometimes not over three weeks old, and it was your articles in your enchilada manner that we liked best." Herbert Thomas, editor of *The Cornishman,* Penzance, wrote Bierce in later years that he had received his first literary impetus from reading "Prattle" while he was in California during 1889-99. Fannie Charles wrote from San Francisco: "What one has loved as a child and idealized as a girl and respected as a woman gets to be part of one's nature after awhile," having reference to "Prattle." This was literally true: people grew up on "Prattle" for, with the interruptions here noted, it appeared in print from 1868 to 1900 in San Francisco.

Bierce was, of course, a romantic and fascinating figure. San Francisco was rife with stories of his amazing brilliancy, his tremendous versatility, and his sharp wit. He was handsome and courageous and, personally, quite charming when he wanted to be. He had a very gallant manner with the ladies, and the men admired his frosty wit and superb poise. People never forgot this man: he remained a most vivid experience in the lives of innumerable Westerners. It was like coming in contact with a dynamo. Twain amused and flattered them at the same time; Charles Warren Stoddard wrote "pretty" verses for emasculated magazines; and Bret Harte's sentimentality brought tears to the eyes. But this fellow Bierce jolted them out of their lethargy and made them aware of the world. He was a gadfly, a torment and a delight. The secret of his success, the explanation of his fame, is that his influence was always a personal influence. It was not so much what he said in “Prattle,” as the fact that the column carried the great moral potency of having been written by Ambrose Bierce. Compared with his contemporaries, he was flawless and impeccable; there were no loopholes in his armor. He blazed indignation and there was a great force to his work that was hard and brilliant and cold. George Santayana has written that “Men of intense feeling are not mirrors but lights.” Such a man was Bierce. And it is really unfair to judge him by his work, although his work was never commonplace or trivial. For him simply to have stood out against his times, when the difficulties of independence were unbelievably greater than to-day, was no little distinction. You can pinch his work from the beginning until the end and not find a soft spot. It was brittle at times, sharp and metallic in some places, but it never lost its headiness, it never drooped or drooled or driveled. What is quite apparent from an examination of his journalism with reference to its *milieu,* and the circumstances under which it was written, is that Ambrose Bierce was the most original, forceful and important literary figure of his generation in the west.

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DURING the first years of his newly acquired fame as the Sir Oracle of journalism on the coast, he lived for the most part at Auburn, although he made frequent trips to visit his wife and family at St. Helena. He entertained quite a number of guests at Auburn. Jeremiah Lynch came to visit him; as did E. L. G. Steele; and “Charley” Kauffman, one of his closest personal friends. It was at Auburn, too, that a committee from San Francisco asked him to write a “Fourth of July” poem. He disliked the idea, but finally accepted, as he said that he did not always want to be regarded as a “refuser.” He spent considerable time over the “Invocation” and read stanzas of it to a friend who owned and published a newspaper at Auburn. Bierce would drop into this man’s office in the afternoon and would read a few stanzas that he had written that day, and they would discuss them. The matter is important only in the light of Dr. Danziger’s statement that he saw Bierce sit down and write the ode, just as he might write out a check, or sign his name. The poem was the product of quite a period of effort and thought. Much of its tone of dire foreboding and its prescience of dark times ahead may be attributed to the fact that the famous anarchist bombing in Chicago occurred in 1886, and the excitement engendered by the episode had stirred many minds. The poem was read at a mass meeting in the Grand Opera House in San Francisco on the evening of July 4th, 1888, — and was reprinted in *The Examiner* the next day with this note: “The poem is not one of the made to order kind. It is not perfunctorily written up to the occasion. It is appropriate, but not with the ephemeral appropriateness that loses its flavor when immediate occasion is past.”

The poem was written for the occasion and it has lost something of its flavor because the government was not overthrown by the anarchists. This poem had an interesting history. One of Bierce’s great admirers in later years was Louis Dupont Syle, of the department of English at Berkeley. Bierce showed him this poem and Syle hung a copy of it on a bulletin board in the university, with a note attached in which he said: “Several years before Mr. Kipling wrote the Recessional there was published ‘The Invocation’ by Mr. Ambrose Bierce, on a subject no less worthy than Kipling’s and a treatment no less superior.” This was in 1899, ten years after the poem was published. Immediately the word went out around the world, from a bulletin board at the University of California, that Kipling had stolen his poem from Bierce. The story, by heaven knows what mysterious channels, was printed and reprinted for years. It is apparently without the slightest foundation in fact. The list of those who have plagiarized Bierce is not as voluminous as some of his admirers would have us believe. In fact, James Huneker in his “Steeple-jack” intimates that Bierce once appropriated an idea himself. But this same idea (“The Man and the Snake”), of a man who dies of fright inspired by a snake with buttons for eyes, if not original with Bierce, was appropriated from his work by Harris Merton Lyon, in a short story called “An Unused Rattlesnake.”

Along with these regular friends that came to Auburn, followed the usual stream of visitors. It was at Auburn that Bierce met one of the first of his “pupils.” Ina Peterson, niece of Ina Coolbrith, was in Auburn on a vacation with her brother and happened to show Bierce some of her work. He was enthusiastic and instructed her in writing for quite a period of years. Her work began to appear in *The Wave,* a publication edited by two of Bierce’s young friends, Hugh Hume and J. O’Hara Cosgrave, and in collaboration with Mr. Bierce she wrote “An Occurrence at Brownsville.” A poem that she wrote about him at about this time is indicative of the manner in which he was revered by his many “pupils” who were constantly writing poems to him, such as this:

“Almost has ceased the royal reign of sun;
Low on his gilded bier the Monarch lies,
Leaving to Shadow Earth’s vain panoplies,
And the long patient Day is nearly done.
Into the West there creepeth, one by one,
A band of glittering stars, their steadfast eyes

Filled with the light of a new Paradise,
And of a consecration fairly won.
So will thy Soul, thou glorious, grandly shine
When the long day hath deepened into night;
And as thy spirit threads the roseate bars
Of Heaven, midst God’s supernal hosts, be mine
The boon to view thee: Thou wilt wing thy flight
Crowned with a halo radiant with stars.”

One can only imagine what Bierce thought of this poem, particularly about walking the “roseate bars of Heaven” — which he so despised — and being one of “God’s supernal hosts.” He once wrote: “Heaven is a prophecy uttered by the lips of despair, but hell is an inference from analogy.” Nevertheless he was secretly much pleased by such pathetic adoration, and being quite romantic, treasured these many mementos.

At Auburn there were few places to take his guests to visit. About the most attractive spot was the cemetery, and there he would repair with his friends to converse about the matter of ghosts, wines and whatnot. He would invariably take his guest to one tombstone, in a far end of the graveyard, on which was inscribed just the single word: “Eulalie.” Such an inscription was Poe-esque and “romantic” and he speculated much about the mysterious “Eulalie,” until some local historian informed him that she had been a servant girl of a German family; large, bony and unattractive. It was probably this disillusioning experience that provoked him to write of the Auburn cemetery in his story “The Realm of the Unreal”: “It was a dishonor to the living, a calumny on the dead, a blasphemy against God.”

He was in Auburn on the eve of the election of Benjamin Harrison as President. A celebration was planned at the Putnam House, and through the lobby that evening a miniature parade was led by young Bouthwell Dunlap, later to become quite well known as an historian. Bierce was amused with the shouting, high spirits and nonsense. During the course of the “parade,” he was conducted across the lobby and introduced to a beautiful lady in widow’s weeds. She was handsome, and stately, and most charming. It was his “Mona Lisa” lady; the beautiful widow who never ceased wearing black because she had worn it when she first met Ambrose Bierce. She was known in San Francisco as the “widow who never ceased mourning,” and years later, when Benjamin Harrison was just a name for school boys to mumble, she was sometimes seen on the streets of San Francisco, in widow’s weeds, but worn they were, and dusty, and wrinkled, as though her grief had grown old.

It was during this period that he began the group of war stories which first brought his name into national fame as an artist. The stories appeared in the Sunday Supplement, sometimes taking the place of his column of “Prattle” and sometimes being in addition to this work. Some of the stories also appeared in *The Wave.* “One of the Missing” appeared in *The Examiner* early in 1888, and the others followed in succession, nearly all of the “Tales of Soldiers and Civilians” having appeared in print in *The Examiner* before they were published in book form. When Bierce thus set about the task of writing a book of short stories he was forty-six years old, and had acquired some little fame as a journalist — a craft in which he had been actively engaged for sixteen years. His achievement is all the more remarkable in view of these facts. But the war was only a memory when he began writing the stories, and when he did finally write them he romanticized the situations and warped the facts to fit his highly artificial theory of aesthetics derived from Poe. As will be shown more in detail in a future chapter, Bierce set down deliberately to write these stories according to a previously worked out formula. He thought that the world was separated into neat, compact departments, such as Art, Satire, Law, and whatnot, that clicked precisely into place, and that were operated according to the principles of immutable law. Bierce never identified his art with life or with the vital creative impulses in himself. Art had nothing to do with reality; ergo, the more unreal a story was the better story it must be. He was always on the edge of experience; he never penetrated to the essence of things. His failure as an artist was his tragic inability to work out a problem that balanced his enormous energy. He shot all his force and vitality into the obsolete, arbitrary pattern of the short story and toppled it over with the force of the blow. The only form that his expression could take was to make his stories unreal and dramatic, which he did in the extreme. But the worthy protagonist never appeared: he could not envisage a problem that measured up to his power. He was like a giant playing with a toy and generally he broke the toy. The short story form with Bierce was a bracelet on the wrist of a Cyclops. He could get more adequate expression in his satire, but even there he went wide of the mark and became merely abusive in his impetuosity.

Several shrewd observers noticed this quality about Bierce’s stories, but jumped to the too hasty conclusion that he was creatively impotent and that his satire was a result of his failure as an artist. This, of course, does not fit the facts, for he was a satirist before he thought of writing stories and his first writings were sardonic. Mary Austin, wrote of Bierce:

“Never having seen Bierce but once, at Sterling’s house, and having known him only through young people who had passed under his hand, I judged him to be a man secretly embittered by failure to achieve direct creation, to which he never confessed; a man of immense provocative power, seeking to make good in other's gifts what he himself had missed, always able to forgive any shortcoming in his protégés more easily than a failure to turn out according to his prescription. I thought him something of a posturer, tending to overweigh a slender inspiration with apocalyptic gesture."

And she further amplified this thought in a letter to me, in the course of which she says:

"I do think that he was to a certain extent conscious of lack and failure in his own life which he was never willing to admit. Much of his venom grew out of this secret disappointment. He kept forcing the note of savage irony because what he really wanted would not come. In fact the whole flavor of the man to me was one of alternate high confidence in himself and puzzled bewilderment over the failure of his genius."

Now this is fine comment, and it is accurate enough from the standpoint of those who approach Bierce's work from a late date without knowledge of his early life and experience. The "bitterness" or the "idealism," because I insist that with Bierce the ideas cannot properly be dissociated, existed from the moment that he began to write. There could have been no disappointment over the failure of his artistic ambitions at that date, for he had none. There was a failure of his genius as a writer of fiction, but the cause was more obscure. While he was amazingly sensitive in his reactions and had a fine appreciation of values, when he went to weld these elements into a work of art, he found himself in a state of chaos. To extricate himself, he reversed the process, thought out a formula, and then wrote stories to fit the pattern previously devised. Naturally the stories were not superlatively great. That they were excellent for their time, cannot be doubted, and that they have survived this long is proof enough of his power. Whether he was a great artist or not, he was indubitably a great man. He once wrote Scheffauer: "Maybe, as you say, my work lacks 'soul,' but my life does not, as a man's life is the man." And he spoke truthfully.

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Meantime, Mr. Hearst was making progress with *The Examiner,* and had moved it into new quarters. He was so excited about the pretty new habitat for his latest toy that he wrote his elderly critic:

“I will come up this next Saturday, if agreeable to you. Thanks for the fables last Saturday. They were particularly bully.

“We are in the new building at last and Gosh! I wish you could see my room. It has a blue ceiling striped with red, gilded windows and yellow marble decorations ‘till your eyes are on edge. I won’t tell you any more about it or you will be down before I can get up to see you.”

Bully fables and a blue ceiling striped with red! “Gosh!”

CHAPTER XI. “NOTHING MATTERS”

DURING these middle years when Bierce was traveling from Auburn to Angwins in search of a “breathing place,” his family continued to live in St. Helena, a small white bungalow on “Main Street.” As Bierce was quite famous on the coast by this time, the presence of his family in such a small town provoked an inordinate amount of comment and discussion. For the most part, this talk centered about Day Bierce. He was a remarkably handsome youngster, with the head of an Apollo. With all his father’s pride and energy, he was naturally arrogant and rather contemptuous of mediocrity. He would write and draw with facility. As early as 1883, his father’s letters would return certain sketches and poems which had been submitted for approval. Bierce once remarked that his son “seemed to know things intuitively” and this was his definition of genius, for he once said: “Genius knows what it has not learned and apprehends before it has examined.” The villagers at St. Helena would stare at Day as he walked about the town; the perfection of his features was that of art rather than nature. To quote these old neighbors, they “marveled” at his beauty. He was a blond, with his father’s piercing blue eyes, but his features were much finer. Fifty years after his tragic death, friends and neighbors in St. Helena still retain a vivid impression of his beauty and charm.

One summer Day announced to his father and mother that he was going to be a “newspaperman” and that he was “sick of school.” A quarrel ensued. But there was as much determination about Day as there was about his father and neither would yield an inch. It was a case of steel upon steel, and the tears of Mrs.

Bierce were as nought. As a result of this quarrel, Day packed his bag one night and left home. Bierce did not attempt to pursue the runaway, as he thought the experience would prove to be of value. Mrs. Bierce continued to write to her son and once sent him some money, which he returned promptly, with elaborate disdain. It was the prelude to a series of tragedies in Bierce’s life.

The first had to do with his wife. Prior to this time, that is, about 1888, there had been considerable disharmony between Mr and Mrs. Bierce. This friction can be traced, in most instances, to unfortunate circumstances, such as, the Black Hills mining episode, the failure of *The Wasp,* and other misfortunes which made Bierce subject to the criticism of his wife’s family. He had not accomplished all that he expected to accomplish, or all that he was expected by others to accomplish, and his intolerable pride resented the slightest criticism.

Marriage to such a man as Bierce could not be other than an irksome experience at times. That he realized this clearly is shown by his insistence in later years that adults be frank about marriage. He once wrote: “We shall continue to have marriage, and its dead-sea fruits will grow no riper and sweeter with time. But the lie which describes them as luscious and gratifying is needless.” In fact, his entire review of “The Kreutzer Sonata,” written in August of 1890, is a rather sharp and acrimonious attack on marriage as an institution.

But despite these minor disharmonies, Bierce lived quite happily with his wife until their separation. If their marriage had not been entirely a “success,” they were far from unhappiness or incompatibility. Their friends knew that a great tragedy had occurred, for only a tragedy could have parted a couple otherwise so attached to each other. Bierce was not the type of man who would have permitted a trifling irritation, a merely selfish annoyance, to disrupt his family life. The cause of their separation was a bitter and tragic misunderstanding, the details of which are unimportant. But the matter was the subject of such protracted discussion in San Francisco, and so many conflicting and discreditable stories have been told, that in fairness to both Mr and Mrs. Bierce some explanation is necessary.

The great tragedies are those of misunderstanding, in which it seems that an unrelenting fate has determined to baffle all the characters and to send them broken from the stage. In such dramas “misunderstanding” is the impalpable marplot at work putting evil potions in every glass, so that all the puppets are left with the fall of the curtain in disconsolate agony. Mr. Bierce once wrote, in the course of a letter: “I don’t take part in competitions — not even in love.” That he meant what he so casually had written cannot be doubted by those familiar with the facts of his life. A more proud or sensitive man than Bierce never lived. By chance he learned that a man, whom he did not know personally, was enamored of his wife. This man had written Mrs. Bierce letters, couched in the rather ornate and egregious manner of a foreigner, for such he was, and the letters had been discovered. To Bierce these facts were an insurmountable barrier: he would not, he could not, forget.

But the tragedy was two-fold for Mrs. Bierce. To the tragedy of separation was added the torturing realization that she was, strictly speaking, responsible for this misunderstanding. For such it was, without doubt. Mrs. Bierce was guilty of no serious impropriety and her subsequent conduct was a beautiful, eloquent and passionate demonstration of her affection and fidelity. She passed through some harrowing experiences, but always with the most admirable grace and courage. She never whimpered or sniffled or bowed her head. To the day of her death, she would not murmur a word of complaint against her husband, nor would she permit others to do so. It might appear to some that he had acted harshly and unreasonably, but she would never permit such comment to be made in her presence. Her devotion was so whole-hearted that, in later years, when she heard that her husband secretly wanted a divorce, she filed an action so that he might have his liberty. As a matter of fact, nothing was further from his desires, and again was misunderstanding fraught with fatality, for Mrs. Bierce died within three months after the decree was granted. Those who knew them both differ in their opinions of Bierce, but there is a convincing unanimity of views about Mrs. Bierce. You may make the circle of their acquaintances and never hear an unkind word about the life which she so splendidly devoted to her husband and family.

Their separation was a great tragedy in Bierce's life. He left the home in St. Helena immediately, but as yet there was no final separation. Mrs. Bierce did not know what would happen and their relations remained in this state of uncertainty until Day's death. The experience was a shadow that enshrouded Bierce's life until his disappearance into Mexico. But it is apparent, and immediately observable, that it was entirely a personal tragedy. It affected his own happiness, but it had no appreciable influence on his thinking. By the nature of things it could not have been other than a personal sorrow, for Bierce was past middle age and had written the great bulk of his satire by the time of the separation. It is impossible to use this domestic unhappiness as a lens by means of which to interpret his life. It was but an incident, perhaps the most serious, in a chain of tragedies that were predestined. His own nature made such sorrows inevitable. An extremely sensitive man cannot be other than indignant about life, but he may express his indignation variously. It may escape in the flight of lyric verse or religious inspiration or mordant satire. With Bierce the movement was centripetal rather than centrifugal. He was as idealistic as Shelley, but it was an indirect, perverse and disguised idealism. It involved him in contradictory situations and he could rationalize his position only with great difficulty. He recoiled from experience in a swift and startling manner. If doubt once crept into his mind, no evidence or logic could remove it. He knew that Mrs. Bierce was guilty of no wrong, but it was the fact that she had permitted him to discover such a situation that made a reconciliation impossible. His impressions were quick, sensitive, and unforgettable.

Bierce had an uncanny ability to "sense" situations and he was capable of the most intense suffering. Dr. Danziger is correct in stressing Bierce's horror of pain or suffering. In his walks through the woods near St. Helena, he would bring back pigeons, whose wings had been broken, and he would nurse and heal them in his study with the tenderness of a woman. For all helpless and unfortunate creatures, he had a marvelous compassion. He would take his daughter, Helen, for long walks through the mountains. She remembers that he would have her wait while he strode forward into the center of a glade or clearing. There he would stand perfectly still and erect, the sunlight touching his hair into a blaze of gold, while he called wild animals. It was a soft call, half a whisper and half a cry, and birds would come and light upon his uplifted arms, perch on his shoulders, and jump about on his hands. Others report the same experience. He always possessed this power and he was never without a "pet" in his study, be it a squirrel or a lizard. The central fact of his personality seems to have been some quality which invariably suggests such hackneyed expressions as "electric" or "vital." It was this quality which charmed the people he knew, for energy is eternal delight. As with William Blake, "there was for him no evil, only a weakness, a negation of energy, the ignominy of wings that droop and are contented in the dust."

This acute sensitiveness was really pathological with Bierce. He was not amenable to reason once he had received a definite impression. He had a habit of freezing into an attitude of perfect immobility once he was disappointed. Within this shell, he was simply unapproachable. He would not quarrel about such matters, nor discuss them, but with him the doors once closed were closed forever. So it was with his wife. Their separation was as cruel and disheartening an experience as he was ever to know, but that it could have been prevented or that a reconciliation could have been effected is a conclusion that sounds chimerical to any one familiar with Bierce's character. From that date forward, there was no communication with his wife; no letters were exchanged; no words spoken, with the exception of two interviews later noted. If there was a message to communicate, it was conveyed by one of the children, generally by Helen.

But even darker days were ahead.... After leaving home, Day had wandered about northern California, going from one town to another, until he came to Chico. There he was employed on a country newspaper, of which he was editor, manager, and virtually proprietor. One reason that had drawn him to Chico was the fact that the previous summer he had met Eva Adkins at an "A. O. U. W." picnic at Red Bluffs and learned that she lived in Chico. When he came to Chico, he boarded at the home of the girl's mother, Mrs. Barney. She had remarried and her second husband was a drunkard. On one occasion Day threw him out of the house. As a result he had caused Day's arrest on a charge of assault and battery, but Day was admitted to bail, one of the bondsmen being his friend, Neil Hubbs. At the time of the trial, Day was acquitted, so to speak, with honors.

Shortly after this occurred, Day and the Adkins girl became engaged. They were to have been married on July 22nd, 1889, and Neil Hubbs was selected as best man. Of course, no word of this proposed marriage had reached the ears of either Mr or Mrs. Bierce. The night before the marriage, the Adkins girl and young Hubbs ran away to Stockton, where they were married. They returned to Chico a fortnight later. In the interim, the “practical jokers” of the village had been making unmerciful sport of young Bierce. He was made the butt of sharp gibes in the country newspapers. Such cruelty seems incredible, the more so as the audience seemed to think it amusing. Any one could have foreseen the consequences. It was unthinkable that young Bierce, who had been schooled to have the loftiest regard for personal dignity, would permit such an affront to go unpunished. Moreover, the perfidy of his best friend and the cruelty of his first sweetheart, had made him insane with rage and humiliation. When the young married couple arrived at Mrs. Barney’s home, Day awaited them. No sooner did young Bierce and Hubbs catch sight of each other than they began to shoot. They were both mortally wounded and died within a few hours after the duel. Day’s last words were: “Send for my father — send for my father!”

The story of Day’s death is given in detail for the reason that it has been bruited about of late in a shameful manner. George Sterling unthinkingly remarked that Day had been “killed by a gambler in a sordid love affair.” Subsequent accounts have been equally careless of the facts and now it has become quite common to refer to the affair as a “drunken brawl.” The entire story appeared in all the San Francisco newspapers; the facts have never been inaccessible. It seems surprising, indeed, that writers enough interested in such a personal tragedy to make public reference to it, would not take the trouble to verify the facts. There is no intimation that either boy was drunk, and, at least from Day’s viewpoint, the affair was scarcely “sordid.” It must be remembered that Day was a mere youngster — seventeen years old. He was extremely proud and sensitive and he had been hard hit. The brutal laughter of a swinish community was ringing in his ears for weeks prior to the meeting. The Oroville *Mercury* made this comment, which illustrates the general feeling about the tragedy at the time: “At first it seems that Bierce was disposed to forego the matter, but for the sake of sensations the reporters continued to lacerate his wounded heart until the young man actually believed he was the laughing stock of the country.” Whether he was mistaken or not, Day could not smile about such a situation, for he was the son of his father and neither ever learned to compromise with life or to discount their ideals.

Bierce was mortally hurt by the death of his boy, the son he always spoke of as “another Chatterton.” It was one of the greatest shocks of his life when Day’s death was announced. But, again let it be remembered, this occurred in 1889.

Bierce was then at the height of his fame as a satirist. Like the matter of his separation from his wife, it was exclusively a personal tragedy. It did not make him “bitter.” It saddened him, made him weak with grief, but it did not mold his thoughts.

Two stories are told as to what Bierce did on learning of his son’s death. Both stories shall be given, since it is as impossible to discredit either as it is to bring them into agreement. According to one account, Bierce went to Chico, with his friend “Charley” Kauffman, and made an investigation of the facts and then returned to San Francisco. George Sterling seemed surprised that “Bierce did nothing” about the affair. But what, indeed, could he have done? Assuming vengeance to be the duty of a father under such circumstances, where and how was it to be obtained? When he arrived in Chico, he went to the funeral parlor where the body of his son lay naked on a marble slab. He approached the body, bent over, and, speaking as though to one at a great distance, said: “You are a noble soul, Day, you did just right.”

By the other version of the facts, Bierce sent Kauffman alone to Chico. A friend recalls that Bierce was stricken with grief and sorrow. “Nothing matters” came to be a phrase born of grief and converted into a philosophy by necessity, but just then something had mattered tremendously. “No words can express his grief,” Mrs. Cecil says. It was not the stereotyped blubbering of “Little Nell,” but it possessed all the elements of real tragedy. Had not the young and beautiful again been struck down by a brutal and shocking violence? At Shiloh the same tragedy had seemed splendid and fascinating; but there was something so gray and so ashen about his feeling over the loss of Day that he could not see or reason his way to any point of consolation. So needless, so stupid, so brutal! As he wrote in one of his stories: “Would one exception have marred too much the pitiless perfection of the divine, eternal plan?” When Mrs. Cecil sailed, a few weeks later, for Japan, Bierce came to the wharf to bid her farewell. He was pale and depressed and ill; she had never known him to look so ashen. He handed her Day’s ivory-handled revolver and asked her to take it away. He had been carrying it around for weeks, so he said, and could no more throw it away than he could forget about it.

But, however dark and cold might be the realm of shadows that Bierce traversed on a recurrent track during these days of his sorrow, the world was still as indifferent and brutal as ever. The two bodies came out from Chico on the same train. At Sacramento the road branched: young Hubbs was carried to Stockton; Day was placed on the train for St. Helena. The Adkins girl stood on the platform of the station, one ear chipped by a flying bullet from the revolver of one of her lovers, and remarked to the newspaper reporters: “Now ain’t that queer? One goes one way and one goes another, but here I am!"

Bierce came to St. Helena to attend the funeral. He was accompanied by Charles Kauffman and Judge Boalt. After the services a few friends returned to the Bierce home before departing. That evening one of them recalls that Bierce asked his wife to step into the parlor of their home, where they were alone for about an hour. The subject of the interview remains a mystery. But after Bierce left that evening, his wife remarked that she knew that a reconciliation was impossible. Many of their friends had hoped that Day's death would bring them together, but it was impossible. Later, in Mrs. Bierce's divorce suit, she fixed the date of the separation as "July, 1891." This was obviously incorrect, as far as the year was concerned, although the month was probably accurately stated. She would have been more likely to forget the year than to forget the month or season. There is no question but that they were finally separated after 1889. Just how long previous to that they had been separated cannot be determined, save that it was after Day left home. Thus the date can be fixed as about 1888.

These twin blows staggered Bierce. Beauty and horror, were their images always to be laid, one upon the other, in his mind? Sensitive and fine natured man that he was, these sorrows must have hit him harder than any one realized. Yet no one was to know the truth. To display grief was vulgar; therefore he froze into an imperturbable calm. It was over and "nothing mattered." He seldom spoke of Day's death afterwards and then only to a few friends. Of his wife he never spoke: not even to friends.

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BIERCE returned to Auburn, and, after a two weeks interval, resumed his column of "Prattle" in *The Examiner*. But during his absence old Frank Pixley had not been inactive, as he saw in the tragedy an opportunity to strike Bierce a fatal blow. It seems incredible that even Pixley could have written this editorial, but he did:

"If it be true, as alleged, that the jibes and jeers of the local press so worked upon the *weak* mind of a young man, maddened by passion and crazed by jealousy over an *unworthy* woman, that he should have resorted to murder and suicide to terminate his unpleasant and ridiculous predicament, may not the incident teach a *moral lesson* to those writers who indulge in such cruel and inhuman satire? May not the death of the younger Bierce teach the older man, his father, how sinister have been the bitter, heartless, and unprovoked assaults which he has spent his life in cultivating that he might the more cruelly wound his fellow-men? Might not an intellect so keen, a taste so critical, and a pen so caustic, have been wielded to some higher and nobler purpose? Might not a life, now growing nearly to its close, have been passed more profitably to humanity, more happily to himself, than in indulgence in the practiced use of a pen more cruel than the most destructive and death-dealing of swords? Does there not rest upon his father the shadow of a haunting fear lest he may have transmitted to a sensitive and tender soul an inheritance which resulted in *crime* and death, while he was cultivating the gift of wounding natures just as sensitive and tender, who had not the courage to end them in murder and self-destruction, but were driven to hide their sorrows in secret? Perhaps this man with the burning pen will recall the names of those whom he has held up to ridicule and shame; the men and women whom he has tortured and humiliated; perhaps he will analyze the *moral code* which has governed him, and review the relations he has held toward men of whom he might at least have remembered that *gratitude* was something other than merchandise and payable as a debt. Perhaps this man may recall the time, when a boy younger than his, with brighter hopes, folded his wings in a more peaceful death, leaving in his flight a mother's love and a father's fondest hopes; and, while they were in sorrow which could find no relief, how cruelly he wounded and tortured them because there had been said over the last remains of the son they loved words too eulogistic for his hard, incredulous stoicism. We are *too sincere an admirer* of this gifted writer not to regret that when his remains shall have been gathered for entombment in the grave of literature, nothing will be found worthy of preservation, and that if his writings shall find a publisher, they will contain no bright saying that was kindly meant, nor aught that was not cruel and cruelly intended. Upon his tomb may be carved the inscription: 'He quarreled with God, and found nothing in his creations worthy of the commendation of Ambrose Bierce.'"

It took Frank Pixley to write as mean an editorial as that, for Bierce seldom struck where there was no provocation. If he whipped rascals unmercifully, there are few who would care to contend that his victims did not richly deserve the beating that they received. Pixley croaking of "gratitude" was, indeed, a ridiculous sight. Moreover, the charge that he impliedly makes that Bierce had taken a similar advantage of another, is not borne out by the facts.

Bierce took a long walk with a newspaper friend at Auburn. He carried a copy of *The Argonaut* and after they had completed quite a stroll through the woods, they came to the edge of a clearing. While they were sitting perched high on a rail fence, Bierce read the editorial and said that he had not decided just what he would do. They were just starting back towards Auburn, when the sun suddenly underwent an eclipse and for a few seconds they stood in a world of shadows and strangeness. As the light came back through the trees, it seemed as though "the mountains were stained as with wine, and as wine were the seas."

But when Bierce resumed his “Prattle” he lost no time in replying to Mr. Pixley.

“You disclosed considerable forethought, Mr. Pixley, in improving the occasion to ask for lenity, but I see nothing in the situation to encourage your hope. You and your kind will have to cultivate fortitude in the future, as in the past; for assuredly I love you as little as ever. Perhaps it is because I am a trifle dazed that I can discern no connection between my mischance and your solemn ‘Why persecutest thou me?’ You must permit me to think the question incompetent and immaterial — the mere trick of a passing rascal swift to steal advantage from opportunity. Your *ex post facto* impersonification of *The Great Light* is an ineffective performance: it is only in your own undisguised character of sycophant and slanderer for hire that you shine above.”

And when some friend wrote in an indignant letter to the press, complaining of Pixley’s editorial, Bierce answered him:

“C. H. L. Your letter in my defense was referred to me. I thank you for your kind intention, but there was no need. The swift revenge of my enemies that God had stood in my path was natural to their degree of intelligence and required but a congenial mood to be amusing. It hardly deserved your stern arraigning.”

Bierce’s reply came as near to a confession as anything he ever wrote in “Prattle.” He bowed ever so slightly when he made that concession to sentiment: “I am a trifle dazed.” But he did not fully realize how hard he was hit. As he wrote of a character in one of his stories: “He had no experience with grief; his capacity had not been enlarged by use. His heart could not contain it all, nor his imagination rightly conceive it. He did not know he was hard struck; that knowledge would come later, and never go.”

CHAPTER XII. THE MASTER

SHORTLY after the death of Day, Bierce went to live at the Sunol Glen Hotel at Sunol Glen, California, managed by Mr and Mrs. H. R. Crane. Like the proprietors of the other small country hotels in which Bierce lived, they were greatly honored by the presence of such a distinguished guest. Indeed, he was quite an attraction, for no sooner was he established than the usual flock of sycophants, admirers, pupils and friends began to haunt the hotel.

His attacks of asthma were very acute at this time. Ina Peterson, with her brother, was visiting Mr and Mrs. Crane, during a vacation. She saw a great deal of Bierce one summer and has written me that “on more than one occasion we sat with him all night administering chloroform to him to assuage the terrible agony he suffered in his attacks of asthma. He often would say between his gasps, ‘Do you think I should stand this?’ And then for days would suffer from the effects of the chloroform.” She recalls, too, that Bierce was sick and ill for weeks after the death of his son and that he remarked to her one day: “I am just beginning to forget for a moment, and then the memory rushes back worse than ever!”

But his work in “Prattle” reflected none of this despondency. In fact, his journalism was at its best from 1887 to 1890. It had more point and force and cleverness. It seems that Bierce had offended one H. Prescott Belknap, a young Naval officer, and that this gentleman had issued a challenge to him in *The Argonaut.* It was the beginning of an amusing series of notes in “Prattle.”

“A chivalrous patriotette which signs its name variously as ‘H. Prescott Belknap’ and ‘Prescott Belknap’ complains in *The Argonaut* that I will not join it, a minor, in committing a felony on the ‘field of honor.’ The Belknaping justified the disappointment by quoting in solemn faith a long forgotten Hibernicism of mine inviting challenges from all persons conscientiously opposed to dueling! When setting that unbaited hook I could hardly have hoped that it would take a sucker — albeit a minnow — so long afterward. Of course the poor creature must not expect to cut a very heroic figure when lifted into its coveted notoriety with a thing like that in its jaw. Ever obliging and willing to assist struggling genius in ‘taking the heart’ of fame, I hereby cheerfully attest the existence of something calling itself Prescott Belknap or H. Prescott Belknap. I admit that, although in law an enfant, it is thought to have attained the age of puberty, and that it is ferocious, a feeding bottle of gore exciting it like the dickens. But whether it is a boy or girl, I am not informed."

But more was yet in store and the following note soon appeared, as Belknap kept demanding satisfaction:

"I am in receipt of another ferocious communication from Mr. Prescott Belknap, who, admitting that he is a minor, protests that he is a Man. His letter is addressed to Sunol, where I live, and informs me that the writer is walking the streets of San Francisco, where I do not live, armed with a horsewhip for me. How he is legged for himself he does not see fit to inform me. Mr. Belknap threatens that unless I come up to be horsewhipped he will tell the public of my disobliging disposition. I shall have to give him the trouble of doing so, for I really do not wish to be horsewhipped if I have to pay the railway fare to enjoy that blessing. The expense of the performance ought, I think, to be assumed by the chief performer. I am still persuaded that Mr. Belknap is a girl."

While he was at Sunol he received one day, not a challenge to a duel, but a request to look over the manuscript of a young author. He consented and found that the manuscript showed considerable merit. He returned it with his suggestions and corrections. Further correspondence followed and then, one day, he received a note from the young authoress asking if she might come to Sunol to see him. It was rather an unusual performance, but Mrs. Atherton never made any compromises with contemporary opinion. Her first meeting with Mr. Bierce was rather disappointing. He was recuperating from a bad attack of asthma and was in an ill humor. To all her fine compliments and tributes to his "greatness," he replied, rather savagely, "No, I'm not a great man. No one is better fitted to judge of greatness in men than I am, and I know that I am not great. I'm a journalist, past middle-age, without ambition, and have written nothing that measures up to my ideals." He told her that it had been a serious mistake for him to return from London, and that he would never have done so but for his wife. Mrs. Atherton and Bierce corresponded for many years, and he had a definite influence on her early work. He became, however, sharply critical of her later novels.

During these years when he was living at Sunol, 1888-1890, Bierce would make occasional trips to San Francisco and Oakland. He was interested in the fate of a little magazine, *The Wave,* that published some good things, including several of his own stories. It was edited by Hugh Hume. Bierce would come to San Francisco nearly every week-end and Friday afternoon would find him in Mr. Hume's office. The time was "devoted to a talk and a walk up Market Street as far as the Baldwin Hotel. Bierce was the mildest and gentlest gentleman I have ever met; there is no writer I have ever known whose pen and tongue delivered such wholly dissimilar thoughts and views. In his conversational discussion of people and events, he was kind, considerate and friendly; it may have been that because his Friday afternoons were play time that he did not permit any of the black beetles to intrude themselves on our holidays. Contrary to the general belief, Bierce was not an unknown figure on the streets of San Francisco. In our rambles from my office on Bush and Kearney to the Baldwin Hotel, and in the many places of resort that we visited, he was well known, and was usually saluted with the utmost respect and regard. He was a flaming figure, and even in San Francisco he was conspicuous and noted." At the barroom in the Baldwin Hotel, which was journey's end for them, they would finish out the afternoon in the manner most congenial to literary gentlemen. Mr. Hume noted, and others made the same observation, that drinking seemed to mellow Bierce, and, strangely enough, that it helped his asthma and seemed to give him momentary relief.

Bierce's fame and influence on the coast reached a high water mark during these years. Quite a group of young writers gathered about him and his influence is reflected in such interesting magazines as *The Wave*. The number of manuscripts that he read and corrected is simply incalculable. On several occasions I have attempted to make a comprehensive list of his "pupils," but have never succeeded, particularly as a definition of "pupil" that would define the degree and extent of his influence over all the young writers who sought his assistance, cannot be framed. Such writers as George Sterling and Herman Scheffauer boasted that Bierce was their "Master." Others deny that he helped them. With many, notably with Mrs. Atherton, his influence never amounted to more than general and casual advice. Moreover, his influence was not restricted to creative work, as he had a marked and decisive influence on many young journalists. Naturally the people that he helped spoke of him to others and wrote blurbs about his books, augmenting his already considerable fame. But, as one might have expected, the praise of these pupils was uncritical and excessively enthusiastic. It came, in time, to be a source of considerable confusion.

To appreciate fully Bierce's eminence on the coast, it must be remembered that in the eighties and nineties, San Francisco was the only western city that made a pretense of culture. Between Chicago and San Francisco there was a dreary wasteland. The position of San Francisco was thus rather isolated and self-contained. It was a complete world in itself. It became self-centered and a survival of the old reckless spirit of the early days served to make it rather contemptuous of the rest of America. It fostered its own groups and its own magazines; devoted considerable attention to local artists and writers; and turned a cold shoulder on the rest of America. Under such conditions, Bierce naturally gravitated into a position, if not of active leadership, at least of proud example. He was the most interesting and fascinating literary man in the West and young writers were irresistibly drawn under his wing. He rather liked the role of "Master," but was not the despot that legend has made him. It is necessary to remember the position of San Francisco in order to appreciate the extent of Bierce's influence, and conversely, in order to understand his slightly pontifical attitude, one must keep in mind that in San Francisco "Ambrose Bierce" was a name that quickly became a legend. When he went east in later years, Bierce struck at random. There was no direct reaction to his satire; he floundered in vacuity. In San Francisco he aimed directly and personally at the malefactor and had the satisfaction of watching the arrow pierce the target. His aim was unerring and his courage superb. But, in later years, when he attempted to generalize his prejudices, he was not effective.

On his occasional visits to Oakland, Bierce would sometimes stay with his son Leigh, who had rooms in the old Blake Block with Roosevelt Johnson and George Sterling. His residence would alternate between Sunol and Angwins and Oakland. While temporarily a guest of his brother Albert, at the latter's camp on the shore of Lake Temescal, he met an interesting group: George Sterling, the Partington family, and quite a host of others who foregathered in the woods for a good time.

Sterling came to California in 1890; two years later he met Bierce. In the East he had lived at Sag Harbor and had been a roguish youngster, his fun-making activities ably seconded and championed by his friend, Roosevelt Johnson. The two of them put a pirate's flag on the top of a church steeple one night. When Bierce was told of this escapade, he was delighted. He made a trip to Sag Harbor after he went east, and sent a picture post card to both young men on which he had drawn a pirate's flag waving in the breeze and had labeled it: "Roosevelt Johnson's and George Sterling's flag." Johnson and Sterling were great friends, and after they came to California, would visit such celebrities as Joaquin Miller and Bierce, although Johnson did not meet Bierce until later. Sterling wrote of his first meeting with Bierce as follows:

"I am not likely to forget his first night among us. A tent being, for his ailment, insufficiently ventilated, he decided to sleep by the campfire, and I, carried away by my youthful hero-worship, must partially gratify it by occupying the side of the fire opposite to him. I had a comfortable cot in my tent, and was unaccustomed at the time to sleeping on the ground, the consequence being that I awoke at least every half-hour. But awake as often as I might, always I found Bierce lying on his back in the dim light of the embers, his gaze fixed on the stars of the zenith. I shall not forget the gaze of those eyes, the most piercingly blue, under yellow shaggy brows, that I have ever seen."

In order to appreciate the influence that Bierce exercised on Sterling, one should really have known Sterling. There was unquestionably a neurotic strain in his life. His father, a physician, had been an early convert to Catholicism, and had been, like both his sons, a heavy drinker. The other son, James, became a priest. He, too, was quite a drinker and died shortly after he reached maturity. George was always excitable, nervous, and extremely impulsive. He was given to strange whims and fancies and was nothing if not capricious. He had attended St. Charles College, at Ellicott City, Maryland, before coming to California. There he had the good fortune to study under Father John Bannister Tabb, but, in 1890, he was scarcely lettered. His lack of a formal education, coupled with his immaturity and his rather weak nature, brought him inevitably under the influence of Bierce. He adopted Robinson Jeffers with just the same enthusiasm years later.

Many of Sterling's friends have bemoaned the influence of Bierce on his life. Mr. James Rorty, for example, writes that Bierce was "the literary Leviathan of the Pacific Coast," and that he was a "cavalry captain in the Civil War." To this generous show of misinformation is added the statement that Bierce was a miserable satirist, an impossible story-teller, and a wretch personally. The first statement is, of course, a misquotation of a comparison used by Vincent Starrett, but where Mr. Rorty discovered the cavalry captaincy must, perforce, remain a mystery. It is obvious, of course, that some one told Mr. Rorty that Bierce was thus and so, and therefore, the matter is beyond dispute. He also makes the statement that early in life Sterling "discovered socialism, which was excellent. Simultaneously, however, he was discovered by Ambrose Bierce, which was almost fatal." This is almost as amusing as it is absurd. It is extremely doubtful if Sterling knew what an iambic was until he met Bierce. Moreover, Bierce did not "discover" Sterling. Sterling sought him out and sat in abject worship at his feet. Just what relation socialism may have with poetry is, also, a matter which must remain a mystery. To be just to both Sterling and Bierce, one must read not only the Bierce letters to Sterling, which have been published by the Book Club of California, but Sterling's letters to Bierce, which have not been published. From an examination of the entire correspondence, it is quite apparent that Bierce did not force themes upon Sterling; he did not attempt to warp the mind of the poet to fit the bias of the satirist. Nor was Bierce responsible for the rhetorical quality of Sterling’s verse. Surely there was no one in the west who could have advised Sterling as soundly as Bierce did. Furthermore, George Sterling knew this quite well, and never regretted his association with Bierce. Has Mr. Rorty forgotten that Bierce was one of the first individuals in this country to praise the poetry of Ezra Pound?

It is difficult to imagine a Master, if one must have a “Master,” more patient, interested, and kindly than Bierce. Of course he warned his pupil against allowing his heart to rule his head; and, of a certainty, he pointed out the danger of permitting his muse to become a ballyhoo for every lost cause and pathetic ideal. But contrasted with the other great influence in Sterling’s life, that of Jack London, Bierce’s influence must be conceded the more fortunate. Bierce advised his “pupil” to study hard; to work incessantly; to devote his life to his art; and to be independent and self-reliant. It seems to me that the strongest and finest work Sterling did was that under the direct influence of Bierce, and that his weakest verse may be attributed to his association with certain well-meaning but ignorant friends. Surely, if Sterling had heeded Bierce’s advice, he would never have published “The Binding of the Beast,” that most unfortunate volume of hysterical, frenzied, war-mad poetry. If Sterling had remembered Bierce’s definition of “Bohemia”—”A taproom of a wayside inn on the road from Bœotia to Philistia” — he might have spent less time enacting the role of poet in restaurants and cafes. The great criticism of Sterling’s verse was that of Lionel Josephare, who said: “George Sterling’s poetry is a representation of poetic values.” This criticism is unjust but it does indicate the real weakness of Sterling’s verse, for which Bierce was not responsible. Bierce actually instructed Sterling in sentence structure, the selection of words, simple matters of versification. Sterling submitted the manuscript of one poem to Bierce and accepted every suggestion made by Bierce, some twenty-one or two changes in all. Sterling was proud to say, as he did, “I write for an audience of one.” Personally the most lovable and generous of men, Sterling would have been the first to resent such criticism as that by Mr. Rorty.

And, great as Bierce’s influence was with Sterling, he was perhaps even a more important figure in the life of Herman Scheffauer. These two young poets worshiped their beloved “Titan.” And he was immensely fond of them, overlooking many foibles that another might not have tolerated. Later he became disgusted with Scheffauer for his insufferable conceit and he became annoyed with Sterling’s irresponsible conduct. Perhaps he should have been more tolerant; but, reading his correspondence in the light of the circumstances, leads one to the conclusion that he was justified in breaking with them both. To have Scheffauer write, as he did, “Every distinction I have achieved has been through hard work, and purely by my own efforts," was enough to annoy even a more tolerant person than Bierce. Why, he had taught the fellow to spell! He had sent his verses about to the magazines, he had lent him money, introduced him to interesting people, corrected his work, and praised his verse in the most flattering terms. It was through Mr. Bierce's efforts that *The Examiner* published the first of Scheffauer's work. The same is true with Sterling. The patience with which Bierce sent "A Wine of Wizardry" from magazine to magazine, facing sneers, intolerable condescension, and rebuffs, is to appreciate the value of his friendship. Sterling, let it be said to his credit, was never ungrateful nor was Bierce resentful. Even after his break with both Sterling and Scheffauer, he continued to praise their work.

Joaquin Miller was also a frequent visitor at the Lake Temescal camp. Bierce would greet him jovially, but there was a veiled antagonism that kept them from being personal friends. Polite as they were to each other, in some ways, Bierce did not hesitate to call Miller a liar on occasion. In a special article in *The Examiner*, Bierce once wrote: "In impugning Mr. Miller's veracity, or rather, in plainly declaring that he has none, I should be sorry to be understood as attributing a graver moral delinquency than he really has. He cannot, or will not, tell the truth, but never tells a malicious or thrifty falsehood. From his incursions into the realm of romance he returns with clean but empty hands." And he once wrote a most delightful burlesque of Miller's poetry in "The Mormon Question":

"I said I will shake myself out of my clothes,
I will roll up my sleeves, I will spit on my hands
(The hands that I kissed to the sun in the lands
To the north, to the east, to the south, and the west
Of every sea that is under the sun),
I will go to the land that the Gentile loathes
As he gathers his one small wife to his breast
And curses and loathes till his life is done.
I will go to the place of the Mormon: the place
Where the jackass rabbit is first in the race
And the woodchuck chatters in meaningless glee —
Chatters and twists all his marvelous face —
Twists it and chatters and looks like me.
And I rose in the strongest strength of my strength,
With my breast of brass and my hair's full length,
And I shook myself out of my clothes in the land
Of the Mormons, and stood there and kissed my hand."

It required but a slight change in phrase and emphasis to show how dangerously near the absurd Miller's verse sometimes bordered.

Bierce only lived at Sunol Glen for about two years, and then he moved to Angwin's on Howell Mountain again. It meant another and longer trip for the Bierce tourists who still pursued "The Master." One day a lady had made an appointment with Bierce. She drove up to the hotel in a carriage and came rushing up to Bierce, who awaited her, carrying a dog in her arms. He bowed and said: "Madame, I do not know you," and walked away. Dogs were ever anathema to him. To collect all the pages of abusive language that he devoted to dogs would fill a considerable volume. He never lost an opportunity to slash at them with his pen, and it is somewhat illustrative of the futility of his satire, as these dogs were no more punished by his abuse than were those other "dogs" who might have read his column had they desired.

He began writing about dogs in Tom Hood's *Comic Annual,* in 1873, with a story: "How! Came to Like Dogs." This was merely facetious clowning. The real anti-dog propaganda owed its origin to an occurrence at North Beach, in San Francisco, when a fierce canine jumped on Bierce one night and bit his hand. Subsequent experiences but increased his hatred. It was not merely a whim, or prejudice, it was a deep-seated loathing. In Oakland, during the 90's, an enormous bull dog bit a young girl and disfigured her face. Bierce learned of the incident, took his revolver and called at the home of the owner of the dog. He asked the owner where the dog was kept, and marched out to the kennel and shot him.

Another incident occurred some years later. Bierce was out walking in the woods with his daughter. A dog rushed at them and began to bark and snap. Bierce saw an indolent looking fellow leaning against a tree at some distance and shouted at him to call the dog away. But the fellow did not heed or notice the entreaty in any manner. Finally Bierce pulled out his revolver and shot the dog, adding another victim to his list of dog murders. He then walked over to the lazy spectator and asked him how much the dog was worth, as he wished to make reparations. The fellow shifted his position, leaned against the other shoulder, and then drawled: "Ah, shucks, the dog wasn't mine — ."

In *The Wasp* and in *The Examiner* Bierce would sometimes devote entire columns to abuse of dogs and the people who kept them. He once wrote an article on "Dogs from the Klondike," rejoicing in the thought that the gold rush might draw all the dogs to Alaska. He defined a Newfoundland as: "Not only is his bite more deadly than that of the ordinary snap-dog, but that of the fleas which he cherishes is peculiarly insupportable. The fleas of all other dogs only sadden: those of the Newfoundland incite to crime. His fragrance, moreover, is less modest than that of the Skye Terrier; it is distinctly declarative indeed.” He described dogs as “small animated pestilences.” He wrote that a puppy was “a clammy-nosed, swell-fronted, Dutch-built, double-charged, flea-peopled, immodest epitome of all nastiness, — a whelp of a thousand infragrant smells.” And to this brief collection might be added the opening lines of his once celebrated poem:

“Snap-dogs, lap-dogs, always-on-tap-dogs,
Smilers, defilers,
“Reekers and Leakers” —

The subject of dogs became, indeed, a matter for serious philosophical consideration in an essay in “The Shadow on the Dial.” He once wrote S. O. Howes: “Pretty nearly all the anti-dog literature gets to me, as I seem to be recognized as the captain of the cult. I sometimes fancy that even the dogs know me and assume the attitude towards me that is dictated by their feeling and interest.”

During these months at Angwin’s, Bierce met an ugly, frail girl who was attempting, after a fashion, to teach a country school nearby. Her name was Carrie Christiansen and she was the daughter of a poor emigrant family that lived in Napa. At this time she was about the most abject, scrawny, unlettered individual imaginable, and had never been outside the Napa Valley. Bierce was impressed with her pathetic helplessness. He spoke to her one day and she was so overawed that she could only stammer a response. A few days later he actually called at her “school,” and the experience nearly overwhelmed the child. She gradually overcame her shyness and told him about her home life, its squalor and poverty, and the fact that she had to contribute to the support of her parents and an enormous horde of brothers and sisters. Bierce was impressed with her sincerity and determination and he took her down to St. Helena with him. It was the beginning of a life-long friendship. Carrie, or “Norrie” as she was always called, became a member of the Bierce household. Mrs. Bierce was really a mother to her, taught her about clothes, manners and people, and gave her the advantages of civilized home life. Bierce arranged to send her to normal school at Berkeley, and, under his instruction, she became a remarkably well read and intelligent woman. In later years she came to Washington as his secretary. The arrangement was, unknown to Bierce, really at his wife’s instance. A more devoted secretary than Miss Christiansen could not be imagined, nor a nobler soul, and the imputations to the contrary have been unjust and malicious. After Bierce's disappearance into Mexico, Miss Christiansen returned to Napa, where she lived for a few years previous to her death.

It was during these years, 1892-1896, that Bierce began to have the first of a long and unbroken series of quarrels with Hearst. The statement is somewhat inaccurate, for the quarrels were never with Mr. Hearst directly, but with his employees. These rifts were seldom over matters of policy, but were more often caused by the carelessness of type-setters. It was always Mr. Hearst who patched things up and mollified Bierce. Reading their correspondence over a period of years, one is impressed with Mr. Hearst's kindness, his good disposition, and his clever flattery, which always drew Bierce back into the fold. A sample note, written with typical Hearstian rush and eagerness, contains this statement: "Write about anything you like if you will only write. I only hope you will write 'Prattle' until you can persuade me to relinquish it. Don't for Heaven's sake stop 'Prattle.' I shall think myself a terrible 'hoodoo' if immediately on my return *The Examiner* should lose what is to me its very best feature. I hope you will continue. I don't want to have to stop my subscription to my own paper for lack of interest in the damned old sheet. Shall I appoint myself a committee of one to come up and persuade you?" There were many of these trips, and they invariably resulted in a reconciliation. Bierce could not resist Hearst's flattery, coupled with the fact that he knew that Mr. Hearst gave him a free rein, asked no questions, let him do as he pleased, and, incidentally, paid him well.

"Prattle," as usual, was quite lively. Several rather amusing incidents should be related. It seems that two men, Phillips and Hahn, had gone to a bawdy house in San Francisco, where Phillips had introduced Hahn to the "Madam" as "Ambrose Bierce." They had gotten quite noisy and had been arrested later in the evening, and the ladies of joy announced to the police that one of the culprits was the great Ambrose Bierce. Of course San Francisco's Fleet Street was roaring with mirth the next day. It took all of Sam Chamberlain's ingenuity to pacify Bierce who was out for blood. But the matter was finally smoothed out, much to the satisfaction of all concerned, as both offenders were quite well known in San Francisco. Bierce, in accordance with his invariable practice, would flog a man on trial if he thought the fellow was guilty. A man was tried at Fresno in the Nineties for a particularly atrocious crime and Bierce abused him in frightful terms. His satire provoked the following ditty in a Fresno newspaper:

"What a brave man is Bierce
And how very fierce
This fellow who fights with his pen,
But when there's a foe

Of Ambrose you know
He gives them the slip to return, when?”

Attorney Foote protested to the court at Fresno that Bierce was stirring up too much public discussion but the judge ordered the case to proceed.

It was during this period that Bierce attempted to arrange for the publication of a volume of his short stories, many of which had appeared in *The Examiner* and *The Wave* during the years from 1887 to 1891. The date of the composition of all these stories cannot, of course, be verified. But it is quite apparent that they were practically all written after he began to write for *The Examiner*. If they were written previous to that date, they would have found a place in some of the journals, as Bierce was frequently requested to submit copy to various magazines. The stories that comprised his first volume were thus written during a rather sad period in his life, but one should not be misled by this fact. Many of the stories can be traced into *The Examiner*, and under dates that were prior to Day’s death and prior to Bierce’s separation from his wife. But the nature of these stories will be considered in the following chapter, as so much discussion has centered around them that it becomes a temptation, even in a biography, to attempt an explanation of their quality.

The first volume of stories, “Tales of Soldiers and Civilians” was published in 1891 by E. L. G. Steele, a San Francisco merchant and friend of Bierce. In a foreword to this volume Bierce wrote that: “Denied existence by the chief publishing houses of the country, this book owes itself to Mr. E. L. G.

Steele, merchant, of this city. In attesting Mr. Steele’s faith in his judgment and his friend, it will serve its author’s main and best ambition.” Now this statement is slightly extravagant. There is nothing to show that the book was “denied existence by the chief publishing houses,” nor, for that matter, that it was ever submitted to a publishing house. The circumstances prove that Bierce had made little or no effort to get his stories published. Andrew Chatto wrote from London, immediately upon the publication of the volume, arranging for the English rights, and asked: “Why have I not heard from you all these years?” Stone and Kimball were writing for copy at an early date. Bierce once admitted in a letter to Sterling that he had been “lazy and indisposed to dicker with publishers.” Practically all the stories that appeared in his first volume had been published in newspapers or magazines and had been paid for at good rates. If Bierce had shown the slightest disposition to “dicker,” as he said, even with Pacific coast publishers, the publication of the volume could easily have been arranged long prior to 1891.

Another myth that has grown up during the years since 1891 is that “Tales of

Soldiers and Civilians” was a failure and that Ambrose Bierce was a “neglected” author. Nothing could be more absurd. His first three volumes had received wide comment in England, for books of their type. “Tales of Soldiers and Civilians,” if one may take into consideration the edition of 1895, as well as that of 1891, was reviewed in over four hundred newspapers and periodicals. Surely this would not indicate neglect. Moreover, with scarcely a single exception, the reviews were enthusiastic. The fact is that Bierce was never the “struggling” artist; in truth, he was never the artist, save incidentally. The stories were written late in life and simply as a divertissement. Bierce always realized that his “trade was abuse,” as he wrote Mr. J. H. E. Partington. That the stories struck such a high level of excellence is only another indication of his remarkably forceful, brilliant, and provocative personality.

It was with the publication of “Tales of Soldiers and Civilians” in 1891 that Bierce attained his national fame as a writer of the short story. “Success,” said Remy de Gourmont, “is a fact.” Opinions may differ, comments may vary, but if a book is ever once a success, that success is a fact which cannot be forgotten. The truth of this psychological observation was never better illustrated than in the history of this remarkable volume of stories by Bierce. It has been extravagantly praised, violently denounced, and hopelessly mauled, since 1891, but the fact is that in 1891 it was a success. Comment invariably centers around a book that has been a success, particularly if that book be as remarkable a book as “Tales of Soldiers and Civilians.” One cannot judge this volume, with justice, by applying the aesthetics of to-day. But when the stories are read in comparison with contemporary collections, their excellence cannot be denied. Bierce’s stories were hard, brilliant, cold, and, whatever their limitations, they were never commonplace. But more of this anon.

There was surely nothing about the reception that the book received of which Bierce could complain. It was praised in almost every journal in which it was reviewed. But this comment, particularly in the American newspapers, was stupid and trite; one review was as like another as two peas. “Suggestive of Edgar Allan Poe,”

“dark stories of death,” it was always and eternally the same. Occasionally some reviewer would write intelligently, as did E. H. Clough in the Oakland *Times*. He said, *inter alia*, that “The best modern fiction is not in realism; neither is it based wholly upon the romantic incidents of life and its possibilities. The absolute horror of ‘The Mystery of Udolpho’ is no longer permissible.” This was sharp comment, particularly in light of the analysis made in the next chapter.

As soon as the volume was published, Andrew Chatto arranged for its publication in England under the title: “In the Midst of Life.” Chatto suggested this new title, for the reason, as he wrote, that English readers did not like collections of stories unless they had some unifying theme. The English reviews were equally enthusiastic although more intelligent. The *Spectator, Daily Chronicle, Scotsman,* Glasgow *Herald,* and *Scottish Leader,* were all enthusiastic. One reviewer, however, held out against the general praise. He was an anonymous reviewer writing in *Literature,* and he wrote of Bierce that he was “another writer, the unfortunate victim of extravagant and uncritical laudation,” who, “has written a number of clever, violent, vigorous battle-notes, which were heaped together between book covers; but crude, unshapen impressions are no more a book than a collection of New England sermons are the ‘Scarlet Letter.’” This was much better than the American drivel about a second Edgar Allan Poe, *etc.*

Not only was the book remarkably well received in the press, but private opinion was equally enthusiastic. Opie Read wrote to Bierce on its publication: “Had you lived two hundred years ago you would be alive to-day, and living to-day, you will be alive when two hundred years have come.” Walter Blackburn Harte wrote letters of high praise and devoted an article to Bierce in the *New England Magazine.* Percival Pollard reviewed the volume with a fine frenzy of eulogistic adjectives. Sam Davis called it ‘‘a stride in literature.” Soldiers in New York State read the book at a reunion meeting and wrote to tell Bierce what fine war stories he had written. And that shrewdest of all Bierce enthusiasts, James Watkins, wrote from New York, where he was working on the *Sun,* with calm and fine assurance: “Probably you will derive only a meager spiritual consolation from the reflection that you are to become a classic, and that in time a test of a critic’s acumen and fitness will be his attitude toward Ambrose Bierce. *Yet this thing shall be, and there will be limited editions, and artists straining to disfigure you with cuts.”* And all these things have happened. The pity is that Bierce, who had taken Watkins’ advice in nearly everything, did not take the advice with which Watkins closed this letter: “Go on living, old man; you have only to live thirty years to be allowed the foremost workman of your period, if you continue with your work.”

Even Bierce’s old enemies reviewed the book well, as did Arthur McEwen, in the Oakland *Tribune.* He told a story about being at breakfast with Bierce shortly after the publication of the book. Bierce asked him how he thought the book would sell. McEwen replied: “I won’t be surprised if it makes a world hit or falls as dead as a landed salmon. You haven’t, in all you write, a trace of what we call sympathy. The pretty girl never appears.” To which Bierce replied: “Darn the pretty girl,” and McEwen added: “That’s what is the matter with you.” And this was correct, from the standpoint of sales in 1891.

There was one review that rather nettled Bierce. It appeared in the New York *Sun*, and was written by Mayo Hazeltine. In the course of this review, Hazeltine intimated that Bierce had once been a failure as a journalist in New York, and that "he is a scoffer and scorner and he writes his tales of horror with a sort of fiendish delight." To both of these statements, Bierce replied *(The Examiner*, Jan. 22, 1893): "In all my life I have submitted but one little piece of my work to an editor of a New York newspaper; and that was accepted and printed in the *World.* No other eastern publication, daily, weekly, or monthly, has, to my knowledge, ever had a line of my manuscript." This, mind you, from the "neglected" Mr. Bierce! Replying to Hazeltine's other remark, Bierce said: "I wrote my tales of horror without reference to the nerves, or even the existence, of the innocent, and in the belief that they are good and true art — a belief in which I have the obstinacy to remain."

T. H. Rearden, an old personal friend, wrote Bierce that his stories of "human beings in a mass, groveling in the horrors of impossible wounds, and yet sentient and acting, though beyond the reach of help, while wishing and hoping for it, stir one with terror," and suggested a French translation. In this suggestion there was a sound psychological observation, as is borne out by the subsequent history of Bierce's stories in France. M. Victor Llona published "Un Incident au pont d'Owl Creek" in *La Nouvelle Revue Française,* and it immediately attracted a great deal of attention. Jacques Rivière and his successor, Jean Paulhan, kept asking M. Llona for more stories by Bierce. He later brought out a collection of stories published in France as "Aux Lisières de la Mort," which enjoyed a considerable sale. Such stories as "Un cas de conscience" have even reached the popular press and have appeared in such papers as *Adventure* and *Excelsior*.

These were the active publishing years with Bierce. "The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter" appeared in 1892; "Black Beetles in Amber," which some wit suggested should be called "red peppers in vinegar," in 1892; and "Can Such Things Be?" in 1893. Did Bierce select the title of this last volume to complete the thought suggested by the title of the English edition of his first volume of stories: "In the midst of life, can such things be?" Whether he did or not, he was annoyed to discover that "Can Such Things Be?" had been used as the title of a book by Keith Fleming, published by George Routledge, in London in 1889. He was to be similarly chagrined about "The Shadow on the Dial," a phrase which Ruskin had previously used as a title.

In connection with "The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter," a fine, ironic romance, and "Black Beetles in Amber," those tersely written lines of doggerel, it becomes necessary to discuss Bierce's relations with Dr. Adolphe Danziger. This is a duty which, had it not been for the tremendous notoriety and publicity that the Doctor has attained by forcing the association of his name with Bierce as that of a "collaborator," and for the misstatements that he has made, would be pleasantly ignored. In the first place, Dr. Danziger (he now calls himself DeCastro), claims that he is entitled to all the credit for "The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter." In a letter to me he made this statement: "at present no one but myself has any right to the story or the name on the title page." This is, indeed, a most extraordinary claim. To begin with, the story was only a translation of a story by Dr. Richard Voss, originally written in German. Danziger made the translation, but admits that at the time he was not sufficiently familiar with the English language to do the story justice, and that he took the manuscript to Bierce and paid him to rewrite it. Whether he paid Bierce or not, the fact remains that Bierce rewrote the story and that Danziger had nothing whatever to do with the revision. Compare the chaste, simple style of the book as it now appears in print with the style of Dr. Danziger in books admittedly of his entire authorship, to wit, "In the Garden of Abdullah and other Poems," a volume of verse privately published in Los Angeles. It would be doing the Doctor an unpardonable injustice to quote these verses, but any one who takes the pains to read them, along with Dr. Danziger's collection of stories "In the Confessional," will never be in doubt as to the pen that wrote "The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter" as it now stands.

The Doctor, who has been at various times a dentist, a lawyer, and Rabbi of Congregation Bikur Cholin of San José, was once a publisher. He organized the Western Authors Publishing Company, in which enterprise, so he says, Bierce and W. C. Morrow, were partners. The plan of this company, according to the Doctor's own explanation, was to charge poor, illiterate hacks who wanted to "write" an enormous sum to publish their books. That Bierce was ever a party to such a scheme is incredible and there is nothing in all his entire correspondence and papers that gives the slightest credence to such a statement. It clearly appears from Bierce's correspondence that Dr. Danziger's partner was one William Langton; that Bierce suspected both of them and that he dealt with both at a considerable fish's pole distance, making copies of even the slightest note addressed to either, and trying, in every imaginable way to shield himself from the very charges that Dr. Danziger has made of recent years. It is significant that these charges were never made during Bierce's lifetime.

Early in their acquaintance, Bierce had defended Dr. Danziger from a vicious attack by Dr. Jacob Voorsanger in the Jewish *Times and Observer.* Bierce soon came to rue the day that he made such a foolish gesture as the article he wrote in defense of Danziger. As a matter of fact, Bierce was always gullible about people. If they would flatter him, he would listen and then smile. The inevitable disappointments that followed on the revelation of unworth were among the saddest experiences in his life.

But, to return to Dr. Danziger, it seems that about 1893, the Doctor wanted to publish a collection of his own stories, “In the Confessional,” and that he greatly desired to have this book illustrated by J. H. E. Partington. To pay for this service, Dr. Danziger went to a very dear friend of Mr. Bierce, and, on the strength of his acquaintance, borrowed some three hundred dollars. When Bierce discovered what had been done, he was furious. Dr. Danziger has sniffed disdainfully at George Sterling’s statement that Bierce once broke a cane over the Doctor’s head. Were it not for this fact, omission would be made of what is, after all, a rather trivial and personal affair. Personally I did not see Bierce apply the cane, nor did Sterling. But Bierce did save the fragments of a broken cane, to remind him, so he said, “of the nature of friendship.” Moreover, he discussed his quarrel with Dr. Danziger in print and no denial was made, at the time, of his version of the facts. It would seem that these quotations state Bierce’s views rather clearly:

“I have not the conceit to suppose the public is interested in the business affairs which Dr. Danziger gratifies his nature at the expense of his welfare by lying about. It cannot make any material difference whether I swindled him or he swindled me; commercial usage and the proprieties of business were sufficiently observed if some one was swindled. Nor with reference to ‘The Monk and the Hangman’s Daughter’ is it important whether he or I had the larger hand in spoiling the work of a better man than either. These matters are trivial and dull, even to me, except in so far as they show (as doubtless Heaven ordained them to do) how far a man may be willing to go in procuring food for the conceit in him. For nourishment of his insatiable inner dog, Dr. Danziger would steal any bone of recognition that he could not get by cheating. What is really amusing is his solemn censure of me for *assaulting with* fist, *stick* and pistol (he seems to have forgotten the cannon) an inoffensive ‘minister’ who desires to do his lying in peace. As to that, I beg leave to explain that having had no voice in Dr. Danziger’s choice of a profession, I do not feel compelled to suffer inconvenience from the abuse of it.

“As a matter of fact, the wretch is a ‘minister’ in the same way that Jonah, after being spewed ashore, was a part of the whale. I never was ashamed of being an infidel until Dr. Danziger assured me that he was one. For ten minutes I was an easy prey to any strolling exhorter that might have passed that way, cadging for souls.

“In Dr. Danziger is a dual individuality like that of a two-headed calf; the natures of saint and sinner are so intimately interblended as to make him preëminently a man of parts. He is a layman for lying and a minister for fighting. He carries his sacerdotal character in his hip-pocket and pulls it only when his face is slapped. He carries a pistol there, too, but when invited to pull that he says it is the proudest moment of his life, but family reasons, largely hereditary, compel him to decline. But, Lord, Lord, you should have heard this holy man of God swear when tapped upon the nimbus! And dance! — why, not a curly young worldling in San Francisco's entire 400 ever footed it so neatly! O, a fine and serious minister he! — isn't he, Dr. Voorsanger? By the way, Voorsanger — shake."

Dr. Danziger has written that George Sterling was lying when he told the caning episode; furthermore, he says, the story was absurd since he could have "broken Bierce" with his hands. To this the answer might very conceivably be that in 1893 he had a perfect chance to do just that thing, and there is no record of his having done so. Moreover, he could have passed over the incident in his "Portrait of Ambrose Bierce" without calling George Sterling a liar and "irresponsible drunkard." But since the issue has been raised, as suggested by Mr. Harry Hansen in the New York *World,* it should be met. It is not, perhaps, so trivial as might be assumed. If a biographer was once caned by his subject, it is submitted that the fact has at least some significance, from a critical standpoint.

In a subsequent issue of *The Examiner,* Bierce gave the public a further explanation:

"I wrote every word of 'The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter' as published. Until Dr. Danziger saw that it was a creditable book he never, so far as I know, professed to have done more than translate the German story by Dr. Voss upon which it was founded. I have never seen that story and do not read German; what changes he may have made I do not know, nor care. If there was as little of Dr. Voss in his version as there is of him in mine, I am unable to conjecture what the original yarn was like. It was for lying about that and other matters that I punished him; and apparently he is not yet reformed."

Mr. Hansen, and those interested, can make such definition of the word "punished" as they desire; I make my own definition, and doubtless George Sterling made his.

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WITH these years an important chapter in Bierce's life came to a close. The violent and impetuous days on *The Wasp* had kept him in a perpetual bad temper about a number of things that were of no ultimate importance. The close of the eighties had seen him swept to prominence with the publication of the three volumes of fiction upon which his reputation as a story-teller rests. With his work on *The Examiner,* he had attained an undeniable position of ascendancy on the coast. He was thus converted into a Master and a Prominent Figure. His picture was prominently displayed in "Men of the Pacific

Coast" published at this time. '*Munsey's Magazine* (April, 1896), had announced that "Mr. Bierce" was an author of great importance, and a number of other periodicals had voiced similar views. On November 18, 1889, the Hon. Henry Highton had lectured on "Bierce as Satirist" in Honolulu. Bierce was made a member of the American Social Science Association in 1899, for "service in literature and journalism." He became quite a grand figure with the publication of his stories. William Dean Howells announced in a lecture at Columbia University that "Mr. Bierce is among our three greatest writers," to which Bierce had made answer that "I am sure Mr. Howells is the other two." J. H. E. Partington painted his portrait which was exhibited at the World's Fair in 1893 and won a gold medal. In this picture Bierce is shown standing by the side of his writing table, on which is a skull. Perhaps people would not have admired the portrait so much had they known that the "Skull," when it was a "head," had been a friend of Mr. Bierce! Several palmists came to study Mr. Bierce's hand as painted by Partington, as it was thought to be a most interesting hand. It was announced in the newspapers that the "hand" was a masterpiece. One of these experts gave an interview in which he announced that: "the hand shows that Mr. Bierce has not had many love experiences."

During these halcyon days, when nonsense was at its height as a national characteristic of our letters and art, that perennial lark of California song, Ella Sterling Cummins, was in charge of the "California Room" in the fine arts section, at the Fair. To those eager to learn about California in letters, she would gracefully suggest that they purchase: "A Story of the Files," which she had written under the auspices of the World's Fair Commission. In this interesting book all the grandees of California verse, song, and story are made immortal. Here, in the covers of one book, all the enemies came together, kissed, and for the honor of California, wrote flattering blurbs about each other. Mr. Bierce waived his acknowledged right of first slaughter and became a lamb of praise. He wrote of Joaquin Miller's verse: "And here I wish to say, and upon the assertion stake whatever reputation for literary understanding I may chance to have, that in all the work of all the red planet's victims there is not a larger, nobler, more purely poetic conception than this (of Miller's) of their surviving brother, whom, in gratitude for the delight he has given me, I beg to warn that the menace of Mars burns implacable in the skies, ‘a still and awful red,’ etc.” To which the only response is: “Ambrose, you are a talented, gorgeous, and slightly inebriated liar.” It is incredible that Bierce wrote that blurb unless he was in his cups. I shall not quote it in its entirety: the experience would be unbearable. But turn about was fair play, for Markham, E. L. Clough, W. C. Morrow, Adele Chretien, Arthur McEwen, Mrs. Atherton, J. O’Hara Cosgrave, and George Hamlin Fitch joined in the love feast and showered the giant of Howell Mountain with an abundance of bouquets. Mr. Markham delved deep in his library and produced this morsel: “His is a composite mind — a blending of Hafiz the Persian, Swift, Poe, Thoreau, with sometimes a gleam of the Galilean.” To which might be added, with equal exactness, John Brown, Christopher Columbus and Florence Nightingale. It was the year of portraits and fairs, of compliments, bows to the gallery, and hand kissing. The spirit of Victoria’s Jubilee had permeated the states.

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TO-DAY Angwins’ Hotel has been removed and the spot where Ambrose Bierce wrote countless reams of “Prattle” is adorned with the pure and stately columns of the Pacific Union Theological Seminary: where “Bitter Bierce” sent forth his weekly thunderbolts of wit, the Seventh Day Adventists now perform their strange rituals and carry on their clandestine whispering with God. It is a circumstance that should be significant to those who believe, as did Bierce, that satire has a peculiar efficacy, and that nonsense can really be confounded by sharp wit and noble example.

Down in the Napa Valley, during these years when Bierce was fast becoming an Olympian, Mollie Day Bierce was reading “Trilby” with Mrs. Hunt, as it appeared in Harper’s *Magazine,* and kindly but firmly declining to see old friends. She lived quietly alone, at the foot of Howell Mountain, waiting and hoping that some day a reconciliation might be effected. She dressed invariably in black, but she would not permit even her unfortunate separation from her husband to make her gloomy or melancholy. When asked to play the piano for the “young people,” she would straighten out the folds of her dress, pin a flower from her shoulder, and play as long as they liked. One day she consented to go on a picnic in the mountains with some friends. The carriages toiled up the mountainside and came to a pause in a clearing. A man strode through a bit of brushwood and stood for a moment in the sunlight, as if puzzled and annoyed at the sight of the picnickers. He was tall and straight and handsome and many people called him a god. Mrs. Bierce hastened from the carriage and walked to his side. They stood apart from the others, whom Bierce did not recognize, and talked in low syllables for a few moments and then parted. They were never to see one another again.

CHAPTER XIII. BIERCE AND THE CHARNEL HOUSE

THE publication of “Tales of Soldiers and Civilians” in 1891 and of “Can Such Things Be?” in 1893, provoked the beginning of what has since become the most irregular body of critical opinion devoted to an American author of any prominence. The only parallel situation is that involved in the work of Edgar Allan Poe. Difficult as it is to analyze these stories, it is still more difficult to explain the interest that has always centered about the two slender volumes of fiction. Bierce only wrote, in all, about sixty-five short stories and this estimate takes into account the stories of two and three paragraphs collected under such topical heads as “Bodies of the Dead.” Of this group of short stories approximately eighteen are war stories and the rest, with one exception, are tales of the supernatural. And yet since 1893 Mr. Bierce has been hailed as a “bitterly realistic” writer, although by a simple mathematical calculation one can demonstrate that forty-seven of his stories are admittedly pure fancy and even the other eighteen are subject to close scrutiny on the same charge, as will be shown.

It is immediately apparent, upon the most casual examination, that many of Bierce’s stories are commonplace. Some of them are actually unreadable to-day. Yet it is upon this fragile foundation that his fame as a man of letters rests, since criticism in this country has always centered about his fiction with remorseless persistence and to the neglect of his great talent as a wit and satirist. It is quite a difficult task to explain why Bierce’s short stories have always attracted such an inordinate amount of interest and comment. It is not sufficient as an explanation to observe that, at the time they were first published, his stories were unusual. They had a quality, to be sure, but it was not a novel quality after Poe. What fascinated most readers was perhaps the thought that these stories represented a disordered mentality. Without the aid of modern psychology, it was a simple deduction from the short stories of Poe and the work of Maturin to assume that they were neurotic. And, since Bierce’s stories bore a superficial resemblance to the work of these men, was it not logical to assume that he, too, was the victim of some hallucination? The question has always been, whether openly stated or not, a personal problem. In other words, were Bierce’s stories subconsciously motivated?

That such has been the basis of the critical interest in his stories is apparent from an examination of some of the more serious comment about his work. Dorothy Scarborough, in “The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction,” first stated the issue and it has been raised by many writers since, including a specialist in psychiatry, Dr. Louis J. Bragman. Miss Scarborough wrote of Bierce’s stories: “The carrion ghosts of Bierce, animated by malignant foreign spirits, surpass the charnel shudders produced by the Gothic.... Bierce’s stories beat upon the mind like bludgeons and his morbid plots are among the most dreadful in our literature. One wonders what *abnormality of mind* conceives such themes, evolves such situations.” The inference that Bierce was mentally disordered has been echoed in a great portion of the criticism devoted to his work. The normal mind is interested in the spectacle of a man preoccupied, or seemingly preoccupied, with the macabre. A sound instinct makes such men suspect. And so it was with Bierce.

This problem of motivation is one which is germane and pertinent to a biography, because it is really a personal, rather than a critical, problem. At the outset, one is impressed with the fact that there is not a taint of abnormality about Bierce’s life. He was vigorous and healthy and possessed none of the symptoms of the neurotic. To be sure he was an asthmatic, but this of itself cannot be given great importance. It caused him considerable pain and was a constant annoyance, and it is true that frequently he had to take chloroform to obtain relief from his suffering. But personally he was far from “bitter” or “morose” and there is nothing in his life that one could hit upon to explain his work in the same manner that Mr. D. H. Lawrence and Dr. Joseph Wood Krutch have psycho-analyzed Poe. Bierce’s physician and an eminent nerve specialist who was his friend, have assured me that it would be a far stretch of the imagination to attribute the somber quality of his work directly to the fact that he was an asthmatic. Moreover, the stories are as nothing when compared with the enormous bulk of his satire. There are surely no clouds of abnormality enshrouding his satire. Bierce had a rather sharp perception of the limitations involved in the critical habit of moving from an author’s work into his life, as is shown by a note on Carlyle:

“I had supposed that when Carlyle died his dyspepsia would die with him, but his death seems to have rather aggravated the disease. His disobedient gastric fluid formerly disordered only his own literary work; it now tinges with ghastlier green the work of those who write about him.... Carlyle — more Carlyle — *toujours* Carlyle! I fall poisonously indisposed of too much Carlyle. The man is dead; shall he not be permitted to enjoy the rotting? Has the long-waiting grave-worm no rights, that we balk his mandible till we have had our will of the corpse? Let there be surcease of Carlyle. I hate him.”

But, examining Bierce’s work closely, it is apparent that one does not need to chart his life to come to the conclusion that he was not abnormal. The same conclusion is warranted by close critical attention to his style, by a knowledge of the origin of many of his stories, and by a study of his theory of aesthetics. These considerations will be discussed in order.

His style itself throws considerable light on the problem, as becomes immediately apparent when it is contrasted with that of Edgar Allan Poe. Mr. Thomas Beer has written that “Bierce erected his mortuary filigrees with traceries from the style of Poe.” Bierce denied this charge in his lifetime with a vehemence with which one can sympathize. The one thing he did not derive from Poe was his style. As will be shown, the terror-romance tradition was old with Poe, who contributed little to its technique. This Bierce realized and he did not hesitate to adopt many of the devices used by Poe, but he was always careful to safeguard his position on the charge of having aped Poe’s style. If Mr. Beer had compared, let us say, “A Son of the Gods” with “The Fall of the House of Usher,” he would have noticed the sharp difference in style. The method, in so far as it attempted to produce a “dominant impression,” might be the same, but the styles were of two worlds. Bierce’s style has nothing of the sonorous, rhythmic sweep of Poe’s best prose. On the contrary, Bierce aimed at clarity, precision, and simplicity.

This difference in style represents the difference in men. Dr. Krutch clearly recognized this fact in his book about Poe. To quote an illuminating passage: “Even Ambrose Bierce, who seems, at first glance, more nearly related than any other writer to Poe, will be found upon analysis to be different in an essential particular. He too depended largely upon horror. But unlike Poe he would often base that horror upon the exaggeration of *a normal emotion*.... His bitterness, unlike Poe’s, is the result of a sense of the world’s cruelty and is thus essentially social as Poe’s is essentially individualistic.” Poe, as Mr. Brownell observed years ago, was *sui generis*. He was a “case” for the psychiatrist from the start. The same can be said of the work of M. G. (‘Monk’) Lewis and Charles Maturin. There is a feverish quality about the work of these men that is unmistakable evidence of neurotic temperaments. But even in the most “awful” of Bierce’s stories, he marred their effect by his “unpardonable facetiousness,” which always snickered at his own grisly yarns.

In a previous chapter the origin of several of Bierce’s famous war stories has been traced to actual occurrences. When he used an actual incident in a story, however, he invariably warped the facts to fit his theory of the elements of a short story. In every instance, he treated the story in a romantic manner. He once rode forward at the head of a brigade brandishing a sword. It suggested a story and he wrote "*A* Son of the Gods" about the heroic young soldier who is killed under the gaze of two armies drawn up in line of battle. The story can be seen to be pure romance. Other instances of a similar transposition, from real to unreal, have been previously observed. The matter of "Mysterious Disappearances" is also illuminating. Bierce was always interested in such cases and, in fact, he made a fine disappearance himself in later years. But his method of writing the stories grouped under that phrase was to collect newspaper clippings and then rewrite them in story form. It can thus be observed that the process was entirely conscious and deliberate. He was not dominated, as was Poe, by an inexorable personal necessity.

As a matter of fact, the genuine moments in his stories are the moments of tenderness and the "horrible" situations are used merely as counterpoint for his own feelings. As Mr. Alfred C. Ward has written: "His war stories frequently represent a cry from the heart, such as should inspire us to veil pained ears and eyes, rather than to hide grinning mouths." This is true even of the stories that cannot be traced to actual occurrences. Bierce invariably used a horrible incident for a dramatic purpose, which, of itself, shows the clearest deliberation. He placed severed legs, slashed heads, and broken bones about his canvases in a manner bordering on the melodramatic.

It would be difficult to compute the number of times that it has been suggested that Bierce's war stories are so "grimly realistic" that they should be compared with Tolstoy's "War and Peace." There is nothing in common between the methods of the two men. This should have been immediately apparent by the examination of a single story by Bierce. Take, for illustration, "The Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge." Technically it is one of the best of his stories, but it is not a war story. He wrote it as a psychological experiment and discussed his method very frankly with Dr. J. M. Robertson. It was pure romance and had no relation to the war, except incidentally. The same is true of many of his war stories. When, as in his sketch "What! Saw of Shiloh," he did come to grips with war, it was in an admittedly personal vein. If he had been a genuine realist, he would never have permitted the dead to die so dramatically. A realist, Mr. Harold Frederic, wrote a collection of stories about the Civil War: "Marsena and Other Stories of the Wartime." In one of these stories, he told all that there was to tell of war in a simple picture of a group of country people behind the lines standing about a bulletin board reading the casualty lists.

One has only to image the many war incidents that Bierce might have used, and then to examine a few of the situations he selected, in order to understand the essential character of his work. Captain Graffenreid, a brave man who has been used in drill work behind the lines, is suddenly shifted to the front and terror besets him. He jabs a saber through his body and an officer in the rear notices, with calm interest, the sharp point of the sword coming through Graffenreid's coat as he sinks to the ground. It develops that the attack which so frightened Graffenreid was just a false alarm. In a word, a man was killed by terror, the oldest trick of the terror romance. The manner of Graffenreid's taking off rather irritates one: it is unnecessarily dramatic. One hears offstage the clanking of the chains as the technician pulls his events into a dramatic order. It should be obvious, too, that the incident was purely imaginary. Outwardly, all of Bierce's stories are objective, as though he had mistaken the origin of the creative impulse.

Take, again, the story of George Thurston, a brave man because he is a coward. He fears his cowardice to such an extent that he is unnecessarily heroic to beat down his terror. But he meets death in a swing. The swing soars too high and he is thrown out and his body crashes to the ground. “Then there is an indescribable sound — the sound of an impact that shakes the earth, and these men, familiar with death in its most awful aspects, turn sick. Many walk unsteadily away from the spot; others support themselves against the trunks of trees or sit at the roots.” It will be observed that the objective act of falling from the swing is deliberately *used* with the purpose in mind of inspiring horror. It is another ancient trick, old with Horace Walpole. The story was clearly manufactured. Deeply imbued with this theory of his art, which failed to identify appearances with an inner reality, Bierce was forever in quest of some “strange” or “unusual” incident to use as a story. This accounts for the meagerness of his stories and their essential uniformity. He was a romantic figure himself and he carried over into art some of the strangeness which he felt inhered in his own experience. He would write only of the “unusual” or the “strange,” because art had nothing whatever to do with reality, and where could he find the “unusual” save in the realm of the unreal in which horror exists solely for the reason that it cannot be explained. Manfred parades his melancholy; Poe announces that loveliness is sad; Mr. Bierce speaks tenderly of the dead.

If further argument were needed to demonstrate the real nature of Bierce's fiction, one has only to refer to the incidents he used in his stories of the supernatural. Some of the details of these stories have greatly perturbed Dr. Louis J. Bragman. Writing in the *Welfare Magazine* of the Illinois State Reformatory (June, 1928), he said: “Other chilling and unnerving topics Bierce develops in his mad search for the macabre are ghosts, the return of the dead, spirits, and spirit-rappings, haunted houses, mysterious disappearances, visual hallucinations, amnesia and delirium tremens. On what strange philosophic food did he nourish himself to produce such gloomy creations?” The answer is not as difficult as it might appear. Dr. Bragman must realize that the details, which have so horrified him, have been the common property of romantic terrorists for centuries.

To understand Bierce's theory, one must keep constantly in mind the fact that there has always been a definite tradition of the terror-romance. The tradition dated, to be arbitrary and therefore inaccurate, with "The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story" by Horace Walpole in 1764. The terror-romance from this early romance to the present date has always been a romantic outburst. The Romantic Movement, so-called, has been traced to the work of Walpole, Ann Radcliffe and M. G. Lewis, I am informed by the academicians. Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie in his series of lectures on "Romance," denies that the Lake poets had much to do with the movement, and, specifically, that Wadsworth was ever a part of it.

It would require a volume to summarize the methods by means of which Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe succeeded in achieving their aim, which was to suggest a spirit of place that would dominate their romances. They deliberately set out to make the scene other than it was in fact. In other words, they used purely objective tricks to attain a mood that satisfied some secret yen in their own natures. To attain this end they invented the "haunted house" and so typical did the castle or house become in the work of such writers that Mr. Eino Railo entitled his capital study of English Romanticism, "The Haunted Castle." This type of romance released the imagination from the commonplace; it was an efflorescence of the romantic temperament. The most interesting of the early terrorists was M.

G. — Lewis. He was well read in German romanticism and, under its influence, wrote a book the title of which has an ironic ring in connection with this study: "Ambrosio, or The Monk." It appeared in 1795 and was an enormous success. The title was shortened to "The Monk" and Lewis quickly became "Monk" Lewis. It is well known that Byron was deeply influenced by this book, just as Shelley was under the spell of similar romantic terrorism for a time. Poe, with his inventive intelligence, liberated the terror-romance from its fixed locale. He also added certain details of his own, such as old manuscripts, miniature portraits, and similar devices, which he used as objects upon which to liberate his romantic rhapsodies. Then, too, Poe used pseudo-scientific data to bolster up his work, just as he used the first person.

It was this tradition of the terror-romance, softened by the poetry of Southey and Coleridge, made fanciful by Hawthorne, and broadened by Poe, that Bierce inherited. Bierce became familiar with the tradition as early as 1874. It was a tradition characterized by its fanatical avoidance of the commonplace and its yearning for the strange, which is in effect a form of disgust with the obvious. It was a flight away from life. Naturally the tradition had much to offer Bierce. He became familiar with it at an early period in his life and he was inducted into its mysteries by his first and only mentor, James Watkins. It must be remembered that an adventurous and independent American, coming into the world of art in 1869, would inevitably fall into the tradition of Poe. Bierce had not passed through many phases of experience at the time and he assumed that Poe's principles were true. All his life he labored under this misapprehension and frittered away his splendid energy and ability accommodating himself to a set of principles which did not align with his own feelings. He was basically ironic and quickly outgrew the tradition, but he never abandoned its principles in his work in the short story.

That he worked in the tradition of the terror-romance may be proven with ease. All the clichés of the tradition were used by him time and again in his stories. Like Poe he used the pseudo-scientific to bolster up his tales and to give them a ring of probability that they would otherwise lack, thus avoiding the errors of Mrs. Radcliffe. He read queer books in an effort to get this data. He quoted Denneker's "Meditations" in "A Psychological Shipwreck," in "Stanley Fleming's Hallucination" and in "Charles Ashmore's Trail." He quoted from Dr. Hern's "Verschwinder und Seine Theorie." He speculated with Hegel's doctrine of Non-Euclidian space, suggesting Poe and his Eureka talk. Bierce's "Moxon's Master" is suggestive, too, of Poe and his automatic chess player, which in turn relates back to the frequent appearance of the Frankenstein monster in German and English fiction. Then, too, Bierce used the incident of a severed part of the body to inspire terror, a trick which is at least two hundred years old. He wrote a group of stories about "haunted houses" and "mysterious disappearances" which were favorite subjects with all the terrorists. It will be noticed that Bierce contributed nothing to this type of story save, perhaps, his style. Practically every incident he used as the framework for a story had been used before. His was not the febrile intelligence to invent such schemes in the first instance. He was personally at antipodes from Poe, whose theory of aesthetics he adopted because it was more adaptable to his purposes than any other. The greatness of Bierce's best stories is that they transcend this very tradition; that they break the bonds that his mind placed upon them.

But, to prove his alliance with the terrorists of fiction, one need only quote his own words. Writing of the tradition in his "Collected Works," he said: "Tapping, as they do, two of the three great mother-lodes of human interest, these tales are a constant phenomenon — the most permanent, because the most fascinating, element in letters. Great Scott! has the patrol never heard of *The Thousand and*

One Nights, of *The Three Spaniards*, of Horace Walpole, of ‘Monk’ Lewis, of DeQuincey, of Maturin, Ingemann, Blicher, Balzac, Hoffman, Fitz James O’Brien?” As a boy he read *The Three Spaniards* and was fascinated with the story. Years later, in 1910, he asked Mr. Roosevelt Johnson if he might borrow the book, as he had not examined it since childhood and the memory of it still pleased his fancy.

Writing of the work of Emma Frances Dawson, he said, of a certain “light” about her work, that “it is a light such as falls at sunset upon desolate marches, tingeing the plumage of the tall heron and prophesying the joyless laugh of the loon. That selfsame light shines somewhere through and under Doré’s long parallel cloudbanks along his horizons, and I have seen it, with added bleakness, backgrounding the tall rood in the Lone Mountain cemetery in San Francisco.” How Mrs. Radcliffe would have applauded that outburst!

Bierce was interested in the supernatural just as he was interested in the dead. He specialized in cadavers. He used to prowl about the old Yerba Buena cemetery in San Francisco, particularly during the time when it was being removed to make way for the new city hall. But he wrote of these incidents only to shock the readers of his “Prattle.” He would write such stuff as this: “I love the dead and their companionship is infinitely agreeable. It was one of those half-dark nights of the wintertime. There was a moon somewhere — I am uncertain if I saw it or heard it.” (*Examiner*, June 26, 1887.) If the legion critics who every now and again lift their voices to proclaim that Bierce liked the macabre because he lost his wife and boys, will reflect upon this statement, from *The News-Letter*, (April 22, 1871), months before his marriage, it might arrest their fine psycho-analysis before its full flowering in puerile fancy. Bierce was writing of the Yerba Buena cemetery: “Some rare old corpses have been turned out; among others one which had been bottled up in spirits and seemed as sweet and clean as a pig naked for the oven. One of these fellows was stuck into the dirt twenty years ago and his immortal part hasn’t done moving out yet: it still rises ‘like the strain of a rich-distilled perfume.’ No man with a normal nose can stand above that carcass and doubt the solemn mystery of a spiritual existence.” But it is important to observe that he was always mildly ironic about such matters and never wrote of death in the excited manner that was Poe’s.

He once summarized his aesthetics in a note on painters in the *Examiner* (May 15, 1887) in this manner: “The great artist makes everything alive; he gives to death itself and desolation a personality and a breathing soul.... We are not all equally sensitive to the joyous aspect of a tree, and the sulking of a rock, the menace of the benediction that may speak from a hillside, and the reticence of one building and the garrulity of another, the pathos of a blank window, the tenderness and the terrors that smile and glower everywhere about us. These are not fancies. True, they are but the outward and visible signs of an inner mood; but *the objects that bear them beget the mood.* No true artist but feels it; and all feel it alike. To discern, to feel, to seize upon the dominant expression "and make it predominant in his picture, — this is the artists' function." (Italics mine.) This, of course, is romantic theory. It shows how deliberately Bierce selected and stressed objective facts on the theory that they created the mood. He sensed a relationship between fact and fancy but he looked outward instead of communing with the Holy Ghost within.

And, if still further proof should be required of his advocacy of the romantic impulse in art, there is the significant passage in his "Collected Works" (Volume X, pages 244-5) which Mr. Wilson Follette wisely quotes in his book *The Modern Novel.* In this passage Bierce said: "It is to him of widest knowledge, of deepest feeling, of sharpest observation and insight, that life is most crowded with figures of heroic stature, with spirits of dream, with demons of the pit, with graves that yawn in pathways leading to the light, with existences not of this earth, both malign and benign, — ministers of grace and ministers of doom. The truest eye is that which discerns the shadow and the portent, the dead hands reaching, the light that is the heart of darkness, the sky with 'dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms.' The truest ear is that which hears

'Celestial voices to the midnight air,
Sole, or responsive each to the other's note,
Singing,'

not 'their great Creator,' but not a negro melody, either; no nor the latest favorite of the drawing room. In short, he to whom life is not picturesque, enchanting, astonishing, terrible, is denied the gift and faculty divine, and being no poet can write no prose." This reads like it was written with one eye on Bierce's own work and as an apology. It is full of the slightly exaggerated statement of the man who would emphasize a quality to cover a deficiency. It was all right to insist that the artist look sharply at life, for, in truth, it is always picturesque and astonishing to the real creative genius. But to insist that "the objects that bear them beget the mood" is a dangerous theory, since it is but one step to the next proposition, that is, by the mere object one can conjure up a lost feeling as a ghost of the genuine impulse. This cannot be done. It was a trick that Bierce tried on himself time and again, as will be noted in the later chapters. He would visit an old battlefield and feel pleasantly sad. He would return two months later and be bored. Therefore, "nothing mattered" because the illusion was gone. The entire process was the result of a mistaken assumption that values were outward, detached, and objective facts.

Mr. W. C. Brownell wrote of Poe that “he is distinctly so much the most, as to be almost the only, romantic figure in our literature; and his romantic interest has greatly influenced the critical estimate of his work.” He might just as well have been writing of Bierce. Bierce was, as George Sterling once remarked to me, “incurably romantic.” This fact has disturbed and excited many an otherwise calm critical pen into flurries of nonsense. His pupils, for example, were so fascinated by his romantic personality that they threw their critical senses overboard. While the ladies... but one need only read Ruth Guthrie Harding’s article....

The inner relation of Bierce to this romanticism is easy to trace. He was an immensely sensitive man and his reaction to life was twice as quick and as violent as the man in the street. But he began to read and think only at a rather late period in his life. Hence he was past middle age when he outgrew his romantic ideas of art, which are usually among the first theories that the novice adopts. He recoiled from the utter futility and fatuousness of existence. Evidence of such futility inhered in his experience. His first great shock, the crash of his idealism that followed after the war, subverted his balance. He swung out of alignment, philosophically. He was in revolt against his environment at all times; not merely his immediate environment, the visible circus-world that he satirized in “Prattle,” but also against pain, horror, futility, chaos and death. In his revolt against death lies the germ of his interest in the supernatural. He deliberately “leads us out into an occult realm whose shapes and happenings give us ‘zero at the bone,’” as Edwin Markham once wrote. There is something of George Thurston’s steely resolve about Bierce’s determination to leave no field unexplored. He had a constant prescience of death; the real might be the unreal, for he had seen strange things; hence he wrote rather rhetorically of ghosts.

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THE greatest formative influence on Bierce’s work was unquestionably exercised by James Watkins. It was a close, intimate, personal influence. Watkins and Bierce thrashed out the problems of aesthetics, as they saw them, and in nearly every argument Watkins gained his point. Bierce, to my knowledge, never accorded to another the deference and respect that he always showed to Watkins. Hence this excerpt from a letter of Watkins to Bierce *in 1874,* is of the first importance in understanding Bierce’s viewpoint:

“The sort of sensation that waited upon Mrs. Radcliffe’s and Monk Lewis’ efforts affords some hint of the sort of career the new ‘Monk’ and ‘Castle of

Udolpho' would run. The work they did in stupid vaults you execute in the secret chambers of the soul; the poor limelight effects they worked on a painted stage, you would *sear with lightning on the face of nature.* Your work would expand the human mind."

This was written to Bierce, let it be remembered, in 1874, long before he had actually started to write any of his stories. And in a later paragraph of the same letter, Watkins said:

"The supreme art with a pen is to-day, as it has been throughout the history of letters, the art of story-telling, — of telling a story that has no reason for its existence outside of its own interest. It must illustrate nothing, be devoid of moral, make no one think, in fact, it must *paralyze the faculty of thinking:* It must purely and simply entertain. That has been the character of all work that has been permanent from the 'Arabian Nights' to 'Treasure Island.' This faculty you possess in the highest degree, though you have not chosen to exercise it *dissociated from the thinking faculties.* A man puts himself into a novel. He puts nothing but his imagination into a story."

I doubt if there exists a better exposition of Bierce's viewpoint. With these passages in mind, the inference is irresistible that Bierce deliberately sought to be the 'newer Monk Lewis' and to write the perfect short story. In the effort to carry out Watkins' advice to the letter, he became involved in this anomalous situation: his inspiration was romantic, but his method was almost modern in its realism at times. He could not exercise his "gift," as Watkins said, "dissociated from the thinking faculties." He was a romantic who wrote like a realist; technically his work belonged to the terrorist tradition and yet personally he was an individual utterly different than Monk Lewis. The conclusion would seem to be that Bierce accepted a theory of aesthetics which did not accord with his own personality and his own vision. But so great was his energy and his divination, that a fine light shines through the shadows of his work and illuminates even the worst of his tales of horror.

His entire life was romantic and he lived as though he were quite conscious of the fact. One of the shrewdest comments ever made about his career was made by John H. McGinnis in the Dallas *News:* "The incidents of his life read like a burlesque on the career of Lord Byron, and yet there is a hard, sardonic element that makes clearer and more poignant his drab romances and his essential tragedy." This statement strikes at the facts most vigorously.

CHAPTER XIV. “DAVID AND GOLIATH”

DURING the period between the completion of the trans-continental railroad until 1896, the Southern Pacific Railroad had gradually acquired a stranglehold on the State of California. There had been no word of protest during the first few years after the completion of the road, as the West was so delighted to have a railroad that it was willing to overlook many disadvantages. During the eighties, however, several far-sighted individuals began to call attention to the consequences of Southern Pacific dominance. A few mass meetings were held and a little indignation was kindled, but it was ineffective. Towards the close of the decade, the feeling became more intense as the railroad squeezed harder. It was an octopus bent on the plunder of the West. Every attempt to regulate its activities or temporize its monopoly proved futile. Farmers began to haul their produce by mule teams rather than consent to the Southern Pacific’s iniquitous fares. It was thought that steam navigation might prove a remedy, but this was an idle day dream, as the railroad promptly subsidized the steamship lines.

The extent of the Southern Pacific’s control of the political machinery in the State of California is almost unbelievable. It dominated the courts, the municipal governments, the county governments, including such petty offices as sheriff and coroner, and practically every newspaper in the state was receiving money from its coffers. When Fremont Older launched his fight against the railroad in 1896, he was amazed to find that the newspaper which he edited, *The Bulletin,* had been receiving a slight *douceur* of $125 a month for years. There was no definite agreement as to just what the consideration was for this sum, but there it was, and Mr. Older’s investigation proved that there were few newspapers in the state that were not on the payroll of the railroad. Judges of the State Supreme Court traveled on annual passes; Assemblymen openly boasted of being kept by the railroad. The thought of a prosecution for the acceptance of a bribe was chimerical. William F. Herrin, attorney for the Southern Pacific in San Francisco, was the “boss” of the state. Applicants for positions, petitioners for governmental relief, and citizens in search of “justice,” did not go to Sacramento, for they knew that the real governor was elsewhere, and so they waited in Mr. Herrin’s reception room. The situation seemed hopeless until the question of the Funding Bill was presented to Congress. Through the lax political economy of Abraham Lincoln, the railroads had been able to borrow an enormous sum of money from the government, upon which they had never paid a cent of principal or interest. It was now proposed, with brazen insolence, that Congress extend the time of payment virtually a hundred years. In the possibility of defeating this bill, California saw a chance to force the Southern Pacific out of business, and to establish a government railroad from Omaha to San Francisco.

Mr. Hearst, clever demagogue then as now, rushed to the attack, and launched a great campaign against the railroad. His agents circulated a petition and obtained 200,000 signatures against the Funding Bill. Mass meetings were held and thousands were turned away. The fight was on. On January 18, 1896, Hearst sent Bierce a wire, which he published in *The Examiner*, “Railroad combination so strong in Washington that seems almost impossible to break them, yet it is certainly the duty of all having interests of coast at heart to make most strenuous efforts. Will you please go to Washington for *Examiner*. I will send Davenport from here and the *Journal* will use whatever power it has to assist.” To this wire Bierce responded: “I shall be glad to do whatever I can toward defeating Mr. Huntington’s Funding Bill and shall start for Washington on Monday evening next.” The incident is typical of the relation between Hearst and Bierce. Here again, in a strange commingling of motives and purposes, the two were allied. Bierce once wrote: “If ever two men were born to be enemies he (Hearst) and I are they.” And yet on many questions Mr. Hearst’s self-interested journalism ran parallel with Bierce’s prejudices, as was so notably the case with the fight that ensued in Washington over the Funding Bill. Bierce left California at once, taking his son Leigh with him. He was faced east again, the first time in sixteen years. He went prepared for a great fight, backed with every facility that Mr. Hearst could command, and with instructions to lead the attack. There is little question but that he was the generalissimo of the California lobby at Washington during 1896, and how effective that lobby was will soon be apparent. Incidentally he went east armed with a letter from his physician, Dr. Cleveland, whose cousin was President of the United States.

When Bierce went to Washington in 1896, he was at the height of his career. The well-known pencil sketch of Bierce by Miss F. Soule Campbell was drawn from a photograph taken by Prince that year in Washington. It has done as much for Bierce’s fame, perhaps, as any merit in his work. The picture used in the “Letters of Ambrose Bierce,” published by the Book Club of California is an interesting study, showing, as it does, Bierce with a newspaper clenched in his hands as a bludgeon. But Miss Campbell’s study rarefies the rather coarse features of Bierce and softens the expression. In her picture his face is brilliant, fine, poetic. Her drawing should have written under it the verses which he originally wrote for his daughter, but a copy of which he gave to Miss Campbell:

How blind is he who, powerless to discern
The glories that about his pathway burn,
Walks unaware the avenues of Dream
Nor sees the domes of paradise agleam!
O — Golden Age, to him more nobly planned
Thy light lies ever upon sea and land;
From sordid scenes he lifts his eyes at will
And sees a Grecian god on every hill.

The portrait by Partington is more to life, but, as is so often the case, the more imaginative study divined a quality not apparent to the eye. When this drawing is compared with the best known portrait studies of Henry James, — (with his sleek complacent features), — and of Edgar Saltus, — (trying to look like an American Oscar Wilde), — something of the difference in men becomes apparent. The two most interesting faces of the period were those of Mark Twain and Ambrose Bierce, for in each case it is a face illuminated with the energy of unique personality. The matter is not altogether trivial: no one who ever saw Bierce could think him unimportant.

In Washington the fight over the Funding Bill was attracting national attention. The excitement was at its height during January, February and March of 1896. Immediately upon his arrival at the battle front, Bierce began to send long dispatches to *The Examiner*, the first of which appeared on February 2nd, 1896, under the blazing headline: “Huntington Lying in His Last Ditch.” Bierce never showed more keenness than in his change of technique during this important campaign. In San Francisco he had early perceived that he must be direct and personal to be effective, for the scene would admit of no other technique. As Percival Pollard once remarked with great discernment: “The impersonal manner is impossible in our present sophistication,” referring to the America of his time. But in Washington, Bierce realized that he was writing for the country at large, and that he was assured an audience. He must be clear, forceful and persuasive about his presentation of the case against Huntington, and so he quickly abandoned the unmodulated satire of his early journalism. He did not, of course, become gentle. He started his first article as follows: “Mr. Huntington is not altogether bad. Though severe, he is merciful. He tempers invective with falsehood. He says ugly things of the enemy, but he has the tenderness to be careful that they are mostly lies.”

If California was ably represented at Washington, it can scarcely be said that Mr. Huntington’s defense was neglected. He had established a veritable barrage of publicity and was fighting, with his customary determination, to befog the issues. One trick of his hirelings was to quote the names of prominent San Franciscans who were supposed to favor the bill, thus creating the impression that California endorsed the measure. Bierce printed all these names at the head of his dispatches and such pressure was brought to bear upon them in San Francisco that they quickly abandoned Mr. Huntington. The railroad was then virtually Mr. Huntington, as his old associates had all died previous to this time. Every day that the fight continued it became more and more apparent that the measure would be defeated. Bierce would intersperse his articles with such a remark as this: “Mr. Huntington appeared before the committee and took his hands out of all pockets long enough to be sworn.” The old Hearst squadron was functioning to perfection, and a more effective journalistic machine never existed in this country. Swinnerton and Davenport in their cartoons reached a high level of caricature and left not a vestige of pride or respect to Mr. Huntington. In San Francisco “Andy” Lawrence was shrewdly keeping the people in a frenzy of indignation and excitement, and wiring Bierce to “send some of your gems — something Biercy.” Bierce’s dispatches were featured in the Hearst newspapers and the interview which he gave some Eastern reporters at the Hotel Page was a masterpiece of effective propaganda. It was the beginning of Bierce’s vogue among Eastern newspapermen. They did not forget this very impressive and handsome Ambrose Bierce. A young reporter who was covering Washington at the time for some Pacific Coast newspapers told about visiting Bierce one day during a lull in the fight. He closed his interview in this manner: “Be good till I see you again,” he said with one of the smiles which let one see behind the ulterior austerity of his bearing and into the real nature of the man himself, which I am sure is the kindest possible. “Be good, if you don’t care for happiness, and God will bless you, and finally kill you.”

Bierce received the active cooperation throughout the fight of Senator Morgan of Alabama, who was being groomed for the presidency at the time. One day, coming out of a committee session, Bierce and some other men met Collis P. Huntington on the steps of the Capitol. Previously Bierce had declined Huntington’s hand in a committee session. But on this occasion Huntington approached and began to inquire as to how much Bierce wanted to withdraw from the fight. Meeting with a stony rejection of every bid, Huntington finally shouted: “Well, name your price; every man has his price.” It was then that Bierce made the famous statement that his price was the amount that Huntington owed the government, and that he might pay it to the Secretary of the Treasury. The story was sent around the world under the flamboyant caption: “The Pen is Mightier than the Sword” or, in some instances, “The Man Without a Price.” Later Huntington was asked why he tried to shake hands with Bierce in the committee room and replied, with typical callousness, “Oh, I just wanted to see how big he was,” and then added, “I know now.”

The experience in the East was not altogether distasteful to Bierce. He was the center of a great deal of attention and he had enjoyed the experience of matching his satire against the wiles of Collis P. Huntington. Bierce had been sent east, as shown by the wire of Mr. Hearst, but his second trip to Washington was at his own request, and was no doubt the result of the pleasant time he had in 1896. One day he was standing in the Senate gallery and chanced to hear Mr. Sherman shout, during the course of an address: “If that is not war, then where in the name of hell does war exist?” A woman standing at Bierce’s side asked him if he had heard anything unusual. He replied: “I really do not know whether or not the expression that he used is common in your tongue. I am from Kansas.” Another incident is rather amusing. One day he chanced to be in a hotel lobby conversing with two very well-known New York society women who were visiting in Washington. An old, shabbily dressed man walked up and spoke to one of the ladies, and she acknowledged his greeting in a courteous manner. After the man had turned away, the other lady said: “Mrs.

A — , how could you speak to such a creature!” Mrs. A — started to explain that the old man had been a former servant, but Bierce interrupted her to say: “It is unnecessary for Mrs. A — to offer an explanation. *She* can afford to be seen speaking to any one.” The “mauve decade” was never more amazing than during these months. At the home of a Western family which had recently acquired a vast fortune, Mr. Bierce was admonished by the hostess to notice her beautiful “spinal” staircase. It was an age of fuss and showiness and Bierce was amused. It certainly offered a bigger scene than San Francisco. He would come back to Washington again.

During the summer, Bierce’s old associate E. H. (“Ned”) Hamilton was covering the Democratic Convention at Chicago and the railroad issue was an important question during the first days of the convention. But suddenly it was forgotten in the shouting about “silver.” Mr. Bierce did not, however, show the same enthusiasm for the young, handsome and rhetorical William Jennings Bryan that the other Hearst journalists did under the instructions of their chief. Mr. Hearst’s papers acclaimed Bryan as the great savior; the man of the hour; and destiny’s choice. But Bierce with ears that were deaf to the rumble and roar of the press and the people, paused in his castigation of Huntington long enough to remark, with characteristic sweetness, “Mr. Bryan’s creation was the unstudied act of his own larnyx; it said ‘Let there be Bryan’ and there was Bryan.’” Bierce marched with Mr. Hearst when it was against some one he disliked, but now he refused to join a band wagon that he knew was headed by the most nonsensical buffoon and demagogue of the century. Moreover, it was from this date that he began to have frequent quarrels with the Hearst editors. From 1896 on, Mr. Hearst was looking with lustful eyes on the possession of the White House, and Bierce knew it and despised him for the ambition. Bierce had some hopes of checking the tide of empty bombast that he saw captivating the country, but by 1913 he had long since despaired of the task. But he did recognize a demagogue when he saw one and later wrote these very sharp lines about Mr. Hearst:

"With many amiable and alluring qualities, among which is, or used to be, a personal modesty amounting to bashfulness, the man has not a friend in the world. Nor does he merit one, for, either congenitally or by induced perversity, he is inaccessible to the conception of an unselfish attachment or a disinterested motive. Silent and smiling, he moves among men, the loneliest man. Nobody but God loves him and he knows it; and God's love he values only in so far as he fancies that it may promote his amusing ambition to darken the door of the White House. As to that, I think that he would be about the kind of President that the country — daft with democracy and sick with sin — is beginning to deserve."

The excerpt is quoted from a manuscript of about fourteen pages which Bierce wrote to fill out the last volume of his "Collected Works." He informed his immediate friends that it formed merely an introduction to a longer work which he intended to write about Mr. Hearst, but which he would never publish during the life of Mrs. Phoebe Hearst, for whom he entertained a very high regard. The rest of the manuscript was never found, and it is extremely doubtful if it was ever written, although there was one trunk which was lost at Laredo in 1913 that might have contained the copy. What a pity that it was never written! Bierce would have been a writer fitted by temperament and experience to analyze properly Mr. Hearst and to point out the significance of the appearance of such a demagogue in the democracy of which Thomas Jefferson had dreamed so nobly.

The strain of the long fight in Washington began to tell on Bierce by the summer of 1896. In the early part of June, he was stricken quite seriously ill and had to go to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He suffered acutely from his asthma and was confined in the old Eagle Hotel for some time. Wires poured in from all imaginable sources, messages of condolence, sympathy, congratulation, and affection. Sam Chamberlain, Mr. Hearst, Bierce's children, Amy Cecil, were all worried and alarmed by the reports they received of his condition. The old blight was upon him again. Never for a cognizable interval had the shadow of its dreaded hand been lifted from his life. It came at nights while he slept; and in the sunny moments of the day, it was a spectre that stalked by his side. During these long nocturnal trysts with death when he wheezed and coughed and struggled for breath, bent over the backs of chairs in squalid hotels, alone and unattended, all the memories of horror and suffering which he otherwise kept, as Mr. Mumford intimates, under a “mechanism of concealment,” were unleased. Death, and death’s music, were with him always. By experience he had come to view death quizzically and with a sneer; contemplation of its significance had made even death negligible. But it served, this ever-present consciousness of death, to beat life into place, to reduce it to such a lowly level that it was wholly contemptible and unworthy. Out in that easy, slothful, lackadaisical world morons and zanies applauded clowns who shouted and roared for their entertainment and the process was known as the selection of a president. Other lovely mannered “genderless gents” wrote novels of “local color” or spent their time in idle, ridiculous, “muckraking” and were pronounced artists. “Nothing mattered,” he said and who, pray tell, would argue with him?

When he was able to be about, he returned to New York, and his copy was dispatched from that city during August and September of 1896. He was not writing very much for *The Examiner* during these months and occasionally his copy would not appear for weeks at a time. In January of 1897 the Funding Bill was defeated and Bierce left for California. The long fight was at an end, and he was glad to be traveling west again. Another circuit of the continent: to England and back; to Dakota and return; to New York and then to San Francisco again; tracks that passed and repassed in an endless repetition of trivial experiences. But always, it seemed, he returned to the coast.

The work that Bierce did towards defeating the Funding Bill, apart from the sensational drama of the Huntington interview, was of the first importance. Furthermore, it was generally recognized and conceded at the time that his influence had determined the battle. Swinnerton pictured him in several cartoons chastising Mr. Huntington with great vigor and skill. The supplement of *The Examiner* for February 22, 1896, during the thick of the fight, was entirely devoted to an account of Bierce’s activities. T. T. Williams wired him, “My congratulations on defeat of Funding Bill due to the able and earnest and honest manner in which you fought against it. If you had done no other good than this, your creation as a beneficent influence would be more than justified.” Long before his colleagues, David Graham Phillips and Alfred Henry Lewis, started their muckraking journalism, Mr. Bierce had fought and won a most decisive victory over one of the worst monopolies that ever disgraced this country. But he had drawn no hasty inferences, and, once the fight was over, it was for him a closed chapter. Would that there had been other journalists as sensible! When Bierce actually arrived in San Francisco, he was given quite a reception and the newspapers were full of cartoons showing “Ambrose Bierce” returning to a city strewn with flowers, etc., to do him honor.

That this account of Bierce’s activities in connection with the defeat of the Funding Bill is not colored by personal admiration is borne out by the fact that in 1910, when Charles Edward Russell began to publish his well-known series of articles on the “Railroads,” and after nearly two decades had passed and public opinion had become somewhat clarified, Mr. Russell made this comment in reference to Bierce’s journalism:

> “These articles were extraordinary examples of invective and bitter sarcasm. They were addressed to the dishonest nature of the bill and to the real reasons why the machine had slated it for passage. When Mr. Bierce began his campaign, few persons imagined that the bill could be stopped. After a time the skill and steady persistence of the attack began to draw wide attention. With six months of incessant firing, Mr. Bierce had the railroad forces frightened and wavering; and before the end of the year, he had them whipped. The bill was withdrawn and killed, and in 1898 Congress adopted an amendment to the general deficiency bill, providing for the collection of the Pacific Railroad subsidy debt, principal and interest.”

And, not only was the defeat of the railroad a great achievement in itself, but the consequences of the victory can scarcely be overestimated. It marked the doom of Southern Pacific dominance in California, for in the mayoralty campaign of 1896, Fremont Older managed to get his candidate, James D. Phelan, a liberal, elected mayor of San Francisco. The tide had turned and it did not cease rolling on to victory until Hiram Johnson had been elected Governor. Then, after he had framed the famous act creating the Railway Commission and amending the State Constitution so as to give the newly created commission sweeping powers of regulation and control, the Southern Pacific episode was closed once and for all.

On the way to San Francisco, Bierce stopped at Los Angeles, registering at the Van Nuys Hotel on March 30, 1897. He was the guest of General O. H. LaGrange for several weeks at Soldiers’ Home, where the General was Commandant. There were several long visits with the daughter and with other friends, including Charles Fletcher Lummis, editor of “Out West,” but there was no word for Mollie Day Bierce, who, in 1896, had left St. Helena to come to Los Angeles to live with her mother. Mrs. Bierce stayed in the North until Bierce had left for Washington, and then, thinking that he was going to live permanently in the East, had moved to Los Angeles. General LaGrange, on this occasion, made the fatal mistake of trying to intercede with Mr. Bierce, on behalf of Mrs. Bierce, to effect a reconciliation. Not knowing the facts, the General had assumed that it was actually a case of “desertion,” and had spoken rather sharply to Bierce about the duties of a husband. There was a stormy scene at the Commandant’s home and Bierce left in anger for the North. He wrote the General a scorching letter, in which he branded his old friend with disloyalty, not in befriending Mrs. Bierce, but in accusing Bierce without waiting for or requesting an explanation. Under the circumstances, the General was the last person in the world who should have accused Bierce of mistreating a woman, and the old fellow must have smarted under the lashing lines of that parting curse for many days. But, in an explanation to his daughter, Bierce said: “My child, there is only one woman in my life that I have loved and that woman happens to be your mother.”

CHAPTER XV. “THE SHADOW MAKER”

ALTHOUGH Bierce was received with exceptional enthusiasm on the part of his associates and the friends of *The Examiner,* still there were intimations of displeasure from the other journals. A writer on *The Call* observed that “the rascal of the sorrel hair” had returned to San Francisco. Doubtless the old offenders prepared for a renewal of the rough treatment to which they had by that time become adjusted. They were not to be disappointed, for Bierce was soon applying his whip with unmitigated zest, writing that “compared with Senator White, Senator Perkins is a clouted suckling. Senator Perkins is a leader only when followed by a line of cows curious to ascertain what else he is, and if he is good to eat.” But it is apparent that Bierce was beginning to suffer from mental fatigue. Satire is endless work and ultimately the satirist wearies of his task, as it gradually becomes apparent to him that his sharp comments are lost in a whirlwind of nonsense. The edge of Bierce’s wit was blunted with hard usage, and he could stoop to such clumsy abuse as this:

“Here lies Greer Harrison, a well cracked louse —
So small a tenant of so big a house.”

But it was about this time that the Spanish-American fiasco gave him the material for the last burst of his fine satirical powers.

Prior to his sojourn in Washington he had noticed that “War — Horrid War! — between the United States and Spain has already broken out like a red rash in the newspapers, whose managing commodores are shivering their timbers and blasting their toplights with a truly pelagic volubility and no little *vraisemblance.”* But when Mr. Hearst, with all his gaudy propaganda about Evangelina Cisneros, had forced McKinley’s hand and we were at war with Spain, not even the colored flags and patriotic headlines of *The Examiner* deceived Bierce for one moment. In the thick of the excitement he wrote such trenchant statements as these: “We are at war with Spain to-day merely in obedience to a suasion that has been gathering force from the beginning of our national existence. The passion for territory once roused rages like a lion; successive conquests only strengthen it. That is the fever that is now burning in the American blood.” (*The Examiner,* July 31, 1898.) “We are not being pushed into the forefront of this bloody struggle for place and power and more of earth by any necessity more imperious than our desire.” (*The Examiner,* July 24, 1898.) And what better comment could have been made at the moment than this: “We can conquer these people without half trying, for we belong to the race of gluttons and drunkards to whom dominion is given over the abstemious. We can thrash them consummately and every day of the week, but we cannot understand them; and is it not a great golden truth, shining like a star, that what one does not understand one knows to be bad?” (August 7, 1898, *The Examiner.)*

He was not deceived by the national psychology that had made war with Spain inevitable. Nor was he particularly deceived by all the talk anent the “perfidious Aguinaldo” and the “mighty power of Spain.” Mr. Bryan and Mr. Roosevelt did not gain his admiration by their obvious play for the grandstand in “raising volunteer” regiments. He suggested that the regiment which Mr. Bryan threatened to organize should be called the “Nebraska Immunes,” and that life insurance companies extend to it special policies at low rates. He announced that he did not share “this paper’s confidence in the formidable character of the dynamite cruiser *Vesuvius,”* and he did not hesitate to write very pointed criticisms of Sampson’s tactics. “Instead of corking Cervera in, Sampson corked himself out. It did not matter: he was held out, anyhow, by the iron hand of his timidity.” The miserable triviality of that tawdry drama was an open book for him: the horrible blunders, the *opéra bouffe* charges, the sophomoric tactics, the race for honors, the petty bickering and quarrels, the hysteria of the people and the sentiments of the press, were all recorded with amused contempt in his column. The spectacle rather fatigued him, but he did correspond with some of the officers and later read with care the manuscript of his friend H. H. Sargeant on “The History of the Santiago Campaign,” and in Washington he was a factor in securing relief for Wolf son, the Confederate rebel who had fought so bravely in the war with Spain.

During these first months after his return from Washington, he lived at the old El Monte Hotel in Los Gatos. Los Gatos, situated at the foot of the Santa Cruz Mountains, overlooking the entire Santa Clara Valley, possessed a warm, dry climate that seemed to give him relief for his asthma. When the spells were too severe, he could take the train at Los Gatos and ride a few miles to Wright’s station, almost at the crest of the mountains, where he stayed at the old Jeffreys Hotel or camp. To Los Gatos and Wrights came the endless hordes of his “pupils,” admirers, and the few faithful but devoted friends. He was never to have such a list of pupils as he had at this time. Carroll Carrington wrote him letters of adoration and called him “Dear Mentor” and reviewed his books with dutiful reverence in *The Examiner.* Then, too, Mr. Markham’s secretary, Jean Hazen, sent some sketches to Bierce which he managed to have published. These pupils were sending him constant verses and poems, some of which were addressed to the Master, as this valentine:

“O Sly Reformer in a cynic’s guise!
Fools led by love see deeper than the wise;
I see in Prattle sermons for the town;
That spare the sin, but gaily cut the sinner down.

Thy word has been my lamp for several years:
Now take my little song of praise — and fears,
For well I know thy joy is in the feeble line,
And thou wilt even flay poor me, thy valentine.”

He would often visit Mr and Mrs. Hirshberg at Ione, where Mr. Hirshberg was in charge of the school for incorrigible boys. He suggested to Mr. Hirshberg once that these boys should all be sent away to war and shot: that they could never be cured of the disorders that made them criminals. It was to the Hirshbergs, too, that he would come on his bicycle for periodic visits from Los Gatos. Upon his arrival, he would line the young ladies of the family up in stair-step fashion and kiss them all from the tallest to the smallest. It was once suggested to Mr. Bierce that he was inconsistent in liking female, but disliking male, Semitics. To this he responded, and the observation is borne out by his practice, that he “hated Hebrews but adored She-brews.” So greatly was he admired by the female side of the Hirshberg family that some irate male had written under his picture the single word: “God.” Mrs. Hirshberg, “the best of my best friends,” as he once said, would send him food when he was ill in Oakland and could not be about. As soon as he recovered, he would call at their home. It was like, as Mrs. Hirshberg says, “The sun coming out from behind a cloud: he was eager, joyous, splendid.” After one particularly severe attack of asthma, he said to her, “Israel has touched me with his wing again.” Naturally he was lionized by the women.

Mrs. Hirshberg and Dr. C. W. Doyle had cared for a little deaf girl, Lily Walsh, who worked around in restaurants and hotels, but who seemed to show considerable promise as a poetess. They showed her work to Bierce, and he immediately became interested in the child and sent her to a school for the deaf in Berkeley. She seems to have been a preternaturally wise and solemn child. She would write all manner of verse, stilted romances of knights and ladies, and essays for Bierce’s approval. He kept a sheath of her manuscripts; and the kindness that he showed her was but typical of his great tenderness for all weak and pathetic creatures. To those who think, as does Mrs. Charlotte Gilman, that Bierce was an inhuman scourge, perhaps the realization of the kind and patient care that he devoted to Lily Walsh might force the correction of a hastily formed opinion. The brother of Lily Walsh was also a devoted admirer of Bierce, and he wrote from New York: "He, the ideal Ambrose Bierce, Saint Ambrose of Los Gatos, is the measure of my conduct." One of Lily Walsh's compositions was the following poem addressed to "A. B."

"O! as some pine towers free and far
Above its forest fellows, matchless in height,
Grace, strength and majesty; so in the might
Of his grand intellect he towers. Dwarfed are
All who beside him stand. They enviously mar
The glory of his shining, quench his light
With lie-tipped tongues, pens dipped in ink of spite
(So, have we seen clouds strive to dim a star
And all as vainly.) While pens scratch, tongues wag
He stands serenely on Truth's rugged rock
To which he's rooted firmly as the pine
Is rooted to Earth's bosom. Winds may drag
That forest monarch from his throne. Not shock
Of Quaking Earth can move this friend of mine."

It was just such blind, unquestioning adoration as this that Bierce inspired in all his young admirers. There were no bounds to their enthusiasm. While Lily Walsh was attending the school at Berkeley, she died and her last request was that she might be buried at Los Gatos where she could be near Bierce, but her relatives were Catholics and hence she was buried in St. Mary's Cemetery at Oakland. Bierce was quite ill at the time or else, as he afterwards remarked, he would have seen that her wish was regarded. His capacity for suffering is shown by his grief over the death of this girl: he mourned over her, as Mrs. Hirshberg says, "like a father."

"To parents only," he wrote, "death brings an inconsolable sorrow. When the young die and the old live, nature's machinery is working with friction that we name grief."

On the outskirts of Los Gatos was one of the largest and most valuable ranches in California. It was owned then by the Hume family. This enormous prune orchard stretched along the foothills for miles. Frank Hume, one of the owners, had started to build a magnificent country place which he called "Dotswood," but he had constructed only one splendid room around which he expected to build his mansion. The ranch itself was named after his very charming wife, Una Hume, and was known as “Glen Una.” At the time that Bierce first went to live at Los Gatos, Mrs. Hume was a widow, and she entertained most elegantly for her friends. She and Bierce became great friends. In fact, Bierce’s affection for Una Hume was one of the reasons that kept him at Los Gatos so long. When their friendship was broken, he determined to go east. Mrs. Hume was a most attractive woman, talented, gracious, and charming and her home was always full of San Francisco people over the week end.

One day Bierce walked out from Los Gatos to call on Mrs. Hume, who was just recuperating from an illness. He entered the gates of Dotswood, nestling as it does in a little grove backed against the hillside, and was about to ring the doorbell when he was accosted by a very determined and spirited Irish nurse. She informed him that Mrs. Hume could see no one and a battle royale ensued, but Theresa McCarthy was not to be overawed, even by Ambrose Bierce, and so Bierce had to turn around and go back to Los Gatos. He later became quite friendly with the nurse, and they exchanged many hot sallies of wit during the time she was attending Mrs. Hume.

Miss McCarthy liked to set baits for Bierce’s rage during his frequent calls at Dotswood. She asked him one day why he always said: “God bless you!” when he did not believe in God. He answered this by saying: “If I actually believed in him, I wouldn’t dare mention his name.” The other gentlemen who called at Dotswood, particularly certain San Franciscans, were quite jealous of Bierce’s position. In an effort to discredit him, they told Mrs. Hume that he had once been expelled from the Bohemian Club for boasting of his conquests with women. Miss McCarthy, anticipating a great burst of indignation, related this story to him. He smiled and sat musing in the twilight for awhile — the warm sweet twilight that came to them through the stained glass windows designed by Bruce Porter — toying with the cocktail that had been served him from the miniature bar in the rear of the room. Then he said, very softly: “Boasting of my conquests with women at the Bohemian Club? Why, my dear, I couldn’t have gotten the floor if I had tried!”

There were several women in Bierce’s life who occupied positions analogous to that of Mrs. Hume, that is, the beloved friend and confidante, some one to be slightly romantic about, if not actually anchored to by the skeins of an infatuation. These women knew him better than any other people in his life; it was to them, rather than to his immediate family or to his journalistic associates, that he talked most freely about his career, his dreams and his ambitions. Men saw a different Bierce: an elaborate cynic, a hardened skeptic, and a calloused satirist. But there were sonnets for the ladies, occasionally, and many a note full of soft pauses and waltz rhythms. With men he was often enough a good fellow, a congenial drinking companion, and capable of rabelaisian bursts of humor. The kindly, white-whiskered old veterans of the domino tables at the Family Club in San Francisco still tell amusing stories about the unprinted portions of his "Devil's Dictionary," ending always with his definition of "Heaven": "Copulation without culmination."

Women were really offensive in the manner that they threw themselves at Bierce. His "Prattle" was literally a dragnet that drew innumerable sentimental notes and requests for clandestine appointments. He did not hesitate in later years to write rather sharp letters to these forward ladies; one such suggestion for an appointment brought this sentence from a scorching reply: "Madam: Commonly when one of your sex writes pleasantly to a stranger, it is because she wants something." But while he was in California, it was not at all unusual for him to receive lyrics on pink stationery from Dimond, California, or stately and quivering sonnets from admiring poetesses at Lake Tahoe, opening with such sentiments as this: "You recall? We walked in the woods that matchless day—" But the ladies that he did admire consumed a great deal of his time: several of his friends lament to this day the hours that he loitered and dallied when he might have been at his work.

At Wrights, Bierce stayed at the Jeffreys Hotel, where he occupied a little cabin set off by itself. One day as he was rounding the corner of the hotel at top speed, he collided with a young girl. He assumed a very superior manner and sniffed something to the effect that he "supposed" she had planned the collision in lieu of an introduction. It was the defensive attitude of a fugitive from feminine wiles. But, to his amazement, he was assured, with extraordinary force and emphasis, that nothing of the sort was in the young lady's thoughts. He apologized and they both concluded that it was a fortunate meeting anyway and became the best of friends. The young lady's name was Leila Cotton. She lived with her family in a delightful old frame house with a circular porch, that was called "Bohemia." He was promptly adopted by the Cotton family, and used to take his meals at "Bohemia."

These last years in California were rather indolent and carefree days for Bierce. His duties were negligible and there were several long intervals during which he did no work for *The Examiner,* the result of spirited and periodic resignations. Nor was he writing any stories at this time. There were long tramps in the woods, usually at night when his asthma kept him out of doors, and the usual week-end foray to San Francisco, or a trip down to Los Gatos to chat with Una Hume. At nights the dark forests of the Santa Cruz Mountains were blue with their cool radiance, and the valleys were full of deep soft pools of darkness.

There were redwoods and pines, and an infinite variety of ferns and forest flowers, and in the distance the Santa Clara Valley was full of an unnameable magic when, at dusk, the shadows involved it and the lights of San José gleamed like phosphorescent fish in a sea of darkness. But, strangely enough, none of this beauty, none of the splendid stillness of the forests, ever got into his work save by a mischance. It was a strange man who could live at Wrights and at Angwins and be impervious to the natural splendor about him. But he was preoccupied with thoughts of the past, with grisly images of death, with a feeling of strangeness and unreality about the entire scene.

The constant stream of pupils and disciples did not cease when he was at Wrights, but came up the grade from Los Gatos and followed him to his lair with indefatigible zeal. Herman Scheffauer was often at the camp; Edwin Markham came often, too, until that fatal afternoon when he read "The Man with the Hoe" and was furiously denounced as a traitor to his art and a victim of reform. So severely did Bierce denounce the poem in print that a debate was provoked, the last echoes of which did not cease to appear in *The Examiner* for months. But when Cora Case accused Markham of stealing the poem from her, Bierce was one of the first to rush to the defense of his old friend. The battle which raged over "The Man With the Hoe" was only a battle of ideas and Bierce would not have been so severe in his criticism had he not entertained a very high regard for Mr. Markham's non-socialistic verse. When Scheffauer could not be at "Valhalla" at the feet of his "Tor," as he referred to Bierce and his cabin, he would write interminable letters, thirty and forty pages long, written in an indecipherable script and full of the wildest and most chaotic and emotional bombast. When Scheffauer discovered Nietzsche the effect was almost fatal, for he promptly adopted the rhapsodical manner of Zarathustra and no one could understand his ravings. No wonder Bierce wearied of the fellow.

At the other side of the range was Santa Cruz and Bierce could proceed there in search of amusement when he knew that the hostess of Dotswood was not at home. At Santa Cruz Mr. Bierce came to know Dr. C. W. Doyle. Doyle was a scholarly fellow, something of a bibliophile, and a considerable drinker. He wrote several volumes of Kipling-esque short stories, "The Taming of the Jungle" and "The Shadow of Quong Lung," one of which he dedicated to Bierce. While not, except in a very limited sense, a pupil, he was yet influenced by Bierce and would never have published the two volumes without his kindly encouragement and interest. The Doctor presented Bierce with a handsome volume of Sir Thomas Browne's "Religico Medici" which was, along with a diminutive edition of Pascal's "Pensées," the favorite item in Bierce's library. At Santa Cruz, also, Bierce met some friends of Dr. Doyle's, the MacKenzies, Agnes and Margaret. He thought that Agnes possessed a genuine talent as a painter, and, with Margaret to amuse them both, they would take long jaunts through the woods. Bierce would instruct the one in design at the same time that he corrected the other's pronunciation. Wherever he lived, at San Rafael, St. Helena, Wrights, or Santa Cruz, he was almost invariably the "mentor" of some group of artists.

One time while he was at Wrights, a woman came up from San Francisco to interview him on the subject of the proper method of rearing the young. He tried to avoid her, dodged her questions, and fled in panic to a friendly porch to read his newspaper in quiet. But she soon discovered his retreat and came rushing to propound more questions. Did Mr. Bierce know any of the ancients who might be read with instruction on the subject? It seemed that he did, for he answered: "Study Herod, Madam, study Herod." During an early visit of the Markhams, Bierce succeeded in inducing Mrs. Markham to drink mulled claret on his representation that all the alcohol was "burnt out." He was always willing to drop his book and go for a walk, or to visit with some pupil, as when George Sterling or Mabel Wood (now Mabel Wood Martin) another pupil, would come up to see him. He was rather bored with his work on *The Examiner,* and spent most of his time in the woods; he seemed to have lost something of his former interest in "Prattle" and only on occasions would it show the brilliancy of former years. He sensed a change and he felt the need of new scenes.

Of all his pupils only Sterling and Scheffauer were destined to achieve any fame or distinction in the art. Some of the others might have gone far, indeed, but when he left the coast in 1899, they quickly neglected the duties and tasks to which he had set them and became teachers, nurses, or Christian Science practitioners. It has been intimated that Bierce helped young writers because he sensed his own limitations, and sought to acquire in another's attainments what he had failed to achieve. It is difficult, of course, to analyze a motive in another. But from an examination of his correspondence, it is apparent that he was quite disinterested in the assistance that he gave many of these young people. He surely did not seek them out: in every instance they came to him begging the advice and assistance which he never withheld from a "worthy case," be it Lily Walsh or Herman Scheffauer. Of course he was hurt and offended when, in later years, Scheffauer told tales about him and scoffed at the idea that Bierce had ever been of assistance to the Scheffauer who had visited Prof. Ernest Haeckel at Basle in 1904 and had his picture taken with the great scientist. By that time he had forgotten those myriad letters, the tons of scribbled adoration and praise that he had penned for his "Magister" at Wrights. It was so with many others. But that there was anything parasitic about Bierce's relations with these pupils is too preposterous to warrant refutation.

Mark Twain had gone East; Bret Harte had been an early fugitive; Stoddard was in Europe for years; and Bierce himself had attempted an escape which had failed. While the others were able to make an escape, Bierce stayed on in the West, rooted to the Bay District. It was thus that he became, as J. S. Cowley-Brown said, “a literary Rhadamanthus,” making and breaking literary reputations on the coast, its foremost writer and its chief figure. His name became a tradition in the West. Young reporters cherished their sheath of notes from “Bierce,” minor poets were grateful of a few kindly words in “Prattle” or a poem that was printed in its columns, or for a book sent them or a picture, or a pressed fern leaf, or an inscription in “Tales of Soldiers and Civilians.” The value of such a tradition can scarcely be overestimated. Bierce sent Sterling on his way to fame; Sterling went to Carmel and himself became a tradition in time; and a decade later Robinson Jeffers published “Tamar and Other Poems.” It is not so much a question as to whether or not Bierce’s influence was always creative, as it is the fact that some one remained on the coast to keep alive the semblance of an interest in the arts. Personally, I think his pupils could not have had a better “mentor.” He would tolerate no cheap and specious reasoning, and they must devote themselves unsparingly to their art. He did not rest with this, but proceeded to pound out of them the emotional optimism which infected the times. As Scheffauer later wrote: “The old Spartan over whom a hundred storms of destiny raged, and who had been obliged to arm himself for many hard battles, had become callous. He ducked me in an intellectual Styx which was for me a veritable chalybeate bath. It bewitched me against many threatening dangers of sentimentality and absurdity which frequently steal upon the young American writer.”

It was while Bierce was at Wrights that he came to know Josephine Clifford McCrackin. She was the “Josephine Clifford” of the early issues of *The Overland Monthly* and *The Californian.* This old lady wrote Bierce the saddest of letters addressed to “Dear Grossmeister,” for her life had been one long trail of sorrow and misery along which she had moved with splendid indifference and unconcern. She tried to remonstrate with Bierce, when, in 1913, he wrote her that “fear of death is the invention of a humorist,” and attempted to point out to him the irrationality of the romantic quest for adventure. But he would not heed her advice; his curiosity demanded satisfaction. Romanticism is, of course, as Mr. Eliot has observed, “a short cut to the strangeness without the reality, and it leads its disciples only back upon themselves.” Much of the “Werther-like pessimism” that Scheffauer had noted in Bierce was the result of this feeling of emptiness provoked by a habit of questing restlessly about for a sensation that had once been experienced fortuitously. This impatience began to characterize Bierce very definitely from 1899 until his disappearance into Mexico.

After the destruction of her home, Monte Paraiso Cottage, in the Santa Cruz Mountains, Mrs. McCrackin was left in straitened circumstances, and it was to relieve this situation that Bierce tried to get several publishers to bring out a volume of her stories. Finally it was arranged, but under the management of George Wharton James, the J. Middleton Murray of Pasadena, who brought out a collection of her stories in 1913, for which Bierce wrote an introduction. His introduction is a little masterpiece of evasion, and it rather admits that the stories were unexceptional, although the lady who wrote them was a noble character. Bierce used to stride out of his little cabin, bang the door, and announce to his friends that he was "going over to see Jo," as he called Mrs. McCrackin. God knows what these rare spirits discoursed about, high in the blue-black shadows of the Santa Cruz Mountains!

A change was taking place in Bierce's writing at this time, a change which must have reflected some corresponding change in the man himself. During these years, 1889-1899, he was at the apex of his career as a journalist in California. Popularly he was known as a Hearst journalist who wielded a mighty sword of abuse when in "good form." But the old fiery days of the "Prattler" were over, for it is apparent from his journalism of this period that he had lost something of his old zest for baiting morons. Without interruption, save for the months in Washington, over a period of thirty years, he had lived and worked in the Bay District. Of its feuds, murders, lusts, crimes, wrongs, not to mention minor frivolities, amusements, social and artistic performances, he had woven a gay pattern which was reflected in the crisp elegance of his column "Prattle." But he began to sense something wrong with his attitude. The satirist was too lowly a figure; he had seen vistas of grandeur during those months in Washington. He aspired to the chair of philosophy. A philosopher was to supplant a wit. The old life in San Francisco was over. The demagogic, prosy attitude of Hearst was beginning to have its effect even on Bierce. Those few months in Washington had whetted his appetite for a larger field, and he told Mr. A. M. Lawrence that a permanent change to Washington would be agreeable.

It is apparent from Bierce's letters to S. O. Howes of this period that he was dissatisfied with his position. We find him writing (date of May 14, 1899), "I am not writing much just now. I 'threw up my job' of Prattle because Mr. Hearst let his fools, fakers and freaks do what they would with it in the *N. Y. Journal* — the which I could nowise abide. They yellowed it every way they knew how, and mangled it at will." It was the recurrence of an old, old quarrel. As early as 1893 he was writing to Blanche Partington, "I peremptorily resigned from the

Examiner, and permitted myself to be coaxed back by Hearst.” How many times he resigned from the *Examiner* it is impossible to estimate; his letters indicate dozens of such quarrels. But about 1899, a serious quarrel was brewing. The Eastern Hearst papers were beginning to reproduce his copy, but would do so in any manner they saw fit. There are in existence two letters, one dated October 31, 1898, and the other November 20, 1898, both addressed to the editor of the *Journal* and remonstrating vociferously about this mooted problem. In fact, for a prior infringement of an imperial ukase about his copy, he ceased to write for nearly a year. He was thoroughly disgusted with his manner of life, and yet there didn’t seem much that one could do about it.

Bierce was turning philosophical, becoming pontifical; there was a heaviness about his writing that indicated a change of tempo. Bierce began to realize that this cross-pull in his nature had its limiting elements. He was, however, unable to make a clear break with his past. He was already fifty-seven years of age. The only thing left for him to do now was to attempt a rationalization of his past. In other words, his philosophy was to justify his satire. He knew that the other avenue, pure art, if one may use such a phrase, was a closed field. He had ceased, with a few exceptions, to write stories. He planned no romances. In fact, when asked to write a love story at a very remunerative sum for a popular magazine, he said; “Do I look like one who writes for the entertainment of chambermaids?” No, he was too intelligent to attempt such a belated change. He was caught in a vicious circle of cynicism. But his idealistic-romantic spirit continued to make overtures towards that “strangeness” of experience which finally lured him after its phosphorescent gleamings along the Mexican ranges.

It was about this time that an incident occurred which, coupled with the influences previously outlined, was responsible for Bierce requesting a permanent transfer to Washington. During the first months of his acquaintance with the beautiful mistress of “Dotswood,” he had occupied a position in that household of the first importance. It was rather a flattering experience for Mrs. Hume to have as an admirer such a distinguished gentleman. This was particularly true at Los Gatos, where Bierce’s fame was almost unbelievable. A lady who had merely a speaking acquaintance with him, once entered the same coach on which he was traveling to San Francisco. She was so delighted with the opportunity of vaunting her acquaintance with Ambrose Bierce, that she proceeded to introduce him to every one in the car, beginning on one side the aisle and completing the circle. Naturally Una Hume was not unmindful of the fame of Bierce during the early days of their friendship. But in time even the celebrated becomes but the accustomed in the court of a beautiful woman. Bierce was first annoyed and then peeved at the manner in which he was relegated by slow degrees to the periphery of her charmed circle of admirers. He was getting old and the realization was unpleasant. He would not, of course, tolerate such a state of affairs and soon quarreled and parted forever with the lady of gray eyes and the melodious voice.

It should not be assumed, for in truth the facts will not warrant such an assumption, that Bierce was devoted to Mrs. Hume or that she was other than a very beautiful and charming woman whom he greatly admired and in whose society he spent many pleasant hours. Such relations were very dear to Bierce, who was always a fugitive from society, living in out of the way places, and always rather lonely. He had stayed on in Los Gatos because it was pleasant and because Dotswood was a retreat that mitigated the horrors of life in such a little village. But now there was no longer any reason to stay.

His determination to leave was a great blow to the group of people who had come to know and love him at Los Gatos and Wrights. He was always leaving and moving on in that restless search for an adequate experience, something, for example, that measured up to the best that war had offered. He was always leaving a circle of people behind him who invariably fell into awkward and strained attitudes once he was gone, losing the ambition which his instruction had inspired. It was because of this, and because of the fact that he was always aloof and never unrestrainedly attached to people, that he came to be called the “shadow-maker.” George Sterling, who knew the real story of that phrase as well as anyone, could not resist the temptation to use it in a different sense in his article about Bierce in *The American Mercury,* and to forget, incidentally, who had coined the expression.

One day Bierce had gone for a long walk through the woods with Eva Crawford, another of his pupils, and Leila Cotton. They noticed on this, as on previous occasions, the strange mesmeric power that he possessed over wild creatures. In fact, his cabin at Los Gatos was peopled with two pet doves, “Jamie” and “Jippie,” and a toad jumped around on his desk as a paper-weight. But when he would call birds to him in the woods, he seemed a different man. His nature was then entirely transparent, open, full of light and free from shadows. There was nothing artificial about his attitude. The girls noticed this and one of them said that she had always thought that Bierce misled women, that they mistook his chivalrous attitude and his elegant sentiments for a more genuine feeling, and that they never seemed to realize that his inner nature was elusive and they were playing with shadows. Bierce said, in answer to this, “But, my dears, the sun makes the shadow.” Eva Crawford replied, “No, it is what gets between you and the sun that makes the shadow, and that’s what you do, you are a shadow-maker.” During the long period of years that intervened between 1899 and his return to California in 1910, many of them came to think that he was truly a "shadow-maker."

He now arranged to go east permanently. On Nov. 29, 1899, — he wrote Howes: "In a few weeks I expect to go to Washington, D. C., where I shall probably remain. It is simply a change of duties, excepting that I shall probably do more work for *The Journal* and less for *The Examiner.*" He soon left, this time to stay, and on January 2nd, 1900, was with his son Leigh, in New York. Leigh had remained on in the East after accompanying his father there in 1896.

This trip east must have been disheartening. He left California at Christmas time, always a sad season for him. He was to arrive sick in New York, unable to continue on to Washington for weeks. His position was not assured, and he was in advanced years — a journalistic hack for the now "Honorable" Hearst. There would be no more mountain boozing parties with Dr. Doyle; the admiring circles of ladies was gone for some time. These trips across the continent were like the balls on a billiard table being shoved across to one end and then back again to the other. Life was a dreary dust-heap of bad things that left a taste of ashes in the mouth, a constant grip on the teeth. Analyzed carefully, existence appeared to be an extremely offensive procedure. Human relationships were so softly veiled and intangible that they crashed on the sharp rocks of circumstances; this phantom "Art" was a sickening vice that meant the abnegation of every full-fledged impulse. The clear, high-toned idealism of youth was a beautiful pageant in the mind, but not practically significant. If you wished to appear eccentric, why idealism was all right. About the only attitude left was cynicism. It turned off many an arrow, and as long as one said resolutely that "Nothing matters," why—"nothing mattered." A good stiff cup of spirits and he was prepared to journey on to Washington in the dead of winter to assume his position as the first of the Hearst Philosophers, those gentlemen whose writings are always accompanied with their picture, adorning the Sunday paper, explaining to the lowly the great mysteries of existence. Bierce was never fully successful in this role. It remained for Mr. Brisbane to coin the art of the startling platitude.

The years had slipped past without meaning or any definable significance. What, in truth, had it mattered? There were moments of great intensity when fear or excitement or elation carried the soul high, when the valiant audacity of man gestured in the face of an encompassing futility. But afterwards, during the long intervals of mediocre experience, time giggled awfully. For sixteen years he had been baiting louts, fakirs, charlatans, skinflints, petty politicians and poets in the pages of one newspaper. He had to justify these years, but it was a difficult task. As long as the duel lasted, he worried not as to its importance. But in the quiet of old age, the record of his accomplishments seemed inadequate. Just before leaving the coast he visited a cemetery in Oakland. He strolled about examining the genuine epitaphs of many that he had once crucified in a couplet or composed a mocking "epitaph" about. And now they were dead and had "real" epitaphs. And all in such a short space of time! It seemed incredible. These arrogant gesturers had only confused the core of experience, and here they were, their names in stone: libeled and libeler, blackguard and victim, lover and mistress, father and son. But still he was "cynical" and blasé: the only record of his thoughts is a brief note in *The Examiner*, August 13, 1899, that he had visited the cemetery and was disappointed to find that Pixley had been cremated so that he could not spit on his grave!

Across the plains again.... And did he expect that even yet he might win to that feeling of winged splendor that youth had given? But this continent's end was a land of shadows for him and it palled upon him unbearably. Thoughts of those halcyon days when the Lotus Club gave picnics in the Marin hills and the bay had gleamed with a brightness that had seemed eternal in its brilliant energy and power; thoughts of the dark hours on Howell Mountain and of the long walks through the streets of San Francisco trying to forget the stabbing pains that the news of Day's death had brought; of lonely pain-racked hours in barren hotel rooms; of friendly faces in whose eyes he had seen shadows; of fights and quarrels.... But it had not mattered, and since the close of the war he had been proving over and over again to himself that it did not matter, and trying to show innumerable fools that the world was not worthy of their worship. But he would go east and forget about these things, for it seemed even too trivial to become indignant about.

There were a few visits to old friends and a few notes of farewell, but there was no word for Mollie Day, who was nursing an aged mother in a lonely old house on Figueroa Street in Los Angeles, while former friends circulated rumors that she was immensely rich and would soon divorce her husband! She must have smiled at these reports as she stole away from the bedside of her mother, who was demented, and went down to Mr. Parker's book store to buy a copy of "Fantastic Fables." *The Times* that morning had announced that Ambrose Bierce, the famous Hearst journalist who had defeated the Funding Bill, had left for Washington where he would live in the future.

CHAPTER XVI. “ALAS, MY DREADFUL INERTIA!”

At the time that Bierce left for Washington in 1899, *The Examiner* printed his picture, accompanying an article which explained the reasons for his transfer to the East. The man shown in the picture is an individual remarkably changed from the handsome fellow that Miss Campbell had sketched three years previously. When age begins to assert its dolorous claim, it acts with alacrity. He was an old man when he returned to Washington the second time. The reasons for his transfer were thus stated by *The Examiner:*

“The 56th Congress seems to be of extraordinary interest. The subjects before it include such matters as the War in the Philippines, the adjustment of our new Colonial policy, the disposition of Cuban affairs, and, the action that Congress may or may not take with reference to the trusts. These are all questions of great national importance. For this reason, *The Examiner* has sent Ambrose Bierce to Washington, where he will remain during the present session.” (Dec. 14, 1898.)

Apparently this was simply a public explanation, as Mr. A. M. Lawrence is positive that Bierce came to him and requested the second transfer. He recalls that Bierce expressed a desire to go East and be away from San Francisco; to address a larger audience and to study conditions at Washington, thinking, no doubt, that he might make a national name for himself as a satirist. But his mood had changed, as indicated previously, and he was becoming more and more the “curmudgeon philosopher,” rather than the sharp satirist. He might have been equally successful in the East had he been equally caustic and witty, but instead he became sonorous, portentous and grave.

He proceeded to Washington and took up a residence at 603 15th Street. The public questions were, as pointed out in *The Examiner’s* notice, interesting if not as important as they were thought to be. These early years of the twentieth century witnessed a turning point in national affairs, and the significance of the change even then was vaguely sensed and appreciated. It was during these years that America began to look abroad with an insatiable passion for land. A fever of imperialism possessed the nation; we had received our first experience with the exhilaration of foreign conquest. The Mexican War had been a nice and profitable enterprise, but this Cuban fiasco offered far greater possibilities and stirred the imagination with dreams of empire.

Strive as one might to cope sharply with the times, it was impossible to provoke attention by criticism. The more intelligent critics, such as Mr. Bierce, were ruffled by the vacuum of public opinion to such an extent that they forgot the art of satire and became merely sarcastic in a stiff and heavy manner. How attack the bombast of such a man as W. J. Bryan? The most astute reasoning and the sharpest satire could not hold a fraction of the public's attention against the roaring syllables of honeyed nonsense that the Commoner bellowed forth. It remained for Mr. Mencken, in later years, to annihilate the reputation of Mr. Bryan in terms harsh, broad-edged and offensive. But in 1899 America actually yearned to be mentally seduced. The times reeked with tepid thought boomed forth in demagogic terms. Perhaps the technique of the orators owed something to the journalism of Mr. Hearst. Bryan had been a protégé and had been so carefully instructed in the art of boob-baiting that he achieved an unequaled mastery. America had taken in Mr. Hearst's wild talk about Evangelina Cisneros without reservation, and had followed him into the war to free the Cubans and increase the circulation of the Hearst newspapers, without regard to the rather timid protests of McKinley. Naturally, in the midst of such a cave of the winds — it is seriously to be questioned if America ever experienced a time when ideas were regarded with such hostility — men of sense were driven to desperation. Mr. Bierce's attack on this gaudy bombast was too contemporary; he might just as well have shouted at the ocean to cease its pounding on the shore. Mr. Mencken's attack was strategic, properly timed, and immensely more effective. Bierce tried his hand at the role of critic for several years, and then turned away from the scene with magnificent disgust.

His first dispatch from Washington under date of January 9, 1900, is an interesting bit of journalism. Bierce had been present during the first session of Congress when Senator A. J. Beveridge delivered his famous speech on our policy in the Philippines, during the course of which the "manifest destiny" apology was advanced as an *ex post facto* cure for a smarting conscience. Beveridge captured the imagination of the nation with his bold, dramatic acceptance of the idea abortive in the public mind, to wit: that while there may have been considerable talk about our idealistic motives in interceding with Spain on behalf of the Cubans, that yet, nevertheless, since certain rich and valuable possessions had been acquired, it was nothing less than our "duty" and "destiny" to retain them. The argument was not without historical precedents, it was a perfect expression of a general but taciturn desire, and it synchronized with the pulse of conquest.

Once more in Bierce's experience had a national fact supplanted a national ideal. It was ever the same: our lust was as inevitable and as predestined to fulfillment as that of all young and strong creatures endowed by an inscrutable fate with the energy that must itself ultimately yield to a superior energy. Bierce listened with mock attention while the galleries were carried away by the practiced and professional oratory of the handsome young senator from Indiana. He listened with equal amusement to Senator Hoar's reply which, like most talk of the kind, got lost in the nebulous ether of idealism. Into the public discussion of this debate, Bierce interjected this note:

"I dare say that is the right view to take of it. I am sure it must be wrong for nations to be wicked. But in the larger politics of this worst of all possible worlds it does seem as if ethical considerations had not more weight and influence than that to which their beauty entitles them. According to the principles so dear to the hearts of the worthy gentlemen who lift protesting hands when the rights of weak nations are invaded by strong ones, not a people on earth to-day has a right to be there. All have dispossessed some other people."

He followed this up with a long article in *The Examiner*, January 14, 1900, "The Survival of the Fittest," in which he gave the correct name to Senator Beveridge's elegant idea. In fact, Mr. Bierce came to think that there was much to be said for the theory of brute force, or materialistic determinism. He used the same idea with a vengeance during the Boer War in which he espoused the cause of the British. As an outgrowth of his articles on British strategy during this campaign, he first began to correspond with Lord Kitchener. They exchanged letters for some years afterwards. All of Bierce's journalism written in the East under the head of "The Passing Show" was extremely reactionary and full of a great seriousness about public affairs. But, then, he held the post as philosopher in the Hearst college and it was beginning to mar his thought.

During these years Mrs. Bierce was living in Los Angeles. Bierce never corresponded with his wife directly, and all communications had to be sent through the medium of the daughter. Every month Helen would receive a remittance from her father, which she would send to Mrs. Bierce. Leigh was in New York at this time. He had studied art under J. H. E. Partington in San Francisco, and had contributed to *The Wave*. Later he began to work for *The Examiner* and Mr. Hearst had sent him to the Yosemite Valley to write some feature stories about the wonders of that valley since desecrated by tourists. He later went to Los Angeles and reported for *The Record*, maintaining a studio up on a region known as Bunker Hill. When his father went east, Leigh accompanied him and soon began to write for the New York *Telegraph*. I have a considerable collection of newspaper clippings containing his work up to December 8, 1900, — and they reveal the hand of an intelligent writer. For some time Leigh edited a rather interesting journal in New York called *The Bee.* He drew with facility and his decorations and illustrations were excellent. His early journalism reflected the temper of his father, but the great light does not shine about the lines. Yet he was like his father in many ways. He possessed the same mesmeric power with animals. And he imitated the personal manner of his father. One evening while in Los Angeles he happened to be dining at Ahrend’s Café. A waiter was discouretous and Leigh, with that sense of affront in the slightest discourtesy which his father always experienced, gave the fellow a thorough drubbing and made him apologize.

Bierce was much pleased with the success of his son in New York, and looked forward to the time when Leigh would try his hand at a book of stories. Of course he made light of the boy’s achievements to others, but he was secretly delighted with his good work in the arts. It would have been interesting to watch the development of Leigh’s talent, but it was destined to be of short life. Upon coming to New York, he had become involved with the wife of an artist. His father learned of the affair; in fact, it was a continuation of a liaison begun in Oakland, and it was the cause of heated words for several years. Bierce had no particular objection to such escapades, but in this case the woman happened to be married and her husband was, if not a friend, at least an acquaintance of the family. This made Leigh’s conduct a form of dishonesty which his father would not tolerate. But once the affair had run its course, a more serious dispute arose between father and son. Upon arriving in New York, Leigh roomed at a boarding-house owned by an aged woman who had a rather pretty daughter whose name was Flora. Bierce had only been East a short time when Leigh and Flora were married. He never approved of the alliance and never ceased to resent Leigh’s disobedience. As usual he showed his great incompetence when dealing with human beings; he was never able to comprehend imperfections. There was no flexibility about his judgments; he was not really unreasonable or dogmatic, but he was temperamentally unable to feel relations as well as to think about them. He saw the issues so sharply and his reactions were so sensitive, that he could not tolerate a sensibility not equally as developed. Consequently he shouted at Leigh, argued, dogmatized, and plead, but all to no avail. Shortly after his son’s marriage, Bierce remarked to a friend: “Why should both of my boys have gotten mixed up with trashy women?”

Once Bierce knew that his son was determined to marry, he cut him off and did not speak or write to him until Leigh was stricken ill. It seems that the newspaper for which Leigh was reporting decided to conduct a Christmas

Benefit. Leigh accompanied the expedition to write a news story and to supervise the distribution of provisions to the poor. He halted the expedition as it was passing a saloon, and proceeded to get hilariously drunk. When the caravan again moved on its way, he began to give away all the provisions before the destination was reached. Shortly after this affair, Leigh became seriously ill with pneumonia. His father rushed from Washington to be near him. He kept asking his father to send for his sister, and finally Bierce wired for her to come on to New York. She started from Los Angeles, but while she was en route Leigh died. The date of his death was March 31, 1901. The pain which Bierce had experienced on Day's death was sharp, and swift, and almost unbearable. Much had happened since 1889. This time his grief was no less acute, but he was somewhat benumbed with a growing sense of utter futility. There was no pillar against which he could lean; there was no faith to sustain his spirit. Winter, and death, and a horrible attack of asthma... the senseless folly and cruelty of human affairs... and death giggling in the drop curtains and whispering in the alcoves. Death had paralyzed his thoughts, embittered his life, made him brave and courageous, and finally it would do away with him. It was, as one commentator announced, "his honey and his poison." A few days after Leigh's death, Bierce wrote a friend: "I am hit hard; more than you can guess — am a bit broken and gone gray of it all." A year later he wrote the same friend: "It is just a year ago to-day that Leigh died — I wish I could stop counting the days."

If it was a great tragedy in Bierce's life, Leigh's death was doubly tragic for Mrs. Bierce, who had to stay in Los Angeles and could not attend the funeral. Poor woman, she seemed destined to a role of lonely and unattended sorrow. But death, while it affected Bierce very keenly, never softened him. He would not relent towards the family into which his son had married. He still refused to see them or to be near them; and used his daughter as a medium to communicate money to his daughter-in-law. In fact, Helen met Leigh's wife for the first time at the funeral! On this occasion the father acted quite in character. He admonished his daughter not to be ostentatious about her grief, and, above all, to be proud and dignified. A woman of very slight acquaintance made herself quite offensive by a gushing expression of condolence. Bierce cut this creature short with a word, and told his daughter that nothing was so vulgar as a public display of sorrow.

Back in Washington Bierce was stricken ill himself and it was months before he recovered from the combined effects of grief and asthma. If it had been a gray scene prior to Leigh's death, it was black now. Something of the depression that settled about Bierce during these months is reflected in a letter to Amy Cecil, dated January 2, 1901, in the course of which he said: "I'm leading a life of mere waiting — waiting for nothing in particular, except the end of it all. I do no work that I care to do — just the work that keeps me living — for I've no incentive, no ambition but to go on with as little friction as possible. (Why did not God make us with ball-bearings, like bicycles?) I fancy most observers would say that I'm having a pretty good time, and that's what I usually say myself; but may Heaven punish the malefactor who invented that deathly dull thing, a good time." And he closed the letter with this phrase: "May God give you strength to bear the sorrows which He seems to desire to inflict." No wonder that he drifted into a state of complete indifference and despair during these months. His writings of about this time are the heavy, dogmatic opinions of an old and rather weary man. He built up fortresses of dogma behind which he could crouch and evade the chance bullet of cruel truth that might otherwise break through the careful shield of his cynicism.

Another unpublished letter of about the same time (June 7, 1901) to Theresa McCarthy contains similar thoughts. "I thank you for your kind words of sympathy, for I know how sincere they are. When one is in trouble, one likes to know that not all the world is indifferent. I hope you are again well and happy — as happy as it is consonant with the plans of God's universe for any of his helpless creatures to be — or believe themselves to be." It is the note of a sick and despondent man, a man to whom the thought of death was a continuing sorrow. He might write with insouciance such lines as these.

"Done with the work of breathing; done
With all the world; the mad race run Through to the end; the golden goal Attained and found to be a hole,"

but when death touched him personally it was a different matter. Grief was crippling and it benumbed the spirit. Day and Leigh both dead! It seemed like a monstrous untruth, and yet it was true and he must endure it. When he recovered he was "cynical" as ever, but

"Thou wouldst not think
How ill all's here about my heart!"

He was leading an idle life: a little writing for the Hearst newspapers; and a few magazine articles. The old column of "Prattle" had long been abandoned, and it was apparently intended that with "The Passing Show" he would adopt a broader outlook. In any event, his journalism ceased to be good reading after 1896. He spent his days in Washington, full of petty duties and trivial tasks, and would invite some of the boys from "the office" to his apartment to play anagrams in the evening! He usually began the day by walking down to the

Army and Navy Club for his mail; then he would journey over to his office in the Washington Bureau of the New York *American;* then back to the Club for lunch and a chat with his old army cronies; when evening came he was ready for Roche's where his "boozing den" as he named it was located. In the evening he would sometimes have a few guests at the apartment; sometimes Percival Pollard, or Dr. Franklin from Schenectady; or Justice Harlan. Later a tray with a pot of coffee would be brought into his study and he would work for awhile, with "Mr. Dooley," a pet canary bird, flitting about the room and trying to alight on his penholder. There, across the desk, would be the famous skull, to which Bierce could address queries and guess the answers. It was worse than a twilight existence: it lacked even the poignancy of twilight. It was a vacuum: a cave of indifference: an empty shadowland of meditation. He wrote a few ghost stories about this time and thought them rather good, but he had too many ghosts in his own life just then to spend much time imagining yarns about them. On the desk by the skull was the cigar box which contained the ashes of another friend. He could steel himself by such bravado gestures against the question which the grinning outline of the skull suggested, as though it would tell him some grave secrets but a horrible mirth made speech impossible. Death worried him all the same. For such a romantic temperament, his life was a boresome existence and gradually the seed of discontent bore fruit in a great disdainful gesture.

Meantime he seems to have been amused with people who wanted adventure and excitement, as though the thought of such experiences was rather attractive to him. Theresa McCarthy wanted to go to China as a nurse, and he was finally induced to see Mr. Meiklejohn and secure the appointment for her. "Why under the sun should you wish to go to Manila?" he would write. A few days later he wrote: "I took your application to Mr. Meiklejohn (whom I found at dinner and therefore good humored), and asked him to approve it before sending it to the Surgeon-General. He said the best way to do would be to order the thing done. He put the application in his pocket; so the Surgeon-General will probably not be bothered about it. We then — took a drink. So I think you may hope to go to Manila and die of a fever or marry one of your patients." He was instrumental in getting Margaret McKenzie appointed as a government nurse; and in getting Mabel Wood sent to the Philippines as a teacher. They were young and wanted adventure; well, why not? He had a few adventures of his own about this time. Coming home one night to his apartment, he was attacked by a big burly negro. But, true to form, he gave battle and beat the negro with a walking stick that fortunately had a steel core. He was laid up in his apartment for some time afterwards with a broken rib as a result of the encounter. He wheezed with asthma; fell over cliffs at Calistoga Hot Springs while bicycling; fought with ruffians in Washington; and always lived. As he once wrote to Howes: “I’m happy to announce the defeat of the hives. I’m now ready for cholera infantum and the ills incident to teething.” There was a strange exclusiveness about death. Should one seek it out, deliberately?

The young lady he had met by chance at Angwin’s, Carrie Christiansen, was now in Washington as his secretary. Since he had met her, Bierce had been a father to this poor girl, sending her to school and helping her in many ways. She had come to Washington, when he finally succeeded in getting her a place in the public schools, and, because it was quite the sensible thing to do, she also lived at the Olympia Apartments. Miss Christiansen’s kindly and loving care of Bierce is an amazing story, a refreshing experience in human affairs, particularly as she Was quite sensitive to criticism and was made the target of a good deal of abuse during the years she lived in Washington. Bierce had warned her that such would be the case, but she was quite oblivious to the consequences. She adored Bierce with the sacred admiration of a blind affection. Guileless, naive, and utterly unsophisticated, her presence was yet an unmixed blessing for Bierce. She assisted him with his work, kept his affairs in order (he was impossible as a business man), and nursed him when he was stricken with periodic attacks of asthma. But to assume, as Mr. Neale has done, that Bierce was deeply in love with Miss Christiansen is ridiculous. The inference that Mr. Neale draws from the manner in which they lived, is repulsed by their correspondence, by Bierce’s references to Miss Christiansen in other letters, and by the testimony of those who lived with them. The fact is that Miss Christiansen, if she admired Bierce, was perhaps Mrs. Bierce’s dearest friend. She was always regarded, even in St. Helena, as a dependent of the family, as an unfortunate child. To assume that Bierce went into Mexico with a broken heart because Miss Christiansen had jilted him, and to whisper of a secret marriage, as Mr. Neale does, is to be unnecessarily ridiculous if not malicious.

Bierce soon began to acquire quite a reputation in Washington as an unusual and striking character. Young newspapermen would “look Bierce up” and have a few drinks. He became the subject of an endless chain of stories; and his bon mots were frequently quoted. One day he was listening to a very ardent suffragette. Suddenly he said to her: “Madame” (it was always “Madame”), “if you desire equal rights it follows that you must assume equal obligations, does it not?” She eagerly assented. “And, therefore, if an army of the Japanese were to land off the coast of Monterey you would be willing to organize an army of women to fight them, would you not?” Oh, yes, indeed she would. “Well, then, did it ever occur to you, Madame, what would happen if an army of women were ever captured by an army of men?” Asked by a group of women’s rights advocates to say something about their sex, he replied: “Woman, lovely woman, if we could only fall into her arms without falling into her hands.” A very proper lady was objecting, one day in the apartment, on the ground of impropriety to everything. Bierce finally became annoyed and said: “Madame, you are so proper that! Would hesitate to call you a woman, for woman is only man with a womb.” He once remarked that to be happy a good woman should possess the three B’s, and when asked what they were he replied: “She must be Bright, Beautiful and Barren.”

George Horton recalls the Sunday morning breakfasts that Bierce used to give in his apartment in Washington for “literary and brain workers, invitations to which were much prized. He specialized in coffee which he made in a peculiar pot that was shaped something like a long melon, and that oscillated like a pendulum, dripping slowly from either end.” He impressed Mr. Horton as the “most genial and kindliest of men, although he seemed oppressed by a secret sadness.” Charles Willis Thompson visited him at about the same time, and his recollections are of interest:

“It is surprising that a quarter of a century later Bierce stands out in my recollection far above nearly all the hundreds of men I was meeting daily, for those were crowded years. I have difficulty in placing many a United States Senator and Cabinet officer, but Bierce is as vividly before me as the day I first saw him; even the day Is before me, a sunny afternoon in Dennis Mullany’s crazy little bar-room, a place frequented by all the wits, the home of real conversation. There Bierce was a conversational autocrat; and his first look at a newcomer was unflatteringly appraising. It seemed to say, ‘Show me your credentials.’ He looked straight at you from under his frosty brows with a bright eye and a cynical smile, which said as plain as words, ‘Now what kind of ass are *you* going to make yourself?’ But, the moment you *did* show him that you belonged, that air was gone and you were admitted to his camaraderie in an instant, and on absolutely even terms, and for all time. Nobody could be more genial or more intellectually democratic. In *The Herald-Tribune* I described him as my most enduring recollection. He had no time and no use for men who had nothing to say, but was hail-fellow with any one who could talk. The recollection of his personal appearance is that of a wonderfully handsome man with talkative eyes and an eagle nose. I can see him at this moment, though I can’t conjure up the face of the British Ambassador.”

The Washington *Post*, March, 1902, reported a meeting of the literati at some salon. Bierce was there, and C. W. Stoddard, Maurice Egan, Harriet Prescott Spofford, and many others. The reporter noticed the handsome Mr. Bierce standing in one corner mixing cocktails, and pouring harsh cynicisms into the pink ears of the Hon. Thomas Nelson Page. The Washington *Times*, August, 1902, sent a reporter around to interview Bierce. “Mr. Bierce was found seated in his den, an apartment hung and carpeted in red and containing a Turkish couch piled high with pillows, a table full of interesting books, and a quaint little sideboard filled with a mixture of curious glasses, decanters, and a chafing dish. He is a modest man and declares that the best thing about his work is the part he doesn’t write, namely, the checks, and that even they might be better. He says that at present he is doing nothing, and adds, ‘except writing.’ He vows that he shall never publish another book and that he has no faith in his own or anybody’s inspiration. He spends most of his spare time collecting arrow-heads.” It is, I believe, a fair picture. He was “doing nothing,” and about the only diversion that might be added to collecting arrow-heads was canoeing.

It was about this time that Sam Davis mentioned to President Roosevelt that he knew Bierce. The President was immediately interested and expressed a desire to meet him. A formal invitation was sent at once. Bierce replied that he was exceedingly sorry to decline the invitation, but that it so happened that he had a previous engagement with an old friend from San Francisco, and that he never “neglected old friends to make new.” Roosevelt was delighted and sent another note, saying, “I quite agree with you. Come to-night, and let us be old friends.” The loyal Sam Davis was present at the meeting, and, true to Virginia City form, introduced the President *to* Bierce. Later in the evening the three inspected the White House, and Roosevelt showed them the famous painting of San Juan Hill with the Rough Rider, well in the foreground, leading the charge. He asked Bierce what he thought of the picture, and was informed that it was inaccurate since it depicted Roosevelt at San Juan when in truth he hadn’t been there!

In the fall of 1903, Bierce went to Aurora, in West Virginia, and there spent most of the autumn. It chanced to be the scene of his early soldiering, and it was during this vacation that he gathered the information contained in the letter written to the Ninth Indiana Volunteer Association. He took long walks through the woods and inspected the Grafton Cemetery with fascinated attention. He was actually walking around in the woods near Belington! Wasn’t there a fellow — what was his name? — Corporal Dyson Boothroyd! And Capt. Madden! It did not seem but yesterday, and now he walked through the cemetery, gray-haired and haunted with memories, while a bright and childish sunlight smiled and laughed with delight. He discovered the fallen Confederates only by accident. They were not housed in a national cemetery. “As nearly as I could make out there were from eight to a hundred sunken graves, overgrown with moss and full of rotting leaves. Fewer than a dozen had headstones, fashioned from native slate of the county, with barely decipherable inscriptions rudely carved by comrades of the dead. These had mostly fallen into the excavations."

The swift and changing habits of time! The black ashes grown into the green freshness of spring and this new life itself already moldy with decay. It suggested the order of a vegetable kingdom that mocked, by its silence and passivity, the thought of dreams and ideals. What did all this idealism amount to, this "lashing rascals through the world," had it any greater significance than the valor he had shown that morning at Belington so many years ago? They had fought around here for several days; the gentlemen over at Grafton and these fellows beneath the unmarked slabs of slate, and the struggle was rumored to have had something to do with slavery. Back in Washington the great world was shocked with accounts of race riots at Atlanta, and he stood in the quietness of Grafton and counted the graves of fallen comrades. It was like Hamlet entering the grave. A sleepy feeling of indifference pervaded the valley, and nothing seemed to matter: rotting logs of breastworks; scarred timbers; a few unmarked graves. But he was still "romantic" about the old scenes; he was still capable of self-deception, and he wrote in his letter to those of his comrades:

> "But the whole region is wild and grand, and if any one of the men who in his golden youth soldiered through its valleys of sleep and over its gracious mountains will revisit it in the hazy season when it is all aflame with the autumn foliage, I promise him sentiments that he will willingly entertain and emotions that he will care to feel. Among them, I fear, will be a haunting envy of those of his comrades whose fall and burial in that enchanted land he once bewailed."

On his return to Washington he wrote George Sterling: "They found a Confederate soldier the other day with his rifle alongside. I'm going over to beg his pardon."

In the winter of 1904, Mary E. Bierce commenced an action in the Superior Court of Los Angeles County against Ambrose G. Bierce for divorce on the ground of desertion. It was a simple complaint: the statutory allegations with the statement that the "defendant" was a journalist who resided in Washington. The interlocutory decree was granted a few months later, and on April 27, 1905, Mary E. Bierce died of "heart failure." Both happenings were a great shock to her husband and daughter. No one knew that Mrs. Bierce intended to sue for a divorce, and for many years her motives remained a mystery. But her counsel, who still lives in Los Angeles, remembers that she filed the action because she had "heard that Mr. Bierce wanted his freedom but was too proud to ask for it." It was another tragedy of misunderstanding, as Bierce had made no such request, and the word that had reached his wife was untrue. He never remarried and never had any intention of doing so.

For many years it has been bruited about San Francisco that Mrs. Bierce filed suit for divorce because she was going to inherit a large estate and wanted to eliminate any possible claim of her husband. As a matter of fact, the estate of Captain H. — H. Day was probated in San Bernardino County, California, in January of 1891, thirteen years before she applied for a divorce. Moreover, both she and her mother were in straitened circumstances at the time the divorce action was filed. The devotion of Mrs. Bierce to her husband is unquestionable: a perfect record of unbroken care and faith. For years she had lived in Los Angeles nursing an aged and demented parent, uncomplaining, cheerful and indifferent to a sad fate. But the last years had been too much: the death of Leigh, the condition of her mother, and the memories that were so unnecessarily stirred into poignancy by that divorce action, these sorrows were more than even this brave and admirable woman could stand. In the final reckoning of things it will be hers and not her husband's fate that will probably be written of as tragic. There is something about the story of her life that is too tragic to write about in the casual manner of narration. In the words of her school-girl friends, now wizened old ladies in St. Helena, "Mollie Day was beautiful and kind."

Again the lot of attending to the details of the funeral fell to the daughter. Bierce had left for the South on a military survey with General Ainsworth shortly after his wife was taken ill, so the daughter had to rush to Los Angeles and care for her mother. And it was the daughter, too, who took the ashes of her mother and the ashes of her brother, Leigh, to St. Helena for burial.

Bierce wrote George Sterling about this time: "Death has been striking pretty close to me again, and you know how that upsets a fellow." If there had been a semblance of vitality about his work in Washington previous to the death of his wife, it disappeared with remarkable swiftness afterwards. He seemed to be numb with cold. He tried frantically to regain the sense of vivid emotions, even if experienced vicariously in the perspective of memory, but it was of no avail. Events did not seem to touch him; he was encased in death's antechamber. Even his work ceased to bring him pleasure. He wrote to Howes, "Alas, my dreadful inertia!" and so it was, for he could not feel keenly and knew that he had been deceived and that he was fast approaching the final mystery which would perhaps turn out to be another empty vault. His days were full of echoes and shadows; the troubling half-reality of pale reflections; the memory of vital sensations. His imagination could not sustain him. He was still looking about him in the world for the revealing magic. That early shock which had paralyzed his imagination had also bred an irremediable distrust of all mysticism. But he had missed so much!

“So, too,” Mr. George Santayana writes of Hamlet and he might better have been writing of Bierce, “his sardonic humor and nonsensical verbiage at the most tragic junctures, may justify themselves ideally and seem to be deeply inspired. These wild starts suggest a mind inwardly rent asunder, a delicate genius disordered, a mind with infinite sensibility possessing no mastery over itself or things.... The clouded will which plays with all these artifices of thought would fain break its way to light and self-knowledge through the magic circle of sophistication. It is the tragedy of a soul buzzing in the glass prison of a world which it can neither escape or understand, in which it flutters about without direction, without clear hope, and yet with many a keen pang, many a dire imaginary doubt, and much exquisite music.”

He came to feel that something should be done; it was imperative that he overcome that “dreadful inertia” which left him “weak and will-less.” He would “go away” and perhaps he could capture again that feeling of “enormous revelry,” of which William Blake once wrote.

CHAPTER XVII. “A MAGNIFICENT CRYSTALLIZATION”

DURING the first years that he was in Washington, Bierce’s journalism appeared under the caption “The Passing Show” in the various Hearst papers. But Mr. Hearst had written him: “I will have enough magazines pretty soon to keep you busy in the magazine field, and then you won’t have to bother with newspapers. I imagine the magazine field will please you better anyway, as it is an opportunity for fuller discussion.” (June 24, 1906.) It became quite apparent that it was the policy of Mr. Hearst to keep Bierce anchored to the magazines and that he should write as little as possible for the newspapers. But 1905 “The Passing Show” was transferred from the newspapers into the files of *The Cosmopolitan,* which Mr. Hearst had purchased, and there it appeared until 1909, when Bierce ceased to write for current publication altogether.

But, if Bierce was out of sympathy with the editors of the Hearst newspapers, he was even more at war with the editors of *The Cosmopolitan.* The radicalism of the late nineties began to find expression, about this time, in the sensational muckraking which Mr. Hearst fostered. It was the era of the “progressive,” and “reform” agitation. The movement doubtless had a genuine causation but its expression was weak, futile and ineffective. It took the form of emotionalized propaganda. *The Cosmopolitan* soon became a hotbed of excited and hysterical prose. The muck-rakers were a querulous and nervous lot, full of accusations and charges, but suffering from the phobia of reform, shouting without reason and writing without grace. It was during this period that David Graham Phillips wrote a sensational series of articles on “The Treason of the Senate.” Ida Tarbell, Ray Stannard Baker, Alfred Henry Lewis, and Emerson Hough, began to chronicle the lives of the industrial barons evolved out of a capitalistic society. Maxim Gorki published his memoirs, which added color to the movement, and Jack London’s hastily concocted stories of the road began to hymn the lowly proletariat in flattering terms. It was the decade of Lincoln Steffens, Upton Sinclair and Robert Herrick. Radicalism was unquestionably making enormous gains throughout the country, and “social unrest” was the favorite subject of the Chautauqua platform. By 1914 the movement had dissipated all its fine energies and it collapsed with the first intimation of war. But the first years of the century were rampant with unphilosophic radicalism.

It was quite predictable that Bierce should war with his fellow contributors.

He was entirely out of place in *The Cosmopolitan.* He knew instinctively that there was too much sensationalism about the muck-rakers, who were, for the most part, mere youngsters in the ironies. Their radicalism was in essence but an unidentified itch for front page publicity. One need but point to Mr. Lincoln Steffens' relation to the McNamara case in Los Angeles in 1910 to realize the basic inadequacy of such propaganda. Bierce quickly acquired a reputation with these men as a reactionary, because he was skeptical about the efficacy of reform and dubious of unthinking propaganda. Hence there was something quite significant about the roundtable debate that Mr. Hearst sponsored between Morris Hillquit, Bierce and John Hunter, for the discussion of the "Social Unrest" at a New York hotel. There is evidence that the meeting was arranged as a deliberate plot to "get" Bierce, by matching him against two agile minded leaders of the unrest. It was heralded as quite a significant debate and Bierce was announced as "a strenuous challenger of the optimists, a thinker whose views are the despair of the social reformer."

John Hunter, who had just published his widely read "Poverty," opened the discussion with some statistics about poverty. Mr. Hunter was then actually concerned with an important problem: this was before he came to live at Pebble Beach, and before he had forgotten that poverty was other than the title he had once given a book. Mr. Bierce immediately challenged his statistics, but then passed them over, admitting with Hunter that there was a great deal of poverty in the country. Hillquit joined in with an "Amen" and for a moment they were in accord. But soon the reformers became excited about a remedy, and socialism was proposed. Immediately Bierce became skeptical: "I don't see," he remarked, "that there is any remedy for this condition which consists in the rich being on top, or rather, the strongest being on top. They always will be. The reason that men are poor — this is not a rule without exception — is that they are incapable. The rich become rich because they have brains."

Hunter then proceeded to review the thesis of his new book, but Mr. Bierce immediately rejoined: "Now don't understand me as defending that system," referring to the evils of an unregulated industrialism. "I wish I could abolish it. I only say it is inevitable and incurable. Nothing touches me more than poverty; I have been poor myself. I was one of those poor devils born to work as a peasant in the field; but I found no difficulty in getting out of it." The debate continued.

HUNTER: "Well, sir, how important do you conceive William Waldorf Astor to be to the City of New York? He lives in London; but he and his family extract from the people of New York interest on, let us say, four hundred million a year. Is he that valuable to the community? Is this because of his extraordinary brains?" (How immature this sounds to-day!)

BIERCE: “Let us admit that he is not important and ought to be eliminated. Now, why don’t they eliminate him? What I — mean is this: If the oppressed workingmen—”

HUNTER: “Don’t consider only the oppressed workingmen, but say all workingmen, brain workers as well as manual workers.”

BIERCE: “In this country every man has a vote. If he is not satisfied with conditions as they are, why doesn’t he change them? If the workingman and the poor are in the majority, why don’t they get together? Because they haven’t sense enough. They can have any laws or any system they want.”

Mr. Hillquit then advanced the theory, so dear to the heart of every socialist, that the poor have a monopoly on all the virtues. But Mr. Bierce made neat capital of this point when he said: “The general idea among the sons of discontent is that the prosperous are dishonest and the unprosperous are honest. If that is so, abolition of poverty is a nefarious business.”

He continued: “I don’t believe in the greatest good to the greatest number — it seems to me perfect rot. I believe in the greatest good to the best men. And I would sacrifice a thousand incapable men to elevate one really great man. It is from the great men only that the world gets any good. What do we owe to the artisans who laid the stones of the Parthenon? What to the gaping Athenians who stared at Plato?’

“‘I haven’t any doubt,’ Bierce said, ‘that a revolution is coming in this country, which may or may not be suppressed. It will be a bloody one. I think that is the natural tendency of republican government. Undoubtedly we have to go over the whole Paris régime again and again.’

“‘Republican government!’ exclaimed Mr. Hunter. ‘Tsarism has brought a bloody revolution.’

“‘Yes, sir,’ said Mr. Bierce.

“‘And a dictator will bring revolution.’

“‘Sure,’ said Mr. Bierce.

“‘The people alone are unconquerable.’

“‘The people are always doing silly things,’ said Mr. Bierce. ‘They sail in and shed a lot of blood, and then they are back where they were before.’

“‘You think civilization has not accomplished anything in recent years,’ asked Mr. Hillquit, smiling. (I can see that smile!)

“‘It has accomplished everything,’ was Mr. Bierce’s ready reply; ‘but it has not made humanity any happier. Happiness is the only thing worth having. I find happiness in looking at poor men in the same way that I do in looking at the ants in an anthill. And I find happiness looking at the capitalist. I don’t care what he does, nor what the others do. It pleases me to look at them. Each man is concerned with his own happiness.'" HUNTER: "Mr. Bierce, I gather from your gray hairs that you are a contemporary of John D. Rockefeller." (People were always using John D. Rockefeller as a token in those days.)

BIERCE: "Yes, sir."

HUNTER: "And I should say you were on a par with him in cleverness."

BIERCE: "I think him a damned fool in some ways."

At the close of the luncheon, Mr. Hunter rushed away to keep an appointment, but Hillquit and Bierce strolled out into the lobby and into the bar. Mr. Bierce proceeded to buy him a drink. Just as Hillquit lifted his glass, Mr. Bierce remarked: "You have a lovely neck, Mr. Hillquit, some day I hope to be one of those who will put a rope about it," and he drank in somber satisfaction while Hillquit choked.

What Bierce resented was the attitude of these men, their calm assumption that the answers to life's riddles were very simple, and that every one was absurd who did not agree with their panacea. Bierce was, to be sure, rather stupid about his arguments, but that he bettered the two young Marxians is apparent. Mr. Hunter's subsequent career has been a long and uninterrupted refutation of the principles that he so glibly mouthed in 1906. Was he insincere then, or has he suffered a change of heart since? What happened to all these muck-rakers of 1905? One looks in vain for their indignation. Upton Sinclair still remains by his guns, but John Spargo, Max Eastman, Floyd Dell (of a later vintage, of course), Ida Tarbell, John Hunter, are they to-day in the vanguard of the liberals? What would their answer now be to the stoical indifference of Ambrose Bierce, who, at heart, felt more compassion for the weak and defenseless than they ever did? Because he would not permit his sympathies to drive reason to unwarranted conclusions, they named him an "old Tory" and raced on to calamitous pitfalls. The debate, indeed, reveals the personal superiority of Bierce as a man. He calmly refused to believe in the sophomoric panaceas of his opponents. The debate is not altogether unlike the exchange of letters that took place between Mr. Mencken and Mr. LaMotte in 1910.

The reaction of the younger generation to Bierce's ideas is revealed in the correspondence between George Sterling and Jack London. Bierce had written that, in his opinion, "The Road" was a bad book. Sterling, always eager for a lively encounter of wits, wrote to London quoting Bierce. But he exaggerated and went so far as to inform London that Bierce had demanded that he give up their friendship under penalty of forfeiting the "Master's" benediction. That Bierce ever made such a threat is not borne out by his correspondence with Sterling. Bierce would not be so ridiculous; moreover, he did appreciate what was meritorious about London's work. (See a letter to Sterling published in "The

Letters of Ambrose Bierce," on page 105.) But Jack London, always "a good fellow," did not resent Bierce's alleged intolerance; in fact, he wrote Sterling with admirable spirit:

"For heaven's sake don't you quarrel with Ambrose about me. He's too splendid a man to be diminished because he has lacked access to a later generation of science. He crystallized before you and I were born, and it is too magnificent a crystallization to quarrel with."

But although one can admire London's spirit, it is impossible to suppress a smile over his superior talk about a "later generation of science." It is particularly amusing when one recalls that Bierce was actually something of a scientist, at least in the fields of astronomy and engineering, and that Jack London was woefully uneducated. What, forsooth, was this mysterious "science," the ignorance of which made Mr. Bierce the subject of condescension, but the "statistics" of John Hunter and the rhapsodies of Lincoln Steffens? Because London had read Mr. Wells' "In the Days of the Comet," he assumed that he was privy to all the dark and unfathomable mysteries of life. In a later letter to Sterling, he made this comment:

"I wouldn't care to lock horns with Bierce. He stopped growing a generation ago. Of course, he keeps up with the newspapers, but his criteria crystallized 30 odd years ago. Had he been born a generation later he'd have been a socialist, and, more likely, an anarchist. He never reads books that aren't something like a hundred years old, and he glories in the fact!"

And in still a third letter, from Hilo, Hawaii, 1907, he said: "The quotes from Ambrose were great. What a pen he wields. Too bad he hasn't a better philosophic foundation."

It is quite apparent that there is little comparison between the philosophy of the man who wrote "John Barleycorn" and the author of "Tales of Soldiers and Civilians." Perhaps London would have been surprised had he known that Bierce wrote intelligently of Nietzsche in 1904; praised Ezra Pound's poetry in manuscript before it was published in book form; was immediately enthusiastic about Baron Corvo's "In His Own Image" when it was first published; defended Tolstoi's "The Kreutzer Sonata" at a time when London was teething; praised Anatole France's "L'Ille des Pingouins" when London thought that Voltaire was the last satirist; and was early in his appreciation of such books as John Galsworthy's "In Motley" and Mary Austin's "The Land of Little Rain."

London's attitude is the more ridiculous when examined in the light of his latter-day renunciation of socialism and his heated resignation from the party in 1916. The writer of "rough-neck" literature is generally a sentimentalist, and London was no exception. One reference to his maudlin letters to "Mate Woman," signed, "Mate Man," is a sufficient commentary on this "cultured" gentleman who could afford to be gracious to Ambrose Bierce because he knew nothing of "science" and was not well read in the philosophies.

The decade from 1900 to 1910 was a weak and fluffy period. It was rife with undergraduate free-thinking. In a series of articles by different writers, ranging from John Burroughs to Edwin Markham, on the subject "What Life Means to Me," that appeared in *The Cosmopolitan* about this time, is reflected a milk-and-water sentimentality that is quite incredible to-day. Ella Wheeler Wilcox, who was regarded as quite a thinker, summed up the spirit of the times in a glowing apostrophe: "All hail to life — life here, and life beyond! For earth is but the preparatory school for a larger experience, for a greater usefulness." Even Mr. Howells wrote a book entitled: "Between the Dark and Daylight." What chance had Mr. Bierce in such an age?

In his department of *The Cosmopolitan,* Bierce would occasionally review books. The temper of 1905 is suggested by a list of the books he noticed one month: "Mehr Licht" by Prof. Friederich Delitzsch; "History of Southern Literature" by Carl Holliday; "Temporal Power" by Marie Corelli, which sold 150,000 in a few weeks; "The Industrial Republic" by Upton Sinclair; "Pilgrimage" by C. A. Laurence; "Hypnotism and Spiritism" by Dr. Joseph Lapponi; Countess Von Arnheim's "Elizabeth and Her German Garden"; Florence Wilkinson's "The Silent Door" and a new biography of Victor Hugo. It was a bewildering deluge but to Bierce it was infinitely amusing.

Occasionally he found a book that he could not review, as his critical vocabulary was inadequate. He once wrote the shortest book review ever written, by simply writing down the title of the book, the name of author and publisher, and then adding this comment: "The covers of this book are too far apart." He would sometimes print a typical extract in horrific but silent disgust, as he did when he discovered a novel with this interesting passage:

"She remained inactive in his embrace for a considerable period, then modestly disengaging herself looked him full in the countenance and signified a desire for self-communion. By love's instinct he divined her purpose — she wanted to consider his proposal apart from the influence of the glamour of his personal presence. With the innate tact of a truly genteel nature he bade her good evening in French, and with measured tread paced away into the gathering gloom.”

What comment could be made? In the midst of such a red plush age, Mr. Bierce’s silent integrity becomes the more striking and admirable. He was not alone in his position as a reviewer, for a young gentleman in Baltimore was also discovering an occasional gem. As one comrade to another, he wrote to Bierce:

“Last night I struck one in which the heroine wants the hero to agree to preserve her virginity. He refuses and the marriage is postponed. A rival now sics a voluptuous wench upon him and he succumbs. Result: a hurry call for 606. While he is being cured the rival marries the heroine and convinces her, by a practical demonstration, that she was wrong about virginity. So she divorces him as a reward, marries the hero (cured by now), and the two go to the mat.”

Not the least amusing reading of the day were the sermonettes of Benjamin de Casseres, the apt pupil of Elbert Hubbard, who turned out such stuff as: “All rational pleasure is prayer — prayer is an uplifting, a rising of the soul toward the object of its desire, an elevation of instinct.” It need scarcely be observed that Bierce was out of sympathy with the entire body of opinion during the decade that he lived in Washington.

But, if Bierce’s cynicism was a fine guard against nonsense, it failed to forewarn him of the changes that time might bring. He was resolutely determined to disbelieve, which is sometimes the easiest road to gullibility. Accordingly when Langley’s attempted flight on December 8, 1903, was a failure, Bierce joined, in fact led, the jeering and derisive “skeptics” who said “I told you so.” Why, it was preposterous to think that aviation was feasible! Simply too absurd. Hence he wrote “The Rise and Fall of the Aeroplane” as a record of the limitations of skepticism. His friend Hudson Maxim wrote an answer in which he asserted, with a confidence that must have seemed insane in 1903, that aviation was already *fait accompli.*

Bierce was occupied during his early years in Washington with arranging for the publication of several books. He wrote to S. O. Howes, in 1905, giving his sanction to a proposed volume to be compiled from early newspaper essays and articles. But his interest was apparently limited to publishing old copy; he had done little creative writing since 1893. “Fantastic Fables” appeared in 1899, but it, too, was merely a volume comprised of old newspaper copy. “Shapes of Clay,” a volume of doggerel, was published in 1903. It was financed by George Sterling, illustrated by Herman Scheffauer, and its title was the suggestion of Mrs. Atherton who had read “Omar Khayyam.” Nearly all the scraps of verse in

“Shapes of Clay” can, however, be traced into newspaper and magazine files. This was the case with all Bierce’s books; they were merely compiled journalism. Even his famous short stories had appeared, for the most part, in newspapers. Occasionally he would stop and make a book, either of stories, verse, fables or essays, but in truth he was merely putting his journalism into book form. He never wrote a book in the sense that he set down to create a work of art. Even “The Monk and the Hangman’s Daughter” was but an adaptation. Bierce was scarcely a man of letters, as the term is generally used, but was always the journalist. He possessed the journalist’s habit of writing fragmentary pieces; in other words, he wrote his column of “Prattle” week by week without thought of continuity or coherence. It became a mental habit and explains the fact that he never wrote a first rate book, not even a book of satire.

He started to compile another volume from his voluminous collection of newspaper clippings. This time he showed better judgment, for he began to edit his “Devil’s Dictionary.” It was eventually printed by Doubleday, Page & Company under the title of “The Cynic’s Word Book.” While editing his work for this volume he wrote Howes: “The publishers doubtless think it a lot of clowneries like the book to which it gave the clue. When they find that it is only sense, wit and good English they will probably turn it down in a hurry.” His publishers did force him to use a new title. The former title, “The Devil’s Dictionary,” was too demoniacal for the America of 1906. But the volume met with little success, and Bierce suspected that it had been shelved by his timid publishers. It contains, in its present edition, his best wit. It was undoubtedly a forerunner of Mr. Mencken’s “jazz webster,” although the idea of a dictionary of wit is an ancient trick of the satirist. Bierce was in no mood to write books. He was full of grave misgivings about his entire career, and his life was a denial of one value after another. Why write books? The pity is that he ceased to think of making books, even out of old newspaper clippings, at a time when his work might possibly have met with a general interest in this country.

The impetus to Bierce’s republishing mania was the enthusiasm of S. O. Howes. It had been Howes’ idea that a volume could be made of the early newspaper essays and to this suggestion Bierce had finally given his consent. It started the habit of looking over old clippings with a thought of more books. But surely Bierce did not entertain a very high regard for this material that Howes was editing, for he wrote: “I daresay there are many articles that are duplicated, and I blush to think how many times you’ll come upon the same ideas and expressions.... Then, too, you’ll find much that old man time has falsified, together with some views that I no longer hold, if I ever really and truly did.” Writing to Sterling about his early work, he said: “Indeed, my intellectual status (whatever it may be, and God knows it's enough to make me blush) was of slow growth — as was my moral. I mean, I had not *literary sincerity."* It was a sharp observation. An American, transformed overnight into a journalist in 1866, would have a predisposition for romantic theories. Art would tend to be for him, something strange, remote, and fantastic. He would feel it a duty to be tangential and whimsical in his essays and slightly perverse in his satire. It is lamentable that Bierce did not come to grips with life until he was past middle age.

Despite the fact that he saw clearly the defects of his early work, Bierce yet consented to its republication. It would seem that his chief motive was to see some of his journalism in book form before he died. He did not even take the trouble to rewrite the material that Howes selected, nor did he edit it. It was merely a matter of paste and scissors for Howes. Bierce was undoubtedly growing old. In his letters to Howes, he stressed the importance of the worst material, overruled the selections of wit and satire, and included a plethora of solemn stuff about the fall of the republic and the dangers of anarchism. The first title selected for the volume was "The Curmudgeon Philosopher" and such it should have remained. It was later changed, however, to "The Shadow on the Dial." Bierce was rather apologetic about the volume and suggested to Howes, who was writing an introduction, "Maybe you can express a doubt about all these views being my final judgment of the matters treated and the impossibility of accurately drawing the line, always, between seriousness and levity. As I find it sometimes impossible, I assume you must." It is difficult to reconcile his distrust of the worth of this material with his desire that it be published. His cynical misgivings about its reception were well founded. The book was sent to Doubleday, Page & Company, Brentano's, Paul Elder, Appleton's, The Century, and refused by all of them. Ultimately it was published by Alex. Robertson of San Francisco.

Some of the contemporary reviews of the book were rather shrewdly written. For example, one reviewer in *The Bookman* (October, 1909) wrote: "Contempt, not prophecy, has always been Mr. Bierce's animating spirit, and it is the animating spirit of these very slashing papers.... Anger is an excellent literary motive and the country needs a drubbing and always did; but somehow these wrathful passages seem to have no natural glow — only the steam heat of journalism." It would be difficult to have selected a more appropriate phrase than "steam heat of journalism" for, in truth, the papers were written as journalism. The essays were, at the time they were written, fearless and able editorials, but as a book of ideas they were, of course, not representative of Bierce's power and ability. The London *Spectator* (August 28, 1909) expressed the same thought: "Still, to be honest, we must own that Mr. Bierce's words sound to us not infrequently to be somewhat wild and whirling." An article in the St. Louis *Mirror* (May 5, 1904) said: "Mr. Bierce is a Niagara running to waste," and the opinion was much to the point. It is interesting to contrast the simplicity and "great good sense" of his letters with the oracular manner that he unconsciously adopted in writing an essay. Of course, the letters are of a later date, but this is only a partial apology for the worst of his editorials. The essay, like the story, must be slightly ultramundane, it must be pitched in a tempo other than the casual.

Yet there was never any clap-trap about Bierce's essays, and when he was aiming at a specific target he always got his man, — or woman, — as when he said that Mrs. Humphrey Ward "suffers from a temporary impediment in her preach," and "Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's characters are presumably male, manifestly middle-aged and prematurely moral." It was only when he turned "curmudgeon philosopher" in old age that he failed to be impressive. But, as George Santayana said of Nietzsche: "We should forgive Nietzsche his boyish blasphemies. He hated with clearness, if he did not know what to love."

*

THE days that passed were idle and dull. It was a period of boredom, the age of torpor. Gentlemen wheeled bicycles and ladies read thrilling accounts of M. Aguinaldo and the iniquitous prison system in Delaware. The years seemed hollow and bereft of significance. Bierce fell into the mood of sad reveries. He was irritated by futility, annoyed by misgivings about his own career. There was no animating principle to save his life from an unbearable emptiness. He was utterly quiet and inactive but a restless and impatient anxiety tugged constantly, urging him away from Washington. One illness followed another in remorseless succession. James Hopper called at his apartment in Washington and found Bierce suffering from lumbago. Another visitor records an impression of a weak and despondent man who had just recovered from an attack of asthma. His letters reflect the same low spirits. He enjoyed only "brief flashes of good health"; "I've got to be sick wherever I am, and prefer to be sick at 'home' among my angel girls who think it good fun to nurse me"; and, from another letter, "This is my birthday. I am 366 years old."

To his sickness and despondency was added the pain of shattered friendships. It was during this period that he quarreled with Scheffauer. The particular details are unimportant. As a matter of fact, they probably had nothing whatever to do with the disagreement which was the result of a growing suspicion on the part of Bierce that Scheffauer was irresponsible and ungrateful. In this Bierce's suspicions were well founded. But when the actual break came, it was a sharp, cruel pain. Scheffauer had written to a "mutual friend" that, in a controversy with Bierce, he had "come out on top." The friend, of course, repeated the remark to Bierce, who replied, "So Scheff thinks he 'comes out on top' — he may have observed scum doing so." But, in a letter to Howes, he said: "I've had a rather disheartening experience with Scheff. Still, I retain some small vestiges of my faith in the existence of a rudimentary gratitude in the heart of man. Don't know about a German." A month later he was still sad and depressed about the quarrel with Sheffauer. "A habit of the heart is not easily overcome. But I've just had to break off personal relations with him — the second time."

Sterling came east for a visit, and he was with Bierce at Sag Harbor for a few weeks one summer. With the publication of "A Wine of Wizardy" in *The Cosmopolitan,* Sterling came into national fame. Bierce had sent the poem to a dozen or so magazines before inducing the editor of *The Cosmopolitan* to accept it. It seems that Sam Chamberlain had read Lord Bryce's remark about the scarcity of poets in America, and had accepted the poem so that he might make it the basis of an editorial devoted to Lord Bryce's shortcomings as a critic of American life. Bierce was furious when he discovered that his "pupil's" poem was accepted only that it might be put to such an inglorious use.

With this notoriety and fame, Sterling began to act in accordance with the best poetic traditions and Bierce was, at first, very tolerant. Writing to Howes, Bierce had occasion to remark: "George Sterling has written twenty-two love sonnets; so he says, but he has sent me only one of them and says that none of them can be printed. Guess he's afraid — he has a wife. Why can't a fellow content himself (as I have learned to do) with a bird and a squirrel? — or (as you do) with a book and a julep? The irrationality of our race is beyond belief." The group of sonnets swelled in the course of time to a bulk sufficient for publication as "Sonnets to Craig," although the wife of a drummer at Carmel received twice as many sonnets as did "Craig." These escapades came to annoy Bierce excessively. He never could tolerate mere "Bohemianism." It impressed him as tawdry, vulgar and unnecessary. Here again Bierce could not overcome his swift apprehension of unworth. He might, conceivably, have been more tolerant. Sterling, in later years, came to realize the truth of much that Bierce had told him. In an essay in *The Overland Monthly* (November, 1926) he echoed the philosophy of "nothing matters" in terms that might have been written by Bierce himself. "Poor dancer on the flints and shards in the temple porches, turn home," so one is moved to cry when contemplating the pain and suffering that Sterling underwent. If Bierce had been able to foresee the future, he might possibly have been less censorious.

While Howes was working on the book of essays, Bierce and Percival Pollard decided to pay him a visit at Galveston. They left Washington in October of 1907, and stopped off at Chattanooga. It was a memorable trip for Bierce. He paraded Pollard around the battlefields with a proprietary interest, pointing out monuments and delighting his guest with the quality of his reminiscences. Bierce was actually excited and the boredom of many idle and fruitless months in Washington was forgotten in this luxurious reveling in the romantic vistas which he conjured up out of memory. The experience had the same satisfactory sadness of that former summer in the Cheat Mountains, only it was more moving and the emotions it engendered were more profound. And what memories flouted his soul! Men had died here, on these sun-illuminated hillcrests, and he had shot some of them. Had it actually happened? Or was it a dream of his youth? Battle cries and death yells, and murderous volleys of shot had once torn all this loveliness into a mad medley of hell and the skies had bled with man’s incurable folly. And all for what? They had not even known precisely what they were fighting for! Years later he could stroll through these grounds, with Percival Pollard, and chat casually of divers things! There was something uncannily light and unreal and shifting about these masks of appearance. “A persistent hallucination” goes with romanticism, and Bierce was forever conjuring up seductive dreams of lost glamour and glory.

At Galveston, Bierce had a delightful visit. He met a number of Howes’ friends and found them congenial, admiring and flattering. Rabbi Cohen took Bierce through his library and Bierce presented to him a copy of “Write It Right,” with the inscription:

“As one who does not hunger is oft bidden to the feast
The author gives this little book to one who needs it least.”

Mrs. Schoolfield,—”that dear woman,” — entertained him. He fought over Chickamauga with Mr. Brown, who had been in the Southern army. And he shared Howes’ enthusiasm for Anatole France. They were pleasant, idle, days. He spent some time in New Orleans with Pollard, and then left alone, coming back on the *Lampasas* and stopping off at Key West.

While he had been in the South, he had talked with Howes of South America. It fanned an old enthusiasm and the thought kept suggesting itself that some day he would journey south again, with finality and dramatic dignity. This first journey had been quite pleasant, and it suggested another trip, for Bierce kept repeating phases of experience like a true romantic, always seeking some unique quality describable as “adventure” and thinking that states of mind can be regained, as though they were purely objective. Howes had suggested a trip to Yucatan and it had met with Bierce's prompt approval. A correspondent, H. A. Moss, who was connected with the American consulate in Brazil, wrote alluring letters about South America. James Watkins and Ralph Smith, two of his dearest friends, had gone to Tepic in 1881 on a mining expedition and had written glorious accounts of the west coast. Roberto Andrade, the Ecuadorian anarchist, had made a translation of some of his stories into Spanish, and their publication had provoked considerable interest in his work in Central America. Then, too, there came enthusiastic letters from Benjamin de Casseres, who was writing for *El Diario* in Mexico City. All these incidents tended to fix his attention on the south. He sorely wished he had gone into Mexico, for on his return he found Washington more dreary and uninteresting than ever.

He began to quarrel incessantly with the various Hearst editors: Chamberlain, Norcross and Rudolph Bloch. Mr. Hearst tried to sick his pet bulldog on Pulitzer but found that Bierce was stubborn. "I don't like the job of chained bulldog to be let loose only to tear the panties off the boys who throw rocks at you. You wouldn't like it yourself in my place. Henceforth I won't bite anybody, a quiet life for mine. I'm going to be a literary gent, thank you, — it is nicer, and there is nobody to say me nay." So Bierce wrote under date of July 8, 1907. It followed a quarrel that was soon forgotten, but others came in rapid succession. Finally when Bierce began to compile his "Collected Works" for Mr. Neale, he quit the Hearst papers altogether and his copy ceased to appear in *The Cosmopolitan* after 1909.

The quarrels were really farcical. Since 1887 they had invariably run the same course: heated words, resignation, reconciliation. A characteristic expression is this to Howes: "I'm off Mr. Hearst's payroll — by voluntary resignation. Couldn't stand the monkeying of his editors with my stuff, and had tired of appealing to him. He always decides in my favor, but never enforces his decisions by 'appropriate penalties.' So I'm without any income, but retain my self-respect, which is not a bad substitute. Anything that comes so high ought to be good." He would follow these grand notes with such weak words as: "My emancipation from Mr. Hearst's service was, alas, brief. He did not want it that way, and I can't resist him, for he has been, on the whole, mighty good to me." In another note, this time to Robert Mackay, Bierce wrote: "I'm a wage-slave for Hearst. But then the negro quarters are fairly comfortable, the corn and bacon tolerable and the overseer's whip can't reach me here in Washington. Sometimes I think I should like to be a free nigger, but I dunno'."

Hearst was always good humored in his replies. In one note he said: "If you will kindly excuse me for saying so, you have devoted so much of your letter to soaking Mr. Chamberlain and proving that I am wrong in everything that I ever said or did, that the details of the arrangement have not received much attention. The Hon. William Randolph Hearst is quite as anxious to do what is right and what is agreeable to all as Will Hearst ever was and I wish I could get you to believe that.” Bierce met Hearst one day in New York and announced that inasmuch as he did no work for the newspapers and little for *The Cosmopolitan*, that his pay should be adjusted. Mr. Hearst said: “You haven’t heard me shrieking about that, have you?” and Bierce was compelled to admit that he hadn’t. Mr. Hearst’s tether of a liberal salary account bound Bierce far more tightly than any other means that could have been employed. Bierce was decent and loyal, and always realized that Mr. Hearst had been kind, although he was skeptical of the motives behind this kindness.

But, if Bierce had not desired to write for Mr. Hearst’s periodicals, there were certainly other opportunities. His papers contain any number of requests for copy from prominent magazines, offering attractive rates for any stories that he might submit. *Hampton’s, The Delineator, Town Topics, McClure’s,* and many other magazines wrote Bierce for copy. Willard Huntington Wright, as editor of *The Smart Set,* wrote for material and offered five cents a word. Bierce commented upon the offer to a friend and said: “One hates to be caught with a magazine having so hateful a title. It is to be read secretly, as we commit adultery and murder.”

It is quite apparent that he had no new plans whatever during the period of his Washington residence. He was merely revising and correcting, preparing for the “Collected Works.” Even the “curmudgeon philosopher” had lost interest in current happenings. He was musing about the troubling nature of quietness and even “art” seemed trivial and unimportant. His hours in the apartment were broken with amusement over the antics of “John Henry Legs,” a pet squirrel, and walks in the park with “my girls.” He jotted down in his letters such an event as a canoeing expedition as though it were of the utmost importance. He would often visit Pollard at Lyme, Connecticut and got to be quite a fearless canoeist, causing his friends no end of worry and alarm by his intrepid expeditions. It was indeed a dreary existence. He would flee for a week or so, visit Mr and Mrs. Martin at West Point and spend long hours on the verandah of the Officers’ Club talking about everything under the sun. He read the verse of Ezra Pound, Samuel Loveman and James Elroy Flecker, with interest, when it was sent him in manuscript. But it seemed so useless, trivial and inconsequential when compared with his own sense of despair and boredom. He was so conscious of death that life seemed a dreary and insignificant buzzing. Why was he so destitute of certainty, so fatigued and weary of existence?

In later years his cynicism sounded off key; it had unquestionably a false note. Bierce learned the trick of paradox early in his career as a professional wit. He could twist expressions about in such a manner that the reader would jump with amazement and call this experiment in the dissociation of ideas “wit.” But the process with Bierce was more a trick of expression than it was a quest for information. For, as Mr. Eliot has observed, “true cynicism is a fault of the temperament of the observer, not a conclusion arising naturally from the contemplation of the object; it is quite the reverse of ‘facing facts.’” And so it was with Bierce. He had really outgrown his cynicism but he did not seem at all aware of the fact. His was the loneliness of the man whose ideas far outran the information of his time. Just as his cynicism had predated modern cynicism by the span of a generation, just so his later reactions found no strengthening verification in the thought of his contemporaries. He always had to trust his “hunches” and “prejudices” against the showy and pretentious information of the period. Naturally he was forced to carry over his early cynicism as a convenient mechanism of protection.

In these last years he worked feverishly on the “Collected Works” edition in twelve volumes. His letters to Mr. Neale reveal how deeply concerned he was with this enterprise into which he was putting money, time, the efforts of his secretary, and the money of his friends who were circularized for subscriptions. He had to have the feeling that all those newspaper clippings were to be converted into neat pages in a handsome edition. His letters of the period are replete with references to the enterprise, discussions of publishing details, plans for prospectuses, and proofs, proofs, proofs. The last four years of his life were taken up with proofreading and little else, correcting proof after proof, and even paying for the privilege of correction. Mr. Neale’s chief typesetter annoyed him to the point of exasperation and he wrote long letters of remonstrance, complaining of the “peculiar” variety of such ignorance which was “dark, profound and general.” He was determined to have a collected edition of his work. This feeling was indicative of his sense of misspent time and effort. A letter of praise which he received from Theodore Bonnet actually made him sad! After reading the elaborate prospectus which Mr. Neale had arranged, he wrote: “The only thing that saddens me in reading the prospectus is the thought of how I might have merited the praise if I had applied myself more to my art and less to pleasure.” This is a strange note, indeed, for the Bierce of legend. His life had been too much an affair of fiery and impulsive battling, jostlings and tournaments, — Sancho Panza and the Windmill.

He was pleasantly contemptuous of the life about him. Mr. Roosevelt’s “charlatanism” disgusted him. Moreover, “Washington is now lousy with statesmen, and I stay indoors a good deal to watch my pocketbook.” Everywhere about him he noticed mediocrity, sentimental and brummagem thinking. He began to suspect even his friend Percival Pollard who, in truth, was always something of the dilettante. “Elinor Glyn is here being loudly entertained and uttering the most bombastic nonsense, proving herself a vulgarian of singularly cheap distinction. By the way, Pollard thinks her book fine. I begin to despair of Pollard.” And, then, came Mr. Taft. “We had a most disgusting inauguration — with blackguardy rampant and to-day the newspapers print page after page of lickspittle adulation of Taft, Mrs. Taft, the cub Tafts, and everybody connected with the administration. I wish I could get the *smell* of my country out of my nose and clothing.” He was no longer young enough to be amused by such nonsense, it weighed heavily upon him, and he longed for a surcease from the monotony of mediocrity. “Compared with the Congress of our forefathers, the Congress of to-day is as a flock of angels to an executive body of the Western Federation of Miners.”

An occasional “champagne week end” in New York, with a dinner party for Blanche Bates at Delmonico’s, helped to break the tedium of being famous but bored. He was not even reading much. “It requires a regiment of Infantry and two field pieces to get me to read a novel. — We have autumnal weather at last and I have resumed canoeing, to the manifest advantage of my temper. Get a canoe and Fate cannot harm you — though you may drown.” So he wrote to Howes. He did read one book with which he was in hearty accord; in fact, he thought that its author might have used some of his own newspaper articles in writing the volume. It was “Janus in Modern Life,” by Dr. Flinders Petries, a book of reactionary ideas, tracing the parallel between the rise of the Roman rabble and the agitation of labor unions in modern times. Then, too, he was amused by a book on “The So-Called Christopher Columbus,” by Goodrich, and his old friend, Col. Willis Brewer, of Haynesville, Alabama, had in “Egypt and Israel” destroyed another myth. To question the histories of Christ and Christopher Columbus was a noble enterprise in America, savoring of unspeakable heroism. He had read John Galsworthy’s “In Motley,” and when he selected a title for Volume XII of his “Collected Works” he apparently carried the title over unthinkingly. He read many war texts, notably Sergeant’s heavy tome on the Santiago Campaign. He had assisted Archibald Gracie somewhat in writing “The Truth about Chickamauga.” At the request of General W. W. Witherspoon, Bierce addressed The Army War College faculty and class on October 3, 1908, on the subject of uniform orders and commands in the military service, which he had devised. He took rambles in the park where he made pets of the squirrels and had his picture taken with them in his hands. He wrote

Howes: “The squirrel of the picture lives in a public park, but he loves me just the same — rather better with pecans than without.” It was a period of Coventry. Squirrels, walks in the park, idle hours, proofreading, and an occasional book. Would something ever happen? Was he to die in Washington of acute lumbago or be stricken by that old “adversary of souls,” his asthma?

Despite a few minor interests, the general tone of his letters is that of unbearable boredom. I refer to the unpublished letters. A few phrases are significant: “Nothing goes on here but the talk in Congress”—”I’m weak and will-less”—”I’m older than the iron hills.” Even the praise which his work was beginning to inspire in many quarters, did not interest him. He was pushing rapidly forward; the currents were quickening; it would not be long until he was one of the initiated. In contemplation of death, he began to get an accurate perspective on his life and career. His “Little Johnny” stories suddenly became “rot”; his ironic romance, “The Monk and the Hangman’s Daughter,” was merely a “yarn”—”simple, sentimental, religious and sensational.” What did it all matter compared with the oppressing sense of futility that belittled every activity and made vanity seem the most laughable folly. And what was this writing but “vanity”? He did not go as far as Anatole France and call it a “lying pretense,” but its ultimate importance was negligible.

He was convinced afresh of the unreality of appearances. While he was preparing himself for a swift and shocking ducking in the Styx, the most inconsequential and ridiculous talk imaginable droned in lassitude about him: woman’s rights, labor unions, the whisper of anti-booze propaganda, the “problem” novel, Spiritualism, Marie Corelli, Elbert Hubbard and the poetry of Ella Wheeler Wilcox. Why write anything? If he did, one of Mr. Hearst’s ingenious young men would deck it out with barbaric banners and streamers, and convert it into an apocryphal revelation. His protests seem futile and almost pathetic. No one paid any attention to his demands. He wrote an article called “The Historian of the Future” and Mr. Hearst had written him: “I thought we might have a sky-line of New York across the top, and at the bottom your group of skin-clad savages gnawing a raw bone; or else we might have merely an imaginative illustration of the Historian of 3940 writing his history. Do you like either of these, or would you prefer some sort of mystic cartoon à la Vedder of greed destroying civilization? I suppose you would rather not have anything, but as we have got to spoil the article in some way, will you not indicate what would be the least objectionable?” So far as Mr. Hearst and his men were concerned, Bierce was just an eccentric old gentleman whose whims must be humored if possible, although there was no penalty if he was treated with disrespect. He was, indeed, “a magnificent crystallization.”

CHAPTER XVIII. HOLIDAY

BY 1910 Bierce had turned the last corner in the road and realized that his active career was over. He had definitely ceased to write for any of Mr. Hearst’s publications, and, so free did he feel from any obligation to Mr. Hearst personally that he began to jot down notes for a proposed biography. Nothing remained but to complete the editing and selecting of material for the imposing “Collected Works” edition, a matter of “adding, subtracting and dividing” old paragraphs into books. He had arrived at the period of rest and pause and yet he did not feel much like abandoning the old life. There were moments when he felt marvelously young and fresh, but it was a deceptive elation. At times his letters would have his early strength and vigor in every line and his wit would be sharper than ever. But there was always a recurrent strain of sadness, the result of an inevitable and disheartening realization that he was but a shell of the man he had been, a shadowy outline of the old “Prattler.” In his despair he began to think of California, old scenes and old faces. He was curious about the place; perhaps he might recapture that illusive feeling of splendor if he returned to the scenes with which it had been associated. And so, in the spring of 1910, he sailed for California.

Ten years had passed since he left California. Now that he was returning, he was excited about the trip. It promised to be something of an adventure. He wrote of it with eagerness and his letters counted the days until he sailed. Perhaps San Francisco would not be the same: the fire had razed many old landmarks and the years had taken their toll. But it would be a pleasant trip, nevertheless. There was surely no reason why he should remain in Washington. Moreover, he wanted to see George Sterling again, who was saving some choice bottles: “The booze that is like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” He sold his canoe, said good-by to a few pet squirrels, and set sail.

He left in April of 1910, sailing to Colon and through the Isthmus. The Canal Zone interested him immensely as he had visited Aspinwall in 1865. The voyage stirred the enthusiasm of that earlier visit to Galveston, and he began to focus his attention on South America and its alluring “romance” and “uncertainty.” It was the only land left for the adventurous. He would return to Central America some day and journey farther south to the Andes. In this way he might be able to rid himself of all this old baggage of ideas, dreams, blasted hopes, and sorrows. For at sixty-eight this appalling “cynic” was still full of a boyish belief that he might discover an *ultima thule.*

As soon as he arrived in San Francisco, he left immediately for his brother's cabin perched high on a bluff overlooking the river near Guerneville, California. It was enjoyable beyond his expectations: a fine interval of quiet, unbroken by the annoyance of duty. The scenery about Guerneville was of a breathtaking loveliness. He wrote to Neale from Guerneville: "I had a pleasant but rather long voyage. Was three days in Panama and saw something of the canal work. On arrival at San Francisco, I gathered up my nephew and his wife and came directly up here to my brother's shack in the mountainside. And, faith! it is paradise. Right above a beautiful river (we have a canoe) with a half-dozen pretty villages in sight below, and the woods already filled with their summer population from the city. One meets groups of pretty girls in camping attire everywhere — some of whom say that I held them on my knee when they were little (I mean to again), although I fancy it may have been their grandmothers." He paddled up to town every day for his mail; the mountainside was ablaze with flowers; and he was to see George Sterling soon as they were leaving for Yosemite.

At Yosemite he was even more amazed with the beauty about him. "As to the 'sights' to be seen, they are simply unspeakable. I haven't it in my heart to say a word about it."

Such a pastoral mood is certainly out of keeping with the "Bitter" Bierce of legend, the ruthless satirist of the Pacific Coast. It is more the expression of an old man who had almost forgotten about life. In July he was back in Berkeley, and, at the Key Route Inn in Oakland, was royally entertained by so many hosts that he could scarcely remember their names. Many old grievances were forgotten and even the journals edited by former rivals were quite polite and docile. The era of bloody journalism in California was at an end.

But there were several uneasy situations that he had to face. When he left for Washington in 1899, he had ceased writing to several old friends, whether out of pique or offended feelings or laziness, no one knows. But he had graciously decided to forget about this neglect and wrote several notes arranging interviews. Soon after his arrival in California, he had written pleasantly to Amy Cecil and suggested an appointment, as though the silence of ten years would explain itself. They met and talked quite casually of a "variety of things," but he offered no explanation of his conduct. Finally, as the day came to a close, he admitted that he had failed to write because of "something" which he later found to be untrue. But if he had expected indifference, he was mistaken. Mrs. Cecil, like several of his other friends, decided that such a sensitive and temperamental creature should be left to his own devices.

It was the end of an old and dear friendship. Some trivial utterance, some letter of gossip, had reached him in Washington, and he had frozen into an unearthly reserve that it had required ten years to thaw. He had not written for an explanation. His experience with friends had been so precarious, that an intimation of disloyalty was enough. He was monumentally unable to deal with human nature, — a sublime incompetent. Some weeks after their first interview, Bierce saw Mrs. Cecil in the Palace Hotel. He bowed rather formally and went his way. They never met again. He might understand but he could not, psychologically, act upon the promptings of impulse. People should not allow their hearts to rule their heads, he was always writing his young admirers, to which one is tempted to add: neither should they be ridiculous.

And his parting with Mrs. Cecil was not an isolated incident. He had quarreled with Leila Cotton before leaving California. It had been a petty misunderstanding, compound of unwarranted inference and conjecture. When Bierce returned in 1910, he invited Miss Cotton to lunch and they went for a stroll in an Oakland cemetery, looking for Lily Walsh’s grave. They talked of the fine hours at “Bohemia,” of amusing incidents, of old friends. He told her that he was “written out” and that some day he “would go away.” It was a phrase that he was beginning to repeat, — a preparation for a farewell. But when they parted that day it was to be for all time. There had been no explanation, not a word of apology, not a token of faith. Had he been ashamed of his impulsive repudiation of an old friendship?

In August there was a round of pleasure: the Bohemian Club play on the Russian River. “The finest spectacle that I ever saw,” so he wrote to a friend. But, despite the Grove Play, and despite the luncheons, and parties in San Francisco and Oakland, he was seized with impatience. “I don’t find San Francisco quite the same,” he wrote. He had written to Scheffauer, prior to their severance of relations, that “San Francisco is not the same city that it was. Where are the courageous men of the Vigilante Committee of the old days? Where are those who broke the head of the mob with pick-handles in the time of Dennis Kearney? I mean, where are those like them? It is clear that the business men and the professional men of to-day are no better than the labor unions and not half so brave.” In truth, the San Francisco that he visited in 1910 had little in common with the San Francisco that he knew of old, despite the pamphlets, brochures, and novels to the contrary. He was not in touch with the new city; his former associates were now old men, who had retired. It was a region peopled with ghosts and specters.

Towards the end of the summer, Miss Christiansen arrived on a vacation, and Bierce saw her for a few moments before she left for Napa, “carrying my bird —

without which she could not live.” They corrected more proofs, checked over some business, and then she left. A few weeks later she returned to Washington to sell some of his favorite Mergenthaler stock and wire him the proceeds. In September he was writing Howes, “my health is pretty good, but I’m a bit homesick. Guess I’ve had too good a time.” And in October, he “left California like a thief in the night” in an effort to avoid his friends. He arrived back in Washington on November 4th, after stopping over at the Grand Canyon for a few days.

The apartment was stuffy; he had an attack of asthma; there was an accumulation of proofs to correct and letters to answer; and his pet squirrel had died. Naturally he was irritable and grouchy. The young newspapermen did not visit him for some weeks. He was still furious when he noticed that the manager of the Washington Directory had printed his name “Major” Bierce in the directory. He sat down and penned him a crisp note, in which he said: “I wish to repeat my protest against being described in your directory as belonging to the United States Army, when in fact I am a civilian, and to beg that in the future my name be omitted from the Directory.” He quarreled with the Army and Navy Club, resigned, and then permitted himself to be coaxed back into the fold. Of such things were his days composed.

This editing of the “Collected Works” was becoming wearisome. He was devoting his entire time to the tedious work of sorting out all clippings, pasting, cutting, editing. The edition was appearing, volume by volume, and was creating no little wonderment in many minds. There was absolutely no demand for a “collected” edition of his works; the entire project was pure vanity. Bierce knew that much of the material reprinted was worthless; his letters, particularly those to S. O. Howes, reveal this fact unmistakably. But the desire to have that massive set of books on the library shelves of America, was too much for the “curmudgeon philosopher,” and he yielded a point to his vanity. Professor Fred Lewis Pattee was rather confused by the edition, and wrote asking Mr. Neale if Bierce was “really a great man.” Editors were equally nonplussed. Franklin K. Lane wrote a hasty letter to a New York newspaper denouncing the author as a “hideous monster, so like the mixture of dragon, lizard, bat and snake as to be unnameable.” The old query: “Who is Ambrose Bierce?” was setting tongues wagging again. American critics were quite incompetent in reviewing the edition and generally wearied of the task after the first few volumes appeared.

In England the reviewers received the volumes of the “Collected Works” with less enthusiasm and more sense. A writer on *The Anthenœum* wrote an interesting review of one volume in which he said:

“It might be interesting to consider what are the prepossessions, the constituents of the alienating view of life, which makes such a solecism (i.e. Bierce's views on the novel) possible in an intelligence so acute. Lacking space for that excursus, let us say that though our author's other critical pronouncements are tangential enough, none is so flagrantly wide of the mark, and many must have been a distinct mental acquisition to the audience which Mr. Bierce instructs.... The great fault or misfortune of Mr. Bierce is that, when he is not kept right by the pressure of an artistic purpose serious enough to inhibit the characteristic sallies of his intelligence, his writing is apt to be punctuated with lapses and excesses, tags of humor or extravagance or verbiage, which bring it into line, for the moment at least, with very common matter."

What seems to have troubled so many reviewers was the impression that insinuated itself into their consciousness, that Bierce was really an important and vital personality. His force reached them through layers of "lapses and excesses" and the "extravagances of verbiage," and unsteadied their pens. But little was known of his life, so they could only wonder in silence.

Just how much of Bierce's work went into the "Collected Works" is a question that is difficult to answer. A great deal of his "Prattle" may be found throughout the twelve volumes, but a vast amount of his journalism did not commend itself sufficient to warrant inclusion. In fact, Bierce omitted the most extravagantly amusing passages of "Prattle," as they seemed too rowdy for the handsome morocco bindings that Mr. Neale had provided. But it would be impossible to edit the unpublished satire, as it is entirely fragmentary and nearly every incident would require a footnote. It seems unthinkable, however, that Bierce should have omitted some of his sharpest lines in order that he might include those horrible "Little Johnny" yarns of which he wrote Mr. Neale that it pained him to have to kill any of them.

He led a rather lazy existence at Washington during these last years. The monotony of proofreading was broken by an occasional visit with Dr. Franklin in Schenectady and a few days at West Point with the Martins. He would also visit Mrs. Ruth Guthrie Harding at Paterson, New Jersey. She, too, was another "pupil." With some of these friends, Bierce apparently adopted the slightly theatrical attitude of the man overcome with a sense of lost illusions. It is always a pleasant and successful act, as it secretly flatters the spectator, who, inferentially, must be happier than the sufferer, generally a slightly romantic, Byron-esque gentleman "tortured" with sorrows. Such was the Mr. "Boythorn" Bierce that Mrs. Harding knew. "At times," she has written with great ecstasy, "I used to feel as if I were strolling with Francis of Assisi." It is difficult not to blame Bierce for such a line as that: he should have realized the consequences of tenderness on the pen of a romantic lady. It was but another indication that he was more sorely than ever in need of a catharsis that would purge him of “shadow making” and romantic gesturing. He was often on the quest of adventure, dramatic situations, and, it must be confessed, an audience.

The origin of his tangential, quixotic gallantry would be difficult to trace. The world was not to him the tragi-comic spectacle that it was to Anatole France. It was more a matter of sharp distinctions; impassable gulfs; worlds of thought that were complete in themselves. This habit of thought warred against any possible synthesis since it prevented the identification of the thinker with his world. The roots of idealism in subjective experience was a theory that would have been repulsive to Bierce. His idealism was ever a star in the sky. Like his conception of “art” as a world of romantic strangeness and bizarre sensation, his idealism had no relation with the material world. He collected weird incidents from the press as the material for romantic stories, that is, strange stories, when all he needed to do was to look at life. He was thus at a tangent. Even his wit and satire broke into unassimilable fragments, unrelated crystals that gleamed impishly in the sunlight. Yet there was a great force about the lines, since inwardly he felt the impulse to create but his hand was stayed by an archaic tradition. When he stepped out of the realm of his unreal ideas, he was literally a Titan. But, under the baleful influence of his beloved “shadows,” he was capable at times of being a Romantic Figure. No man ever takes the trouble to write epigrams about love who is not at the same time slightly romantic. “Disillusion” is not understanding any more than a headache is wisdom. What he needed was to be plunged layers deep in the so-called material world and to be in sympathy with fundamental rhythms. “Idealism,” in his sense, was remote and unnecessary. He saw the dilemma at times but it was too late to amend.

There was an interval when he was away at Sag Harbor, “motorboating, autoing, and so forth,” with George Sterling, who was visiting in the east. But it was a short vacation, and he was soon back in Washington. “I’m still playing at asthma. It isn’t much of a game; I prefer draw-poker. But asthma is cheaper.” The great edition of his work was progressing rapidly and he wrote to Neale that “before ‘cashing in’ I should like to know that some far future edition of my books will be brought out in a little better shape.” His ambition was to be fully realized and his vanity appeased, for the complete set was put on the market about this time.

That it might be properly ushered into the world, Mr. Neale and Bierce conspired over a prospectus, which, properly considered, is one of the most amusing documents imaginable. In it they collected all the odds and ends of compliments and opinions that Bierce could cull from his files. Some of these comments were forced, some absurd, some ridiculous, but they were all included. The prospectus when printed was naturally a most bewildering document. What could the uninitiated think of such a magnificent brochure? “He is a literary Rhadamanthus,”

“He is as interesting as a kangaroo,” said the faithful J. S. Cowley-Brown, who wrote blurbs about Bierce in the *Musical Leader* and *Black and White* (London), and occasionally tapped him for a slight loan! Brander Mathews was present with a gentle and diplomatic compliment. Michael Williams shouted, “Hail, Bierce!” Arthur Machen, William Marion Reedy, Richard Barry, and Gertrude Atherton made their contributions. Mr. Arthur Brisbane, with customary grandeur, said that: “Ambrose Bierce is one of the best writers in America, perhaps the best.” Joel Chandler Harris was so enthusiastic that if he were “Santa Claus he would give every one a set of Ambrose Bierce’s works.” Elbert Hubbard, recognizing the fact that Bierce could write a nice sermonette when in the mood, announced that “Ambrose Bierce is the boss of us all,” and then added the famous prophecy which Mr. Vincent Starrett quoted in his little brochure but omitted the name of the prophet, fearing (perhaps?) that its association might injure Bierce’s reputation: “Some day he will go up on Mount Horeb and forget to come down. No man will see his death struggle, for he’ll cover his face with his cloak of motley, and if he sends us a wireless it will be this: ‘‘Tis a Grave subject.’” Perhaps it was Hubbard’s suggestion that prompted the final melodrama. The prospectus will remain a literary and psychological curiosity. Arthur Machen, Haldane MacFall, Edwin Markham, Franklin Lane, Joel Chandler Harris, Elbert Hubbard, Eugene Field, and the Wellington, New Zealand, *Searchlight!*

Bierce had few close friends in the East. On the coast, “Charley” Kauffman, Judge Boalt, Watkins, and quite a number of others, were always faithful and loyal. But in Washington he had no associates with whom he felt truly companionable, if one may make a notable exception of Percival Pollard. They began to correspond in the early nineties when Pollard was one of the first Eastern reviewers to become enthusiastic about Bierce’s work, and naturally they soon met after Bierce went to live in Washington. Pollard’s home, when he was not globetrotting, was in Baltimore. He spent much time with Bierce, at Washington and Baltimore, and also during the summer home in Connecticut. The intervals when Pollard was abroad were always noted in Bierce’s letters with a shade of regret. They were constantly in correspondence and had many ideas which they shared in common, although Pollard was of a different temperament.

But even this friendship, imperfect as it was, soon came to a tragic end.

Pollard died in Baltimore, December 7, 1911. His death was a great blow even to Bierce, whose reaction to death had been dulled by hard usage. He was stubbornly adamant about Pollard's death, as though he would stifle his suffering by the harshness of brusque statement. He wrote to Howes, announcing the fact of Pollard's death, and added: "That is all I feel like writing." A few days later he wrote again to Howes: "You would hardly care to have in memory the image of Pollard that I must carry for life. You'd not have recognized that handiwork of death. Poor Percy! he must have suffered horribly to become like that. *Well,* we put him into the furnace, as he would have wished, and there is no more Percy." He was determined that nothing should matter, but there is a fatal hesitancy about that "well." He attended the funeral in company with Mr. Mencken, who recalls that he wore an "elegant plug-hat," and told some curious anecdotes on the way to the crematory, chiefly of morgues, dissecting-rooms, and lonely churchyards.

The horrible image of Pollard's face, writhed in agony, haunted Bierce for days. The giddy emptiness of life — a buzzing and unnecessary annoyance — outlined against the sharp drop-curtain of death. Nothing remained for him but death, and he had been thinking of it more and more during these last idle years in Washington. How futile and misspent and absurd his life now seemed! A little fame, a little useless and annoying notoriety, and then this awful fatuous existence in an apartment house! It was better when Sherman was marching to Georgia or when Grant was surprised at Shiloh: a life of wild, exciting and dramatic action. How long, Lord, how long? He was "suffering only from life and that would bring its own cure"; "nothin' doin' here — same old dreary round of religious duties tempered by temptations to murder my fool fellow citizens." It was at this time, too, that he wrote Mrs. McCrackin that "fear of death is the invention of a humorist," recalling Beddoes' lines:

"For Death is more a 'jest' than life: you see
Contempt grows quick from familiarity.
I owe this wisdom to Anatomy."

Bierce owed his wisdom to a slightly different experience than that of a German medical school, but it was anatomical in its way. There was material enough for the students of anatomy at Shiloh.

Two letters to Howes of about this time are suggestive of his desire to run away from an engulfing boredom and ennui. In one letter he said: "In your place I'd go west — to Arizona, New Mexico — anywhere west — and do any old thing I could get to do. Even if you should not 'succeed,' it is no hardship to be poor in the west; and you’ll not know the joy of living till you ‘cut’ cities. Sell the books and just *go,* relying on luck. Nobody suffers real privations in a new country.” For Bierce this impatient eagerness for life in the “rough” and a return to nature via Rousseau, was strange indeed. He was, again, transposing ideas in his imagination. It was not that he desired a new experience, or a new land, but that he wanted to find the key that would lead him back to the vital current of existence. Another letter to Howes contains a revealing passage: “In the west is room enow to expand the mind and heart.... *Even at my age* I feel the ‘call of it,’ and it is among the probabilities that I shall not ‘return to civilization’ when I again get out of the reek of it.” The letter is dated April 26, 1912. His plan of escape was already completed in his mind. There is no questioning the ominous ring of the passages in quotations marks, particularly that phrase, “return to civilization.” How often has it been used with reference to him since 1913!

During the spring of 1912 he made a trip to Richmond in company with Mr. Neale and Miss Christiansen. The south was for him always a land peopled with strange figures of dreams and stalked by spectres. “Richmond,” how that name had sounded when whispered or shouted in 1865! Now it seemed quiet and indolent and full of sleep. Could it be possible? It made him question the veracity of his senses. And he wrote to Sterling: “I went to Richmond, a city whose tragic and pathetic history, of which one is reminded by everything that one sees there, always gets on my nerves with a particular dejection. True, the history is some fifty years old, but it is always with me when I’m there, making solemn eyes at me.” The fifty years seemed but a slight cæsura: what mattered were the accented moments when life was lifted by chance to the level of great poetry.

He was no sooner back from Richmond than he left for California. How many times had he made this circuit? How many times had hope alternated with despair, and despair with hope, as he journeyed back and forth across this continent! It was a dreary and tedious business, but this was to be his last trip. He was resolved to say farewell. It was really one trip too often for he found that the scenes had changed. He went to Lake Tahoe and met one evening a lady he had known in Oakland. They were driven into her cabin by a harsh and biting wind and they drank to San Francisco as they tried to forget the disagreeable and deserted lake resort. But San Francsico was no better. Like his second trip to the battlefields, this return visit to California was disappointing. He should have known the psychological inevitability of disappointment under these circumstances. A sensation may be recaptured by visiting old scenes that once have been memorable by mere association. But the experience will not recur a second or a third time.

Moreover, there had actually been quite a change in California since 1910. During his absence, Christian Science had bitten old friends like a pestilence. He would greet people with the salutation: “Well, are you also a believer in white magic?” The Hall of Truth in Oakland, conducted by Mrs. Lillitz, had taken in many an old pupil, admirer, and friend. One evening when Mrs. Lillitz was asking for names to be made the subject of prayer an unidentified voice suggested “Ambrose Bierce,” and a prayer was offered for his soul. By 1912 several of Bierce’s favorites were practitioners and even his daughter had joined the circle. He smiled when she remonstrated with him about his skepticism. “Bib” (his name for her), he would say, “has the greatest gift of all: the gift of happiness.”

It was not altogether the “white magic” that annoyed him. A Radical Club had been formed at Piedmont, and even George Sterling was flirting with the fatal heresy of socialism. As far as Bierce was concerned, they were all “anarchists.” Even his nephew and niece talked dangerously of “conditions” and he told them, with calm but definite certainty, that if they became “anarchists” they would lose a patient uncle and he a beloved nephew and niece. He was out of tune with things: he was actually relegated to the armchair in the lobby of his hotel in Oakland. Sterling added to socialism a harum-scarum theory about “free love” which disgusted Bierce, who wrote: “I’m thinking of cutting Sterling — he gets on my nerves.” George sent him a poem from Carmel with the request that he show it to a mutual friend. Bierce returned it with an angry note, in which he said that he would not think of showing such a poem to a lady! It was too fleshly for Bierce. This was followed by the famous swimming-pool episode in which Bierce threatened Sterling if he dared go swimming in the nude. He should have been more tolerant: George was something of a jester and had an insatiable mania for nakedness. He once created an international sensation by a midnight plunge in Golden Gate Park after a lily, and he scandalized several masked balls in San Francisco by appearing in a leopard’s skin. However amusing this might have been to Sterling, it grated on Bierce’s nerves. He could not tolerate sensationalism. He visited Sterling at Carmel for a few hours, and wrote in George’s guest book: “Nothing to say.” It was literally true.

His friends observed that he had aged noticeably since his last visit. In two years he had become an “old man.” One lady remarked that even on his second visit he seemed as alert and manly as ever when he called. But the next day she saw him crossing a street in town, when he was unaware of her presence. She was shocked by his appearance, for he was bent, walked stiffly, and carried a cane. His voice sounded “old” for the first time. He told Eva Crawford that he was “sleepy for death” and that he “was going away.” His summer was taken up with one visit after another in which he repeated this message. The details varied to some extent, but generally the message was the same and it was definitely “farewell.” He was determined to make this visit the last and he wanted to leave this impression. All his friends seemed to realize that he walked in a constant shadow, but nothing definitely was said about his plans.

One evening he invited Mr and Mrs. Roosevelt Johnson to his hotel for dinner. They had a very pleasant evening. When they left, Bierce, said “good-by” in a manner that impressed them both with its tone of finality. As they were crossing the street in front of the hotel, they turned and gazed back at Bierce. He was standing in the doorway, the light streaming from behind. His figure, clad in black, with a suggestion of white about the cuffs and collar, appeared as sharply outlined as though it were set in a frame. As they turned, he lifted his hand in a gesture that said “farewell” even more definitely than his last words.

By October he was again in Washington. The journey had been almost disastrous. He was stricken with asthma while en route, and had been forced to make short stop-overs in order to complete the journey. It had been a bad summer, and he returned to his apartment more determined than ever that he must leave Washington and never return. He had made his usual pilgrimage up the Napa Valley to St. Helena. It had been warm and sultry out in that barren cemetery as old “Charley” Jackson had shown him about the ground. The “Bierce” lot had been removed, as he had instructed two years previously. It was now a square plot of raised earth marked with four palm trees. There were no inscriptions, monuments, or stones. Day, Leigh, and Mollie Bierce... St. Helena... Howell Mountain... shadows and echoes. It really had ceased to matter. He was quiet and gray and sad, but he no longer felt the anguish that he had once thought unforgettable. He left hurriedly for Oakland, telling the sexton that he was “going into Mexico” and that the graves were to be attended with the money that he left for their care. There was a finality about this last trip. Every task had been attended; his affairs were in order. The few old friends had been told farewell, and there was nothing more to say or do. He no longer had a single interest in California. The first visit had been pleasant and amusing, but the second was quite disappointing. It was ever the case with Bierce. He was shambling across the continent again, but he knew with the unquestionable certainty of all great determinations, that this would be the last trip. If he was to be deceived by alluring vistas again, it would be in the South, where there was “something new under an old sun.”

In Washington, again, he had resumed the same round of puerile tasks. The “Collected Works” were “out of my system” and he took some satisfaction in knowing that the edition was completed before he “passed on.” There were spurts of activity, on occasion, as when he wrote to a friend that he had recovered from the "wobbles" and that there was "life in the old dog yet." There was life enough to write several sharp letters about the new régime in Washington. This fellow Wilson wrote better than the others, but he sounded specious at times. As for Walter Hines Page: "He has done some of the loftiest and hardiest lying that has been heard on this orb in many a year anent pensions." He felt restless and read the papers about the situation in Mexico with interest. It looked like a real fight might ensue. It was about time. Every generation had its baptism of fire, and his shadow had stretched far into the second generation. He corresponded with Carranza and announced to friends that he "liked the fellow." He could not believe all the talk that he heard about Mexico. He decided to go down below Juarez and view the scene for himself. The news of war was broken, however, with amusing incidents as when George Harvey invited him to attend a dinner in honor of William Dean Howells. It seemed like a post-mortem laurel for Bierce, who had always been, as Robert Barr observed, "too full of original hell to succeed in a Presbyterian world," and the world was going Presbyterian just then.

Later in the year, Bierce left for a visit with his daughter who was then living in Bloomington, Illinois. When she had first announced to her father that she lived in this city, he sent her a telegram: "Why *Bloomington!*" He brought with him a box of letters, papers and documents, and left a trunkful of unassorted papers. It was a pleasant visit over a period of about two weeks. The daughter was impressed with his excellent health; in fact, he told her that he had never felt better. But, despite his good health, he seemed vaguely uneasy and was determined that he would "go away." Just at dusk one evening they were sitting on the veranda of Mrs. Cowden's home. An old man walked along the street in front of the house: bent, shambling, forlorn. An involuntary grimace passed over Bierce's face. There was a prolonged pause in their conversation, as she noticed that he was disturbed. Then, after a moment, he said: "Bib, did you notice that old man? I'll never be like that! It is not merely the personal humiliation of age that I resent but the fact that it discommodes others. Old people are cranky and fussy and infernal bores." Both Mr and Mrs. Cowden remonstrated and assured him that he could come and live with them in Bloomington, but he only smiled enigmatically and began to talk of other things. His insouciance did not, however, deceive his daughter.

She had several long chats with her father during this visit. One evening they were discussing some former acquaintance who had disappointed all his friends by his rather contemptible conduct. Mrs. Cowden chided her father about his indignation. Why should he, who was so "cynical," care about what another did, particularly when “nothing matters”? Moreover, she volunteered, the man in question could scarcely have kept from doing what he did. Bierce was immediately serious. “That’s all rot! Why, Bib, a long time ago I came to realize that a man could be a gentleman if he once made up his mind. As a youngster before and immediately after the war, I did many things that I would not approve of to-day. But there came a time when I determined that to be a gentleman was one of the few worthy ambitions in a man’s life, and I found that it could be done.”

He also told her of his plans. “Why should I remain in a country that is on the eve of woman’s suffrage and prohibition? You are well provided for and my proofreading stunt — four years of it — is over. In America you can’t go east or west any more, or north, the only avenue of escape is south. I’m going back to Washington and make preparations to leave. I’ll take some letters along with me and strike the border near El Paso. It will be easy enough to get along. I’m going to buy a donkey and hire a peon. I can see what’s doing; perhaps write a few articles about the situation; and then pass to the west coast of Mexico. From there I can go to South America, cross the Andes and ship to England. This fighting in Mexico interests me. I want to go down and see if these Mexicans shoot straight.”

There were questions which he did not answer. He seemed to prefer a vague understanding of his plans to any forthright explanation. His daughter knew him well enough not to remonstrate or to argue. She was worried and alarmed, but, as was always the case, she did not, or could not, change his determination. She could see that there was more to his determination to leave than a mere desire to see Mexico. But he was not morbid or pessimistic. He seemed quite cheerful, as though he were humming to himself. And well he might, for he was excited and enchanted with life once more.

One thing she did ask him about. Had he not been happy in Washington? Why should he want to leave? Washington, he announced, was the city of bores and fools. He was sick of the place. It palled on him. For thirteen years he had been a spectator, watching the idle game of politicians masquerading as statesmen. He was thoroughly disgusted with the scene and eager to leave. New York offered no greater divertissement. Why, he had walked the streets in New York, after Leigh’s death, gazing at buildings, counting objects, doing anything to keep from thinking about his own personal sorrow. He avoided seeing even his few friends on these occasions, as they were “shameless” about their happiness and reveled “indecently” in their bliss in his presence. No, he had not been particularly happy in Washington.

While in Bloomington, he took a keen interest in Mrs. Cowden’s two step-sons, Henry and Victor. One of the boys was interested in drawing and used to show his sketches to Bierce. Bierce was delighted, commented upon them, and, when he returned to Washington, sent the boy a sketchbook and some Japanese prints. He wrote that the prints were in excellent taste: they were simple, full of health, and saw reality as it should be seen, — from a distance.

The visit was at an end. He told his daughter “good-by” in a smiling and cheerful manner and said that he would write from Mexico. When he told his daughter good-by, the period of leave-taking and adieus was at an end. Was it not better that he should leave in this manner? Nothing is ever irrelevant, as one of Mr. Huxley’s characters has announced, and that is a great mystery and a paradox.

CHAPTER XIX. “THE GOOD, GOOD DARKNESS”

BY THE spring of 1913, Bierce began to prepare for his journey. His letters from May, 1913, throughout the summer, reveal a definite determination to go into Mexico, although not all of them are as explicit as the note to Mr. Roosevelt Johnson which closes with the phrase that he was “dressed for death.” The trip had been a matter of much thought; he had toyed with the idea of running away from old age as early as 1899. Troubled and annoyed by the thought of a general and gradual atrophy, he resented the casual deadening of the faculties which age used as an opiate. He wanted to meet death while he was sentient. Having rebelled so long against life, he could scarcely have been expected to acquiesce in what is rather facetiously known as a “natural” death.

Much doubt has been cast about the time and circumstances of his departure. This doubt can now be removed, as the details of his trip have been made available. Bierce was in constant communication with Miss Christiansen from the night he left Washington until his disappearance. Mr. Neale has intimated that Bierce went into Mexico because of a quarrel with Miss Christiansen, and he feels “certain that she never received any letters from him after their last personal interview.” There are no circumstances whatever to indicate that Bierce quarreled with Miss Christiansen. When he left for Mexico, she was in charge of his affairs. He had made assignments to her of his property, aside from the gold he took with him, and she was in possession of his papers and personal effects. Furthermore, she attended to all the details of his trip. Do these facts indicate that there had been a quarrel? Moreover, Bierce wrote Miss Christiansen the only specific and detailed account of his trip that exists. She knew his fear of the posthumous publication of letters written hastily and without thought of publication. Consequently, she destroyed all the correspondence, but she did realize the importance of the letters received from him during this time and thoughtfully jotted down in a notebook the dates and significant facts which they contained, even quoting an occasional phrase. That the record she made is authentic, admits of little doubt. The notes are specific and definite. Furthermore, there is no reason whatever to question her integrity, and the occasional phrases she quotes are unmistakably from Bierce’s pen.

From this record it is apparent that Bierce left Washington, Thursday evening, October 2, 1913, on the 10:10 train for Chattanooga. He was alone, although he had invited one friend to accompany him as far as the battlefields, just as he had taken Pollard with him on the pilgrimage of 1908. The fascination which old battle scenes possessed for Bierce was compelling and irresistible. When he was visiting in West Virginia, he had written to a friend a letter which contains a most significant passage:

"I have told her of a certain 'enchanted forest' hereabout to which I feel myself sometimes strongly drawn as a fitting place to lay down 'my weary body and my head.' (Perhaps you remember your Swinburne:

'Ah yet, would God this flesh of mine might be
Where air might wash and long leaves cover me!
Ah yet, would God that roots and steams were bred
Out of my weary body and my head.')

"The element of enchantment in that forest is supplied by my wandering and dreaming in it forty-one years ago when I was a-soldiering and there were new things under a new sun. It is miles away, but from a nearby summit I can overlook the entire region — ridge beyond ridge, parted by purple valleys full of sleep. Unlike me, it has not visibly altered in all these years, except that I miss, here and there, a thin blue smoke from an enemy's camp. Can you guess my feelings when I view this Dream-land — my Realm of Adventure, inhabited by memories that beckon me from every valley? I shall go; I shall retrace my old routes and lines of march; stand in my old camps; inspect my battlefields to see that all is right and undisturbed. I shall go to the Enchanted Forest."

He apparently desired to make a complete and final inspection of these romantic scenes, which were so indescribably enchanting. He was perplexed by the quiet sleepiness of meadows and parks that were once the scenes of carnage and gore. It should be remembered that this was a second visit; a merely intellectual curiosity would have been satisfied by one trip. It is obvious that he was in a mood for revery. He was seeking for a lost magic, as though for fifty years he had been wandering in a world of negligible importance: weary, bored and disillusioned. Bierce had always been suspicious of the metaphysician's identification of himself with light, and sun and stars. But now he rather vaguely desired that "roots and stems were bred" out of his "weary body" and his "weary head." Every man to his own talisman.

On October 5th he arrived at Chickamauga, and the next day he was in Murfreesboro, registering in a hotel named, appropriately, "The Hermitage." He tramped over many old battlefields that first day, missing no landmark of former years. He reported with pride that he had covered fifteen miles at Chickamauga and ten at Chattanooga. From Murfreesboro, he proceeded to Nashville. While he was visiting the field at Chickamauga, he made a sketch of the monument erected to his brother's regiment and sent it to Albert in Berkeley. "Stone River" — it seemed an impossible dream and yet the experience was projected through time and its memory troubled him now that he stood in the center of silent fields and seemed to hear the call of bugles and to see the flash of brilliant flags.

A few days later, on the 12th, he left Nashville and journeyed up the river to Pittsburg Landing. If the river banks had been full to overflowing in 1862, on that memorable day when he had been ferried across to Shiloh, they were suspended high above the waters in 1913. It was, indeed, a time of low tide. A phrase from Miss Christiansen's notebook reads: "A long and tedious voyage by steamboat. Stopped at every landing to put on freight. Landings are not towns, just roads coming down to the water. River beautiful but so low that the country could not be seen over the banks. The park so abundantly marked that following route of brigade and regiment is easy. Savannah, eight or ten miles below, looked familiar." There was a hollow depression to the right of a clearing, in which men had been cremated in a burning forest — but it was only a green hollow carefully planted to lawn and might have served as a hazard on a golf course. At Shiloh he counted the graves of twenty men who had been in his regiment, but he noted that less than half of the three thousand graves were marked. It was a dreary trip of inspection and not at all satisfying. He was still disconsolate and troubled and eager for the time when this mask of appearances might be torn aside.

The pleasant sun which had blazed down at Murfreesboro suddenly disappeared and was followed on the twentieth by a snowstorm. He was miserably cold and his trip was a disappointment. He arrived at Corinth, after a long drive, so cold that he could scarcely write his name in the hotel register. Corinth was lost in a fog of coal gas from the engines. Clouds of steam, frosted windows, and a driving wind full of sleet — what evil chance had brought this cold upon him? He was cold, and sick; why, he wondered, had he ever started on this dreary trip. The interval of revery was shattered and the next night he "fled south" towards New Orleans. Nothing mattered; nothing ever remained the same. Even the fine sensation of sadness which he had experienced on his first trip to Chickamauga was gone. It was, indeed, time that he went into Mexico. Nothing was left him. Again that fatal cleavage from reality kept him pursuing a phantom of fine feeling and an impossible elation. He had been deceived into thinking that the lost glamour of war days could be conjured forth by auto-suggestion practiced in the midst of scenes rich in associations. Fumbling old letters in his trunk at Washington had given him the same feeling: sorrow and pain and despair. He had burned many of the letters as “old junk” and he now turned from Chickamauga which was suddenly but a “cold and dismal park.” He was annoyed with fugitive emotions. But, after all, “nothing mattered.”

In New Orleans the interval of darkness in the north was forgotten. It was good to be in New Orleans. A trace of the old raillery appeared in his letters, and he wrote “Norrie” that “the sun shines in evidence, the horses are twittering in the trees and the autos hopping gaily from limb to limb.” The place seemed to please him; it was warming as a cordial. He noticed that even the street traffic seemed full of leisure; that the hotel corridors and lobbies were crowded with handsome people who had pleasant voices; men played billiards just as they did “years ago — and the bars — O you should see a New Orleans bar!” And, a few lines later: “The drinks they make, the trays and trays sent upstairs; the general air of leisure and the love of life.” It suggested that trip to New Orleans in 1865. This was an admirable mode of living: leisure, drinks, and gestures towards happiness. Not that damned scrambling in New York, or the hollow tediousness of Washington, but a “love of life.” These people were saving life and enjoying it, in the same manner that they lingered over a julep.

But, then, if he returned again to New Orleans, perhaps it, too, would have changed. He had no assurance that its charm was more durable than an hour. He was skeptical even of his own emotions, and, in a few days, his doubts were confirmed. “All my old haunts are lost to me, and excepting a few blocks immediately about the St. Charles Hotel, it is a strange city. I can’t find even the places where Pollard and I dined and drank a few years ago.” Shortly after his arrival he was stricken with asthma, and spent a day and night pacing his hotel room, bending over the back of a chair, gasping for breath, and wondering, as he had wondered for fifty years, why he endured such pain. He was losing weight and noticed the fact with apprehension. Perhaps he would yet die of “disease.” He must hurry. It was a lonely vigil with death in a land where “something was doing.” As though such a land existed! But the quest was understandable enough and his courage, as always, was most admirable.

He arrived at San Antonio, October 27th. Texas was in the grip of a blizzard. As soon as the weather improved, he spent some days strolling about and visiting the Alamo—”rather interesting with relics, old documents and bad poetry, the shrine of each Texan’s devotion.” At Fort Sam Houston that week he had a royal good time; why, he was actually treated as though he were a “foreign ambassador”! It was with difficulty that he prevented the Colonel from parading the regiment in his honor. Some of these army men he had known when they were stationed at the Presidio in San Francisco; many of them had exchanged drinks with him in the Army and Navy Club at Washington. Naturally they gave him a fine reception. It warmed him like the first flush of New Orleans had done. But it, too, was only a fragment of deceptive delight, a slight distraction. Death was his companion on this trip, and they hastened forward on their journey.

In November, “All Souls’ Day,” was clear and bright. The pale sunlight fell softly on a young winter world. Church bells were ringing everywhere and he took a long walk through the town, observing that several of the churches were “old for his country,” and reflecting on the contrast between such overt piety and a name like San Antonio. There were letters to write in the evening and then time for another long stroll before retiring. He would be traveling to-morrow — across the line. What was there? Probably another land of guffaws, boredom and chicanery. But if the fighting was trivial, there was still South America. It promised something; at least it offered more sustenance than the Washington of Woodrow Wilson. All these years he had known that he wanted surcease from a mob-mad democracy, a Leviathan of vulgarity that turned his sharpest shafts of satire with the strength of a great indifference. He had raged and stormed and cursed, but all to no purpose. Had he not seen demagogues on bicycles, the one with a hideous grin and the other with the voice of a bull in anguish, romping across the nation, jerking old scarecrows before the people, depicting promised lands, and leading the sheep to slaughter? No, San Antonio on “All Souls’ Day,” yea, even with Church Bells, was sweet and kind after such a nightmare.

But he must be going. November 7, 1913, saw him in Laredo. Across the river was Nuevo Laredo, held by the Huertistas. He was near now to the scene of the mock battles that were to follow: like an old soldier he was going to direct a sham battle for amusement. He was known even in Laredo. A newspaper man connected with *The Herald*, recognized him in the streets. This chap told an interesting story about a member of Porfirio Diaz’s cabinet who had bored his friends by reading “A Wine of Wizardry” on all occasions. Bierce stayed in Laredo for several days, visiting Fort McIntosh and the old Spanish Settlement, where he puzzled over ancient inscriptions just as he had made notes of Indian signs at Powder River in 1866. He stood on the river bank and gazed across into a “vast expanse of Mexican territory alluringly spread out and inaccessible.” He went on minor forays into the “enemy’s” territory, piercing that “inaccessible” and, therefore, “romantic” land to the south.

He proceeded on to El Paso and passed across the line into Juarez. Officials received him cordially and gave him his credentials to accompany the army. On December 16, 1913, he was in Chihuahua, Mexico, and a letter from Juarez relates that he had just ridden in from Chihuahua to post it. It was sharp weather but he was enjoying the life. There was much talk of “Jornada del Muerto,” the journey of death, and the roads were dotted with groups of refugees. There was a distinctly military atmosphere about the place and it pleased him. Troops were leaving Chihuahua every day and he was expecting to be in Torreon soon.

There had been a little fighting. These Mexicans fought like devils, but they were unsoldierly and addicted to "unseasonable firing." There was the incident at Tierra Blanca, for example. Inquiry had been set afoot about the "gringo" who was accompanying the army. Was he a soldier? To remove any suspicion from their minds, he had taken a rifle, walked to the top of a ridge, taken careful aim and had gotten his man. They were elated: such firing was unheard of, it was an example of Non-Latin calculation and precision. The old Gringo was given a sombrero and questioned no more. But he was curious. He had shot one of the "enemy," but his only sensation was one of dismay. "Poor devil! I wonder who he was!" War, too, had gone the way of all the mysterious, shifting, tantalizing shadows that were constantly disappearing only to reform into half-shapes and then dissolving again into the mists from which they had emerged and into which everything eventually disappeared. He was no nearer "the heart of darkness" than ever and he was troubled by a recurrent thought: was death to be a jest? He had touched it throughout his life. Once it had placed a long white scar through his hair, and it had mowed down thousands in his sight. Now, in old age, he was flirting with it again, but it did not seem much of an adventure. His early experience, then, had been something personal and subjective. All his life he had cherished the thought of the Civil War as the great "adventure" of his life, and now he knew it had been but another wraith of smoke stirred up by the gods of chance to perplex his sight. "To be a Gringo in Mexico — Ah, that is euthanasia!"

The notes ceased, for there were no more letters. It was near Christmas time, always for him a "hateful" season, full of sad memories. The year 1914 was to bring no word of him. His journey with death was over. He had disappeared — into his "good, good, darkness."

CHAPTER XX. “INCOMMUNICABLE NEWS”

BIERCE once remarked that “Death is not the end; there remains the litigation over the estate.” The wildly imaginary rumors that have circulated since his disappearance into Mexico, certainly suggest an interesting parallel. His disappearance did not put an end to the absurd speculations about his life, but, on the contrary, only gave them a fresh and splendid impetus. The old question: “Who is Ambrose Bierce?” was supplanted by the far more perplexing query: “Where is Ambrose Bierce.” Just as America was becoming curious about the first question, the second created even more attention and interest. The matter was made the subject of psychoanalysis, crystal gazing, and sensational news stories. The famous “disappearance” became the theme of short stories of the supernatural, prose fantasies, dialogues, detective stories, and editorial comment. Nothing so augmented the interest in Ambrose Bierce as his disappearance. Obscurity is obscurity, but disappearance is fame. It would be an act of supererogation to list all the stories about Bierce’s disappearance that have been tossed to a greedy world by those who have glibly promised to tell exactly what happened to Ambrose Bierce, but a few may be considered.

Immediately upon Bierce’s disappearance, that is, when his friends ceased to hear from him, his daughter wrote to the authorities in Washington and requested that they make an investigation, which they agreed to do. The Hon. Franklin K. Lane was one of the men who was induced to take an active part in directing the search that the government made in an effort to get word of Bierce. He was apparently ashamed of his famous Dunciad to the New York newspapers and was making belated amends. It was known that the last letters were postmarked from Chihuahua. One was dated Christmas Eve, December 24, 1913, and was addressed to J. H. Dunnigan, in the course of which Bierce asked his friend to “pray for me — real loud.” The other was mailed two days later. Some further facts are known, as that Bierce had on his person approximately two thousand dollars in gold, that he carried credentials permitting him to pass through the Constitutionalists’ territory, and that he was accredited to the Villa forces. He left a trunk in Laredo, which, *en passant*, was never found and could never be traced. From various sources, it is quite apparent that Bierce did not go into Mexico with the thought of actually enlisting with either side. His role was distinctly that of an observer; his credentials so stated, and he had told many friends that he was merely “going through to the West Coast and then to South

America.” So much, then, for the known facts.

The first important “Bierce Disappearance” story was that by James H. Wilkins. Wilkins, a well-known Pacific Coast journalist, was sent into Mexico by Fremont Older to try and find out what happened to Ambrose Bierce. The result of his investigation was a sensational news story that appeared in the San Francisco *Bulletin*, March 24, 1920. Summarized, Mr. Wilkins’ story is that Bierce was shot by a firing squad of Villista troops near Icamoli, on the trail to Monterey, in 1915. Wilkins claims that he went to interview Edmund Melero, associate editor of the *Mexican Review* in Mexico City. It was rumored that Melero had known Bierce in El Paso, and that they had been together for some time in Mexico. Up to this point Mr. Wilkins’ story is quite probable. But he strains the easiest credibility by the statements that follow. He went to interview a man supposed to have been with Melero, as Melero did not personally know much about Bierce. This mysterious man, unnamed in the story, then told Wilkins that he had been sent by Villa to capture an ammunition train on its way to Carranza’s forces. The ammunitions had been captured and two men had been taken prisoners. These two prisoners were shot down by the firing squad. As the man told Wilkins the story, a pictured fluttered to the floor. Wilkins is “without doubt” that it was a picture of Ambrose Bierce. But he never produced the picture or the man.

There are strange things, indeed, in this world and it is within the range of probabilities that Mr. Wilkins’ story may be correct. But it sounds so absurd as to repel even a qualified acceptance. The first objection to the story is that Mr. Wilkins would fix the date of Bierce’s death at 1915. It seems unbelievable that Bierce could have been in Mexico for two years without having written a word to his daughter or Miss Christiansen. Moreover, it would have been virtually an impossibility for him to have been on Carranza’s staff for two years, particularly after the government had started its search, without being detected by American correspondents. Quite a considerable group of correspondents who were in Mexico at the time have been interviewed and none of them report having seen or heard of Bierce. Nor do any of Carranza’s aids recall the presence of such a man on the staff of the Constitutionalists’ Army.

But even before Mr. Wilkins had reported the firing squad yarn, there was a widely circulated story to the effect that Bierce was in Europe with Lord Kitchener. This story, which had a most questionable origin, was sent all over the world by an excited and unreliable press as an authentic account of Bierce’s disappearance. Dr. B. F. Mason, a physician in San Leandro, California, had given an interview to a reporter on the Oakland *Tribune*, in which he said that he had just received a letter from a relative, Col. Henry Charles Mason, who claimed to have seen Bierce with Kitchener’s forces. This was the origin of the story. It was promptly reprinted throughout the country, but with the statement that Bierce’s daughter had confirmed the story at Bloomington, Illinois. She did nothing of the sort. All that she said, when interviewed, was that she had read the newspaper stories about her father. This casual statement was converted into the definite assertion that she had “received a letter from her father,” and that he was with Kitchener’s army. As a matter of fact, there was no basis for the story whatever, aside from this circumstantial confirmation: Bierce had corresponded with Lord Kitchener, after the Boer War, and England was the ultimate destination of his trip. But this version of the disappearance, if true, would fix the date at 1915, and it thus becomes immediately subject to the objection that Bierce would certainly have written to his daughter in that period of time. His daughter is convinced that he would have communicated with her, if alive, knowing her terrible anxiety and apprehension. This belief finds the strongest substantiation in his last letters, in which he had promised to write from time to time, as he journeyed south.

Another story about Bierce’s disappearance, and a rather probable one, is that by George Weeks. Weeks was a correspondent attached to Villa’s forces during the days leading up to the capture of Juarez. He explains how difficult it would have been for Bierce to be on the staff of either Villa or Carranza and to have escaped unnoticed. Mr. Weeks even admitted that he had been unable, personally, to learn a word about Bierce, although he made inquiries at Villa’s headquarters. This is important, particularly when Dr. Danziger’s story is considered.

After the Revolution, Mr. Weeks published a newspaper in Mexico City, and it was this newspaper of which Edmund Melero was associate editor. Weeks had, in fact, introduced Wilkins to Melero. But Weeks also stated that Melero did not remember much about Bierce. After talking with Mr. Weeks, however, Melero discovered an old Mexican Sergeant who had been with General Tomas Urbina, one of Villa’s corps commanders. This old fellow, over a bottle of wine, was induced to tell a story about seeing an American shot down by a firing squad, and, presumably after another bottle of wine, to identify Bierce by a picture that was shown him as the man who was shot. It thus becomes apparent that the Wilkins story was but the story of a story, and that Mr. Weeks, who was personally quite reliable, only stated the story upon the questionable hearsay of Melero, which was based in turn upon the unnamed sergeant’s evidence. Such stories surely do not commend themselves. Much publicity has been given to the Weeks-Wilkins story by stating it as an accepted version of what happened to Bierce, but it was never other than a questionable hypothesis. It is far more likely that Bierce was shot during the fighting that occurred at Torreon about the time he was last heard from. No effort whatever was made to identify the bodies of the dead during the Revolution and a disappearance in this manner would be forever veiled in mystery. It would seem that Bierce, if dead, was probably killed during the early days of the Revolution. This becomes apparent when one reads Mr. Weeks' account of the manner in which the correspondents covered both the Villista and Constitutionalists' armies.

Another widespread story about Bierce's disappearance is that circulated by Dr. Danziger. According to the Doctor's version, Bierce went into Mexico with the express purpose of joining Villa's army. Bierce, says Dr. Danziger, was jealous of General Harrison Gray Otis, formerly owner of the Los Angeles *Times*, because the latter, by flattering Diaz, had acquired large estates in Mexico. Hence Bierce wanted to assist Diaz. This is, of course, most characteristic of the Doctor, who, throughout his "Portrait of Ambrose Bierce," goes to the utmost recesses of his fervent imagination to attribute a mean and personal motive to all of Bierce's activities. Regardless of what may be proven or not proven in this controversy, one fact remains clear: Bierce did not go into Mexico with the thought in mind of assisting Villa or because he disliked General Otis.

The Doctor would have us believe that he personally interviewed Villa, and was highly complimented for his courage, the compliment being noted along with several other flattering tributes to the self-narrated glory and heroism of the author of "A Portrait of Ambrose Bierce." He then tells the most preposterous yarn, quoting Villa to the effect that Bierce, by drinking tequila, had become a drunkard. But he never directly states that Villa admitted that Bierce was dead, or that he knew who killed him. He does not offer a scintilla of proof, nor a single circumstance to buttress this flimsy and ridiculous story. Despite the widespread publicity given to Mr. Robert H. Davis' interview with Dr. Danziger, published, let it be known, in 1928, there is scant evidence to support the Doctor's story that he learned about the disappearance of Ambrose Bierce in 1923, but kept the matter a secret for five years. Villa was assassinated July 20, 1923. In 1923, Bierce would have been eighty-one, and in 1928, he would have been eighty-six. It was time for a brilliant revelation.

It has previously been stated that in 1893, Bierce and Danziger had a serious quarrel. This state of affairs was not altered in later years. On July 19, 1902, Bierce wrote Dr.

Danziger a note, — one of the mildest of several similar letters of this time — and a characteristic passage will be quoted:

“If you come to Washington there will be a few things for you to explain. I have had to pay some bills of yours, for example. And I have reason to think that you have again been ‘working’ some of the persons whom you knew as my friends. In brief, it is up to you to show, if you can, that you are not an irreclaimable crook.”

The Doctor was quite well aware of Mr. Bierce’s attitude, for he kept writing and begging for an interview. To quote from a letter of March 28, 1903: “I cannot conceive that you should so detest me that you would not grant my request. Much has happened since we were together that has strengthened my manhood and has raised me above the former level.” It is the story of this man that one is asked to believe as to what happened to Ambrose Bierce.

The latest “Mexican” disappearance story is that related by one Edward S. O’Reilly, soldier of fortune. O’Reilly claims to have been an officer on the “staff” of Pancho Villa, in 1914. O’Reilly is firmly convinced that he found the grave of Ambrose Bierce near Sierra Mojada. While in Sierra Mojada in 1914 with General Torivo Ortega, he heard rumors of an old man who had drifted into the town searching for Villa, who had been shot by some local soldiers. Some “scraps” of an envelope were reported to have been found with an Oakland postmark. Of course, none of the circumstances of the story are in any way capable of verification. It is just another story.

Several years after Bierce’s disappearance into Mexico, his devoted and faithful secretary, Miss Christiansen, died at Napa, California. Before her death she turned over to Mrs. Isgrigg all her personal effects and the property which Mr. Bierce had given her prior to his departure into Mexico. There was nothing in her papers that throws any additional light upon the disappearance of Ambrose Bierce, other than the notebook to which reference has been made. But her death inspired several new “stories” about Bierce, one of which was quite ingenious. There is a state institution for the insane at Napa. Miss Christiansen lived in Napa several years prior to her death. Therefore, reasoned the inventor of this story, Bierce had been in Napa all the time and had never disappeared into Mexico. If in Napa, where could he be but in the State Insane Asylum! Of course, the simple fact that Napa, California, was Miss Christiansen’s home, would not be a sufficient explanation of her presence there.

But the interest in Bierce’s disappearance has not been limited to the reporters and pseudo-reporters. Mr. Edward H. Smith wrote an article about the famous disappearance in a detective story magazine, and later reprinted it in a book devoted to “Mysteries of the Missing.” In this volume, with Charlie Ross, Archduke Salvator, and Theodosia Burr, Bierce joins the ranks of the mysterious army of the missing. He had written about these strange folk on many occasions, and now he was of their grisly company. Mr. Smith, trained in the lore of the detective, comes to some interesting conclusions. He rejects, as who would not, the stories by Weeks and Danziger, and makes this sensible observation: “My own guess is that Bierce started out to fight battles and shoulder hardships as he had done when a boy, somehow believing that a tough spirit would carry him through.” Indeed, it should be remembered that Bierce had led an inactive life in Washington for thirteen years. He was not a strong man at the time he went into Mexico, although he was well preserved for his age. He had been ill in New Orleans and again in El Paso, as shown by the notes Miss Christiansen made from his letters. He was surely not in condition to undertake the hardships of a correspondent in Mexico during the Revolution.

The labors of Mr. Bierce’s bibliographers are incessant and eternal. Any one who has tried to follow all the stories about Bierce’s disappearance, will sympathize with Charles Willis Thompson’s mild satire on the stories about “the disappearance of Ambrose Bierce,” which have been as numerous and as colorful as the stories of Czar Nicholas’s death. The writers who have used the disappearance as an incident for pure fiction have been much more successful. Mariam Storm’s story “Discovery” which appeared in *The Forum* is much more convincing than most of the news stories. Benjamin De Casseres in “The Last Satire of a Famous Titan” indulges in some pyrotechnic prose, and seats Mr. Bierce in the Café Gambrinus in Mexico City. It would seem that Mr. De Casseres has given a careful attention to details, for in one paragraph Mr. Bierce “tosses off a couple of brandies,” and smacks his lips over a third a few lines later. Both the De Casseres and Storm stories are “brandy fiction”; even the few details, such as the old soldier comrade of Bierce and the set of books in Miss Storm’s story, are purely imaginary. Mr. Thomas Burke has even suggested a supernatural explanation of Bierce’s disappearance! Crystal gazers have been consulted and palmists interrogated, but the mystery remains and the farce continues.

Jay House, writing in the New York *Evening Post,* raised the question as to whether or not there was ever such a man as Ambrose Bierce. Under the circumstances, the question was really quite pertinent. He received some thirty-seven wildly contradictory letters, purporting to tell all that was to be known about Bierce. One correspondent, however, rebelled; he insisted that no such person ever existed! The clipping bureaus have brought in some fantastic stories about Bierce during the last four or five years. He has been seen in out of the way places and has appeared at psychological moments with all Banquo’s sense of dramatic values. It is slight wonder that the skeptics ask whether or not such a man ever existed. Was he a salamander, a sadist-masochist, Francis of Assisi, a bat, or an ape? Was he as interesting as a kangaroo and did he have the kick of a zebra? Every semester during the college year some sophomore has discovered the twelve-volume set of Bierce and has written a laborious treatise for the local campus quarterly about this "lonely" figure in American Literature for the edification of the faculty and the bewilderment of the public. One man in San Francisco, who knew Bierce quite well, informs me that he was besieged by four biographers within a space of three months. And so it goes....

Mrs. Isgrigg launched an investigation under the direction of Col. C. J. Velardi, to determine if any new facts could be unearthed as to her father's disappearance. But the mission proved unsuccessful. Will these investigators ever succeed in unearthing genuine clews? The question is unanswerable. But should they succeed? Bierce wanted to find death when he went into Mexico, and his curiosity was justified by a sad experience in human affairs. It was, after all, a personal privilege. Whatever word he may have spoken has, thus far, most certainly been that "incommunicable news" of which Mr. Markham wrote, in Bierce's favorite sonnet, "The Wharf of Dreams":

"Strange wares are handled on the wharves of sleep;
Shadows of shadows pass, and many a light
Flashes a signal fire across the night;
Barges depart whose voiceless steersmen keep
Their way without a star upon the deep;
And from lost ships, homing with ghostly crews,
Comes cries of incommunicable news,
While cargoes pile the piers a moon-white heap —

Budgets of dream-dust, merchandise of song,
Wreckage of hope and packs of ancient wrong,
Nepenthes gathered from a secret strand,
Fardels of heartache, burdens of old sins,
Luggage sent down from dim ancestral inns,
And bales of fantasy from No-Man's Land."

Events have a strange pattern when viewed by the mystic. On February 6, 1926, Emma Frances Dawson, one of Bierce's most brilliant pupils, died of starvation at Palo Alto. George Sterling wrote me that it was "suicide" and closed his letter with a stricture to the effect that the only people who committed suicide were those without energy enough to live. On November 17, 1926, Sterling committed suicide at the Bohemian Qub in San Francisco. When his room was entered, it was found to be in a state of confusion and disorder. But there was a picture of Ambrose Bierce on the wall — austere and fine and handsome. In our last interview, Sterling had said that the final letter he had received from Bierce had the tone of "God talking to a gutter snipe." A year later, almost to the day, Herman Scheffauer committed suicide in Berlin. Both had chided the "old Titan" about his sternness, but they died with his name on their lips.

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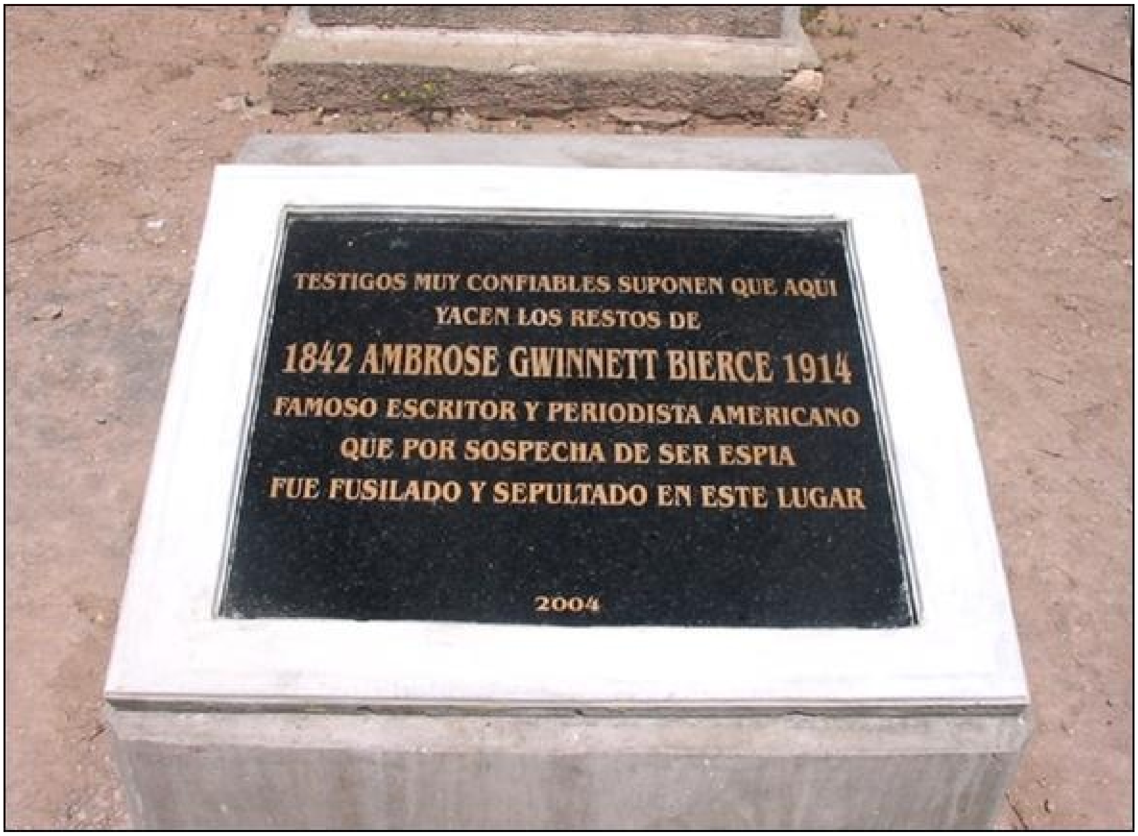
So great has been the interest in Bierce of recent years that it is tempting to speculate as to just what his ultimate position will be in American letters. It is a question which time will settle in its own impartial manner. But the current discussion about Bierce has been so careless of the facts that his admirers may well fear that his name is in danger of being dropped in despair by the minority to whom it has always been a byword. Perhaps the ultimate judgment will be that he was more interesting as a man than he was important as a writer. If his name lives, it is within the range of probabilities that it will be as a tradition of wit, courage and decency. Whatever judgment may be passed on his work, it does not affect the important fact that Bierce was one of the most provocative figures of his generation. One cannot reflect upon the facts of his life without coming to entertain an admiration for his splendid courage and indomitable spirit. To those of us in the West who have watched the fate of his reputation with a peculiar and personal interest, it has always been a source of satisfaction to realize that dead, absent or unknown, he has survived his critics and that he has even bettered the enemies who pursued him into Mexico, "to feast on his bones." To some of us, too, whose early enthusiasm for his work has somewhat waned, every light that has been thrown upon the facts of his life has brought a glowing certainty that this man was of the immortals and that around his name has grown up a tradition that we will not willingly relinquish.

Adios!

THE END

Sierra Mojada, Coahuila Cemetery, Mexico — believed to be Bierce’s final resting place


TESTIGOS MUY CONFIABLES SUPONEN QUE AQUI
YACEN LOS RESTOS DE
1842 AMBROSE GWINNETT BIERCE 1914
FAMOSO ESCRITOR Y PERIODISTA AMERICANO
QUE POR SOSPECHA DE SER ESPIA
FUE FUSILADO Y SEPULTADO EN ESTE LUGAR
2004

Bierce's likely grave in Sierra Mojada, Mexico. The translation reads: "Very trustworthy witnesses suppose that here lie the remains of 1842 Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce 1914 a famous American writer and journalist who on suspicion of being a spy was executed and buried at this place. 2004"